

Ecological Justice and the Importance of Indigenous Territories for the Preservation of Biodiversity in the Face of a Climate Emergency

Letícia Albuquerque

In December 2022, the Fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity (COP15) adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (Kunming-Montreal Agreement). The agreement is considered a new landmark for the protection of biodiversity due to its ambitious goals and established a new legal, ethical, and environmental bases. The goals of the agreement aim to prevent the extinction of up to one million species of fauna and flora. Concentrating on goal number three (protection of 30 percent of biodiversity by 2030; recognizing and respecting the rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities) and goal number seven (reduction of the use of pesticides), my project sets out to investigate the role of Brazil and the European Union in adopting and implementing these goals. In the opening statement of COP15, the representative of Brazil argued that, as a megadiverse country, Brazil plays a fundamental role in halting and reversing biodiversity loss.

However, the history of rights violations of Indigenous peoples and the recent alarming rate of deforestation in the state shows that more effective measures than declarations of good intentions are needed for Brazil to reach the goals set out in the agreement. The production of animals for human consumption (meat production) increases the pressure of human activities on Brazil's different biomes and on Indigenous territories, with an increasing number of pastures—even though mining, among other activities, is also threatening the biomes. Data points to increased deforestation due to pastures and meat production in the areas that need to be protected. Thus, one of the challenges for Brazil regarding the goals of the Kunming-Montreal Agreement, specifically in relation to goal number three, is: the achievement of an increase in conservation areas and restoration of already degraded areas, while respecting the rights of Indigenous peoples, despite this data.

In addition to the challenges that this activity poses for the implementation of goal number three of the agreement, there are challenges to goal number seven. Contamination of the environment by pesticides and violence against small farmers and Indigenous people increase the challenge to achieve the goal. The report prepared by the Missionary Indigenous Council (CIMI) *Violence against the Indigenous Peoples of Brazil: Data from 2021* points out that there has been an intensification of violence and violations against Indigenous peoples in Brazil, with an increase in invasions and attacks against communities and leaders. This intensification of conflicts is reflected in the territories and in the institutional environment of the offensive against the constitutional rights of the First Peoples.

The issue of the use of pesticides is a key point in the Kunming-Montreal Agreement and caused an impasse between the European bloc and the bloc of agricultural countries, such as Brazil, during the COP15 negotiations. The European Union, led by France, insisted on the withdrawal of harmful subsidies, with the aim of putting the world in line with the European agenda that provides for the reduction in the use of pesticides by 2030. Agricultural countries such as Brazil, Argentina, and Indonesia were opposed, and, in the end, the agreement was accepted after some adaptations. Brazil is one of the world's largest consumers of pesticides, which represents a challenge for the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal goals. Pesticides have also been used for forced displacement from areas of interest through aerial spraying in rural and traditional communities, rural settlements, and Indigenous communities. Additionally,

pesticides disproportionately affect vulnerable populations due to the regulatory and corporate double standard that shifts chemical pollution from countries in the Global North to peripheral countries. Through this perspective, the project will examine the interplay between ecological justice, climate emergency, and the achievement of the goals of the agreement, especially through the analysis of goals number three and seven. The project is relevant considering the importance of the Kunming-Montreal Agreement for life on the planet and the ambitious goals established.

Leticia Albuquerque is at the RCC both as a Landhaus fellow and a member of the [Speak4Nature](#) project.