RIO SYNERGIES

BACKGROUND

Climate change, biodiversity loss, desertification, land degradation and drought are deeply interconnected challenges and require integrated solutions. The scale of the challenge is global. 2024 was the warmest year on record, with global average temperature above 1.55C above pre-industrial times. At the same time, around one million species are estimated to be threatened with extinction, underscoring the scale and accelerating pace of biodiversity loss, and up to 40% of the planet's land is degraded, affecting around half of humanity and increasing risks for food security, water systems, and livelihoods. The economic case for integrated action is also strong: evidence from the Economics of Land Degradation Initiative (ELD) shows that coordinated restoration activities across the Rio Conventions can significantly lower costs and improve efficiency compared with fragmented approaches, including estimated savings of USD 45.6 million annually in Rwanda and USD 7.9 billion between 2020 and 2050 in Central Asia.

Over the past three decades, Parties to the Rio Conventions have progressively strengthened cooperation across the three Conventions through COP decisions, institutional cooperation, technical exchanges and implementation partnerships, increasingly recognizing the opportunities for integrated implementation across climate, biodiversity and land. Cooperation across the Rio Conventions has evolved through different forms of institutional coordination, including the Joint Liaison Group, the COP28 Joint Statement on Climate, Nature, and People, the Rio Trio Initiative, and the Belém Joint Statement on the Rio Conventions. In parallel, complementary implementation frameworks have emerged, including the Global Climate Action Agenda under the UNFCCC, the Riyadh Action Agenda under the UNCCD, and efforts to strengthen implementation of the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (2022) under the CBD. Together, these efforts provide important entry points for advancing integrated implementation across the Conventions while respecting their distinct mandates.

The challenge is now to advance practical implementation at the national level, including through national planning instruments, financing channels, reporting systems, and stakeholder engagement. Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), and land degradation neutrality targets (LDN targets) are often developed and delivered through separate processes, despite addressing overlapping risks and relying on many of the same institutions, data systems and implementation partners. The aim should therefore not be to create new commitments or planning processes, but to enable countries to identify where existing national priorities can be implemented in a more coherent and mutually reinforcing way, while connecting them more effectively with relevant partnerships, expertise, and finance.

OBJECTIVE

The Rio Synergies Group for Action is a voluntary, country-led Group being advanced under the UNFCCC COP31 Presidency of Türkiye to accelerate the integrated implementation of countries' existing commitments across the three Rio Conventions. Rather than creating new commitments or parallel processes, the Group aims to connect country-led actions with existing expertise,

partnerships, implementation support, and finance. By building on existing country priorities, the Group seeks to translate opportunities for synergies into practical implementation, while respecting the distinct mandates of the Rio Conventions.

INITIATIVE OUTLINE

1. Implementation pillars

A Presidency-led process across the 2026 Triple COP Year is shaping the Group ahead of its formal launch at UNFCCC COP31 in Antalya. Through a sequence of complementary high-level and technical dialogues across UNCCD COP17, CBD COP17 and UNFFCCC COP31, alongside consultations with countries and international organizations, the Presidency-led process will refine the Group's practical approach and support countries in identifying nationally determined Rio Synergies Flagship Actions, while engaging organizations on implementation support, expertise, partnership, and finance.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">The Rio Synergies Group for Action

A voluntary, country-led Group to accelerate integrated implementation across the Rio Conventions. The Group will connect nationally determined priorities with relevant expertise, partnerships, finance and implementation support. Implementation remains country-led.</td></tr>
<tr><td>High Level Dialogue Series

Brings together high-level politicians, COP Presidencies, Executive Secretaries, and senior leadership of international organizations to set political direction, sustain political momentum across the Triple COP Year and mobilize support for the Rio Synergies Group for Action</td><td>Technical Dialogue Series

Brings together technical experts from countries and international organizations to identify practical implementation opportunities and barriers to inform the High-Level Dialogue Series and shaping the practical approach of the Rio Synergies Group for Action</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Belém Joint Statement on the Rio Conventions

The COP31 Presidency endorsed the Belém Joint Statement on the Rio Conventions at UNCCD COP17 in Ulaanbaatar, for enhanced cooperation, greater policy coherence, integrated planning, and whole-of-society mobilization across the Rio Conventions.</td></tr>
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2. Delivery

UNCCD COP17

At UNCCD COP17 in Ulaanbaatar, a technical dialogue convened country experts and partners to identify practical opportunities for integrated implementation across climate, biodiversity, and land, with land providing a practical entry point. Its findings informed the High-Level Dialogue, "From Ambition to Action: Delivering Rio Convention Synergies across the Triple COP Year," convened by the three Presidencies with the support from G20 Global Land Initiative at the UNCCD and the Joint Liaison Group. Ministers, Rio Convention COP Presidencies, UN leaders and partners highlighted the importance of voluntary, country-led approaches that build on existing national priorities and advance integrated implementation while reducing duplication and reporting burdens. The dialogues and Türkiye's endorsement of the Belém Joint Statement strengthened momentum towards CBD COP17 in Yerevan and UNFCCC COP31 in Antalya, while announcing the Presidency process towards the launch of a voluntary, country-led Rio Synergies Group for Action at UNFCCC COP31.

CBD COP17

A second round of technical and high-level dialogues in Yerevan will build on the Ulaanbaatar outcomes, deepen the biodiversity and nature dimension, and further refine the practical approach of the Rio Synergies Group for Action. Guided by "Nature as the Integrator", the technical dialogue is intended to explore how biodiversity priorities and implementation of the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework can connect with climate and land priorities through existing national plans and programmes. Expected contributions include practical country examples, identification of coordination and capacity gaps, and opportunities for partnerships and integrated implementation. The high-level dialogue is intended to sustain political momentum and encourage voluntary country leadership ahead of Antalya. The findings will inform the further refinement of the Rio Synergies Group for Action and preparations for its official launch at COP31. The format, participation and specific outputs remain subject to consultation with the CBD Secretariat, the Armenian CBD COP17 Presidency and Türkiye.

UNFCCC COP31

The third round of technical and high-level dialogues in Antalya will consolidate lessons from the Triple COP Year and inform the official launch of the Rio Synergies Group for Action. Guided by "Climate as the Accelerator", the technical dialogue is intended to identify practical pathways integrated implementation across climate, biodiversity and land implementation, including national coordination, integrated investment opportunities and better use of existing data and indicators. A concise synthesis will capture practical lessons and implementation needs emerging from the dialogue series and help inform country-led action and potential partners' support. The high-level dialogue is intended to formally launch the Rio Synergies Group for Action, showcase participating countries' nationally determined flagship actions and identify support offers from interested organizations and initiatives. Expected outcomes include an initial Group of participating countries, greater visibility of country implementation needs and potential support offers, and a basis for continuity beyond COP31. Participation, partner contributions and follow-up arrangements will be developed through consultations; implementation remains country-led and nationally determined.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE AND PARTNERS

The Presidency-led process towards the Rio Synergies Group for Action is being advanced by the Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change under the coordination of the COP31 Presidency of Türkiye, in collaboration with the UNCCD COP17 Presidency of Mongolia and the CBD COP17 Presidency of Armenia. The UNCCD G20 Global Land Initiative supports the Presidency. Led process through outreach, country and partner engagement and political coordination. IUCN, through the ENACT Partnership, supports the delivery of the technical dialogue series and engagement with technical partners. Specific contributions are provided within partners' respective mandates and remain subject to available resources.

The Rio Synergies Group for Action is informed by ongoing consultation and exchange with stakeholders engaged in Axis 2: Stewarding Forests, Oceans, and Biodiversity of the Global Climate Action Agenda, and will support efforts to advance the Global Climate Action Agenda's objectives. A light coordination arrangement is proposed under the COP31 Presidency, with participating countries retaining ownership of their national actions. Interested successive Rio Convention COP Presidencies would be invited to champion continuity. Supporting organizations and contributing initiatives would participate within their existing mandates and governance arrangements. Coordination or secretariat functions, responsibilities and resources require agreement before being presented as established arrangements. Voluntary sharing of progress should draw on existing

national information and reporting systems, support peer learning and help identify implementation needs, without creating new international obligations or reporting requirements.

PARTICIPATION

The Rio Synergies Group for Action is intended to be voluntary and country-led, connecting existing national priorities across climate, biodiversity and land with existing partnerships, technical expertise, implementation, knowledge-sharing, capacity-building and financing opportunities.

Countries

Interested countries are invited to indicate their interest in participating in the Group by identifying a national contact person and by bringing forward at least one nationally determined flagship action that builds on existing commitments and priorities. Examples could include strengthening coordination around existing climate, biodiversity and land priorities; advancing integrated landscape restoration or ecosystem-based adaptation; developing investment-ready initiatives that generate benefits across the three agendas; or improving the use of existing knowledge and data for implementation. Where nationally appropriate, actions may also strengthen cooperation among relevant ministries, Rio Convention focal points, sub-national authorities and other stakeholders. A concise voluntary action description could identify the lead institution, relevant national priorities, intended outcomes, an initial implementation step and any support needs. The purpose is not to establish a new planning or reporting instrument, but to provide a simple way for countries to communicate an existing priority and the support that could help advance its implementation.

Organizations and initiatives

Supporting organizations and contributing initiatives are invited to identify concrete potential contributions of expertise, capacity-building, knowledge exchange or access to financing opportunities within their existing mandates. These contributions should respond to needs identified by participating countries and help connection nationally determined Rio Synergies Flagship Actions with implementation support.

Country briefings and bilateral exchanges will help refine actions and connect needs with support offers. The technical and high-level dialogue series provides opportunities to contribute to the Group's development ahead of its COP31 launch; participation does not create new international obligations or reporting requirements.

Parties are kindly requested to indicate their interest through their respective UNFCCC national focal point, by e-mail to the address indicated below. The same address may also be used by other interested stakeholders to express their support.

CONTACT

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