



AFRICA4RESILIENCE

POSITION STATEMENT FOR THE 17TH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (CBD COP17)

Background and context

As global delegates convene for the seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP17) in Yerevan, Armenia, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) is under review at a critical moment. National reports show that global implementation is off track, and expedited, accountable action is needed to close the gap before the target year of 2030.

Africa4Resilience (A4R) is a regional Community of Practice that strengthens the capacity of national Communities of Practice (CoPs) in Africa. Our national CoPs bring together civil society organizations, community actors and strategic partners working to advance climate resilience, sustainability and inclusive policymaking. This paper draws on the COP17 priorities submitted by Kenya4Resilience (K4R), Uganda4Resilience (U4R) and Burkina Faso4Resilience (B4R). Together they convey a shared message from the Sahel to East Africa that biodiversity is the foundation of water security, food systems, public health, livelihoods and community resilience, and communities must be at the center of implementation.

A4R calls on governments to adopt a whole-of-society approach, bringing together national and sub-national governments, communities, civil society, researchers, faith and traditional institutions, development partners and the private sector, to turn biodiversity commitments into measurable results on the ground.

The state of biodiversity and community resilience in Africa

Across our countries, communities are living with the realities of climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, desertification, declining ecosystem services and growing pressure on natural resources. In Kenya, erratic rainfall, prolonged drought and invasive species are reducing water availability and pasture productivity, threatening livestock and degrading rangelands, while declining soil fertility and vegetation loss are hurting crop yields. In Uganda, land degradation and pressure on wetlands, forests and farmland are undermining ecosystem services. In Burkina Faso and across the Sahel, desertification, habitat loss and unsustainable resource use continue to threaten ecosystems and the livelihoods that depend on them.

The impacts fall hardest on smallholder farmers, pastoralists, women, young people and low-income households whose livelihoods depend directly on healthy ecosystems. Water scarcity increases the time women and girls spend collecting water. Declining biodiversity



also reduces access to indigenous foods, medicinal plants, traditional seed varieties and cultural resources that support community wellbeing and identity.

A4R is therefore calling for biodiversity to be recognized and upheld as an essential foundation for sustainable livelihoods, food and water security, climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction. Nature is not separate from people resilient communities are the foundation of resilient ecosystems.

Communities are driving practical, locally grounded solutions

Local communities, grassroots organizations and civil society are frontline stewards and implementers of biodiversity action. Farmers are restoring degraded land and practicing Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) and agroforestry. Communities are planting and protecting trees, managing rangelands and pastures, protecting water catchments and wetlands, and building water-harvesting infrastructure. Young people are leading conservation efforts and developing climate-smart livelihoods. Women are leading household and community resilience initiatives. Traditional and local knowledge, and in many places' faith and cultural values, continue to guide the sustainable management of natural resources, including through protected forests and sacred natural sites.

These actions begin in villages, farms, wetlands, forests and landscapes, but they contribute directly to global biodiversity goals. Yet many remain isolated or dependent on short project cycles. Without sustained multi-year funding, technical support and integration into development frameworks, their long-term viability and potential for replication are limited.

A4R calls for formal recognition, documentation, adequate financing and scaling of community-led solutions, connecting communities with governments, research institutions, faith and traditional institutions and the private sector. Our message is simple; let local action count.

Progress and the implementation gap

A4R acknowledges progress in our countries, including growing environmental awareness, afforestation and restoration initiatives, active civil society mobilization and policy and institutional frameworks that provide a foundation for sustainable natural resource management. Governments in the region have reaffirmed their commitment to implementing the KMGBF.

Nevertheless, a persistent gap remains between national and international commitments and the resources, institutional authority and technical support that reach the communities responsible for implementation. The main obstacles are inadequate and inaccessible financing, with grassroots actors reliant on fragmented, short-term funding; weak coordination between sectors and levels of government, which isolates biodiversity



management; and limited capacity, technology transfer and scientific cooperation, particularly for developing countries and the Sahel.

A4R therefore calls on countries to accelerate implementation of their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) by translating biodiversity commitments into clear national and sub-national priorities, with dedicated and accessible financing, defined institutional responsibilities and robust accountability.

A4R's position and key recommendations for CBD COP17

Priority 1: Put communities, women and youth at the center of biodiversity governance

COP17 outcomes should promote the meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women, youth and persons with disabilities in biodiversity planning, implementation, monitoring and decision-making. Communities are knowledge holders, innovators, custodians and agents of change, not only beneficiaries of Programmes. Participation must go beyond consultation: community representatives should help set priorities, influence budgets, manage initiatives and evaluate results, with real opportunities for women and young people to lead innovations, develop enterprises and access resources.

States should strengthen sub-national biodiversity governance, recognize community institutions and legitimate resource rights, and ensure that the benefits of biodiversity investments are shared fairly.

Priority 2: Deliver predictable, accessible finance to grassroots stewards and to developing countries

A4R calls for long-term, flexible and accessible financing that reaches community and local implementers directly. Short-term project funding is inadequate for restoration, whose benefits may take years to emerge. Financing should cover implementation, maintenance, technical support, community participation, monitoring and organizational capacity.

Governments should establish community biodiversity and restoration financing mechanisms linked to national biodiversity targets, providing accessible multi-year funding for locally identified priorities. At the international level, we call on developed countries and partners to strengthen predictable, adequate and accessible biodiversity finance for developing countries, together with capacity-building, technology transfer and scientific cooperation, so that countries across Africa and the Sahel can implement their NBSAPs effectively.

Priority 3: Scale ecosystem restoration and link conservation to livelihoods



Biodiversity conservation must deliver tangible ecological, social and economic benefits. Communities should not bear the costs of conservation without practical opportunities to improve their livelihoods. We call for greater investment in reforestation, restoration of degraded land, wetland and water catchment protection, sustainable land management, sustainable agriculture and responsible forest management, which together combat desertification, protect habitats and strengthen resilience to climate shocks.

Programmes should open access to markets, appropriate technologies and extension services, with transparent and fair benefit-sharing, and be designed around integrated ecological, social and economic outcomes that also advance food security, health and household incomes.

Priority 4: Recognize and protect local and traditional knowledge, faith and cultural values

Communities hold valuable knowledge about ecosystems, agriculture, natural resources and adaptation. This knowledge should be respected, appropriately documented and connected with scientific knowledge in ways that protect community rights and promote mutual learning.

Faith communities, traditional authorities and spiritual values also play an important role in protecting nature, through teachings of stewardship and respect for life and through protected forests, natural sites and traditional conservation practices. We encourage partnerships among governments, religious leaders, traditional authorities, scientists and local communities to promote environmental education and responsible stewardship, while respecting religious diversity, Indigenous Peoples' rights and local knowledge, and complementing science-based conservation policy.

Priority 5: Strengthen coordination and NBSAP implementation across sectors and levels

The biodiversity, climate and development crises are interconnected and require coordinated solutions. A4R calls for stronger collaboration among national and sub-national governments, civil society, researchers, communities, development partners and the private sector. Biodiversity priorities should be integrated into national planning, budgeting, land-use decisions and sectoral programmes, including agriculture, water, livestock, fisheries and infrastructure.

Governments and partners should set clear responsibilities, implementation timelines and financing arrangements for turning national commitments into local action, and approach restoration at landscape level, recognizing the connections between forests, farms, wetlands, rangelands, water catchments and human settlements.



Priority 6: Strengthen monitoring, learning and accountability

Implementation must be measured not only by policies, strategies and commitments, but by what is changing on the ground and in the lives of communities. Monitoring should move beyond counting activities to measuring ecological recovery and community benefits, using indicators such as survival and growth of restored vegetation, recovery of indigenous species, habitat condition, water availability, soil health, food security, livelihood benefits and the participation of underrepresented groups.

Community organizations should receive training, tools and resources to collect and document evidence, and their findings should inform policy, resource allocation and adaptive management. COP17 should strengthen support for implementation, financing, capacity development and transparent monitoring so that progress towards the 2030 targets can be demonstrated through verifiable results.

Core messages

- 1. Put communities at the heart of biodiversity action.** Local communities, Indigenous Peoples, women, youth and persons with disabilities are knowledge holders and active contributors to conservation. We call for recognition of their rights, knowledge, leadership and participation in decisions affecting natural resources.
- 2. Take biodiversity finance to the local level.** Direct, predictable and flexible financing must reach community organizations and local CSOs to sustain and scale locally led conservation, supported by adequate international finance, capacity-building and technology transfer for developing countries.
- 3. Turn biodiversity commitments into measurable local action.** Commitments must become funded community initiatives that restore ecosystems, protect water and food systems, strengthen livelihoods and build resilience, with progress measured through ecological recovery and tangible community benefits.
- 4. Unite knowledge, values and action.** Scientific knowledge, traditional wisdom, faith-based values and effective public policy, working together through a whole-of-society approach, offer the strongest path to halting biodiversity loss and restoring ecosystems.

Conclusion

Africa4Resilience believes the success of CBD COP17 should be judged by the extent to which biodiversity commitments translate into practical, adequately financed and measurable action at community and local levels. Nations must move beyond commitments to implementation, ensuring that the people who live with and manage biodiversity have the resources, rights and decision-making power to protect it. Biodiversity conservation is not a separate environmental activity but a foundation for sustainable livelihoods, food and



Africa4Resilience

water security, and resilient communities, and a moral, cultural and intergenerational commitment to the generations that follow.

AFRICA4RESILIENCE CBD 17 POSITION STATEMENT .