

Countries launch nature coalition at UN COP16 talks, warn of human extinction

By Jake Spring

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Colombian President Gustavo Petro speaks at the opening of the 16th United Nations Biodiversity Summit in Cali, Colombia October 20, 2024. REUTERS/Luisa Gonzalez/File Photo [Purchase Licensing Rights](#)

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- Colombia launches coalition with 20 countries to make 'peace with nature' Leaders warn that humanity's own survival is on the line COP16 aims to halt nature decline by 2030, but funding remains a challenge Countries struggle to agree on financing for biodiversity conservation

CALI, Colombia, Oct 29 (Reuters) - Colombia at the U.N. COP16 biodiversity talks on Tuesday launched a coalition with 20 other countries seeking to make "peace with nature," as leaders warned that the rapid destruction of the environment risks humanity's own extinction.

The summit of nearly 200 countries under way in the mountain-ringed city of Cali is tasked with figuring out how to halt the decline of nature by 2030, as humans drive habitat loss, climate change, pollution and other activities that destroy biodiversity.

The coalition includes countries from four continents including Mexico, Sweden, Uganda and Chile, although none from Asia-Pacific. The coalition is open to countries that agree to a set of principles aimed at changing humanity's relationship with nature, to live in harmony with the environment.

That includes marshaling money toward conservation and sustainable development, cooperating internationally and mobilizing all of their society toward preserving nature.

At the opening of Tuesday's COP16 meeting with six presidents and more than 100 government ministers, leaders warned that by destroying nature, humanity is killing itself.

"We are beginning the era of human extinction. I do not think I am exaggerating," Colombian President Gustavo Petro said.

Petro said that the world cannot wait for it to be profitable to save nature and that the market will not save humans, adding that the value of life should be placed over money.

"Nature is life. And yet we are waging war against it. A war where there can be no winner," said U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. "This is what an existential crisis looks like."

Leaders said COP16 could be a turning point for conservation as the summit seeks to implement 23 goals to stop nature loss by 2030 laid out in the 2022 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, that includes mobilizing \$200 billion annually for conservation and preserving 30% of the Earth.

Countries as of Tuesday were far from reaching an agreement on how to advance the wide-ranging agenda, remaining at an impasse on how to ramp up finance. A handful of nations announced millions of dollars in new commitments to a global fund for biodiversity, but observers said it falls far short of the billions of dollars needed.

"Today we can change," Ecuador's President Daniel Noboa said. "I want to believe we can change and the world is not going to end."