

DECLARATION
Latin American Waterkeeper Groups
COP 16- Biological Diversity Convention
October 21 to November 1, 2024
Cali, Colombia



Dear Presidents and Decision Makers of Latin America and the Caribbean,

Many of the Latin American¹ Waterkeeper®² Alliance groups, Guanabara Baykeeper, in Brazil; Maule Itata Coastkeeper, Futaleufú Riverkeeper in Chile; Bocas de Ceniza Waterkeeper, Cartagena Waterkeeper, Río Cravo Sur Waterkeeper, Río Inírida Waterkeeper y Río Meta Waterkeeper and Río Pauto Waterkeeper in Colombia; Río Ozama Waterkeeper in Dominican Republic; Nicoya Peninsula Waterkeeper, in Costa Rica; Guayllabamba Waterkeeper, in Ecuador; Lake Atitlan Waterkeeper in Guatemala; Cabo Pulmo Coast Waterkeeper, Los Cabos Coastkeeper, Loreto Coastkeeper, Terra Peninsular Waterkeeper, and Tijuana Waterkeeper, in Mexico; and Río Mapacho Waterkeeper and Ramis Riverkeeper, in Perú, and Waterkeeper Alliance CEO, Marc Yaggi, in the framework of the Conference of the Parties (COP 16) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), **call on Latin American leaders and decision-makers** to:

- reinforce the commitments acquired as Parties to the CBD, in harmony with the commitments acquired in the framework of the UNFCCC, the Paris Agreement, the Ramsar Convention and other international instruments, that should be harmonized with the Kunming-Montreal global biodiversity protection framework, which constitutes a strategic plan for the achievement of the objectives of the CBD and its protocols in the period 2022-2030;
- in particular, for the fight against pollution in Latin America, to focus on the gradual and progressive reduction of the chemicals that are released to our water sources and strengthen research and knowledge on emerging pollutants;
- continue advancing the management of wastewater discharges and reduce the gaps in relation to the provision of public sanitation services for the benefit of human beings but also of nature;
- strengthen at the administrative, financial, political, and legal levels the battle against deforestation and biodiversity loss;
- include climate change in integrated water management from supply, demand, quality, and risk management perspectives;
- design viable financial strategies to encourage the use of clean energy and declassify hydroelectric energy as clean energy;
- respect local communities, their knowledge, and worldview, to achieve the objectives of the CBD and the mission of the strategic plan for the protection of biodiversity by 2030.

¹ 166994,6441 kilometers patrolled and/or monitored in 9 Latin American countries.

² Waterkeeper® Alliance is a global movement uniting more than 300 community based Waterkeeper Organizations and Affiliates around the world, focusing citizen action on issues that affect our waterways, from pollution to climate change. The Waterkeeper movement patrols and protects nearly six million square miles of rivers, lakes, and coastlines in the Americas, Europe, Australia, Asia, and Africa. For more information, visit waterkeeper.org.

The undersigned Waterkeeper groups, hereby state and declare as follows:

1. That as humanity we are facing a triple planetary crisis - biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution - and that the water crisis is transversal to this triple crisis.
2. That water pollution not only directly affects the effective enjoyment of the human right to clean water, but also implies a direct affectation of the rights of Nature and water sources.
3. That more than 90 out of 185 countries have one or more water-related ecosystems in a state of degradation; river flow has significantly decreased in 402 river basins around the world, where live approximately 107.5 million people; surface water bodies, such as lakes, are shrinking or disappearing altogether in 364 (of 13,894) watersheds worldwide, home to approximately 93.1 million people; the world has lost 5,250 km² of mangroves, a net decrease of 3-4% since 1996; and wetlands are being drained for agriculture: about 85% has been lost globally in the last 300 years and more than 50% since 1900 (UN WATER, 2024).
4. That out of 9 planetary boundaries evaluated, it is concluded that we have exceeded the safe level of 6 of them, whose analysis as a whole, and in congruence with all the official information and that, product of independent scientific research coming from the Academy, indicates that the stability of the Earth's biological processes, which allow life on the planet, as we know it today, is at high risk.
5. That the planetary boundary "changes in freshwater" documents and evidences that the alteration of freshwater cycles, including rivers and soil moisture, affects natural functions such as carbon sequestration and biodiversity. Anthropogenic interventions have resulted in this limit being exceeded at a safe level ([Planetary boundaries - Stockholm Resilience Centre](#)).
6. That the imbalance in the Earth's bio-geochemical processes is aggravated by insufficient scientific information and especially the lack of data in many low-income or developing countries on the level of pollution caused by emerging pollutants and all kinds of chemicals that are constantly being released into our water bodies.
7. That the assessment of the planetary boundary "new entities" documents, among other things, that the amount of synthetic substances released into the environment without proper testing exceeded the safe level ([Planetary boundaries - Stockholm Resilience Centre](#)).
8. That the Kunming-Montreal biodiversity framework establishes 23 targets of immediate and urgent application to protect, conserve and reverse the loss of biodiversity and among them, **Target 7** aims to reduce the risks of pollution by 2030; reduce by at least half the release of excess nutrients, reduce by at least half the risk of pesticides and hazardous chemicals, as well as prevent, reduce and seek the elimination of plastic pollution.

9. That the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) Resolution 6/13 dated March 1, 2024, on “Effective and Inclusive Solutions to Strengthen Water Policies to Achieve Sustainable Development in the Context of Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss and Pollution,” recognizes the high concern for the threats to the quality and quantity of water, particularly those due to marine and terrestrial pollution, and the fact that water-related ecosystems suffer the effects of climate change, the serious contamination by pathogens, the increase of polluting anthropic activities and the deficiency in environmental sanitation.
10. That the contamination of water and aquatic life with emerging and non-emerging hazardous substances is not sufficiently documented in relation to rivers and other water sources in Latin America and the Caribbean, requiring more scientific research to establish the real state of water contamination with chemical substances and to know if those substances that are currently prohibited under the regulatory framework of each country are present in the waters.
11. That it is the responsibility of Latinos to protect our natural heritage, but also the responsibility of the entire planetary society to collaborate in the protection of biodiversity; it is necessary that not only governments, civil society, academia, human rights defenders and defenders of the rights of Nature act, but also that the determined agreement of the business and industrial sector is required to transform production processes to reduce water, air and soil pollution.
12. That we are at a historical and crucial moment, so **humanity must assume the responsibility that corresponds to us as a species and stop the loss of biodiversity on the planet.**
13. That the protection of biodiversity and water implies the protection and respect for the exercise of environmental and nature defenders, for which reason the standards established in the Escazú Agreement must be strengthened and implemented.
14. That strengthening access rights is a vital issue in the fight against biodiversity loss and climate change. It is imperative that the States advance within the framework of ethics, transparency, solidarity, and intergenerational equity towards a new governance that allows halting the loss of biodiversity, based on human rights.

STATEMENT AND PETITIONS

1. The below signatory Waterkeeper groups of Latin America and Waterkeeper Alliance declare that the protection and defense of water is equivalent to protecting all forms of life present in aquatic and marine-coastal ecosystems.
2. That human beings have a responsibility to protect the biodiversity of all life on our planet to ensure a sustainable and thriving ecosystem for future generations.

3. That reversing the loss of biodiversity can only be achieved with the decisive, harmonious and joint action of indigenous peoples, local communities, institutional and social actors, always respecting the values and traditions of indigenous peoples and local and rural communities, custodians of life and biological diversity.
4. That living in harmony with Nature in 2050 is possible, if and only if all financial, human and technical resources are deployed to implement the 23 goals of Kunming-Montreal, recognizing the intrinsic value of each form of life present on Earth and therefore their inherent rights.
5. Water is an element of Nature and a fundamental human right and in general water sources have the right to be free of contamination.

Accordingly, on the basis of intergenerational equity and solidarity and taking fully into account the circumstances of each country, and in accordance with the principles and provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity, **we request and urge the presidents, decision-makers of Latin America and the Caribbean, the following:**

1. Coherence in the discourse regarding the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal targets, within the framework of the National Biodiversity Protection Plans and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), of each country to achieve the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Paris Agreement. This coherence is evidenced by clear policies and actions, such as the gradual and sustained reduction of fossil fuel mining-energy projects; the refusal to license mining exploration and exploitation projects in moorlands and/or strategic ecosystems for the regulation of the hydrological cycle and offshore projects, among others, that obstruct the real protection of the ocean and terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.
2. A call is made for urgent action by all Latin American and Caribbean States to deploy their best efforts to comply with the calls made by the United Nations Environment Assembly through Resolution 6/13 in the year 2024, especially with regard to integrating sustainable water management and the protection, conservation, restoration and sustainable management of aquatic ecosystems.
3. Update environmental regulations and public policies to fully and timely comply with the obligations derived from the Stockholm Convention.
4. Invest all necessary financial resources to increase the range of domestic and industrial wastewater sanitation to guarantee human rights to clean water and sanitation, as well as the rights of water sources and their ecosystems to ecological integrity and freedom from contamination.

5. Prevent multinationals from settling in our countries, reproducing the extractivist model, using our water sources and ecosystems as dumping grounds for priority and priority hazardous substances.

Waterkeeper Alliance



Marc Yaggi, CEO

Waterkeeper groups of Latin American



APREC Ecosistemas Costeros (Guanabara Baykeeper)



Fundación Futaleufú Riverkeeper



Vigilante Costero Ong (Maule Itata Coastkeeper)



Fundación Guardaguas de Ecosistemas Marinos y Costeros Bocas de Ceniza (Bocas de Ceniza Waterkeeper)



Fagucar (Cartagena Waterkeeper)



Río Cravo Sur Waterkeeper



Río Inirida Waterkeeper



Río Meta Riverkeeper



Río Pauto Waterkeeper



Nicoya Peninsula Waterkeeper



Asociación Guayllabamba Waterkeeper



Asociación Amigos del Lago de Atitlán (Lake Atitlan Waterkeeper)



Amigos para la Conservación de Cabo Pulmo A.C (Cabo Pulmo Coast Waterkeeper)



Los Cabos Coastkeeper AC.



Proyecto Fronterizo de Educación Ambiental (PFEA) (Tijuana Waterkeeper)



Terra Peninsular (San Quintín Bay Waterkeeper)



Loreto Coastkeeper / Eco-Alianza de Loreto A.C



Río Ozama Waterkeeper



Ramis Riverkeeper



Río Mapacho Waterkeeper