



Missionary Society of St Columban

General Council

Message for the United Nations Biodiversity Conference, COP17

HONG KONG, October 15, 2026. On the occasion of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Conference of Parties, COP17 in Yerevan, Armenia, (October 19-31), Columban missionaries recognize it is essential to listen to the cries of the poor and the wounded planet. As Pope Leo says in his message for the 11th World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation 2026, “Today, we are witnessing many crises and much human suffering.... and disruption to the harmonious balance of creation is accelerating”

The first official, comprehensive Global Stocktake of the 2030 Biodiversity 23 Targets established under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) at COP15 in 2022, of all national reports will be presented and reviewed during COP17. They are urgent actions for nations to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030, putting the planet on a path toward full ecological recovery by 2050.

To date, about 75% (over 145 countries) have registered national commitments aligned with the KMGBF ahead of COP17. There are worrying signs, however, as only 71 countries have full strategic action plans outlining specific legislation, funding and roadmaps. Independent reviews (World Wildlife Fund and UN preliminary assessments) show most countries are falling short on implementation and ambition.

The Missionary Society of St. Columban is accredited by the Convention on Biological Diversity as an observer organization in the upcoming COP17 and the concurrent meetings of the Parties to the Cartagena and Nagoya Protocols. A four-person delegation will be present. We have previously participated in U.N. CBD Summits, including those leading to COP15 and the 2022 Global Biodiversity Framework and COP16 in 2024.

Columban missionaries see the loss of biodiversity in the countries we work in. In **Peru**, cattle ranching, illegal logging and mining continue to strip the Amazon of primary forest. In **Myanmar**, the same story repeats with jade, gold and rare-earth mining. **Korea's** large-scale reclamation projects destroy tidal flats that once sheltered migratory birds and fed coastal fisheries. In the U.S., government policies promoting expanded oil and gas development open more areas to drilling and mining. **Taiwan's** mountain communities watch rapid development and typhoons alter rivers. **Chile and Pakistan** have the highest annual deforestation rates in their regions. In **the Philippines**, mining permits and tourism development contracts are granted in key biodiversity areas.

Species loss is alarming. **Pakistan** has lost cheetah, lion and tiger species with many others on the edge of extinction. **Japan** has already lost its wolf, otter and sea lion nationwide. In **Myanmar**, illegal wildlife trade continues alongside logging and mining. **Ireland** faces a severe biodiversity crisis, with about one in five assessed species threatened with extinction. **The Philippines**, a megadiverse country and global biodiversity hotspot, faces severe species and ecosystem decline. **Australia** has over 100 species extinctions and more than 2,000 threatened. In **Fiji and Japan**, fishing pressure without adequate quotas continues to strain reef and coastal fish stocks. **Britain** is one of the most nature-depleted countries globally with one in six species at risk of regional extinction.

We close by praying that the cries for justice, healing, and flourishing of the earth and its people will be heard and heeded. We pray for the world leaders and delegates at COP17, that they courageously fulfil the commitments already made for the protection of vulnerable species and ecosystems. We pray with Pope Leo for a conversion of heart which respects the gift of Creation.

Andrei Paz
Superior General