



## What is the Convention and what are its objectives?

The Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty that comprehensively addresses biodiversity issues to achieve sustainable development. It has three overall objectives:

- The conservation of biological diversity
- The sustainable use of biological resources
- The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources

## What is biological diversity and why is it important?

Biological diversity – or biodiversity – is the variability among living organisms and the ecological complexes of which they are part. It includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems. The immense diversity and combination of life forms, and their interactions with each other and the physical environment, has made the Earth a uniquely habitable place for humans. Biodiversity supports the ecosystem functions essential for all life on Earth and imparts resilience to the system as a whole. It provides products such as food, medicines and materials for industry. It is also at the heart of many cultural values. The result of millions of years of evolution, biodiversity and the functioning of ecosystems are now, as a result of human activities, in serious decline.

## What does the Convention do?

The CBD establishes commitment among its contracting parties to take measures, according to national circumstance, to conserve and promote the sustainable use of their biodiversity. It promotes international cooperation and establishes thematic and cross-cutting programmes of work to advance its objectives. These programmes provide a common framework and help to guide biodiversity initiatives at the national, regional and global levels.

### Thematic programmes

- Agricultural Biodiversity
- Dry and Sub-humid Lands Biodiversity
- Forest Biodiversity
- Inland Waters Biodiversity
- Island Biodiversity
- Marine and Coastal Biodiversity
- Mountain Biodiversity

### Cross-cutting programmes

- 2010 Biodiversity Target
- Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit-Sharing
- Climate Change and Biodiversity
- Communication, Education and Public Awareness
- Economics, Trade and Incentive Measures
- Ecosystem Approach
- Global Strategy for Plant Conservation
- Global Taxonomy Initiative
- Impact Assessment
- Identification, Monitoring, Indicators and Assessments
- Invasive Alien Species
- Liability and Redress
- Protected Areas
- Sustainable Use of Biodiversity
- Tourism and Biodiversity
- Traditional Knowledge, Innovations and Practices
- Technology Transfer and Cooperation



## How does the Convention operate?

### At the international level

- **The Conference of the Parties (COP)**, comprising the Convention's 191 Contracting Parties, is the CBD's governing body. The COP meets every two years to review progress on the Convention's implementation and to decide on additional initiatives to advance its objectives.
- **A Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice** provides the COP with science-based advice regarding implementation of the Convention. The COP has also established four **Working Groups** on specific issues, including protected areas and access to genetic resources and benefit sharing.
- All Parties contribute to a core budget to enable the international process that is determined by the COP and administered by the **CBD Secretariat**. A **CBD financial mechanism**, operated by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) under guidance of the COP, supports developing country Parties to implement the Convention.
- A **"clearing-house"** for information exchange allows national and international institutions to coordinate initiatives on topics of common interest by gathering and organizing the information they need.

### At the national level

- While the CBD sets overall goals and general obligations, specific measures towards its objectives are implemented according to national circumstances. These may be defined by a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan that typically addresses *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation, sustainable use, incentive measures and the mainstreaming of biodiversity considerations into governmental decision-making.

## What has the Convention accomplished?

- **Common goals and action:** With near universal membership – 190 States and the European Community – and the active engagement of civil society, business, international organizations, academia, research communities, and indigenous and local communities, the CBD is the world's global forum on biodiversity, establishing a solid platform for common action worldwide.
- **National biodiversity strategies and action plans:** By December 2008, 160 countries, have developed a strategy and action plan to conserve and sustainably use their biodiversity according to national needs and circumstances.
- **Guidelines and frameworks for conservation and sustainable use:** In-depth guidelines have been agreed to help countries implement the Convention.
- **Setting international conservation targets:** In 2002, the Parties to the Convention set a common, concrete goal to significantly reduce worldwide rates of biodiversity loss by 2010.
- **Support for worldwide action:** The CBD financial mechanism, operated by the GEF, has enabled action in 155 countries to safeguard biodiversity through projects funded with over \$2 billion in grants and \$5 billion leveraged funding. It has also supported the work of communities in 101 countries through small grants to more than 5,000 biodiversity projects.
- **Towards worldwide monitoring:** The Biodiversity Indicator Partnership (BIP), an international initiative to develop standard worldwide indicators of biodiversity levels and rates of loss, was launched in 2007.
- **Enabling safe application and benefits of biotechnology:** The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, a supplementary agreement with 151 Parties, provides an international legal framework to enable safe use and international movement of living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology.



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