



INCLUSIVE CONVERSATIONS

Exploring the Role of a Human Rights-Based Approach
to Biodiversity and Climate Action

Final Report of the Dialogue Process



MULTI-ACTOR DIALOGUE PROCESS OUTCOME

The Multi-Actor Dialogue Process took place in 2024 and 2025, with a penultimate event in Cali, Colombia, on 18–19 October 2024, at the margin of the 16th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Dialogue contributed to consolidating the collective, whole-of-society approach and deepening the understanding of the implementation of a human rights-based approach (HRBA) to biodiversity and climate action. Participants included members and representatives of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, small-scale fishers and farmers, women, youth, civil society organisations, researchers, and government representatives. These groups came together to share a vision of what needs to happen and how to advance collective progress towards a more just and sustainable future.

Photo by Alexandre Weiss, Pexels

Adopting the HRBA in biodiversity and climate action

From crisis to transformative action: Our collective path forward

The interconnected crises of biodiversity loss, inequality, and climate change are fundamentally a human rights crisis, rooted in unsustainable and unjust value systems. Indigenous Peoples and local communities often emphasise the profound interconnectedness of humans and nature, viewing all living beings as part of a sacred and dynamic web of life in which each element plays a vital role in maintaining ecological balance and harmony. They also advocate an HRBA that recognises not only the rights of people but also the rights of nature, or Mother Earth, in ensuring a sustainable, just, and equitable coexistence.

Despite existing human rights instruments, frameworks, and commitments – including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – widespread violations of human rights in relation to biodiversity loss and climate change continue. Those most affected by these crises are Indigenous

Peoples, women, children and youth, local communities, small-scale fishers and farmers, peasants, rural populations, Afro-descendants, people living with disabilities, and other marginalised groups. These actors are often excluded from research and decision-making processes that directly impact their lives, livelihoods, lands, territories, cultures, and resources. This lack of research and decision-making access is only exacerbated by the exclusion from funding.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) and the Paris Agreement recognise the importance of human rights. Yet implementation often prioritises quantity over quality, numbers over people, and short-term, market-based, or unsustainable solutions over an HRBA. The current crises present a critical juncture where transformative change is not just desirable but essential for the survival and well-being of both people and the planet.

Participants in the Multi-Actor Dialogue called for bold leadership and collective action to:

- **Recognise that the HRBA is both morally and legally required** and are the most effective pathway to achieve biodiversity and climate goals;
- **Address root causes of biodiversity loss and climate change**, including by challenging extractivism and exploitation as well as reforming inequitable economic systems;
- **Ensure inter- and intra-generational equity** in all decisions and actions;
- **Prioritise the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities** by including their collective rights alongside individual rights and supporting the inclusion of their traditional knowledge, worldviews, values, and practices in policy and decision-making processes;
- **Foster multi-actor collaboration**, dialogue, and partnership grounded in trust, reciprocity, and shared responsibility;
- **Apply an intersectional lens to biodiversity and climate action** by recognising how overlapping identities (e.g. gender, age, disability, ethnicity, and socio-economic status) shape vulnerability and marginalisation contexts, access to resources, and participation in decision-making;
- **Design policies and programmes that actively dismantle structural barriers** and deliver equitable benefits for all groups.



The Dialogue also identified the set of key actions below to be taken by specific actors.

For governments and policymakers

- **Acknowledge that the indivisibility of the Global Biodiversity Framework targets necessitates a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.** This approach should place human rights at the centre of efforts to achieve KMGBF and other Rio Convention targets.
- **Ensure meaningful and sustained participation of rights holders** through inclusive, ethical, locally led co-creation processes at all stages of policy development, goal-setting, implementation, reporting, learning, and monitoring.
- **Strengthen legal frameworks and accountability mechanisms** for protecting defenders of environmental and human rights.
- **Develop and implement robust, ongoing, and iterative free, prior, and informed consent procedures with adequate resourcing to safeguard the rights and self-determination of** Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Free, prior, and informed consent processes often lack proper funding, monitoring, and implementation support, which undermines their effectiveness.
- **Recognise and protect collective land and water tenure rights** of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and Afro-descendants.
- **Ensure direct, flexible, predictable, and accessible funding** reaches Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and rights holders at the frontlines of biodiversity and climate action.
- **Integrate the HRBA** into national biodiversity strategies and action plans, nationally determined contributions and national adaptation plans, land degradation neutrality targets, and sub-national and city planning processes to ensure no one is left behind.

For international organisations and financial institutions

- **Move beyond transactional relationships** to build genuine partnerships with rights holders. This change requires shifting from viewing communities as passive beneficiaries or groups experiencing vulnerability to treating them as active and equal partners in conservation and climate action.
- **Ensure that social and environmental safeguards are binding**, effectively implemented, and rigorously monitored. Non-binding safeguards, especially in the context of carbon markets, have often failed to protect community rights.
- **Develop indicators that capture qualitative aspects of human rights principles** in biodiversity and climate action. Current metrics tend to emphasise quantity (such as the percentage of protected areas) over quality of governance and rights, respect, and protection.
- **Contribute proactively to tracking the implementation of Section C** of the KMGBF.
- **Support capacity-strengthening efforts** for both duty bearers and rights holders in understanding rights and responsibilities linked to the HRBA for biodiversity and climate action.
- **Facilitate knowledge exchange and co-production** among Indigenous, traditional, and scientific knowledge systems.
- **Create dedicated funding mechanisms** to support the HRBA.



For civil society organisations

- **Support Indigenous Peoples and local communities** in co-developing and implementing biocultural protocols and approaches.
- **Strengthen networks and platforms** for knowledge exchange and peer-to-peer learning on the HRBA among practitioners, policymakers, and academic communities.
- **Strengthen capacity for community-based monitoring and information systems** for biodiversity, climate change, and human well-being.
- **Document and widely disseminate good practices** of HRBA application.
- **Support alternative dispute resolution mechanisms** at the community level in line with community governance structures.
- **Advocate the integration of human rights principles** across all environmental action, at all scales.

For the private sector

- **Respect human rights** in all business operations that affect biodiversity and climate, ensuring alignment with international standards and local contexts.
- **Implement effective environmental and social safeguards.**
- **Ensure transparency and accountability** throughout project implementation.
- **Support small-scale producers and local economies.**
- **Move beyond voluntary commitments** to binding obligations that uphold human rights.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to all the participants who contributed their time, knowledge, and insights to the discussions that formed the foundation of this report on a human rights-based approach to biodiversity and climate action.

Our sincere thanks go to the individuals and organisations who took part in both the in-person and online sessions, as well as to those who participated in the Multi-Actor Dialogue held in Cali, Colombia, on 18–19 October 2024. Your diverse perspectives, experiences, and expertise have been invaluable in shaping the content of this report.

The thoughtful discussions and shared reflections during this Dialogue Process have provided a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities that arise at the intersection of human rights, biodiversity conservation, and climate action.

We deeply appreciate the open and candid dialogue, collaboration, and commitment to fostering a more equitable and sustainable future for all. Your contributions are at the heart of this report, and we hope that the collective insights shared will continue to inform and inspire efforts in advancing human rights in the context of global environmental challenges.

Thank you for your dedication and your vital role in this important work.

DISCLAIMER

This report presents a synthesis of the key issues discussed during the Multi-Actor Dialogue Process on Inclusive Conversation: Exploring the Role of a Human Rights-Based Approach to Biodiversity and Climate Action. It reflects the perspectives and insights shared by participants, facilitated by the co-organisers throughout the process.

The content of this report is not intended to be exhaustive. The co-organisers acknowledge that there are many additional issues, dimensions, and viewpoints that warrant further exploration and deeper analysis. This report does not claim to represent all aspects of the subject matter, nor does it imply consensus on all points raised. The views expressed in this publication, therefore, do not necessarily reflect the positions of all participating individuals or organisations. The co-organisers encourage continued dialogue and collaboration to further develop and expand upon the themes addressed here.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Multi-Actor Dialogue Process outcome	3
Adopting the HRBA in biodiversity and climate action	3
From crisis to transformative action: Our collective path forward	3
Acknowledgements	8
Table of contents	10
List of abbreviations	12
Glossary	13
1. Introduction	16
Background	16
Purpose of the report	19
2. Setting the scene of the Dialogue Process	20
Data analysis	23
3. How the HRBA is understood	24
Key insights: Understanding the HRBA	24
The HRBA as a way of life	24
Embracing plurality	25
Relational perspectives	25
4. Opportunities for implementing the HRBA	26
The HRBA as a bridge between biodiversity and climate action	27
The HRBA can transform power dynamics	27
Gender-responsive safeguards and women's leadership through an intersectional lens	29
Ensuring land tenure security and access to resources	29

Transforming private sector engagement through enhanced accountability, as well as fair and equitable benefit-sharing	30
Strengthening multi-level governance and policy coherence through enhanced recognition and integration of locally led approaches	31
Democratising and embracing diverse knowledge systems	32
5. Enabling HRBA implementation	34
Policy and legal frameworks	34
Strengthening capacities and enhancing awareness	35
Ensuring meaningful participation	36
Fostering the co-production and management of knowledge	37
Enhancing monitoring, evaluation, and accountability	37
Adequate and inclusive funding	37
Mobilising partnerships and strengthening communication	38
6. Moving forward together	39
Funder acknowledgement	42
<i>Appendix 1: Data analysis</i>	43

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
SBSTTA	Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice
COP	Conference of the Parties
FPIC	free, prior, and informed consent
HRBA	human rights-based approach
ILK	Indigenous and local knowledge
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science–Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
KMGBF	Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
NBSAP	national biodiversity strategy and action plan
NDC	nationally determined contribution
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

GLOSSARY

Biocultural

The links between biological diversity and cultural diversity.¹

Duty bearers

Actors who have a particular obligation or responsibility to respect, protect, and fulfil

human rights and to abstain from human rights violations. The term is most commonly used to refer to State actors, but non-State actors can also be considered duty bearers. Individuals, local organisations, private companies, aid donors, and international institutions can also be duty bearers, depending on the context.²

Ecosystem-based approaches

The use of biodiversity and ecosystem services as part of an overall adaptation strategy to help people and ecosystems adapt to the adverse effects of climate change by increasing their resilience and reducing their vulnerability.³

Free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC)

A right to self-determination granted to Indigenous Peoples, recognised in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. FPIC allows Indigenous Peoples and local communities to provide, withhold, and withdraw consent in projects that impact them or their territories. It also allows Indigenous Peoples to engage in negotiations to shape the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of projects.⁴

Human rights-based approach (HRBA)

A conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed towards promoting and protecting human rights. It seeks to analyse inequalities that lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress and often result in groups of people being left behind.⁵

Indigenous and local knowledge (ILK)

The knowledge, practices, and innovations embedded in the relationships of Indigenous Peoples and local communities with nature. ILK is situated in a place and social context, but it is also open and hybrid. It continuously evolves through the combination of written, oral, tacit, practical, and scientific knowledge obtained from various sources, and it is validated by experimentation and direct interaction with nature.⁶

¹ Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (2018) *Glossary of relevant key terms and concepts within the context of article 8(j) and related provisions. Annex to decision adopted by the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity*. Available at: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/guidelines/cbd-8j-GlossaryArticle-en.pdf>.

² United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2023) *Reinforcing capacities of duty bearers*. Available at: <https://www.unesco.org/en/international-programme-development-communication/duty-bearers>.

³ CBD (2009) *Connecting biodiversity and climate change mitigation and adaptation: Report of the second ad hoc technical expert group on biodiversity and climate change*. Technical Series No. 41. Montreal: Secretariat of the CBD.

⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2025) *Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC)*. Available at: <https://www.fao.org/indigenous-peoples/pillars-of-work/free--prior-and-informed-consent/en>.

⁵ United Nations Sustainable Development Group (2003) *The human rights-based approach to development cooperation towards a common understanding among UN agencies*. New York: United Nations.

⁶ IPBES (2019) *Glossary*. In: Brondizio, E.S., Settele, J., Díaz, S. and Ngo, H.T. (eds.) *Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*. Bonn: IPBES Secretariat.

GLOSSARY

Intersectionality/intersectional

The interaction and cumulative effects of multiple forms of discrimination affecting the lives of individuals through identity markers such as gender, age, disability, ethnicity, and socio-economic status.⁷

Land degradation neutrality

A principle under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification to avoid further land exploitation by maintaining existing healthy land, reducing existing degradation, and making efforts to restore previously degraded land.⁸

Locally led approach

An approach to development action, closely linked to the HRBA, where local actors set their own agenda, develop solutions, and have control over the resources and decision-making in the implementation.⁹

National adaptation plans

Plans prepared under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change that set out a Member State's medium- and long-term priorities for climate adaptation efforts.¹⁰

Nature-based solutions

Actions to conserve, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems. These actions address societal challenges effectively and adaptively while providing benefits for human well-being and biodiversity.¹¹ In the CBD, nature-based solutions with biodiversity safeguards are seen as an essential component of ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation, mitigation, and disaster risk reduction.¹²

National biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs)

National policy documents developed under the CBD that outline a Member State's priorities, goals, and actions for conserving and sustainably utilising its biodiversity.¹³

Nationally determined contributions (NDCs)

Self-set pledges by Members of the Paris Agreement for climate mitigation and adaptation action.¹⁴

7 Samie, A. (2025) 'Intersectionality', *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/intersectionality>.

8 United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (n.d.) *Land Degradation Neutrality*. Available at: <https://www.unccd.int/land-and-life/land-degradation-neutrality/overview>.

9 Adapted from Soanes, M. et al. (2021) *Principles for locally led adaptation*. London: International Institute for Environment and Development.

10 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (n.d.) *Overview – National adaptation plans*. Available at: <https://unfccc.int/topics/resilience/workstreams/national-adaptation-plans/overview>.

11 Cohen-Shacham, E., et al. (2016) *Nature-based solutions to address global societal challenges*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.

12 CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) (2019) *Recommendation adopted by the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice: CBD/SBSTTA/REC/23/2*. Paragraph 12. Montreal: Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

13 CBD (1992) *Convention on Biological Diversity*. Article 6. Montreal: Secretariat of the CBD.

14 UNFCCC (2015) *Paris Agreement*. Article 4, paragraph 2.

GLOSSARY

Rights holders

Individuals or groups who are entitled to specific rights. Rights holders have particular entitlements in relation to specific duty bearers. In general terms, all human beings are rights holders under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In particular contexts, there are often specific social groups whose human rights are not fully realised, respected, or protected. More often than not, these groups tend to include women and girls, ethnic minorities, Indigenous Peoples, migrants, and youth. The HRBA recognises that the entitlements of rights holders need to be respected, protected, and fulfilled, while also considering rights holders as active agents in the realisation of human rights.¹⁵

Small-scale fisheries and farmers

Individuals and family units – rather than commercial units – running traditional fisheries using a relatively small amount of capital and energy. They typically carry out short fishing trips close to coasts and mainly for local consumption.¹⁶

Transformative change

A fundamental system-wide shift in views, structures, and practices that address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss and nature's decline.¹⁷

Whole-of-society approach

An approach that incorporates formal and informal institutions, the civil society, and public and private sectors to find common solutions to complex problems.¹⁸

¹⁵ UNICEF (2020) *Gender equality, UN coherence & you*.

¹⁶ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2018) *FAO Terminology Portal*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/faoterm/en/>.

¹⁷ IPBES (2024) *IPBES Transformative Change Assessment: Full report*. O'Brien, K., Garibaldi, L., and Agrawal, A. (eds.). IPBES Secretariat, Bonn, Germany. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11382215>.

¹⁸ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2023.) *The United Nations World water development report 2023: partnerships and cooperation for water*. Paris: UNESCO/UN-Water.



INTRODUCTION

Photo by Kelly Pexels

Background

The functioning of human societies and the provision of ecosystem services are dependent on the state of climate and biodiversity. If left unchecked, the impacts of biodiversity loss and climate change will continue to undermine the full enjoyment of human rights,¹⁹ accentuating inequality and the marginalisation of the most vulnerable sectors of society. Biodiversity loss and climate change directly impact human rights, including the rights to life, health, food, water and sanitation, self-determination, culture, and a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.

In the wake of humanity facing a planetary crisis, the links between human rights, climate change, and biodiversity loss have continued to gain significant traction. The growing recognition of the intertwined challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change has led to increased efforts to address them synergistically.

The Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kunming-

Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) of the United Nations CBD recognise the importance of respecting, protecting, and fulfilling human rights.^{20,21} The KMGBF explicitly states that its implementation requires an HRBA.

The HRBA ensures that policies, governance, and actions actively support and promote human rights in their design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and learning.²² The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Global Assessment on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (2019) highlighted the importance of the recognition and realisation of the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities for biodiversity protection and conservation. It also underlined the importance of their full and effective participation in environmental governance for quality of life, as well as for nature conservation and restoration, and identified human rights in

¹⁹ United Nations General Assembly (2017) *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment*. New York: United Nations.

²⁰ UNFCCC (2015) Decision 1/CP.21: *Adoption of the Paris Agreement*. Paris: United Nations.

²¹ CBD (2022) *Decision CBD/COP/15/DEC/4*. Montreal: Secretariat of the CBD.

²² United Nations Sustainable Development Group (n.d.) *Human rights-based approach*. Available at: <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/human-rights-based-approach>

conservation as a critical leverage point for transformation towards sustainability.²³ The latest Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change also outlined the importance of implementing climate actions that prioritise equity, social justice, climate justice, HRBA, and inclusivity for attaining more sustainable outcomes.²⁴

The recently approved IPBES Transformative Change Assessment (2024)²⁵ further emphasises that recognising rights and promoting justice is essential to address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss and guide the process of transformative change. The assessment identifies four key principles for transformation – rights and agency, equity and justice, connectivity of systems, and responsible innovation – highlighting that applying the HRBA is not only morally imperative but also foundational to effective environmental policy. The IPBES Nexus Assessment (2024)²⁶ aligns with these findings, outlining that promoting rights and equity leads to positive outcomes for people and nature. It also notes that wider scaling and support are critical for advancing justice and gender equality.

Despite this growing consensus emerging from ecological and climate assessments that respecting, protecting, and fulfilling human rights is an obligation under international law, gaps in the application of the HRBA persist. Bridging these gaps requires a better understanding of how governments and other duty bearers

translate global climate and biodiversity policies into action following the HRBA.

Various guidance documents on the HRBA relevant to the implementation of biodiversity and climate action are publicly available, including those published by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). OHCHR's recent publications provide guidance for States on how to integrate the HRBA into climate- and biodiversity-related policies, such as the NBSAPs²⁷ and NDCs.²⁸ The United Nations Environment Programme has also recently launched a report outlining key HRBA elements for ecosystem-based adaptation.²⁹

The United Nations Environment Management Group has also produced guidance on integrating human rights into NBSAPs.³⁰

27 OHCHR (2022a) *Integrating human rights in national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs)*. Geneva: United Nations.

28 OHCHR (2022b) *Integrating human rights in nationally determined contributions (NDCs)*. Geneva: United Nations.

29 United Nations Environment Programme (2022) *Adopting human-rights based approach in ecosystem-based adaptation*.

30 United Nations Environment Management Group (2023) *Guidance on integrating human rights in National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs)*. Geneva: United Nations.

23 IPBES (2019) *Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services: Summary for policymakers*. Bonn: IPBES Secretariat. Available at: <https://zenodo.org/records/3553579>.

24 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2023) *Climate change 2023: Synthesis report. Summary for policymakers*. Geneva: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Available at: https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_SYR_SPM.pdf.

25 IPBES (2024) *IPBES Transformative Change Assessment: Full report*. O'Brien, K., Garibaldi, L., and Agrawal, A. (eds.). IPBES Secretariat, Bonn, Germany. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11382215>.

26 IPBES (2024) *IPBES Transformative Change Assessment: Full report*. O'Brien, K., Garibaldi, L., and Agrawal, A. (eds.). IPBES Secretariat, Bonn, Germany. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11382215>.



Photo by Mousie Balachew Feyisa

Furthermore, the United Nations system and several development cooperation agencies have been following the HRBA within their own activities, including those related to the environment, climate change, and biodiversity.

Many people involved in international environmental negotiations across the Rio Conventions have asked what it really means to apply the HRBA to biodiversity and climate work. This question presented an opportunity to consult with different groups and unpack what HRBA means in their specific situations, considering their knowledge, views, experiences, and perspectives. By exploring together how the HRBA could work for biodiversity and climate action from various perspectives, a shared vision can be developed and specific steps identified for different actors to implement the HRBA effectively. The Dialogue Process on Inclusive Conversations: Exploring the Role of Human Rights-Based Approach to Biodiversity and Climate Action (hereafter “the Dialogue Process”) was initiated to address this question and enhance the understanding and capacities of various actors in applying the HRBA to biodiversity and climate action. This initiative was conducted jointly by SwedBio, Soka Gakkai International, the Climate and Development Knowledge Network at SouthSouthNorth, Focali, and the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network.³¹ The OHCHR and the Secretariat of the CBD also supported the initiative.

³¹ The Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network is a partnership initiative driven by the United Nations Development Programme, the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

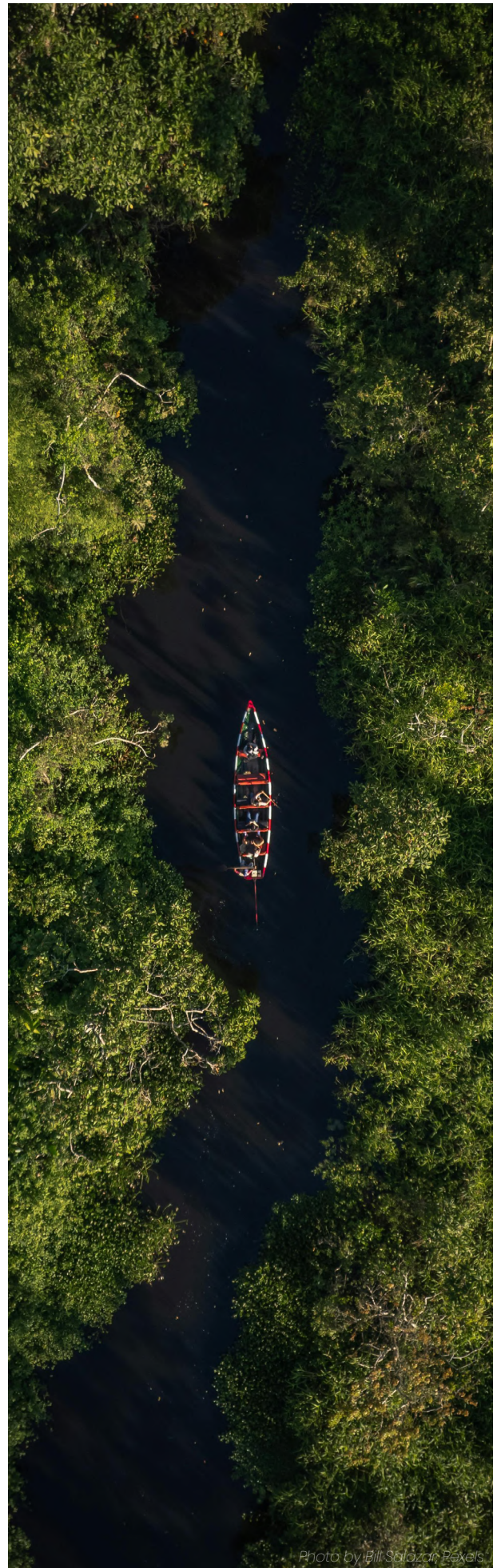


Photo by Bill Salazar Rexels

Purpose of the report

The Dialogue Process has contributed to consolidating a collective, whole-of-society approach and an understanding of the importance of the HRBA in synergistic biodiversity and climate action. This report serves as a synthesis of the Dialogue Process on Inclusive Conversations: Exploring the Role of a Human Rights-Based Approach to Biodiversity and Climate Action.

Grounded in the inputs and reflections of diverse actors, the report captures lessons, experiences, and priorities that emerged throughout the Dialogue Process. The report aims to:



Document the perspectives, insights, and lived experiences of diverse actors in applying the HRBA to biodiversity and climate action;



Identify enabling conditions of, barriers against, and opportunities for advancing the HRBA in the implementation of such biodiversity and climate action, aligned with the KMGBF and Paris Agreement;



Propose practical, actor-specific recommendations that support more inclusive, just, and rights-based approaches to biodiversity and climate action.

The findings aim to inform relevant policy processes, implementation efforts, and advocacy across local, sub-national, national, and global levels. They underscore the urgent need to move from verbal and written commitments to concrete, actionable pathways – they are a call to action, aiming to ensure that biodiversity and climate action uphold and advance human rights. The momentum generated through these discussions provides an important foundation for linking the HRBA to global processes such as the KMGBF, the Paris Agreement, and other emerging climate-biodiversity policy interfaces.

The Dialogue should be seen as an evolving process. To build on its momentum, further engagement is needed with a broader set of actors, including donors, funders, and the private sector. Together, they can foster synergistic biodiversity and climate action guided by the HRBA.



SETTING THE SCENES OF THE DIALOGUE PROCESS

Photo by Pixabay, Pexels

The Dialogue Process sought to unite diverse actors with unique knowledge, views, experiences, and proposals, thereby deepening their shared understanding of how to apply the HRBA to biodiversity and climate action. The overarching goal of the Dialogue Process was to contribute to the implementation of the KMGBF and the Paris Agreement – with the potential for integrating the HRBA into the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification processes and targets – across all governance levels.

It aimed to accomplish this goal by advancing the understanding of how the HRBA is currently conceptualised, co-designed, and applied in biodiversity and climate action. The interactive sessions implemented throughout the Dialogue Process among various actors, including duty bearers and rights holders, provided opportunities for the mutual learning of lessons and good practices regarding applying the HRBA to biodiversity and climate action.

Based on the needs identified through the CBD, UNFCCC, and other global processes,³² the specific objectives of the Dialogue Process were to:

- Identify existing practices for applying the HRBA to biodiversity and climate action – including through ecosystem-based approaches and nature-based solutions – from various actors engaged in related science, policy, and practice;
- Facilitate the exchange of knowledge, views, and experiences of actors regarding applying the HRBA to biodiversity and climate action;
- Generate learnings by identifying the gaps and opportunities in applying the HRBA to biodiversity and climate action;
- Synthesise a shared understanding among actors on what the HRBA entails for biodiversity and climate action and the necessary steps to enhance and amplify its application.

³² Outcomes of UNFCCC-COP28, CBD-SBSTTA 25, Intergovernmental consultations on NbS Co-chairs summary (2023).

Box 1: Multi-Actor Dialogue

In times of global change, there is a need to prepare for uncertainty and be willing to experiment, innovate, and learn, both within and between different actor groups, knowledge systems, and cultures. Such preparedness allows actors to respond to changes that have significant impacts on the environment, ecosystems, and human societies. A Multi-Actor Dialogue³³ is a methodology developed to make international environmental negotiations more productive. Conducting a dialogue helps build a shared vision of desired future pathways and foster broad agreements by learning across cultures, worldviews, interests, and various actor groups. This methodology helps generate knowledge, empowerment, and a common understanding for implementing policies. Yankelovich (2001)³⁴ has defined a “dialogue” as having the following three qualities, which were applied throughout the Dialogue Process:

- (1) Equality and the absence of coercive influences
- (2) Listening with empathy
- (3) Bringing assumptions into the open

These key qualities distinguish a Multi-Actor Dialogue from negotiation, mediation, debate, and argument. A Multi-Actor Dialogue emphasises exploring what others are trying to bring forward, instead of defending one’s own position. In this context of engaging in a Multi-Actor Dialogue, it is important to listen openly without seeking flaws in the other’s argument or immediately presenting counter-arguments, particularly when faced with contentious issues and asymmetric power structures among participants/actors. This approach fosters trust-building and the acceptance of diverging experiences and perspectives, which are instrumental for building a common understanding.

The Dialogue Process comprised a series of preparatory engagements, both in-person and online, with the penultimate event of a Multi-Actor Dialogue aligned with the CBD Conference of the Parties (COP) 16 in Cali, Colombia. The process was designed to bring together diverse rights holders and duty bearers to exchange perspectives and co-develop actionable recommendations on advancing the HRBA in biodiversity and climate action.

The preparatory sessions were structured to engage a wide range of actors from different knowledge and action communities. Participants included representatives of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women, youth, researchers, practitioners, and Member States of the CBD and UNFCCC. They were invited through networks and caucuses after being identified by the convenors as having strong relevance to the Dialogue themes. Each session was designed to create space for specific groups while acknowledging and addressing power asymmetries inherent in multi-actor dialogues.

33 Stockholm Resilience Centre (2016) *The biggest single opportunity we have is dialogue*. Available at: https://swed.bio/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/SwedBio-Report-on-Dialogues-Seminars_2016_2.pdf.

34 Yankelovich, D. (2001) *The magic of dialogue: Transforming conflict into cooperation*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Box 2: Dialogue Process sessions

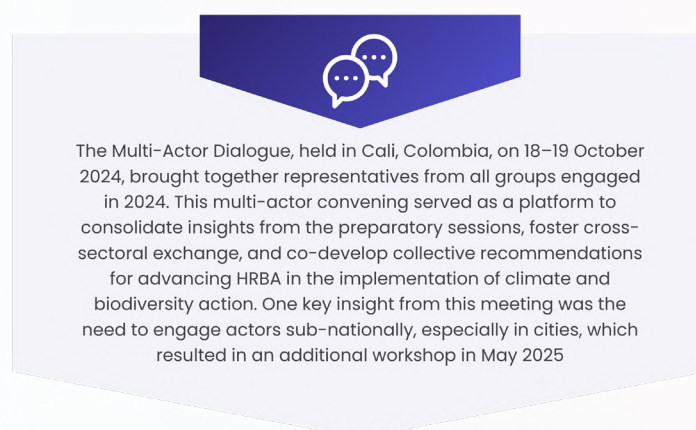
In-Person Sessions



Online Sessions



Multi-Actor Dialogue



All sessions that included the Multi-Actor Dialogue had simultaneous language translation (where needed), and participants were encouraged to speak in the language with which they felt most comfortable.

Each engagement session of the Dialogue Process gathered participants with diverse expertise and experience in human rights, biodiversity, and climate policy and implementation processes, aiming at advancing the application of the HRBA in biodiversity and climate action. These sessions were intentionally held on the margins of international policy processes and events to facilitate broad participation, consolidate efforts, and reduce carbon emissions associated with travel. Throughout the Dialogue Process, participants were invited in their personal capacity as experts.

During the sessions, various participatory processes captured the participants' perspectives on HRBA-related issues linked to the Dialogue objectives. These processes included group work deliberations, storytelling circles, and plenary discussions where participants shared their experiences, concerns, ideas, fears, and knowledge. The facilitation team took comprehensive notes during the sessions to capture the participants' feedback, which was shared through verbal discussions, creative processes, and written inputs on sticky notes during the sessions.



Photo by Anthony Okoh, Pexels

Box 3: Principles applied during the Dialogue Process

- Participants of the Dialogue Process represented a balance of genders and a range of actor groups across geographic regions, diverse knowledge systems, and ecosystem types.
- The democratic participation of rights holders and principles of non-discrimination, transparency, and accountability were upheld.
- The Chatham House Rule was observed during the sessions, where points raised are not attributed to any specific participant.
- Consent mechanisms, including FPIC for Indigenous Peoples, were applied.

All individuals engaged in the Dialogue Process demonstrated respect, empathy, and a spirit of collaboration, striving to achieve outcomes based on collective thinking and action.

Data analysis

The findings from the initial preparatory sessions' data analysis³⁵ were shared during the Multi-Actor Dialogue held in Cali, Colombia, on 18–19 October 2024, and an event with sub-national officials in Cape Town, South Africa, in May 2025. These initial findings, combined with the rich discussions and outcomes from the Multi-Actor Dialogue, form the basis of this comprehensive final report.

³⁵ For more details on the analysis approach, please see Appendix I.



HOW THE HRBA IS UNDERSTOOD

Photo by Melodramatic

The Dialogue Process yielded rich, multifaceted insights into how the HRBA can be conceptualised, implemented, and strengthened in biodiversity and climate action. This section presents a summary of these findings.

Key insights: Understanding the HRBA

Throughout the Dialogue Process, participants shared diverse perspectives on what HRBA means in the context of biodiversity and climate action. Rather than a single concept, the HRBA emerged as a multifaceted framework with interconnected elements that reinforce one another. Key elements consistently mentioned included inclusion, participation, respect, equality, justice, equity, self-determination, transparency, and accountability – all centred on positioning human rights at the core of environmental action.

The HRBA as a way of life

For many participants, especially Indigenous Peoples and local communities, the concept of HRBA transcends policy frameworks to become “a way of life” or “how you deal with people. It is living up to our values and our words. It is a lifestyle.”

This perspective emphasises that the HRBA is not merely a technical approach but a fundamental way of being in the world. It prioritises recognising, respecting, and affirming the rights of people, particularly those in vulnerable situations. It also offers a holistic framework for a whole-of-society approach that addresses specific vulnerabilities linked to biodiversity loss and climate change impacts.

Embracing plurality

A core insight from the Dialogue Process was the importance of recognising and embracing plurality in values, knowledge systems, and governance approaches:

Plural values of nature: These include intrinsic values (nature's inherent worth), relational values (meaning derived from relationships between people and nature), and instrumental values (benefits humans derive from nature).

Plural knowledge systems: These include scientific as well as Indigenous knowledge. Particularly, ILK emerged as an essential HRBA element. Participants shared insights on how the inclusion of ILK could inform and enhance evidence and decision-making.

Plural governance systems: The HRBA was seen as facilitating the recognition of traditional and customary governance alongside formal legal and regulatory systems. The Dialogue underscored the inherent alignment of traditional justice systems and Indigenous enforcement mechanisms with the HRBA. Therefore, these systems and mechanisms should be integrated into formal legal frameworks. Recognition of traditional and Indigenous justice systems is crucial, alongside efforts to address structural power imbalances that may hinder accountability. Such efforts ensure that plurality is not only conceptual but also operationalised in legal and governance structures.

Relational perspectives

Many participants highlighted the interconnectedness of people and nature, emphasising that human rights and environmental outcomes are mutually reinforcing. The HRBA brings climate action and biodiversity together. This relational view underscores the indivisibility of human rights and biodiversity and climate action, and it suggests that effective environmental strategies must prioritise people – especially those experiencing marginalisation or vulnerability – in decision-making processes.



A man in a light blue shirt and hat is holding a falcon on a gloved hand. The background shows a vast, hilly landscape with mountains in the distance under a clear sky.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE HRBA

Photo by Magda Ehlers, Pexels

This section outlines key opportunities for advancing the HRBA in biodiversity and climate action, as identified through the Multi-Actor Dialogue Process. These opportunities reflect the lived experiences, insights, and priorities of the diverse rights holders and duty bearers who participated in the Dialogue. Their contributions point to the HRBA as part of a normative framework and as a practical tool to address deep-rooted inequalities, ensure inclusive governance, and foster just and sustainable environmental outcomes. The key opportunity areas identified include:

- Bridging biodiversity and climate action through the HRBA;
- Transforming power dynamics and promoting inclusive decision-making;
- Advancing gender-responsive safeguards and women's leadership;
- Securing land tenure and access to natural resources;
- Enhancing private sector accountability and fair benefit-sharing;
- Strengthening multi-level governance and policy coherence;
- Democratising knowledge and centring ILK systems.

Each of these areas represents a concrete entry point for embedding human rights into biodiversity and climate policies, programmes, and practices – ensuring that those most affected are both protected and empowered as central actors in shaping the future of our planet.



The HRBA as a bridge between biodiversity and climate action

The HRBA offers a powerful bridge between biodiversity and climate action, helping to overcome the siloed implementation that often undermines impact. At its core, it ensures recognition of the needs, rights, and agency of people – particularly Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, and other groups experiencing marginalisation – as central to decision-making processes.

Participants noted various tensions between biodiversity and climate action, with some climate interventions potentially exacerbating biodiversity loss or undermining human rights and cultural diversity. They recognised the importance of drawing on the United Nations

General Assembly resolution on the right to a healthy, clean, and sustainable environment, as well as guidance documents from OHCHR on integrating human rights into NBSAPs and NDCs. When applied to climate and biodiversity policies, HRBA principles can reframe nature not just as a resource to be managed but as a foundation for human dignity, livelihoods, and cultural identity. This synergy creates a shared framework where climate mitigation, adaptation, and biodiversity conservation can be seen as complementary objectives rather than competing priorities.



Photo by Fatih Muth, Pexels

The HRBA can transform power dynamics

The HRBA provides a structured way to confront and rebalance power dynamics in biodiversity and climate action. Participants intensely discussed how imbalanced power relations hinder the effective implementation of biodiversity and climate initiatives, often reinforcing exclusion and limiting transformative change. Rather than merely seeking to include biodiversity and climate action within existing systems, there is a growing recognition of the need to fundamentally rethink and restructure decision-making spaces. In many contexts, the reluctance to share or relinquish power presents a greater barrier to progress than a lack of commitment to biodiversity conservation itself.

These power imbalances stem from historical and colonial injustices, land rights and tenure issues, structural inequalities, and exclusionary institutional and political frameworks. These imbalances manifest in various ways, including fortress conservation, forced displacement from traditional territories and urban green spaces, privatisation of natural resources, and the exclusion of key actors and knowledge holders – particularly women – from decision-making processes.

Participants called for a fundamental shift in power dynamics, moving from hierarchical, top-down structures to more egalitarian, circular models that ensure

all actors and knowledge holders have genuine influence in decision-making. They emphasised that meaningful participation and engagement require transparency and trust, ensuring all voices – especially groups living in vulnerable situations – are heard. The FPIC process was highlighted as a critical mechanism ensuring the meaningful engagement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in decisions affecting their lands and resources.

Participants highlighted the current disconnect between formal government systems and traditional governance systems, with the latter often being disregarded. They noted that the HRBA offers a pathway to better recognise traditional systems and include marginalised groups in decision-making. Decisions about biodiversity are often made without the involvement of those most affected, who frequently face isolation and exclusion from consultation processes – including in the context of marine parks and other conservation measures. This systematic exclusion remains a significant barrier to inclusive and effective action. Ensuring the meaningful participation of important actors and knowledge holders in policy development and implementation is essential for a holistic HRBA that addresses the unique challenges faced by different Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

Participants also discussed how the HRBA links power to equity and redistribution. Fair and equitable benefit-sharing, rights-based finance, and capacity strengthening and empowerment activities are not optional add-ons but rather preconditions for effective, just, and sustainable outcomes. Incorporating these essential elements can help prevent the concentration of benefits from climate and biodiversity finance and conservation initiatives among limited groups. It also ensures that conservation does not come at the expense of local livelihoods

and supports transformative change in governance systems to address existing power asymmetries.



Photo by Víctor Armas Pexels

Gender-responsive safeguards and women's leadership through an intersectional lens

The Dialogue Process revealed how the HRBA can help address intersectional issues faced by diverse actors, including Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, small-scale fishers and farmers, youth, and others who experience overlapping forms of discrimination. This intersectional approach recognises that methods of addressing human rights must be context-specific, with entry points based on local customs, norms, and values. The Dialogue Process highlighted how Indigenous and rural women bear disproportionate burdens of ecosystem degradation while simultaneously serving as custodians of seed banks, agroforestry practices, and

local value chains. Protecting women's land rights is the first step to safeguarding forests.

A robust HRBA thus calls for: (1) gender-audited risk assessments to identify how proposed actions may exacerbate women's workloads or expose them to gender-based violence, (2) targeted capacity-strengthening for women's community-based organisations, and (3) dedicated quotas or financing to ensure women's meaningful leadership on steering committees. Embedding gender-responsive safeguards fosters equitable outcomes and harnesses women's unique contributions to biodiversity stewardship.



Ensuring land tenure security and access to resources

Participants repeatedly underscored that without clear, enforceable tenure rights, especially for Indigenous Peoples and local communities, any attempt at co-management or benefit-sharing is fundamentally undermined. When forest communities lack recognised land rights, they cannot meaningfully participate in conservation planning. Strengthening tenure security requires: (1) mapping and demarcating traditional territories with community leadership, (2) enacting fast-track legal recognition processes for communal titles, and (3) promoting community-led grievance mechanisms to resolve boundary disputes before they escalate. Such measures directly reinforce the HRBA concept that rights holders must hold genuine decision-making power over their lands and resources.

The most prioritised topic in the Dialogue Process for further discussion was “defence of territories”. Participants from various regions shared cases in which biodiversity and climate action had violated people's rights to lands, territories, and resources. Examples included communities losing access to traditional fishing grounds due to marine protected areas, blue economy initiatives displacing coastal communities, and climate and biodiversity projects failing to respect land tenure rights.

Participants emphasised that inequality among communities is often rooted in land and water tenure insecurity. They called for strengthening capacity on human rights – not just for communities but for all sectors, including government agencies and the private sector.



Photo by Tampatra via Adobe Stock

Transforming private sector engagement through enhanced accountability, as well as fair and equitable benefit-sharing

Private sector actors, particularly those in agribusiness, mining, forestry, and nature- or wildlife-based tourism, are perceived to hold outsized influence over land use and resource management. Without clear accountability frameworks, this disproportionate influence may mean that their activities undermine both environmental and human rights standards. For example, companies operating in remote areas often bypass FPIC and displace communities.

The HRBA demands that private sector engagement be underpinned by: (1) mandatory human rights due diligence laws requiring companies to identify, prevent, and remedy adverse impacts,³⁶ (2) community-driven grievance and redress mechanisms, and (3) transparency requirements for supply chains to guard against illicit deforestation and large-scale land acquisition. Such safeguards deter rights abuses and channel private finance towards inclusive, rights-respecting biodiversity and climate outcomes. Participants cautioned against market-oriented schemes – both privately and publicly funded – commodifying carbon or biodiversity in ways that marginalise Indigenous Peoples and local custodians of ecosystems. When forests

and ecosystems are monetised without the involvement of their stewards, the result can be the simultaneous erosion of both ecological integrity and community rights.

To uphold the HRBA in climate and biodiversity finance, it is essential to: (1) fully capacitate communities on climate and biodiversity financing mechanism models as well as their legal options, (2) co-develop benefit-sharing formulas with Indigenous Peoples and local communities, (3) ensure engagement, negotiations, and contracts are composed in or translated to local languages, (4) integrate non-market pathways (e.g. community-led restoration) that align with traditional stewardship, and (5) develop transparent, participatory monitoring of carbon/biodiversity credits. By centring rights holders in benefit-distribution, countries can avoid large-scale land and resource appropriation for conservation and ensure climate payments bolster rather than undermine community resilience and biodiversity.

Accountability mechanisms can be strengthened by ensuring adequate and equitable social and environmental safeguards. These safeguards should also include protection for environmental human rights defenders, who often face threats, criminalisation, and even violence when advocating biodiversity and climate issues.

³⁶ The HRBA references the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2011) *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations 'Protect, Respect and Remedy' Framework* as a global standard for preventing and addressing the risks of adverse impacts on human rights from business activity.

Strengthening multi-level governance and policy coherence through enhanced recognition and integration of locally led approaches

Many participants mentioned the importance of harnessing ground-level, locally led initiatives that already embody the HRBA, including:

- Traditional spatial planning in forest-dwelling communities
- Community-led urban planning
- Community biodiversity monitoring tools
- Research methodologies based on Indigenous knowledge systems
- Biocultural protocols
- Community bylaws and customary governance structures

Governance mechanisms that support the integration of these locally led approaches are critical for ensuring that implementation activities are grounded in local contexts, realities, knowledge, and value systems.

In addition, participants noted that national laws often conflict with customary norms, leading to jurisdictional confusion. For example, a community may have land rights recognised at the local level but not at the national level, making enforcement impossible.

Addressing this problem requires: (1) harmonising national biodiversity legislation with Indigenous customary laws, (2) creating intergovernmental and intersectoral platforms where local, subnational, and national authorities jointly review HRBA compliance, and (3) establishing clear lines of accountability and feedback loops enabling local voices to inform policy development and amendments. When governance at all levels is coherent, the HRBA can move from an abstract concept to a tangible practice.

Multi-level governance can be enhanced through the adoption of existing tools for surfacing and acting on synergies across the Rio Conventions, or by co-creating new tools through enhanced collaboration among caucuses and constituencies in international conventions.



Photo by Akash Karki, Pexels

Democratising and embracing diverse knowledge systems

The HRBA recognises that knowledge production is not necessarily neutral but is often shaped by power, access, and voice. Without deliberate inclusion, decision-making can privilege technocratic or Western scientific knowledge, marginalising knowledge and perspectives of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, youth, and those living with disabilities, whose lived experience and practices are essential for sustainable solutions. For example, Dialogue participants emphasised that Indigenous Peoples and local communities' ecological observations are foundational to early warning systems and adaptive management. One delegate remarked: "Our elders' seasonal indicators often detect changes long before satellite data do."

By affirming the right to participate in decision-making processes linked to biodiversity and climate action, as well as the right to access information, the HRBA expands the scope of who is involved in knowledge generation and whose perspectives count. This helps dismantle hierarchies of knowledge systems and allows the co-creation of evidence that is context-specific, ecological, culturally grounded, and socially relevant. For example, the HRBA can guide processes like those used by IPBES, which deliberately

brings together multiple evidence bases in its assessments, including ILK. Such approaches produce richer and more legitimate evidence while also empowering knowledge holders to be active contributors rather than passive informants.

Participants also mentioned the importance of intergenerational learning and offered ideas to help strengthen these processes. One suggestion was to leverage youth-led digital platforms and community-based monitoring networks to gather biodiversity data while ensuring that data protocols honour community ownership and privacy. Indigenous youth can also be agents of technology transfer through self-strengthening capacity support and knowledge exchange across generations. They can help bridge digital divides and make diverse knowledge more widely accessible. Participants reiterated several times the importance of ensuring that digital platforms and information systems are designed with data sovereignty and community control in mind. They emphasised that these systems should not include extractive data collection, allowing Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and other rights holders to safely share and manage their knowledge without fear of external appropriation.



Photo by Marco Carmona, Pexels

Several participants underscored that people with disabilities must be explicitly included through accessible meeting formats, sign-language interpretation, and adapted information materials. These adaptations will allow the HRBA to fully capture all dimensions of inclusion. Other participants emphasised the need to address specific barriers to accessing information and resources, including those linked to mental health.

To harness ILK within an HRBA and multiple evidence-based approach, governments and partners should: (1) promote Indigenous-led research and documentation, (2) co-design monitoring protocols with community knowledge holders, (3) ensure that ILK validation processes align with customary epistemologies, and (4) ensure community-driven data sovereignty agreements govern any ILK contributions. Embedding ILK in official reporting structures not only improves biophysical outcomes but also affirms the right to self-determination and cultural integrity.



Photo by Gulsa Haydgn, Pexels



ENABLING HRBA IMPLEMENTATION

Photo by Alex Gamaliev, Pexels

Throughout the Dialogue Process, key enabling conditions and practical implementation approaches for translating the HRBA into effective biodiversity and climate action were identified. These enabling conditions and approaches are presented below, with clear examples of how and where HRBA elements regarding biodiversity and climate action can be implemented.

Policy and legal frameworks

The KMGBF, particularly Section C, explicitly calls for an HRBA to be used in its implementation. Similarly, the Paris Agreement's preamble acknowledges that climate action must respect, promote, and consider human rights. Clear legal frameworks explicitly integrating human rights into biodiversity and climate action are essential. Enabling conditions include:

- Aligning national and sub-national climate and biodiversity policies with global frameworks by mainstreaming the HRBA throughout the workplan. This entails integrating HRBA principles in city processes or in NBSAPs and NDCs where ILK are included and rights holders' needs inform policy development.
- Ensuring coherence across different policy domains.
- Embedding the HRBA in proposals for synergistic action across agreements.
- Ensuring access to justice for communities affected by biodiversity loss and climate-related disasters.
- Strengthening legal and practical protections for environmental human rights defenders, including early warning systems, rapid response legal aid, and safe spaces for dialogue, to ensure they can carry out advocacy without fear of reprisals.
- Developing and adhering to safeguards for both public and private sectors regarding biodiversity, climate, and human rights.

While global policy frameworks can be enabling, they must be implemented with caution. One example of this is the discussion held in Cali, Colombia, during the CBD COP on Target 3³⁷ of the KMGBF. This discussion revealed concerns about how the target might impact rights holders. Key issues identified included:

- Indicators focused on quantity (percentage of area protected) rather than the quality of protection or conservation, or the effectiveness of governance;
- Examples of human rights violations where communities were not consulted about protected areas;
- The need to adapt conservation approaches to cultural and social realities;
- The importance of recognising and supporting Indigenous territories and community conservation areas as effective conservation models.

Participants agreed that no protected areas should be created in ways that violate human rights. Potential solutions discussed to overcome the issue include conducting ecosystem assessments supported by inclusive dialogues and recognising different forms of conservation that respect human rights as well as Indigenous and local practices and knowledge. Participants recommended the adoption of co-management frameworks and the incorporation of traditional governance systems, such as bylaws, to ensure that conservation initiatives honour and protect human rights.

Strengthening capacities and enhancing awareness

Strengthening the capacities of all actors, from policymakers to Indigenous Peoples and local communities, is essential for enabling and embedding the HRBA in policy design and implementation. Based on the inputs shared during the Dialogue Process, strengthening capacity can include: (1) improving the understanding of the links between human rights and the environment, (2) equipping authorities with technical support, (3) empowering communities to know and claim their rights, (4) addressing discrimination, (5) respecting ILK in decision-making, and (6) increasing HRBA awareness within the private sector.



Photo by Caleb Oquendo, Pexels

37 Conserve 30% of land, waters, and seas by 2030.

Participants highlighted practical measures to achieve these goals: (1) training programmes – for government officials, civil society, and community leaders or representatives – on tools and strategies to enable effective civil society engagement and dedicated spaces for Indigenous Peoples and local communities to share experiences, (2) peer-to-peer story sharing, (3) stronger connections with national focal points, and (4) the creation of communities of practice to further enhance learning and

coordination among HRBA practitioners. Participants also recommended using community-managed digital archives and mapping tools that respect local data sovereignty to ensure that Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and other rights holders retain full control over their nature-related information. Together, these actions provide a clear pathway to implementing the HRBA that is inclusive, respectful of local knowledge, and effective across all levels of governance.

Ensuring meaningful participation

Inclusive engagement of diverse actors, especially those most affected by biodiversity loss and climate change, is fundamental to the effective implementation of the HRBA. Ensuring that underrepresented groups can speak and act for themselves, rather than being represented solely through intermediaries, is also essential for equitable and informed decision-making. Meaningful participation requires the recognition of these actors as decision makers in their own right. Several key enabling conditions of inclusive engagement supporting more just and effective biodiversity and climate outcomes were identified in the Dialogue Process, including the following:

- Implementation of multi-actor dialogues at local, sub-national, national, and international levels;
- Presence of collaborative partnership models throughout the project design and implementation;
- Use of accessible formats (e.g. local language, sign language, Braille, plain-language summaries), transport stipends, and assistive technologies so that persons with disabilities can fully participate in consultations and decision-making;
- Recognition of traditional governance structures at the community level;
- Support for community-led conservation initiatives.

Meaningful participation necessitates the inclusion of diverse actors and knowledge holders as well as the establishment of transparent and trust-based relationships. Trust is essential for meaningful participation, underscoring the need for mechanisms such as citizen assemblies to foster trust. Moreover, adopting a gender-responsive approach with calls to address patriarchal structures that limit women's effective participation is imperative to ensure that women's unique perspectives are integrated and their specific needs addressed. It is crucial to transcend tokenistic engagement and strive for transformative participation that is rooted in local contexts and yields authentic engagement, ensuring that the interest of rights holders matches outcomes.

Fostering the co-production and management of knowledge

Collaboration across diverse knowledge systems, including Indigenous, local, and scientific knowledge, emerged from the Dialogue Process as a crucial enabling condition of effective HRBA implementation. Including ILK in biodiversity and climate actions enriches decision-making and ensures that policies reflect the realities and priorities of those most affected. Recognising the diverse values of nature, different worldviews, and ecosystem contributions strengthens the legitimacy and impact of interventions. It also promotes respect for cultural heritage as well as Indigenous and local practices and knowledge.

Participants also emphasised the importance of supporting Indigenous Peoples and local communities in documenting their knowledge and sharing experiences of HRBA application, for example, through communities of practice. This approach fosters local ownership while also establishing a record of lessons learned and best practices that can inform future actions. At the same time, documenting human rights violations related to biodiversity and climate action helps identify and address risks early, ensuring that policies and programmes uphold human rights standards while advancing environmental objectives.



Enhancing monitoring, evaluation, and accountability

Enhancing monitoring, evaluation, and accountability requires robust frameworks with clear HRBA indicators to ensure transparency and credibility. Participants emphasised the need for transparent biodiversity monitoring systems supported by clear and verifiable HRBA-related indicators. These systems should also be complemented by community-based monitoring approaches that actively involve local actors and knowledge holders. User-friendly online tools for tracking target achievement can further strengthen oversight, empower communities, and improve the flow of information needed to hold actors accountable.

Adequate and inclusive funding

Participants emphasised that predictable and appropriate funding is essential for implementing the HRBA. Such funding should include short-term funding cycles aligned with long-term community needs, supporting the capacity-building of relevant actors for the participatory development of financing mechanisms. These financing mechanisms should explicitly integrate human rights principles and secure dedicated funding for those community institutions best placed to drive change on the ground. Participants proposed that future dialogues and events focus on funding, especially rights-based funding.

Mobilising partnerships and strengthening communication

Mobilising partnerships and strengthening communication are critical components for enabling sustained and measurable HRBA outcomes and impacts. Participants noted that establishing effective partnerships across sectors and at multiple scales is not simply desirable but essential for maximising resources, expertise, and influence. Strategic communication should underpin this process. Without well-planned, inclusive, and consistent messaging, collaborative initiatives risk remaining fragmented or under-recognised.

Participants identified that a key element of this approach is the adaptation of HRBA language for diverse audiences to ensure clarity and relevance. By recognising and leveraging traditional knowledge systems, the interconnection between biological and cultural diversity is reinforced. This connection supports sustainable practices that enhance conservation, restoration,

and sustainable use of biodiversity and climate resilience. Equally important is the wide dissemination of community-led experiences and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles, which together strengthen actor engagement and build public support.

Targeted communication with decision makers is also crucial. Participants noted that the development of concise policy briefs enhances policymakers' understanding of community priorities and evidence-based practices. Collaboration with media organisations also extends the reach of these messages to broader audiences, ensuring visibility and impact. Partnerships, supported by robust communication strategies, act as an enabling condition for scaling up local initiatives and embedding them within broader policy and development frameworks.



MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

Photo by Mikhail Nilov, Pexels

The Dialogue Process created a unique space for diverse voices to converge, share experiences, and collectively chart a path forward. This process reinforced the idea that the effective implementation of the HRBA is not merely a technical exercise but a transformative journey that requires fundamental shifts in how we conceptualise our relationships with nature and with each other.

Four overarching themes emerged across the Dialogue Process:

1

The HRBA is more than a singular concept; it is a multifaceted framework that encompasses key elements of justice, equity, participation, transparency, and accountability. For many participants, especially Indigenous Peoples and local communities, it represents “a way of life” that honours the deep interconnections between human well-being and ecological integrity.

2

There are substantial opportunities to advance the HRBA despite the significant challenges that persist, such as power imbalances, capacity limitations, and implementation gaps. Existing policy frameworks, locally led initiatives, and growing momentum across various movements and constituencies all support HRBA advancement.

3

Moving from concept to action requires enabling conditions: capacity strengthening at all levels, political will and leadership, meaningful participation of diverse actors, knowledge co-production across different knowledge systems, clear legal and policy frameworks, robust monitoring and accountability mechanisms, adequate funding and effective partnerships, and communication strategies.

4

Specific concerns require urgent attention and safeguards, particularly the protection of Indigenous Peoples and local communities’ territories and land rights, conservation initiatives that respect human rights, critical assessment and oversight of market-based mechanisms to ensure they do not undermine human rights, as well as fair and equitable benefit-sharing.



The Dialogue Process emphasised the urgent need to move beyond decades of discussion to concrete action. In a state of crisis, we must discuss potential solutions. What emerged from this process represents a collective commitment to translate dialogue into meaningful change.

As we look ahead to the implementation of the KMGBF and the Paris Agreement, the insights from the Dialogue Process offer a valuable roadmap for the path to take. They remind us that addressing the interconnected biodiversity loss, climate change, and inequity crises requires transformative approaches that place human rights and the well-being of those most affected at the centre of our efforts.

The path forward must build on the rich diversity of knowledge, values, experiences, and perspectives shared throughout this process. It must recognise that implementing the HRBA is not just morally and legally required but also the most effective way to achieve our shared goals for people and the planet. This path must also embody the spirit of collaboration, trust, and reciprocity that has characterised the Dialogue Process itself.

By working together – governments, international organisations, civil society, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, youth, researchers, and the private sector – we can bridge the gaps between global commitments and local realities, creating a more just, sustainable, and rights-respecting approach to biodiversity and climate action.

To succeed, our collective efforts must close the digital gap, uphold data sovereignty, ensure disability inclusion, and fortify measures to protect the rights of environmental defenders – thereby empowering every rights holder to lead transformative biodiversity and climate action.

Participants in the Multi-Actor Dialogue identified specific actions that actor groups can take to advance the implementation of the HRBA in biodiversity and climate action. The following commitments reflect the collaborative and cross-sectoral effort required to ensure the proper integration of the HRBA.

Efforts required by rights holders:

- Strengthen the collective understanding of their rights and hold conversations with duty bearers to foster mutual understanding and accountability;
- Strengthen knowledge exchange through networks and platforms;
- Develop community-based monitoring and information systems;
- Build and sustain community leadership;
- Establish direct funding mechanisms for Indigenous Peoples, women, youth, local communities, and other rights holders;
- Organise regional dialogues on the HRBA among peers;
- Secure support for meaningful participation in international policy processes.

Efforts required by national governments:

- Address knowledge and capacity gaps among government officials, policymakers, and decision makers;
- Develop methodologies tailored to different national and sub-national contexts;
- Facilitate inclusive dialogues with diverse actors in planning and decision-making processes;
- Partner with academic and research institutions to inform evidence-based policy;
- Promote cross-sectoral approaches, including with education systems.

Efforts required by international non-governmental organisations and research institutions:

- Shift from transactional engagement to long-term and trust-based relationship-building;
- Support rather than lead rights-based agendas;
- Advocate the decolonisation of conservation approaches and development practices;
- Amplify the voices of rights holders and contribute to embedding human rights in policy frameworks;
- Work towards decolonising research methodologies by engaging ILK holders and experts and eschewing extractive practices.

APPENDIX 1: DATA ANALYSIS

All data were transcribed, translated where needed, and stored in protected folders that only the project team could access. Data from the engagement sessions were coded and analysed by five team members (representing five different institutions that are part of the organising team) through inductive and deductive thematic analysis,³⁸ starting with a joint pilot analysis in support of a team sense-making process. Once an analysis framework and approach had been co-developed and implemented, emerging themes were clustered and discussed among team members to ensure consistency in the analysis and agreement on the emerging themes.

The findings from the preparatory sessions were shared during the Multi-Actor Dialogue held in Cali, Colombia, on 18–19 October 2024. These findings, combined with the rich discussions and outcomes from the Multi-Actor Dialogue, form the basis of this comprehensive final report.

The analysis processes synthesised, grouped, and summarised the key discussion points. This process might have resulted in the loss of some specific wording or phrasing. The analysis team has, however, tried to ensure that the results are aligned as authentically as possible with the discussions that were held and capture the essence of the dialogue. Key outputs of the Dialogue Process include this comprehensive report, which outlines the process of data collection and analysis and presents the key findings and recommendations, including next steps. Other outputs include a policy and practice brief based on the results of the Dialogue Process, news pieces, blogs, social media posts, and a compendium of case studies, all serving to contextualise and inspire the application of the HRBA in biodiversity and climate action.

38 Fereday, J. and Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006) 'Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1), pp. 80–92.

FUNDER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



The co-organisers gratefully acknowledge the generous support of our individual funder, whose contribution made the Dialogue Process on Inclusive Conversation: Exploring the Role of a Human Rights-Based Approach to Biodiversity and Climate Action and the production of this report possible.

We also thank the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network Consortium for its instrumental role in administering the funding provided by SwedBio (a programme funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency), as well as for its valuable technical support. The participation of the Forest, Climate, and Livelihood research network in the Dialogue Process was also made possible with support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

The participation of the Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) was supported by a grant from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and the International Development Research Centre, Canada, as part of the CDKN programme. The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, the International Development Research Centre, its Board of Governors, or the entities managing CDKN.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the
Netherlands



