

*Press Release*

## **COP 16 Yields Landmark Gains for Indigenous Peoples, Yet Biodiversity Crisis Worsens Amid Corporate Greenwashing**

Saturday, 2 November 2024, Cali, Colombia – The COP 16 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) ended this morning with no concrete steps to stopping biodiversity loss, and presents another lost opportunity to regulate the impacts of big businesses on nature, not addressing the root causes of the biodiversity crisis.

After a session lasting through the night, in which the COP adopted important decisions, the meeting was suspended due to lack of quorum. Decisions such as that on resource mobilisation and a financial mechanism, key for developing countries who need to have security in terms of funding for implementation, as well as the Planning Monitoring, Report and Review framework, which is essential to ensure a proper implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework, were left unresolved.

Friends of the Earth International celebrates a huge victory for Indigenous Peoples and local communities, who will now have a dedicated work body under the Convention. The environmental federation also congratulates the approval of a new work plan by the CBD which will further enhance the role of Indigenous Peoples, local communities and Afro-descendant peoples in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

However, at the same time, corporations found ways to avoid regulation in policy and practice, while pushing heavily for false solutions, particularly biodiversity offsetting.

**Nele Marien, Forests and Biodiversity co-coordinator of Friends of the Earth International, said:**

*“Corporations were here pushing very hard for all kinds of false solutions, for example on biodiversity offsetting, which had a lot of traction. They argue that they can keep pushing into new territories, and destroying these ecosystems, promising that they will compensate for this. This is simply impossible, because we don't have space in the world to compensate*

*for these losses. Biodiversity offsetting is a mechanism that further perpetuates destruction, undermines human rights and damages environmental justice.”*

Finance for biodiversity, and the mechanisms for its delivery, were discussed intensely but without resolution. The grossly insufficient finance for the Global South is said to be complemented by private funds from corporate-related interests and biodiversity offsetting, as was propagated in many parallel events. Nevertheless, the real financial debacle - the \$7 trillion of “investment” spent on destructive activities per year, was absent from discussions.

Friends of the Earth International is also deeply concerned about the negative cycle between the climate and biodiversity crises. Biodiversity is suffering enormously from climate impacts, and yet, climate policy-makers continue projecting biodiversity as a source for carbon offsetting. The CBD further fails to evaluate all the negative impacts of many climate policies that undermine biodiversity.

**About the approved Subsidiary Body and work plan for Indigenous peoples, local communities and Afro-descendant peoples, Isaac Rojas, Forests and Biodiversity co-coordinator of Friends of the Earth International, emphasised:**

*“Thanks to this new body and work plan approval, future COPs will work, amongst many other important issues, on land tenure, traditional knowledge and governance by Indigenous Peoples. It's a milestone in the struggle of Indigenous peoples for their rights. We congratulate them and share their joy following this win. But we have to remain vigilant, because these achievements may turn out to be empty words in view of the push for several false solutions.”*

**About the push for false solutions at COP 16, Mariann Bassey, from ERA / Friends of the Earth Nigeria and Food Affairs, regretted:**

*“We always expect to see real actions, but all we are seeing are false solutions. We are tired of people coming here, COP after COP, and things remain the same. We are tired of corporations seizing up the spaces where the peoples should be speaking.”*

**Finally, Linda González, from CENSAT Agua Viva / Friends of the Earth Colombia, said:**

*“The solutions to the biodiversity crisis are not biodiversity credits. The solutions lie in the recognition of the historical and ecological debt owed to the Global South, and in the urgent need for reparations. This was not addressed at COP 16.”*

Friends of the Earth International will continue mobilising alongside allies around the world to ensure that the victory of the Indigenous Peoples, local communities and Afro-descendant peoples in this COP is respected. And to be so, corporations cannot keep destroying the planet and offering offsets in exchange.