



acba
African CSOs
Biodiversity Alliance



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THE YEAR AT A GLANCE

The year began with the establishment of ACBA's governing body following the organization's legal registration in Nairobi in November 2023. This registration marked a new phase in ACBA's evolution, transitioning from an informal network to a legal and structured entity. During the year, the board held four meetings, providing much-needed guidance to the network. This new phase brings both challenges and opportunities. Key challenges include the urgent need for operational policies and systems, a monitoring and reporting framework, and fundraising. On the other hand, opportunities include strengthening the ACBA brand, enhancing its ability to fundraise, and seeking accreditation with pan-African and multilateral bodies.

As a key actor in the biodiversity and climate change sectors, ACBA actively engaged in significant African Union Commission (AUC) meetings. The first was a consultative forum on the outcomes of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP 28, which focused on how African CSOs should respond to ongoing negotiations on carbon markets and COP 29 in Baku. The second was the Africa Multi-Stakeholder Conference on Carbon Markets, held in June 2024. The primary outcome of this conference was a set of policy recommendations outlined in the "African Aspiration and Action Plan on Carbon Markets (AAAPCM)." Additionally, ACBA was part of the technical committee planning the international conference on afforestation and reforestation in Brazzaville in June 2024. ACBA also had a strong presence at the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) COP 16, hosting several side events and members speaking on various platforms. Furthermore, ACBA was part of a small delegation under the auspices of the CBD Alliance (CBDA) that met briefly with the United Nations Secretary-General and presented.

Key decisions from CBD COP 16 included the establishment of a Subsidiary Body on Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), with its operational framework to be developed over the next two years. This body is expected to elevate IPLC-related issues, particularly regarding implementing Article 8(j), and enhance IPLC engagement in all convention processes. Additionally, there was recognition of the role of people of African descent in implementing the Convention and in biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. About Digital Sequence Information (DSI), the Cali Fund was established, requiring qualifying companies to contribute 0.1% of their revenue or 1% of their profits to the fund, with at least 50% of the proceeds directed to IPLCs. A global action on One Health was adopted to strengthen the link between nature and climate further and emphasize ecosystem integrity.

Despite these achievements, ACBA faced significant operational challenges. Limited funding hindered the network's ability to deliver on its mandate and vision fully, and the Secretariat remained understaffed and under-resourced. However, ACBA members provided valuable in-kind support, including reviewing key documents, drafting concept notes, accepting speaking engagements, and participating in knowledge-sharing through the monthly Members Forum.



1) Key ACBA achievements

- i. Participation in Major Events – ACBA actively participated in key events, including the IUCN Africa Conservation Forum, where it showcased Afro-centric solutions and advocated for human rights-based and gender-sensitive approaches to implementing the 30x30 initiative. Additionally, ACBA engaged in African Union Commission (AUC) meetings on climate change.
- ii. Completion of ACBA's Capacity Needs Assessment (CNA) – The assessment identified several focus areas: governance, resource mobilization, coordination within the Alliance, and co-learning. It also recommended the establishment of an ACBA Biodiversity Academy to enhance capacity-building efforts further.
- iii. Development of Policy Briefs—In collaboration with the African Wildlife Foundation's (AWF) policy fellowship program, ACBA developed six policy briefs on critical topics such as biodiversity offsets and the protection of environmental defenders. These briefs will be published on the ACBA website.
- iv. Enhanced Visibility – ACBA strengthened its presence within the AUC and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), furthering its influence on policy discussions.
- v. Awareness Campaigns – In partnership with the South Africa Youth Biodiversity Network (SAYBN), ACBA launched the "The Road to COP: Insights on COP 29" campaign. This initiative significantly expanded ACBA's reach, growing its audience to 1.5K on Facebook, 2.1K on Twitter, and 800 on LinkedIn.
- vi. Network Growth – The ACBA network expanded with 20 new members in 2024.

MEMBERSHIP, PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

In 2024, the Communications, Membership, and Partnerships Committee worked tirelessly to foster engagement and collaboration among ACBA members. ACBA successfully onboarded over 20 new members into the alliance this year alone. The working group has actively involved members in various initiatives to highlight and advance key activities.

Notably, members played a crucial role in developing policy briefs by AWF Policy Fellowship Program fellows. Additionally, the working group collaborated with a consulting firm to conduct a comprehensive Capacity Needs Assessment of the network.

It has been inspiring to witness the diverse initiatives led by ACBA members across different countries, demonstrating their commitment to driving meaningful change. This report documents some of these key activities.

1) Capacity Needs Assessment

The Capacity Needs Assessment (CAN) was successfully concluded in February 2024, following a virtual validation meeting with Alliance members. This meeting provided a crucial opportunity for members to gain a clear understanding of the assessment's outcomes and engage in discussions about its implications.

The findings of the assessment were systematically categorized into six key areas, namely Governance - the capacity to lead, motivate, and build a shared purpose; capacity to fundraise; capacity to create spaces and systems for members and local voices to participate and influence decision-making processes in the conservation of Africa's biodiversity; capacity to manage expectations of members and maintaining a balanced operating environment; capacity to Programme for relevance and encourage collective action and partnerships, and capacity to monitor, report and learn.

2) Policy Brief

ACBA collaborated with the AWF Policy Fellowship Programme to develop five policy briefs, addressing critical issues such as:

- Legal conceptualization of IPLCs in Southern Africa and the implications of 30x30 for Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa (Natural Justice Hubs).
- The political economy of the Blue Economy in Ghana (The Development Institute, Ghana).
- Addressing transparency and equity in Zambia's expanding carbon markets (Zambian Community Resources Board).
- Improving access to financial resources (Hatof Foundation).
- Protecting African environmental defenders and assessing the effectiveness of biodiversity offsets (ACBA Secretariat).

3) CBD COP 16 members get together

Over its four years of existence, ACBA has consistently organized monthly members' virtual meetings to facilitate sharing and learning. However, hosting physical meetings has faced logistical and financial constraints. High-level meetings allow attending members to convene and shape the network's agenda.

During the CBD COP 16 meeting, held in October in Cali, Colombia, ACBA members were hosted by Tommy Garnett, from the Environmental Foundation for Sierra Leone, one of ACBA's founding members. ACBA members had an opportunity to reflect on their ongoing efforts within their respective countries and to explore new ways to foster collaboration. The meeting also facilitated meaningful engagement with our partners from China's Civil Society Alliance for Biodiversity Conservation (CSABC) group.

4. Members Corner

ACBA members actively contributed to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use through various initiatives, including:

Engagement at CBD COP 16:

- Participated in negotiations, daily briefings and bilateral meetings to advocate for biodiversity conservation.
- **Side Events Hosted:**
 - ACBA Secretariat & Somalia Greenpeace – Hosted a session on the peace and biodiversity nexus, emphasizing conservation's role in conflict resolution and sustainable development.
 - Kenyan Youth Biodiversity Network, South African Youth Biodiversity Network, and GYBN Africa Organized side events that amplified youth voices and regional biodiversity issues.
 - ACBA Coordinator, Dr. Yemi Katerere – Moderated a side event by IPNESA (Indigenous People's Network of Southern Africa), supported by JAMMA International, where Indigenous communities shared insights on biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.

Some On-the-Ground Conservation Initiatives from ACBA Members



Cabo Verde – Associação de Conservação da Biodiversidade (Biflores):

- Piloted a cloud-moisture harvesting and agroecological restoration project producing 600–1,000 liters of water.
- Cleared 20 hectares of invasive species and replanted 5,000 endemic and fruit trees.
- Enhanced economic opportunities through artisanal production

South Africa – Youth4MPAs:

- Won the Mail & Guardian Greening the Future Award 2024 for advocating Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).
- Hosted a #MPA Day event, raising public awareness and inspiring youth-led marine conservation.

Democratic Republic of Congo – EMERGENCE ONGD:

- Led environmental education and reforestation efforts, planting over 18,000 trees in schools, churches, and community fields.
- Conducted community awareness campaigns to restore plant cover.
- Supported women's economic empowerment through community-led savings groups.

Somalia – Somali Awareness and Social Development Organisation (SASDO):

- Implemented a community-based reforestation project, planting 10,000 indigenous trees across 50 hectares.
- Trained 200+ community members in sustainable practices.
- Empowered 100 households through agroforestry-based food security and income generation.



5. Partnership

The African CSOs Biodiversity Alliance (ACBA) formalized its partnership with the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) in 2021 through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This agreement strengthened their collaborative efforts to advance shared goals in biodiversity conservation and sustainable development across Africa. Since ACBA's inception, AWF has played a pivotal role in supporting its activities and operations, serving as the Secretariat and providing strategic guidance and institutional support to the Alliance.

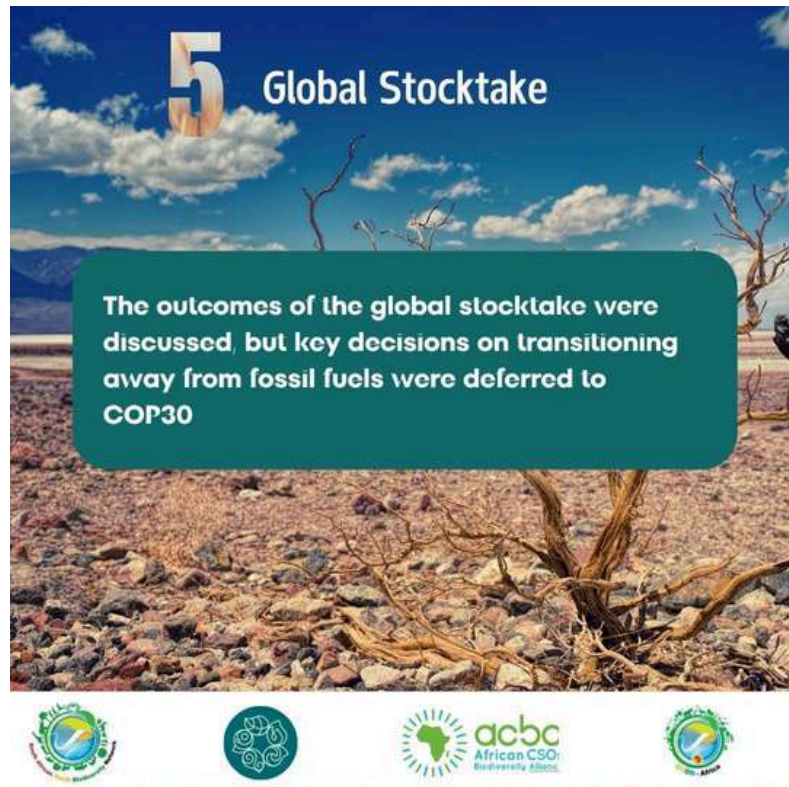
Since 2021, this partnership has been defined by joint initiatives and a shared commitment to improving biodiversity conservation and enhancing the livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs). However, in response to an evolving external environment and shifting internal priorities, AWF and ACBA agreed to review and revise their original MOU. This process involved a comprehensive evaluation of the agreement, and identifying areas that needed updates to better reflect the current context.

As a result, the MOU was thoughtfully amended to align with these developments, ensuring it remains relevant, effective, and responsive to the needs and priorities of both organizations. This ongoing collaboration highlights the importance of adaptability and strong partnerships in driving impactful conservation efforts across the continent.



6. Communications and Outreach

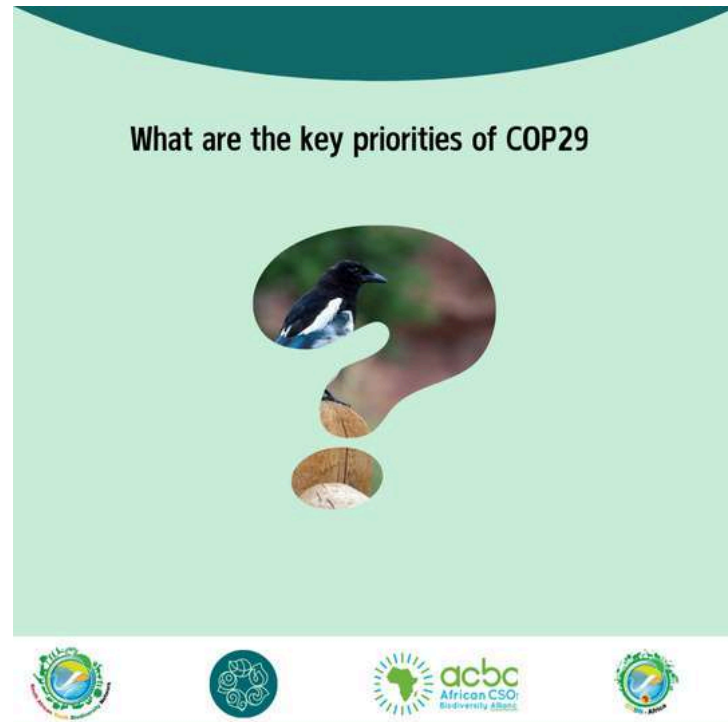
This year has been relatively quiet in terms of on-ground activities as compared to other years. Still, ACBA's social media presence has however continued to grow. Across our platforms, we have observed notable gains in both follower growth.



Campaigns

This year, we successfully executed an awareness campaign in the lead-up to UNFCCC COP 29, titled "The Road to COP: Insights on COP 29" campaign. The campaign, conducted in partnership with GYBN South Africa and GYBN Africa, focused on raising awareness about the significance of COP 29.

Previous engagements with various ACBA members showed that many people had a limited understanding of what COP 29 entails. To address this, the campaign utilized visually engaging infographics to explain the conference's purpose and importance. These infographics were widely shared on social media, significantly enhancing outreach and engagement.



Beyond providing a general introduction to COP 29, the campaign highlighted its key priority areas. These included participation at COP 29 as the "Finance COP," the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) on climate finance, the need for 1.5°C-aligned Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) from all stakeholders, the finalization of Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, and the operationalization of the Loss and Damage Fund.

In addition to outlining these priorities, the campaign contextualized their relevance for Africa, emphasizing their potential impact on the continent. The infographics from this campaign are available on our social media pages for further reference



POLICY AND INFLUENCING COMMITTEE

The African CSOs Biodiversity Alliance (ACBA) played an instrumental role in shaping critical discussions and advocating for biodiversity, climate change and sustainable development in various global and regional forums. Below is a detailed account of ACBA's participation in key events

1. ACBA Participation at United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) 6



Following ACBA's presence at the Sixth United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA 6) was marked by the participation of 13 members who worked collaboratively to influence resolutions under key thematic clusters. These included promoting effective and inclusive water policies amidst climate change, halting land degradation and advocating for nature-based solutions (NBS) with binding safeguards and standards. ACBA also emphasized synergistic approaches to tackle global crises such as climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, advocating for sustainable multilateral actions and climate justice. Discussions extended to environmental recovery in conflict-affected areas.

In addition to these focus areas, ACBA members were actively involved in side events and panel discussions. One notable event was led by Ebrima Jarra from Soil Solution, titled “Biodiversity Conservation in Our Neighborhoods: Human-Based Solutions to Address Nature’s Crisis,” which highlighted the role of community engagement in biodiversity conservation while addressing challenges like pollution and climate change. Similarly, Pauline Nantongo from ECOTRUST spoke on developing high-integrity biodiversity credit markets. Furthermore, a meeting facilitated by the African Wildlife Foundation with the Society of Entrepreneurs and Ecology (SEE) Foundation from China opened doors for potential collaborations, allowing ACBA members to showcase their initiatives.

2. Participation at the African Protected Area Directors' Conference

Two ACBA members attended this conference, focusing on priority issues such as inclusive conservation with communities and youth, integrated landscape management and sustainable financing for protected areas (PAs). Key actions included creating systems for youth and community engagement, availing tools for rights-based landscape management and enhancing capacity for PAs to access and retain funding.

Observations highlighted directors' willingness to collaborate with CSOs, a promising step toward building trust. However, challenges such as the need for better dialogue with funders and the inclusion of forestry directors in discussions on climate change and protected areas were noted. Funding predictability and localization remain critical gaps.

3. ACBA Participation at Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) and Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) Meetings

Nine ACBA members contributed to discussions during the meetings at the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) and Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI). A significant side event focused on the 30x30 initiative, emphasizing the recognition of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) and the importance of an African-centric platform for collaboration. Discussions stressed the need for capacity-building, African leadership in conservation, and the delivery of ecological and socioeconomic benefits.

Financing was a dominant topic during the SBI meeting. African nations like the DRC and Togo advocated a new finance mechanism outside the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Preparations for CoP16 were also highlighted, with upcoming build-up meetings to discuss the 30x30 partnership and other agenda items.

4. ACBA Participation at the IUCN Conservation Forum

At least 15 ACBA members participated in the IUCN Conservation Forum held in Nairobi, Kenya, from June 24–28, 2024. The event began with a pre-forum co-organized by the Kenya and Ugandan Youth Biodiversity Networks under the theme “Amplifying African Youth Voices and Solutions Towards Creating Transformative Responses to the Biodiversity and Climate Crisis in Africa.” This platform allowed young people to discuss their roles in conservation, culminating in an outcome statement outlining key policy actions.

The main forum, attended by heads of state, reinforced the need for African unity in conservation efforts. Kenya's Minister for Tourism and Wildlife, Alfred Mutua, announced that the forum would now be held biennially in Nairobi and included in the national budget. ACBA members also organized side events, such as AJESH Cameroon's session on “Achieving Target 3: Technical Support for Implementing the 30 by 30 Target in Africa.”



4. ACBA Participation at CBD COP 16

The Africa CSOs Biodiversity Alliance (ACBA) actively participated in COP 16 with a clear focus on influencing biodiversity outcomes, advocating for increased funding for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), and strengthening the connections between biodiversity, climate change, and conflict resolution.

Key themes included respecting traditional knowledge systems, rejecting false biodiversity solutions and greenwashing, and promoting accessible and sustainable funding mechanisms. ACBA organized impactful side events under the theme of South-South-North collaboration, addressing IPLCs' roles in conservation, innovative financing for protected and community areas, and the nexus between biodiversity loss, climate change, and conflict.

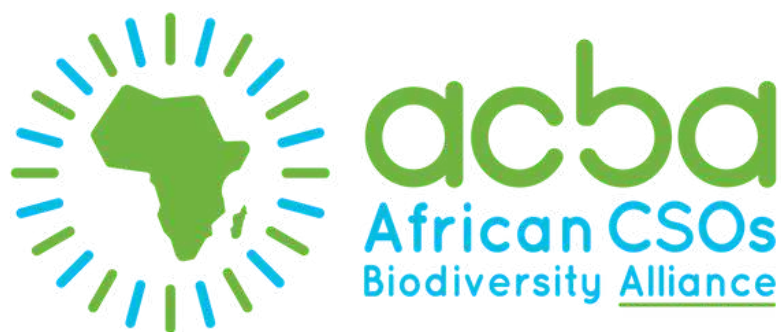
These events highlighted case studies from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Indonesia, South Africa, and Namibia, showcasing progress and ongoing challenges in equitable benefit-sharing, legal recognition, and funding accessibility for IPLCs. High-level ministerial discussions emphasized community-driven approaches, with South Africa and Zimbabwe leading efforts to integrate inclusive strategies under the Kunming-Montreal Framework.

Despite progress, COP 16 faced challenges such as failing to establish a dedicated biodiversity financing instrument and limited updates to National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs). The growing financialization of biodiversity and shrinking space for civil society participation were highlighted as critical issues.

Through bilateral meetings, ACBA explored opportunities to expand its influence, including its participation in the upcoming Convention on Wetlands of International on International Importance (RAMSAR) COP 15 in Zimbabwe and collaborations with funding organizations. Overall, ACBA's participation reinforced the urgency of addressing biodiversity challenges through inclusive, equitable, and sustainable solutions while calling for more outstanding commitments from developed nations to honor their responsibilities in supporting the Global South.

ACBA's active engagement in these forums underscores its commitment to addressing the interconnected challenges of biodiversity loss, climate change, and sustainable development. By amplifying African voices, advocating for inclusive and rights-based solutions, and fostering partnerships, ACBA continues to champion transformative responses to global environmental crises. However, sustained financing, collaboration, and capacity-building efforts are essential to achieving long-term conservation goals.





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The continued support provided by the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) to the African CSOs Biodiversity Alliance (ACBA) secretariat ensured that ACBA could effectively coordinate membership participation in important events, host webinars, and fulfill its mandate.

We appreciate ACBA members for generously volunteering their time and making invaluable contributions. These efforts play a pivotal role in advancing ACBA's mission and vision

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