

## OPEN LETTER FROM THE LATIN AMERICAN WATERKEEPER GROUPS AHEAD OF COP30

### Addressed to:

The Presidency of COP30 – Federative Republic of Brazil  
The Bureau of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)  
Heads of Delegation of the Parties to the Paris Agreement  
Leaders of Annex I countries  
Leaders of Multilateral Development Banks and International Climate Funds  
Donor governments and strategic partners committed to climate justice

The Latin American Waterkeeper® groups, together with Waterkeeper Alliance, address this letter to you — climate leaders convening at COP30 — to express our collective position and present concrete demands in response to the urgency of the global climate and ecological crisis, with **water as a vital axis of transformative action**.

Ten years after the adoption of the **Paris Agreement in 2015**, the world has made important, yet insufficient progress in addressing the climate crisis. Near-universal participation and a wave of national climate commitments have helped reduce projected global warming from approximately **4°C** (estimated in 2015) to around **2.6°C** by the end of the century — if all current pledges are fully implemented. However, **2.6°C** remains far from the **1.5°C goal**, and many countries are not even on track to meet their existing commitments. The science is clear: **every fraction of a degree matters**. The **IPCC Synthesis Report (AR6, 2023)** warns that climate impacts are already more severe than previously projected, exposing millions of people to food and water insecurity — especially in vulnerable regions of Africa, Asia, and Latin America — and driving irreversible damage to ecosystems. Extreme events (heatwaves, droughts, floods) have intensified, claiming lives and livelihoods, while **funding for adaptation remains dangerously inadequate**.

In Latin America, we face this global reality with particular urgency. Our region is home to critical ecosystems — including the Amazon Rainforest, high-altitude Andean páramos, tropical glaciers, and vast coastlines — that are essential to global climate stability, biodiversity, and the water cycle. Yet we suffer a **triple planetary crisis**: climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, with **water at the center of them all**. More than **90 out of 185 countries** report one or more freshwater ecosystems in degraded condition; **river flow has declined significantly in 402 basins worldwide**, affecting an estimated **107.5 million people**; **surface water bodies**, such as lakes, are shrinking or disappearing entirely in **364 of 13,894 basins**, affecting another **93.1 million people**; the world has lost **5,250 km<sup>2</sup> of mangroves** — a net reduction of 3–4% since 1996 — and wetlands continue to be drained for agriculture: **85% of global wetlands have been lost in the last 300 years**, and more than **50% since 1900** (UN Water, 2024).

On the eve of **COP30 (Belém, 2025)**, we, the Waterkeepers of Latin America, raise our voices once again. We work in watershed communities across nine Latin American countries, protecting rivers, wetlands, coastlines, and sources of freshwater. **To defend water is to defend life**, and to stand against the most devastating effects of climate change. In our previous declaration at **COP26 (Glasgow, 2021)**, we demanded a shift away from fossil-based extractivism, respect for Indigenous Peoples' rights, and true alignment between national climate pledges and real action by 2030. At **COP16 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (Cali, 2024)**, we called for coherence between the Kunming-Montreal biodiversity targets and national climate contributions (NDCs), and for the full implementation of environmental access rights (Escazú Agreement), along with urgent measures to halt water pollution from hazardous substances.

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Now, reflecting on the progress and failures of the past climate decade, we reiterate and reinforce those calls with the following **concrete demands**, addressed to those with the power to close the gap between ambition and action:

1. We call on Annex I nations to update their NDCs before COP31 (2026) with significantly more ambitious targets for 2030 and new 2035 commitments aligned with the 1.5°C goal, as required by the first Global Stocktake. We will not accept further delay: without deeper emission reductions from major emitters before 2030, the world risks crossing dangerous climate tipping points. Likewise, we demand that developed countries eliminate fossil fuel subsidies now and immediately cease public investment in coal, oil, and gas projects — including deep-sea exploration and new fossil frontiers — in Latin America. Instead, redirect those investments to clean energy and resilient technologies, in support of our region’s just transition.
2. To donor countries of the European Union and other international partners:

We recognize and value your contributions to the global climate effort and ecosystem conservation in Latin America. However, we urge you to **scale up and accelerate this support**. In particular, we call on the European Union to **double its contributions by 2027** to mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund and the Adaptation Fund, ensuring a steady flow of resources to the most vulnerable communities in our region. We also request **technical cooperation** to implement the **Enhanced Transparency Framework** under the Paris Agreement: many Latin American countries still lack the technical capacity to prepare detailed GHG inventories and **Biennial Transparency Reports (BTRs)** that meet the required standards.

3. We further urge you to increase support for freshwater and biodiversity conservation initiatives — for example, expanding funding for the implementation of the Escazú Agreement, which strengthens environmental justice and the protection of environmental defenders across Latin America and the Caribbean; and supporting the achievement of the Kunming-Montreal targets, such as halving risks from pollutants and pesticides by 2030 and restoring degraded ecosystems. We request that this support be channeled directly and preferentially to community-based organizations and Indigenous and ethnic groups leading the defense of forests and waters, recognizing their vital role.

**In conclusion:**

We issue an urgent call for **coherence and decisive action**. We can no longer accept a gap between words and reality. If we are serious about meeting the climate goals for 2030 and 2050, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) must stop being paper promises and become **concrete, transformative policies**.

This coherence demands, on the one hand, that Latin American countries implement their NDCs and biodiversity plans in an integrated way — halting deforestation (still the largest source of emissions in countries like Brazil), phasing out fossil exploitation in ecologically fragile areas, and upholding the **rights of nature**. On the other hand, it requires developed countries and international funders to fulfill their responsibilities for **finance, technology transfer, and support** — without which local efforts will never reach the needed scale.

**COP30 in Belém** is a historic opportunity: taking place in the Amazon, the hydrological and climatic heart of the planet, it symbolizes the undeniable link between **climate action and nature protection**.

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In line with the objectives of COP30, we call on world leaders and the Conference Presidency to advance a “Belém Action Package” grounded in five core commitments: NDC 3.0 with targets through 2035; implementation plans for the New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG); transparency through BTR reporting in 2024–2025 and delivery roadmaps for 2026–2028; a regional initiative on water and ecosystem-based adaptation; and full enforcement of the Escazú Agreement. This would be the true test of political will and coherence in Belém.

*Ten years of words have not been enough. It is time for courage — to turn promises into action, with the urgency demanded by science and by the communities on the front lines of defending water.*

This open letter is a **collective outcry** from the rivers, mountains, lakes, and coasts of Latin America. We demand **climate justice and historical responsibility**. We demand a **livable future**. **We will accept nothing less.**

### Waterkeeper Alliance



Marc Yaggi, CEO

### Waterkeeper groups of Latin American



APREC Ecosistemas Costeiros (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 Inírida Waterkeeper



Río Meta Riverkeeper

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Río Pauto 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 Verde Waterkeeper



Río Ozama Waterkeeper



Río Mapacho Waterkeeper