

Presentation and open Plenary on the outcomes of the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD-14) and Climate Change Negotiations (UNFCCC-COP24) and the link with 2030 agenda

Convention on Biodiversity and UNFCCC Conference of Parties have one common thread – Sustainable Development!

Equity-focused, gender responsive implementation, assessment and evaluation of the CBD be it 14 or any other, COP be it 24 or any other and the 2030 Agenda offers an opportunity for the transformative change towards sustainable development that we all seek.

Allow me to cite the most recent IPCC Report which was reviewed by 235 experts from across the world who reached their conclusions by reviewing thousands of published research papers. It has undergone peer review by many other scientists, experts and by IPCC member governments. The thoroughness of the process is without parallel in terms of scope, rigour, transparency and level of government engagement.

Among the key findings of the report we find that:

- Greenhouse gas emissions are still rising, and the rate of increase has itself been increasing – most of this increase is being driven by increasing global prosperity.
- On a business-as-usual pathway, global mean temperatures will increase by 3 to 5 degrees over pre-industrial levels by the end of the century.
- Staying under the 2-degree limit is possible but increasingly difficult – it will require a wide range of changes, including changes in technology, institutions and behaviours.

One statement made at CBD14 sums it up. The Executive Secretary of CBD, Dr. Cristiana Paşca Palmer in her opening remarks said, “We are failing to arrest biodiversity loss. We urgently need to address this silent catastrophe through nothing less than a shift in societal narratives.”

The question on many people’s mind is, “In spite of the technical expertise, the political support exhibited and the Millions of dollars sank into convening these global conventions, why does biodiversity loss accelerate, why does deforestation and forest degradation continue at alarming rates, Climate Change and its manifestations grow worse by the day?”

For a true transformative change, there is an urgent need to;

1. Rights- Based Action! For instance, while stating to be anchored in the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights, the SDGs are not centered on the Human Rights Based approach. The SDGs promote a shift away from rightsholders to stakeholders, from sovereign spaces to multistakeholder platforms. They have no safe guards that would protect and respect the rights of the indigenous and local communities. States which would fulfill their obligations to facilitate IPs to participate in implementation are under no obligation to do so, because they are just one of many actors and not sole duty bearers. We need to breakout and from new institutions that shift the concerns of marginalized people, very often rights-holders to these natural resources anyway, from their marginal locations to the center of the CBD14 and COP 24 and all subsequent Global Conventions hereafter. Institutional rules must be rethought, resources redistributed, the underlying incentive structure must change.

2. Maintain climate change in its social context. Climate Change is talked about as an environmental and even a scientific issue; greenhouse gas emissions, rising sea levels, rising temperatures. While this narrative is important, it is missing one critical component, "Climate Justice". Those who are the least responsible suffer the gravest consequences! Take an example of the Paris Agreement. Article 8 lists actions to address Loss and Damage from Climate Change but it does not provide any basis for liability and compensation.
3. Gender Justice. This is much more than gender equality. It is premised on the notion of social justice rather than a search for formal equality of opportunity. Gender justice recognizes the unequal constraints and opportunities which underpin gender differences in the ability of women and men to define their own goals and exercise agency in pursuit of these goals. We need a world where women and men, boys and girls are valued equally and are able to share equitably in distribution of power, knowledge and resources. We demand generation of gender disaggregated data in all undertakings. In the Paris agreement, only Article 7,8 (Adaptation Action) and Article 11 (Capacity Building), make reference to Gender. All others Article 1,2,3 (Objectives), Mitigation (4,5,6), Finance (9), Technology (10), Awareness and Reporting (12,13,14,15,16), Legal Modalities (16 – 29) are Gender blind. Silence is a legal loophole. It could be used like in Shakespeare's play where a character demanded a pound of flesh and a sharp lawyer defeated him on a technicality! A Pound of flesh without blood.