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Draft Agenda

Cultural Landscapes and Biodiversity: A Living Heritage Worth Protecting

17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP17)

Saturday 24 October 2026, 16:00–18:00 | Yerevan, Armenia

Armenia's Pavilion, Blue Zone

Date: 24 October 2026

Time: 16:00–18:00

Place: Armenia's Pavilion, Blue Zone, COP17 Yerevan

Format: Panel discussion and audience exchange

1. Event rationale

The Council of Europe Landscape Convention defines landscapes as “an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.” This definition places people, their perceptions and their relationship with places at the heart of landscape policy. The Convention applies to the entire territory of the Parties, not only remarkable cultural landscapes: natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas, as well as every day and degraded landscapes.

Landscapes are shaped by long-term interactions between people and nature. Cultural landscapes, such as agricultural terraces, bocage, alpine pastures, grazing lands, wetlands and viticultural landscapes, are rich reservoirs of cultivated and spontaneous biodiversity. This biodiversity is maintained precisely because of local and traditional practices. When these practices are abandoned, or replaced by more intensive land use, both biodiversity and collective memory and identity are lost. Protecting landscapes and conserving biodiversity are therefore inseparable.

This is particularly relevant to Armenia, where diverse mountain environments, forests, grasslands, agricultural areas and wetlands reflect centuries of interaction between people and nature. Traditional pastoralism, seasonal grazing, haymaking, agriculture and the management of forests and water resources have helped shape the country's landscapes, influencing their ecological characteristics as well as their cultural identity. These landscapes are not simply backdrops to human activity or repositories of natural and cultural heritage; they are living systems whose biodiversity and character are closely linked to how people use, manage and



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perceive them. Recognising these relationships is essential to ensuring that landscape policies respond to both ecological processes and the needs and knowledge of local communities.

The panel will explore how cultural landscapes sustain biodiversity through traditional practices, community knowledge and integrated management. Together, these perspectives will highlight opportunities for stronger international cooperation and show how the Landscape Convention can support biodiversity and landscape governance beyond Europe.

Bringing these perspectives together reflects a central principle of the Council of Europe Landscape Convention: landscape must be taken into account in all the policies that shape it, including agriculture, environment, health, land and spatial planning, as set out in Recommendation CM/Rec(2021)12 on the integration of the landscape dimension into sectoral policies.

This approach contributes directly to the following targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF):

- **Target 1** calls for all areas to be under participatory, integrated and biodiversity-inclusive spatial planning and/or effective management processes, bringing the loss of areas of high biodiversity importance close to zero by 2030. Landscape planning, management and protection, as promoted by the Landscape Convention, are practical tools for this, since they integrate landscape into territorial, cultural, environmental and social policies.
- **Target 10** calls for areas under agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries and forestry to be managed sustainably, including through biodiversity-friendly and agroecological practices. Traditional pastoralism, seasonal grazing, haymaking and other low-intensity practices that have shaped cultural landscapes are concrete examples of such practices. Keeping them alive supports both biodiversity and the resilience of local food systems.
- **Target 22** calls for the full, equitable, inclusive, effective and gender-responsive participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in biodiversity decision-making, respecting their cultures and their rights over lands, territories, resources and traditional knowledge. It also covers the participation of women and girls, children and youth, and persons with disabilities, as well as the protection of environmental human rights defenders. Public participation is a core principle of the Convention: Parties commit to involving the public, local and regional authorities and other stakeholders in defining and implementing landscape policies. Recognising local and traditional knowledge, and securing communities' access to land and resources, are therefore essential to both frameworks.



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2. Strategic references

Council of Europe and the Landscape Convention

- Council of Europe Landscape Convention.
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2025)1 on landscape and health.
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2021)12 on the integration of the landscape dimension into sectoral policies.
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2021)11 on landscape and agriculture.
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)8 on landscape and democracy: public participation.
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)7 on landscape integration in policies relating to rural territories in agricultural and forestry, energy and demographic transition.

Global biodiversity framework

- KMGBF Target 1, on ensuring that all areas are under participatory, integrated and biodiversity-inclusive spatial planning and/or other effective management processes addressing land- and sea-use change, to bring the loss of areas of high biodiversity importance close to zero by 2030.
- KMGBF Target 10, on ensuring that areas under agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries and forestry are managed sustainably, including through biodiversity-friendly practices such as agroecological approaches, contributing to the resilience of production systems and to food security.
- KMGBF Target 22, on ensuring the full, equitable, inclusive and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in decision-making related to biodiversity, and respecting their rights, cultures and traditional knowledge, while ensuring access to justice and information and the protection of environmental human rights defenders.

Other relevant frameworks

- Convention on Wetlands, Resolution VIII.19 on considering the cultural values of wetlands.
- CBD Global Action Plan on Biodiversity and Health, adopted at COP16 (2024).
- FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (2012).

3. Objectives

The event will:

1. Demonstrate that landscapes, and cultural landscapes in particular, are key reservoirs of biodiversity, maintained through traditional land-use practices and community knowledge, in line with KMGBF Target 10.
2. Showcase Armenian cultural landscapes as concrete examples of the biodiversity-culture nexus, alongside experiences from the Mediterranean and the work of international organisations.
3. Promote the integration of traditional and local knowledge and participatory approaches in landscape and biodiversity decision-making, in line with KMGBF Targets 1 and 22.
4. Foster dialogue between experts and practitioners on integrated landscape governance, drawing on the Council of Europe Landscape Convention and its emphasis on integrated approaches to landscape protection, management and planning, as well as public participation.
5. Strengthen cooperation between the Council of Europe Landscape Convention, the Convention on Wetlands, FAO and WOA, and highlight that the Convention is open to States beyond Europe.

Time	Session	Speakers
16:00–16:05	Opening and welcome	Rafael Bénitez , Director of Social Rights, Health and Environment – Council of Europe
16:05–16:20	Setting the scene: Wetlands as cultural landscapes: A shared agenda for biodiversity, water and people	Dr Musonda Mumba , Secretary General of the Convention on Wetlands
16:20–17:30	Panel: How landscape management, planning and local knowledge shape biodiversity	Moderated by Caroline Martin , Secretary of the Council of Europe Landscape Convention. • Nune Petrosyan, Armenia's national representative to the Council of Europe Landscape Convention • Clinton Omusula, FAO • Chadia Wannous, WOA • Antonio Antequera, Vice President of the Landscape Convention
17:30–17:50	Questions and answers with the audience	Panellists, moderated by Caroline Martin
17:50–18:00	Closing remarks and key messages	Rafael Benitez , Director of Social Rights, Health and Environment – Council of Europe



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Questions for the panel:

Moderator's opening (Caroline Martin)

“Without biodiversity, landscapes grow poorer. Without landscapes, the living world becomes invisible.” Biodiversity is largely shaped by how landscapes are managed and planned, and by the knowledge and cultures of the people who live in them. Planning that ignores local knowledge fails on the ground. Local knowledge that planning does not recognise slowly disappears. Our question today is simple: how do we bring the two together?

Round 1 – one question per panellist

1. Nune Petrosyan (Armenia):

- Armenia's cultural landscapes reflect centuries of interaction between people and nature. Could you share one or two examples of how traditional land-use practices have shaped these landscapes and contributed to maintaining biodiversity — and what this tells us about the importance of recognising local knowledge and cultural identity in landscape governance?

2. Chadia Wannous (WOAH):

- Pastoralism and the management of grazing lands link the health of animals, people and ecosystems, while sustaining traditional knowledge, cultural practices and relationships with the land. How can the One Health approach be built into landscape management and planning, and how can these cultural practices and local knowledge contribute to it?

3. Clinton Omusula (FAO):

- Local communities maintain biodiversity through their everyday management of landscapes — but only when they have secure access to the land and resources they depend on. Could you illustrate what insecure land tenure means in practice for biodiversity, and how land-use planning can better recognise traditional practices that sustain it?

4. Antonio Antequera:

- The Council of Europe Landscape Convention promotes an integrated approach to landscape protection, management and planning. What does this look like in practice for countries trying to address biodiversity loss while safeguarding cultural identity and traditional land-use practices — and what does it offer beyond Europe?

Round 2 – cross-cutting question (2 or 3 panellists)



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5. **All panellists:** The Council of Europe Landscape Convention, the Convention on Wetlands, FAO and WOAHP each bring different but complementary expertise. Where do you see the greatest opportunities to work together more effectively — and what concrete joint actions could help countries integrate biodiversity, traditional knowledge and community participation into landscape governance?
6. **Two or three panellists:** Landscape planning is often done by experts, while local knowledge is held by communities, farmers and herders. What would it take, in practice, for planning and management to make real room for this knowledge?
7. **Optional:** Many traditional practices, such as pastoralism, seasonal grazing and haymaking, are under economic, demographic and environmental pressure. What would it take to make them viable for the next generation?
8. **Optional, if the fire angle is covered by a panellist:** Wildfires are affecting a growing number of landscapes. How can landscape management, including traditional practices such as grazing, help reduce fire risk while supporting biodiversity?

Key messages (to be adjusted after the discussion):

Biodiversity is shaped by how landscapes are managed and planned. In all landscapes, from wetlands and mountain pastures to everyday rural and urban areas, biodiversity largely depends on the choices made in managing and planning the land, and on the knowledge and cultures of the people who live there.

Local knowledge must shape decisions. Planning that ignores local knowledge fails on the ground, and knowledge that planning does not recognise slowly disappears. The real participation of local communities, including women and young people, secure access to land and the One Health approach are conditions for success.

Integrated policies and cooperation are the way forward. Agriculture, environment, health, land tenure and spatial planning shape the same landscapes and must work together. Landscape protection, management and planning, as set out in the Council of Europe Landscape Convention, are practical tools to achieve KMGBF Targets 1, 10 and 22. The Convention is ready to strengthen its cooperation



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with the Convention on Wetlands, FAO and WOAHP, and is open to accession by States that are not members of the Council of Europe.