

Cop15 summit: DRC drops objections to seal deal on historic action on biodiversity

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is one of the world's most biodiverse countries, and its objections raised the prospect of legal challenges



Ève Bazaiba, centre, the Democratic Republic of the Congo's environment minister, had earlier objected to the text of the Cop15 agreement. Photograph: Paul Chiasson/AP

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A **once-in-a-decade deal** to halt the destruction of Earth's ecosystems finally won full support at Cop15 in Montreal on Monday after the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) dropped its opposition.

Earlier on Monday, Ève Bazaiba, the DRC's environment minister, threatened to throw the integrity of the historic UN biodiversity agreement into doubt just

hours after it was signed, when China's summit president **appeared to ignore her country's objections** to the text and forced it through.

But on Monday evening, just before the final plenary, the Chinese **Cop15** president, Huang Runqiu, approached Bazaiba to shake her hand in an apparent apology – to the applause of the entire conference hall at the Palais des congrès– and she later gave a speech in which she congratulated the Chinese environment minister on the deal, acknowledging it had passed. The DRC's concerns over finance will be registered as part of the final report of the Cop.



It came after intense negotiations on the plenary floor between the big three rainforest nations – Brazil, Indonesia and the DRC – who signed a cooperation

agreement at the G20 last **month for their conservation, dubbed the “Opec of rainforests”**.

The Brazilian head of delegation, Leonardo Cleaver de Athayde, could be heard encouraging the DRC minister to soften her opposition to the agreement in a huddle. Once convinced, they posed with the lead Indonesian negotiator, holding hands and smiling.

Speaking to the Guardian on Monday morning, **Bazaiba had said she did not support** the deal, throwing into doubt action on targets to protect 30% of the planet for nature by 2030, reform \$500bn (£410bn) of environmentally damaging subsidies, and take urgent action on extinction. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is one of the most biodiverse countries in the world, home to a large chunk of the Congo basin rainforest.

The objection raised the possibility of legal challenges to the process, a potentially disastrous outcome for action on biodiversity loss. Her objections had the support of DRC civil society groups, who are calling for more money for conservation.

Following the rapprochement, Prescilia Monireh from the Indigenous organisation ANAPAC in DRC, said: “We are confident that the DRC government will implement the agreement, securing the important rainforests in Central Africa and securing Indigenous people’s territorial rights. We do however support DRC’s call for more financial support, structured in a way that allows Indigenous people to access the money. This has proven very difficult with the current funding mechanisms.”