



INFORMATION SHEET GENDERED PARTICIPATION AT CBD COP16

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The participation of women in decision-making processes is important because it ensures that biodiversity governance reflects diverse knowledge systems, priorities, and lived experiences. Women play a critical role as custodians of natural resources, leaders in their communities, and holders of traditional knowledge that is indispensable for conservation. Their involvement strengthens the inclusiveness, and effectiveness of negotiations, enabling policies that are not only environmental but also socially just. Within the context of the CBD and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF), women's participation is directly linked to Section C and in achieving Target 23 on gender equality, which recognizes that equitable governance and gender-responsive implementation are essential to halting biodiversity loss and ensuring sustainable futures¹. (CBD, 2022; Women4Biodiversity, 2024a; Women4Biodiversity, 2024b).

In addition, the Gender Plan of Action 2023–2030 (GPA) acknowledges that women's participation in decision-making

processes is directly linked to achieving Target 23 of the KM-GBF. In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the importance of women's involvement in biodiversity governance, both at national and international levels. However, enabling conditions to ensure meaningful participation at all levels of government remain limited. Persistent barriers, such as unequal access to resources and the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, continue to delay the full realization of gender-responsive biodiversity governance. Strengthening institutional mechanisms, ensuring gender-disaggregated data collection, and providing dedicated financial and capacity-building support are crucial steps to guarantee that women's participation is not only symbolic but also influential in shaping biodiversity policy and implementation²³.

On this occasion, Women4Biodiversity has undertaken an analysis of sex-disaggregated participation at the Sixteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity

(CBD COP16), held in Cali, Colombia, in 2024. The conference brought together 906 participants, including representatives from Parties and non-Parties, governmental organisations, United Nations and specialized agencies, intergovernmental organisations, Indigenous Peoples and local community organisations, non-governmental organisations, subnational and local authorities, business and industry groups, academia and research institutions, youth, and observers.

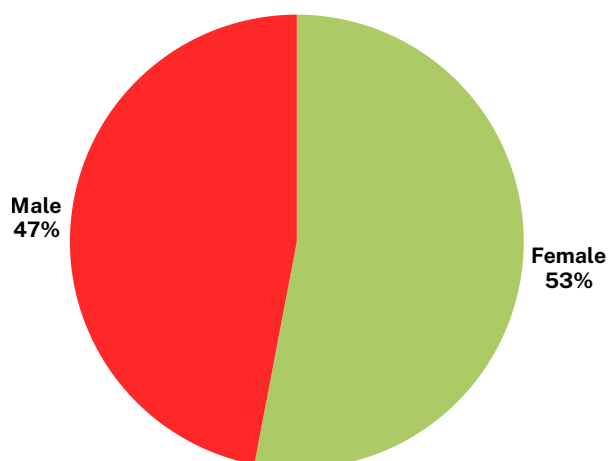
This brief provides a gender-focused analysis of their participation, highlighting regional variations and sectoral trends while reflecting progress towards the implementation of Target 23 on gender equality of the KM-GBF. At the same time, it contributes to the achievement of Objective 2.2.2 of the GPA, which calls for ensuring the representation of women's groups in meetings under the Convention

Overall Participation

Across all categories, women accounted for 479 participants (53%) and men for 427 (47%). This marks a significant step towards gender parity in biodiversity governance, as women slightly outnumbered men in participation at a CBD COP16. However, numerical presence does not necessarily translate into influence, this highlights the need to monitor leadership roles and speaking opportunities.



Figure 1. Registered participants at CBD COP16 by sex



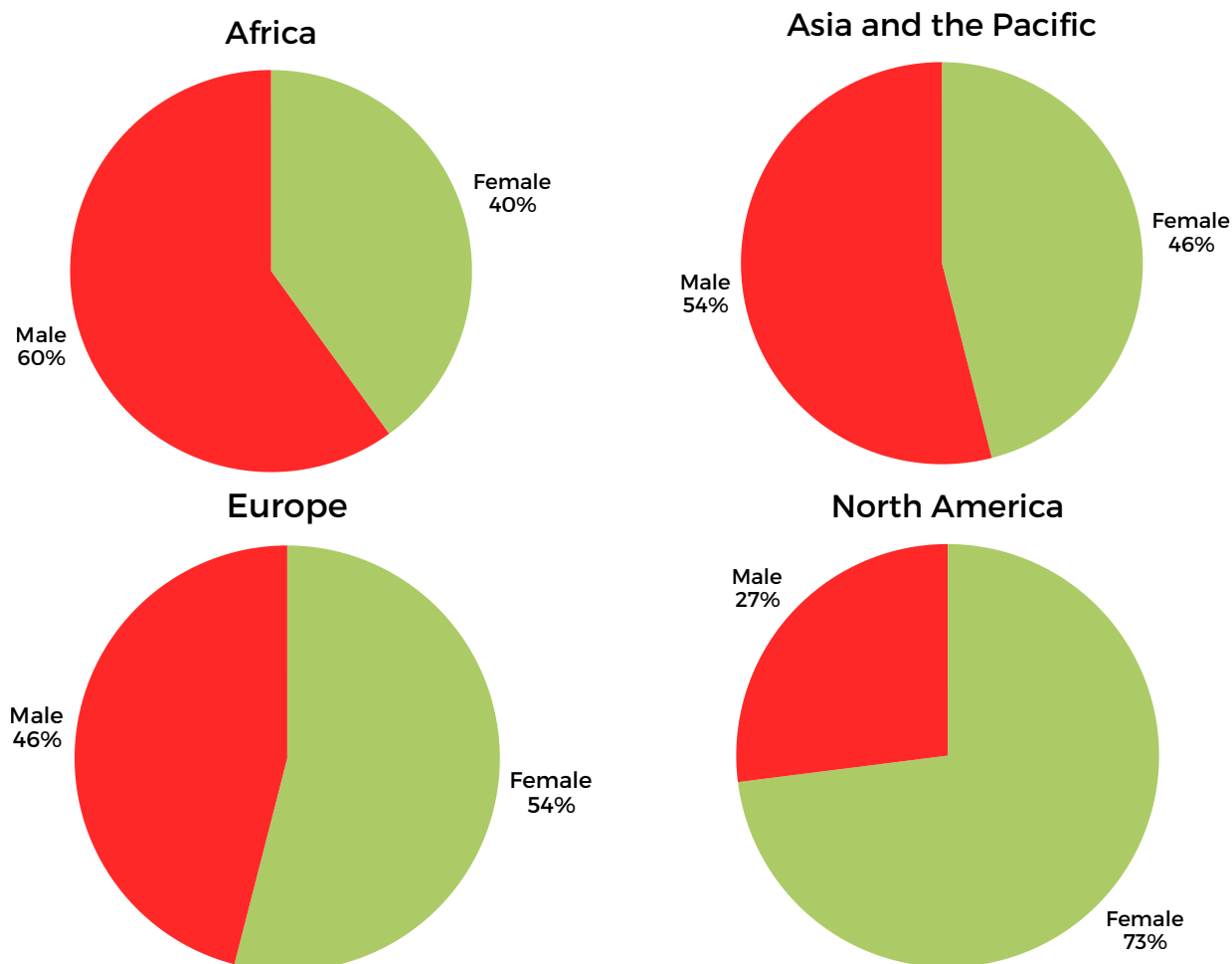
Regional Distribution in Party Delegations

By region, the gender distribution of Party delegations reveals uneven patterns of representation. Women delegates formed a majority in Europe (101 compared to 87 men), Latin America and the Caribbean (66 compared to 44 men), and North America (8 compared to 3 men). By contrast, men continued to predominate in Africa (74 compared to 50 women) and in the Asia-Pacific region (76 compared to 64 women). These disparities highlight persistent structural imbalances and underscore the need for dedicated funding, and supportive policies to strengthen women's participation in regions where they remain underrepresented. See *Figure 2*. An examination of high-level delegates, such as Ministers, Ambassadors, and Heads of Delegation, at COP16 reveals gender disparities across regions. While Latin America and the Caribbean (60% women) and Europe (55.6% women) achieved female majorities in these senior decision-making roles, women were entirely absent from high-level delegations in Africa, Asia-Pacific, and North America. This indicates that, although women are increasingly present in overall participation, their representation in leadership spaces remains uneven.

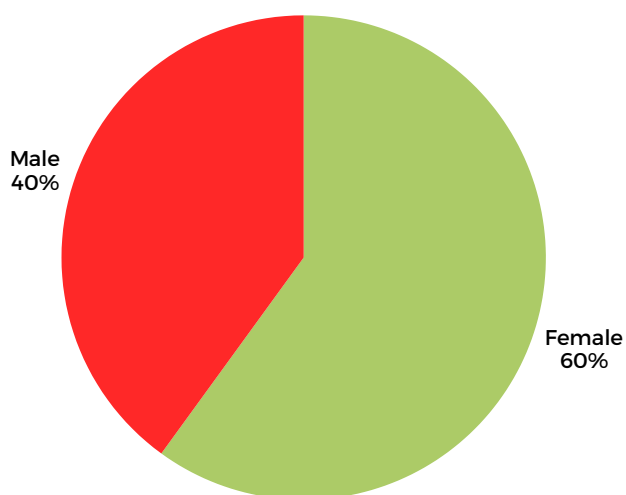
Table 1. High level delegates across regions by sex

Region	Female	Male	% Female	% Male
Africa	0	3	0%	100%
Asia and the Pacific	0	1	0%	100%
Europe	5	4	56%	44%
Latin America & the Caribbean	6	4	60%	40%
North America	0	1	0%	100%

Figure 2. Regional delegations by sex



Latin America and the Caribbean



Note: The uneven regional sex distribution among Party delegations at COP16, reveal that despite overall progress towards gender balance in global biodiversity governance, persistent regional disparities continue to limit the realization of full and equitable participation.

Participation by Category

This shows that while women made up a majority overall, their representation varied significantly across groups. Women were strongly represented in academia (69.2%), NGOs (62.1%), and youth (62.5%), and parity was achieved among Indigenous Peoples and local community organizations (50%). By contrast, observers and governmental organizations were exclusively or predominantly male, reflecting persistent gender gaps in specific categories. This highlights that women's participation is not evenly distributed, with certain entry points to biodiversity governance still structurally dominated by men

Table 2. Participants by category by sex

Category	Female	Male	% Female	% Male
Academia and research	9	4	69.2%	30.8%
Business and industry organisations	7	5	58.3%	41.7%
Indigenous Peoples & Local Community organisations	21	21	50.0%	50.0%
Intergovernmental organisations	17	14	54.8%	45.2%
Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)	95	58	62.1%	37.9%

Observer	0	6	0.0%	100.0%
Party	289	284	50.4%	49.6%
Non-Parties	1	3	25.0%	75.0%
Governmental organisations	0	1	0.0%	100.0%
Subnational and local authorities	1	0	100.0%	0.0%
United Nations & specialised agencies	29	25	53.7%	46.3%
Youth	10	6	62.5%	37.5%
Total	479	427	52.9%	47.1%

The analysis of the participation at COP16 reveals both progress and persisting challenges. On the one hand, women represented a slight majority overall, which aligns with the mandate of Target 23 to ensure full, equitable, meaningful, and informed participation. However, disparities remain pronounced across regions, categories of participation, and especially in high-level decision-making spaces, where women's presence is still limited. Ensuring that participation translates into decision-making is key. Gender parity in numbers does not automatically equate to equality in influence. Representation in leadership roles and

negotiation spaces is critical for women to shape the outcomes of global biodiversity policy.

Key Recommendations:

- Reduce the gaps in women's participation across regions by providing financial support and creating enabling conditions to increase the presence of women leaders in regions where participation has not been equitable. At the same time, promote women's leadership in high-level decision-making positions.
- Strengthening monitoring by integrating gender-disaggregated

- indicators into national reports and review processes, in line with the KM-GBF and the GPA.
- Including gender-responsive frameworks and financing, to promote women's equal influence in biodiversity governance.

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the Rio Conventions. However, considering that the KM-GBF calls for the whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach and the GPA (2022-2030) lays out a comprehensive framework for achieving gender-responsive implementation of the framework by a range of actors, including Parties, and that the GPA (2023-2030), it is vital for this review to be comprehensive.

The final decision (CBD/COP/DEC/16/35) recognises the importance of strengthening cooperation and creating synergies between all relevant conventions, organisations, and initiatives to support and achieve global biodiversity goals. It encourages deeper collaboration between the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and the Science-Policy Interface of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

The decision further invites the governing bodies of the chemicals and waste conventions, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, including the Global Framework on Chemicals – For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste, among others, to collaborate with the three Rio Conventions on the implementation of Target 7 of the KM-GBF, which focuses on reducing pollution to levels that are not harmful to biodiversity. This collaboration is particularly relevant to strengthen the connection between the CBD and the Minamata Convention on Mercury. Mercury contamination is a global threat to biodiversity, ecosystems, and human health, with a disproportionate impact on women.



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Women are especially vulnerable because mercury exposure can affect their health and can also be passed on to their children during pregnancy and breastfeeding¹. The Minamata Convention has already developed a Gender Action Plan to address this issue, and it presents an important opportunity to build synergies with the Gender Plan of Action under the CBD. Aligning these two action plans can help ensure the mid-term review based on the information received from Parties and the support of other relevant partners. It would be crucial for the Secretariat to draw up a methodology that allows maximum participation in the mid-term review, which is missing from the decision text.

Agenda Item 11: Resource mobilisation and Financial Mechanism

Resource Mobilisation