

The Planet is in Crisis, and We All Have A Part To Play - Charity Calls for Refocus and Rethink Around COP16

Saturday 19 October, 2024

"Forests that once teemed with life are disappearing. Coral reefs, once vibrant and full of colour, are turning barren. Animals worldwide are being pushed out of their homes, and weather patterns are becoming more erratic and extreme. The consequences of climate change and biodiversity loss are devastating ecosystems across the globe. From rising sea levels to catastrophic wildfires, floods, and droughts, the changing climate is destroying habitats and putting immense pressure on species already on the brink."

These are the stark words of Gavin Bruce, CEO of International Animal Rescue (IAR), calling on everyone from global leaders to citizens everywhere to 'Refocus and rethink' as COP16 approaches.

COP16 occurs from 21 October to 1 November 2024 in Cali, Colombia. This United Nations conference represents a critical moment to halt biodiversity loss and tackle the growing climate emergency. COP16 allows the world to assess the progress made since the landmark Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework in 2022 and push forward with urgent action to protect the planet.

The crisis is especially dire for coastal ecosystems like mangroves and coral reefs. Rising sea levels and ocean acidification devastate these fragile environments, while inland areas suffer from increasingly severe droughts and floods. Entire ecosystems that once supported diverse wildlife are being destroyed at an alarming rate.

Gavin Bruce, International Animal Rescue, continues: *"Rising sea levels threaten coastal mangroves, the critical habitat for many species and protection for coastal erosion. In Armenia, we've seen firsthand how unpredictable weather patterns affect local wildlife. In Costa Rica, we've seen an influx of injured animals being brought to us after their habitats are destroyed by natural disasters linked to climate change."*

"But although it often feels like it, real change doesn't just come from high-level negotiations. It comes from the small actions we take every day. It's not just up to governments; each of us has the power to make a difference. Every sustainable product we choose, the effort we make to reduce waste and recycle, and every conservation project we support brings us closer to the world we want to see. One of the most powerful things we can all do is think before we buy. Every purchase is an opportunity to support a more sustainable, nature-friendly future. COP16 is more than a diplomatic event—it's a wake-up call for us all to think and use our power of choice before it's too late."

"At International Animal Rescue, we are taking action to combat both biodiversity loss and climate change. We're restoring mangroves in Indonesia to protect coastlines and create safe habitats for wildlife. In Armenia, we're rescuing endangered brown bears from captivity and releasing them into safe environments where they can thrive. In Costa Rica, we're rehabilitating injured animals, many of whom have been displaced by extreme weather events and returning them to the wild. Our conservation education programmes deliver knowledge so that the next generation is informed to do better."

International Animal Rescue's (IAR) conservation work is grounded in collaboration with local communities because we believe that protecting the planet starts with empowering the people who depend on these ecosystems. Together, we can restore degraded landscapes, protect endangered species, and help communities adapt to the changing climate.

The final word from Gavin: *"International Animal Rescue believes that we can still turn the tide with strong action. The future of our planet's biodiversity and life as we know it depends on the choices we make today. At COP16, we must hold leaders to their promises and think about what one thing we can do today to protect and restore our fragile ecosystems. Let's work together to give our planet and all its inhabitants a fighting chance. Let's make peace with nature."*

Watch our urgent call to action video 'Refocus & Rethink' here <https://bit.ly/IAR-Refocus-Rethink-COP16>

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