

Missionary Society of St Columban

聖高隆龐傳教會

General Council

**Columban Missionaries Message
on the United Nations Biodiversity COP 16**

Hong Kong, October 21, 2024. When representatives from around the world gather in Cali, Colombia, October 21 – November 1, for the UN Biodiversity COP 16, Columban missionaries represented by Amy Echeverria, Columban International Coordinator for Justice, Peace, and Ecology will be there as part of an international multifaith coalition of leaders. The purpose of attending these international summits is to bear witness to the global community that people of faith are committed to advocating for the protection and restoration of biodiversity.

Biodiversity is the bedrock of life on Earth, underpinning our global economy, combating climate change, and sustaining the food systems that nourish the world. Yet, we are witnessing an unprecedented crisis; habitats are vanishing, and up to a million species face extinction, threatening the lives and livelihoods of the billions of people who depend on them.

This year's COP is the first since the signing of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) in 2022. One critical aspect of COP 16 that Columbans and the Faiths for Biodiversity network are monitoring is how countries are updating their National Biodiversity Action Plans to be in line with the Goals and Targets of the KMGBF.

COP 16 will further develop the monitoring framework and advance resource mobilization for the KMGBF. COP 15 was about agreeing to targets for protecting nature – COP16 is about accountability in showing concrete plans for meeting those targets.

Amy Echeverria stresses, “We know that the KMGBF is imperfect, but it is a valuable tool available to civil society to hold governments and businesses accountable to the commitments made. It is also a tool that we, as an international Catholic organization, can use to keep ourselves accountable in our decisions, lifestyle, ministries, and spirituality to care for the web of life.”

This commitment to biodiversity restoration and protection was recently affirmed at the international Columban General Assembly in June 2024, Lima, Peru of leaders and delegates from the countries where we are present.

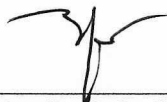
Columban Fr. Andrei Paz, Superior General, spoke of mission priorities “as not merely directives to be implemented, but rather invitations that can inspire and challenge us to live out our vocation...to become our way of responding to Jesus’ commission to share the Gospel message with all creation” (2024 General Assembly Acts).

Pope Francis, in his 2024 message for the annual Season of Creation (September 1 – October 4), asks, “Why so much injustice, so many fratricidal wars that kill children, destroy cities, pollute the environment and leave mother earth violated and devastated?” This is precisely the question that Columbans will be raising at COP 16.

C Columbans live first-hand the interconnections of war, militarization, human migration, and the destruction of the earth. Military conflict in Myanmar; extractive industries in Fiji, Chile, Peru, Philippines, and Pakistan; climate migrants to Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, Britain, Ireland and the United States; increased military tensions and threats to nuclear disaster in Northeast Asia are some examples of places and ways that demonstrate how the web of destruction are tied together. Our message at COP 16 is a call for ecological conversion which manifests in universal peace with humanity and with the earth.

Let us undo this web of destruction and construct the web of life that centers on nonviolent, just, equitable, and ethical ecosystems and economies for all of creation.

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Rev. Andrei O. Paz, SSC
Superior General