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More Than 80 Organizations Urge Governments at UN Biodiversity Conference (COP17) to Keep Extractive Industries Out of Protected and Conserved Areas

Joint Letter Announced at COP17 Press Conference Calls on Parties to Deliver 30x30 "Not Just on Paper, but in Reality"

YEREVAN, ARMENIA — More than 80 civil society, Indigenous, and conservation organizations from around the world have signed a joint letter calling on Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to safeguard protected and conserved areas from extractive and large-scale industrial activities. Leaders from the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas, the Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) Secretariat, Global Alliance of Territorial Communities (GATC), Campaign for Nature and Earth Insight announced the letter today at a COP17 press conference. The full letter and list of signatories can be found [here](#). A recording of today's press conference is available on [UN Web TV](#).

The letter, *Delivering 30x30: Safeguarding Protected and Conserved Areas from Extractive and Large-Scale Industrial Activities*, urges governments to measure success by biodiversity conserved and rights upheld, not simply by hectares counted. The letter was signed by Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), Rainforest Action Network, The Nature Conservancy, BirdLife International, Rights and Resources Initiative, the Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA), Rainforest Foundation US, Rainforest Foundation UK, Urgewald, SkyTruth, Climate Rights International, Auriga Nusantara, Ajemalebu Self Help (AJESH), and Trend Asia, alongside other Indigenous, community, and grassroots groups from Latin America, Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, and North America.

"We, the undersigned civil society organizations from around the world, call on Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at COP17 to deliver on the commitment to conserve at least 30 percent of land, inland waters and seas by 2030, not just on paper, but in reality...Meeting a numerical target will mean little if the areas counted remain exposed to extractive and large-scale industrial activities that undermine biodiversity."

"[Indigenous Peoples' and local communities'] territories are not simply hectares to count:

recognition must respect their decisions, rights and governance...At COP17, Parties must turn ambition into action. Areas counted toward 30x30 must be safeguarded from incompatible industrial activities, with rights upheld and the means to make protection effective."

The letter arrives as Parties gather at the [Seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity \(COP17\)](#), taking place in Yerevan, Armenia, from October 18 - 30, 2026, to assess progress toward the [30x30 target](#), which commits countries to effectively conserve and manage at least 30 percent of the world's land, inland waters, and coastal and marine areas by 2030. So far, national commitments are on track to reach only about [23 percent](#).

The letter draws on the recently-released pan-tropical spatial analysis, [High-Integrity 30x30 Implementation: Industrial Threats and Promising Pathways for Effective and Rights-Based Biodiversity Conservation](#), which found:

- Nearly 62 million hectares of terrestrial protected and conserved areas, roughly 2.5 times the size of the United Kingdom, are overlapped by oil and gas blocks across the tropical countries analyzed, with a further 43 million hectares overlapped by mining concessions.
- Over 40 percent of identified terrestrial Key Biodiversity Areas in the Amazon remain unprotected, alongside 29 percent in the Congo Basin and more than 50 percent in both Southeast Asia and Central America.
- Over 19 percent of terrestrial Key Biodiversity Areas outside of conservation management are threatened by oil and gas blocks, and 15 percent by mining concessions.

Downloadable maps from the report can be found [here](#).

The signatories call on Parties at COP17 to:

- **Remove incompatible industrial threats** by enforcing standards that prevent extractive and large-scale industrial activities from undermining protected and conserved areas, and reviewing existing concessions.
- **Use spatial planning to prevent threats before damage occurs**, directing incompatible industrial activity away from protected and conserved areas, Key Biodiversity Areas, intact ecosystems, and ecological connections.
- **Uphold rights, governance, and stewardship** by securing the land, territorial, and resource rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and respecting Indigenous Peoples' right to free, prior and informed consent.
- **Align licensing and economic decisions with conservation commitments**, so that licensing, infrastructure, energy, agriculture, fiscal incentives, and finance do not support activities that undermine protected areas.
- **Provide the means of implementation**, including long-term finance, capacity-building, and direct, accessible support for Indigenous and community-led priorities.

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