

Unlocking Land Tenure: Pathways for policy action after the triple COPs of 2024

Which decisions and pathways can advance coordinated advocacy, programming, and policy alignment on land rights?

Background

In 2024, for the first time, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held their Conferences of the Parties (COPs) in the same year.

The outcomes demonstrated there is widespread recognition that **land rights** are critical to achieving global goals on climate, biodiversity, and desertification. But recognition is not enough. A constellation of decisions, processes and networks exist – ready to be leveraged to achieve the greatest collective impact.

While previous studies examined just transitions, landscape restoration, and gender equality, as well as emphasized the importance of enhanced synergies among the Rio Conventions, they have not specifically adopted **land tenure and land rights as a central lens**.

The findings of [TMG's latest policy brief](#) highlight where to turn recognition into action. It identifies **key decisions across the 3 UN Rio Conventions and maps entry points, both direct and indirect, for coordinated advocacy, programming, and policy alignment**.

This valuable resource can support civil society, Indigenous groups, governments, gender advocates and other decision-makers to make a strong case for land tenure integration in national and international policies, and ensure land governance frameworks advance sustainable development.

Key takeaways

TMG examined the outcomes and decisions relevant to land tenure, land rights, women's land rights, and broader gender, human rights and inter-convention synergies. Below is an overview of key decisions and entry points to advance land tenure, land rights, and human rights-based land governance.

Download the [full analysis here](#) and the more detailed [technical report here](#).

- UNCCD COP16 made bold commitments, including calling for land tenure focal points, digital mapping of customary rights, and integration of tenure in LDN strategies.
- UN CBD COP16 adopted land tenure indicators as part of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework monitoring framework – a first for biodiversity policy – and means that countries will have to track and report on land rights to ensure that conservation actions respect and support IPLCs.
- UNFCCC COP29 reaffirmed Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLC) participation in climate-policy processes via the Baku Workplan, opening the door to make stronger commitments on tenure rights.

Gender & Women's Land Rights

- All three COPs acknowledged that the climate crisis impacts women harder, and gender was strong on their agendas.
- CBD integrated gender indicators into its Biodiversity Framework, tracking women's land and resource access.
- UNFCCC extended its gender programme, resulting in the Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender. Set for adoption at COP30, negotiations are shaping which components will be included in this work and how these commitments will be translated into a Gender Action Plan: a powerful but underused tool to secure women's land rights.
- UNCCD's "Her Land. Her Rights." campaign continues to spotlight tenure inequality, but stronger financial investments are needed to make gender equity a reality.

Indigenous Peoples & Local Communities (IPLCs)

- IPLCs gained stronger institutional footholds across the Conventions.
- CBD created a permanent IPLC body and reinforced free, prior and informed consent for actions affecting IPLC lands and resources, ensuring compliance with national and international law.

Key takeaways continued

- UNCCD established separate caucuses for IPLCs—a milestone in recognizing distinct rights.
- UNFCCC's COP30 offers a chance to embed land rights and secure participation of legitimate land holders, including IPLC, in restoration, adaptation and biodiversity initiatives.

Human Rights in Environmental Governance

- CBD made great strides in linking biodiversity with human rights in multiple decisions, paving the way to embed land rights in restoration, adaptation and biodiversity initiatives.
- UNCCD and UNFCCC have yet to adopt stronger human rights language. Their progress in areas of participation and inclusion reveal important linkages to build on. CBD's progress provides a model pathway to make those links explicit.

Participation & Inclusion

- UNCCD endorsed national dialogues and multi-stakeholder consultation on land tenure and further committed to the FAO and UNCCD Joint Initiative.
- CBD reinforced inclusive biodiversity governance, emphasizing traditional knowledge and IPLC-led planning.
- UNFCCC endorsed inclusive adaptation indicators, with potential entry points for land rights advocacy.

Synergies & Inter-Convention Cooperation

- CBD committed to exploring a joint programme of work with UNCCD and UNFCCC.
- All three conventions called for greater technical information exchange and inter-agency cooperation.
- A joint approach to land tenure governance across Conventions should be on the table – and institutionalizing it must be pursued.

Get in touch

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