# COP17 opens in Yerevan amid global biodiversity challenges

The 17th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (COP17) opened in Yerevan on Oct. 19, 2026, bringing together government officials, international organizations, scientists and environmental advocates for two weeks of negotiations aimed at reversing the global loss of biodiversity.

Hosted by Armenia through Oct. 30, the conference marks a key opportunity to assess progress toward the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, adopted in 2022, and accelerate efforts to meet its ambitious targets for protecting nature by 2030.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan addressed the opening ceremony, while Environment Minister Hambardzum Matevosyan was elected COP17 president for a two-year term, taking responsibility for guiding the conference's proceedings.

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres also took part in high-level events ahead of the conference, including the Leaders for Nature Summit, held in Yerevan on Oct. 16.

Africa's priorities featured prominently in the opening discussions. Ousseynou Kassé, chair of the African Group of Negotiators, described COP17 as a pivotal moment for mobilizing collective action against biodiversity loss.

"COP 17 represents a decisive moment of awakening collective consciousness to the urgency of halting biodiversity loss and the profound threats it poses to human well-being," Kassé said.

Over the next two weeks, delegates will discuss progress toward 23 global biodiversity targets designed to curb the destruction of nature by 2030. Key goals include conserving at least 30% of the world's land and marine areas, restoring 30% of degraded ecosystems, reducing pollution, protecting threatened species and promoting the sustainable use of natural resources.

Financing and accountability in focus

Securing sufficient funding for conservation is expected to be among the conference's most consequential challenges. Under the global biodiversity framework, countries committed to mobilizing at least $200 billion annually for biodiversity by 2030, including $30 billion a year in international financial flows to developing countries and economies in transition.

Delegates will also examine efforts to reform or eliminate government subsidies and incentives that harm biodiversity, particularly in agriculture, fisheries and other resource-intensive sectors.

Other agenda items include scientific monitoring, accountability mechanisms, the participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from genetic resources. Parallel negotiations under the Cartagena and Nagoya protocols will address biosafety and access to genetic resources.

Africa seeks a stronger voice

African countries are participating in the conference with support from the African Union Development Agency-NEPAD (AUDA-NEPAD) and other partners.

Alongside plenary sessions and official meetings, the African Group of Negotiators has scheduled preparatory and debriefing sessions to coordinate positions, strengthen regional unity and advance the continent's priorities in the negotiations.

For African countries, the talks carry particular weight as they seek greater support for biodiversity conservation, sustainable resource management and the financing needed to implement global commitments. The outcome of COP17 will help determine whether international pledges translate into concrete action to protect ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.