



AFRICAN WILDLIFE
FOUNDATION

AFRICAN WILDLIFE FOUNDATION POSITION STATEMENT

Seventeenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP17)

Accelerating African-Led Implementation of the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

Yerevan, Armenia | 19–30 October 2026

Our Position

The African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) believes that COP17 must mark a decisive shift from **global biodiversity commitments to accelerated, African-led implementation that delivers for people, wildlife and ecosystems.**

Africa's globally significant biodiversity is central to its ambitious development goals. The continent's long-term prosperity depends on development that can maintain ecological integrity, recognize the rights and aspirations of communities, and mobilize sustainable investment in nature.

As the first global review of collective progress under the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), COP17 is an important moment of accountability. The review's findings are clear: fewer than half of Parties consider any of their national targets to be on track, and the 2025 milestone of USD 20 billion per year in international biodiversity finance has fallen short.

The question for COP17 is whether it will create the political, institutional and financial conditions to turn the KMGBF into measurable change for Africa's landscapes and its people.

AWF calls for outcomes on three interconnected priorities.

1. ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY AND CONNECTIVITY

Africa needs protected and conserved areas that are well managed, connected and resilient, not just larger.

Move from Area Targets to Effective Conservation Systems

AWF strongly supports KMGBF Target 3, known as 30x30: ensuring that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial and inland water areas, and of marine and coastal areas, are effectively conserved and managed. But 30x30 must be about more than hectares. Africa needs protected and conserved area systems that are effectively governed and managed, ecologically representative, connected and resilient—and embedded within wider landscapes where people, wildlife and economic activity coexist.

AWF therefore calls for implementation of Targets 1–3 that prioritizes:



- effective and equitable governance and management of protected and conserved areas;
- ecological integrity and connectivity across landscapes and national borders;
- restoration of degraded ecosystems and ecological corridors;
- appropriate recognition of other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) and community conservation approaches;
- sustainable financing and institutional capacity for protected and conserved area authorities; and
- credible measures of conservation effectiveness alongside measures of spatial coverage.

AWF welcomes the recommendation of the 28th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-28) to formally rename the Programme of Work on Protected Areas to the Programme of Work on Protected and Conserved Areas (PoWPCA), recognising OECMs and Indigenous and Traditional Territories as equal components of the 30x30 architecture. AWF calls on COP17 to adopt this recommendation.

AWF also calls for ecological connectivity to be included as a distinct programme element of the PoWPCA, with dedicated funding, covering wildlife corridors, transboundary conservation areas and climate-informed landscape networks.

Development Must Maintain Ecological Integrity

Africa's infrastructure, energy and mineral development will expand significantly over the coming years. These investments are essential to development, but poorly planned development can irreversibly fragment ecosystems and undermine the natural systems on which economies and communities depend. AWF calls for biodiversity to be integrated early into spatial planning, infrastructure, extractive activities, and investment decisions.

Africa can pursue development while maintaining ecological integrity, but only if biodiversity is treated as a core consideration in development planning rather than an environmental issue addressed after investment decisions have already been made.

2. PEOPLE AND NATURE

Conservation lasts only when the people who live with wildlife benefit from it and help decide how it works.

Conservation Must Work for the People Who Live with Nature

Conservation cannot succeed over the long term without legitimacy among the people who live alongside wildlife and depend upon natural resources. AWF supports conservation approaches that recognize Indigenous Peoples and local communities as **rights-holders, decisionmakers, partners, and beneficiaries**, while acknowledging their responsibilities as stewards of natural resources.

COP17 should strengthen implementation that:

- recognizes rights and tenure;
- ensures full, equitable and effective participation in conservation decisions;



- strengthens equitable benefit-sharing;
- expands community-led and community-based conservation;
- increases appropriate direct access to conservation finance;
- strengthens sustainable nature-based livelihood opportunities; and
- recognizes the particular roles and needs of women and young people.

Sustainable Use Requires Strong Governance

Sustainable use of wildlife and natural resources can contribute to conservation, food security, livelihoods and local economies where it is **science-based, legal, effectively governed and ecologically sustainable**. AWF opposes exploitation that threatens species or ecosystem integrity. Policies on sustainable use should therefore be grounded in credible science, effective governance, transparent benefit-sharing, robust monitoring and Policies should also require transparent benefit-sharing, robust monitoring and clear evidence that use contributes to conservation outcomes and community wellbeing.

AWF welcomes the voluntary global guidance on sustainable wildlife management developed ahead of COP17 and calls on the Conference of the Parties to formally adopt it. The guidance sets out a framework of inclusive governance, rights recognition, and equitable benefit-sharing that should be the standard for sustainable use implementation under the KMGBF.

Human-Wildlife Coexistence Must Become a Conservation Priority

Communities whose lives and livelihoods are intertwined with wildlife often carry more than their fair share of the costs of conservation: lost crops and livestock, threats to their safety, and limits how they can use land and resources. For conservation to last, these costs must be recognized and reduced.

AWF calls for greater investment in preventing and reducing conflict with wildlife, and in fair, locally suited compensation and benefit-sharing for affected communities. These include insurance and compensation for livestock losses and crop damage, as set out in the SBSTTA-28 recommendation on sustainable wildlife management. Land-use planning should also help reduce conflict and make coexistence possible. Conservation has not succeeded if wildlife recovers while the communities who live alongside them are left worse off, feel less safe, or lose trust in conservation.

AWF calls on COP17 to translate the SBSTTA-28 commitment to integrate effective management of human-wildlife interactions at SBSTTA-28 into dedicated investment and implementation guidance.

Education is a Catalyst for Action

Education of all stakeholders is key to accelerating the implementation of all KMGBF targets. AWF recognizes that education is context-based and happens in formal, informal, and non-formal ways. Increased efforts are therefore needed to systematically support education.

AWF calls on COP17 to adopt the draft Global Plan of Action for education on biodiversity and urges parties to better embed education in their NBSAPs and National Reports.



3. SUSTAINABLE CONSERVATION FINANCE

Move Finance from Global Commitments to African Landscapes

The scale of biodiversity finance remains inadequate relative to the ambition of the KMGBF. The first global review confirmed that the 2025 milestone of USD 20 billion per year in international biodiversity finance was likely not met. Delivery of Target 19 requires urgent accelerated action. But the challenge is not only the amount of money available. It is also **where finance goes, how easily African institutions can access it, and whether it reaches the landscapes and communities responsible for stewardship.**

AWF calls on COP17 to advance:

- predictable and accessible international biodiversity finance for developing countries;
- delivery of commitments under Target 19;
- simplified access to multilateral biodiversity and climate finance;
- stronger domestic resource mobilization;
- responsible private-sector and blended finance;
- reform of incentives harmful to biodiversity;
- investment in African conservation institutions and capacity; and
- increased flows of finance to landscapes and communities.

Conservation finance must move beyond dependence on short-term projects towards durable financing systems that make conserving nature economically viable for countries, landscapes and communities.

Connect Biodiversity and Climate Finance

Africa's ecosystems are major assets for climate adaptation, resilience, water security and carbon storage.

Yet biodiversity and climate finance remain fragmented. Biodiversity and climate finance need to work together, so that investment in one also strengthens the other. Protected and conserved areas, intact and restored ecosystems, and other natural infrastructure should be recognized as essential to climate-resilient development. AWF calls on COP17 to adopt the PoWPCA's complementary activities on climate change.

Build Africa's Biodiversity Economy

Africa's biodiversity should increasingly generate sustainable economic opportunities for the people and institutions responsible for maintaining it. AWF supports responsible nature-based enterprises and biodiversity economy approaches that create jobs and livelihoods while maintaining ecological integrity. Such approaches must be supported by strong environmental and social safeguards and ensure fair benefits for communities.¹

AWF'S CALL TO COP17

AWF calls upon Parties at COP17 to deliver outcomes that:



1. Turn the first global review into an acceleration mechanism, with clear actions to close implementation, finance, institutional and capacity gaps before 2030.
2. Define success on 30x30 through ecological integrity, connectivity, effective management and equitable governance—not hectares alone. Adopt the SBSTTA-28 recommendation to rename the Programme of Work on Protected Areas to the Programme of Work on Protected and Conserved Areas, with ecological connectivity as a resourced element.
3. Strengthen the rights, agency and benefits of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, including appropriate access to conservation finance.
4. Adopt the voluntary guidance on sustainable wildlife management as the standard for sustainable use under the KMGBF.
5. Make human–wildlife coexistence a funded priority, with dedicated investment and implementation guidance.
6. Integrate biodiversity into Africa's development choices, particularly spatial planning, infrastructure, mining, agriculture and investment decisions.
7. Deliver adequate and accessible biodiversity finance, with more resources reaching African institutions, landscapes and communities.
8. Connect biodiversity, climate resilience and economic development, recognizing intact and restored ecosystems as productive natural infrastructure, including by adopting the PoWPCA climate-related activities.
9. Adopt the draft Global Plan of Action for education on biodiversity.
10. Strengthen monitoring and accountability, so implementation is measured through outcomes for ecosystems, species and people.

Africa's Biodiversity Is a Development Asset

Africa's biodiversity is not a constraint to development. It is natural infrastructure supporting water and food security, livelihoods, climate resilience, economic opportunity and human wellbeing. COP17 must therefore help establish biodiversity as a foundation of Africa's development.

AWF stands ready to work with African governments, the African Union, Regional Economic Communities, protected area authorities, communities, civil society, development partners and the private sector to translate the KMGBF into African-led solutions that deliver for people and nature.



Key Terms

Term	Meaning
30x30 (KMGBF Target 3)	Conserving at least 30% of land, inland waters, coasts and oceans by 2030
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPLCs	Indigenous Peoples and local communities
KMGBF	Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the global plan agreed in 2022 with 23 targets for 2030
NBSAPs	National biodiversity strategies and action plans
OECMs	Other effective area-based conservation measures: areas outside formal protected areas that deliver lasting conservation
PoWPCA	Programme of Work on Protected and Conserved Areas, the proposed new name of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas
SBSTTA-28	The 28th meeting of the CBD's Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, whose recommendations go to COP17
Targets 1–3	The KMGBF targets on spatial planning (1), restoration (2), and protected and conserved areas (3)
Target 19	The KMGBF finance target, including international finance milestones for 2025 and 2030