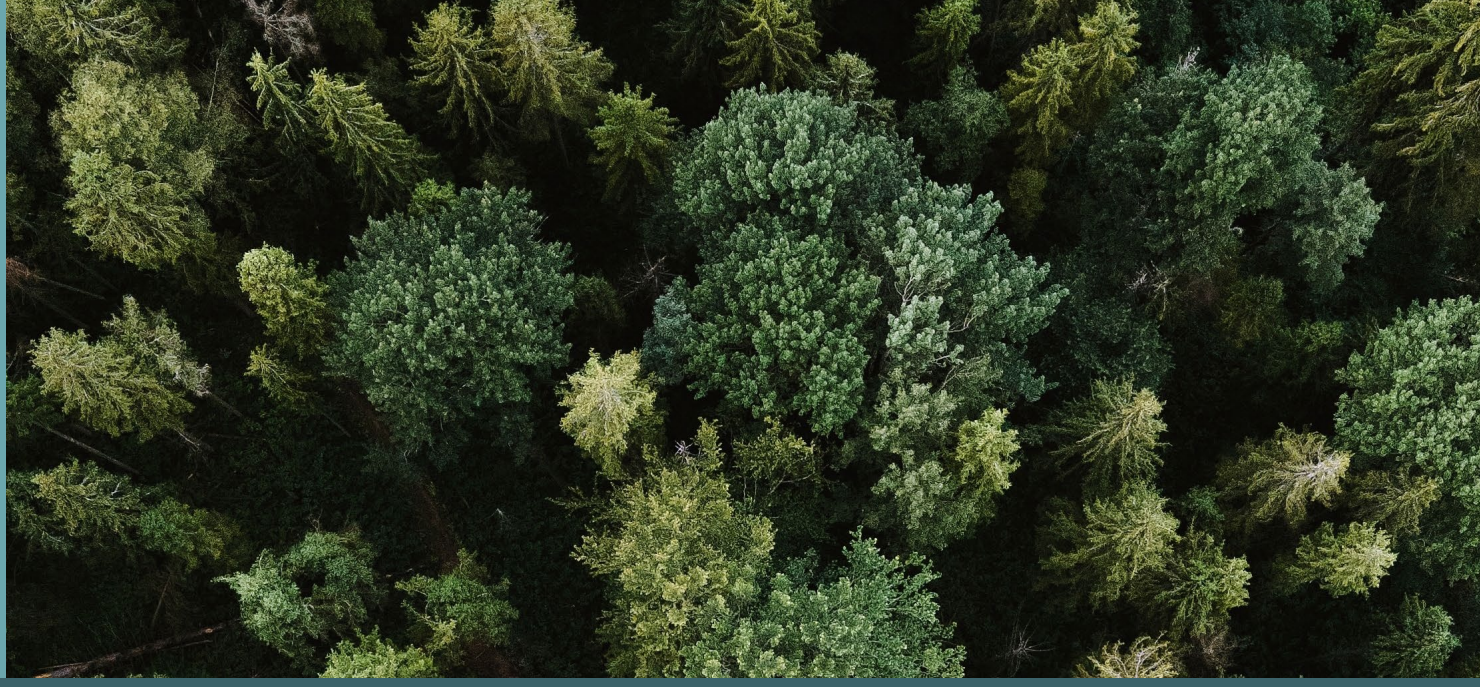
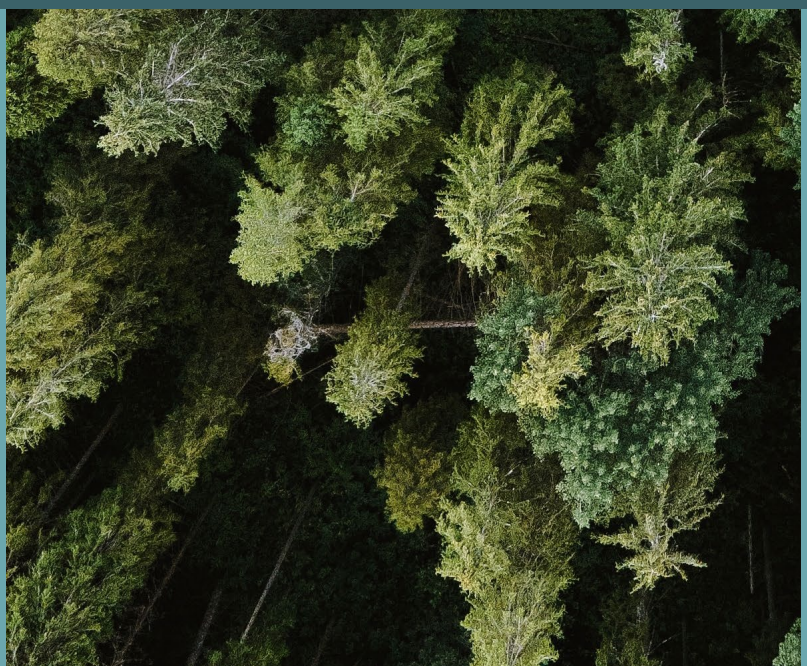


EMBEDDING CLIMATE-BIODIVERSITY SYNERGIES WITHIN THE UNFCCC
A POLICY BRIEF FOR COP28

SEPTEMBER 2023



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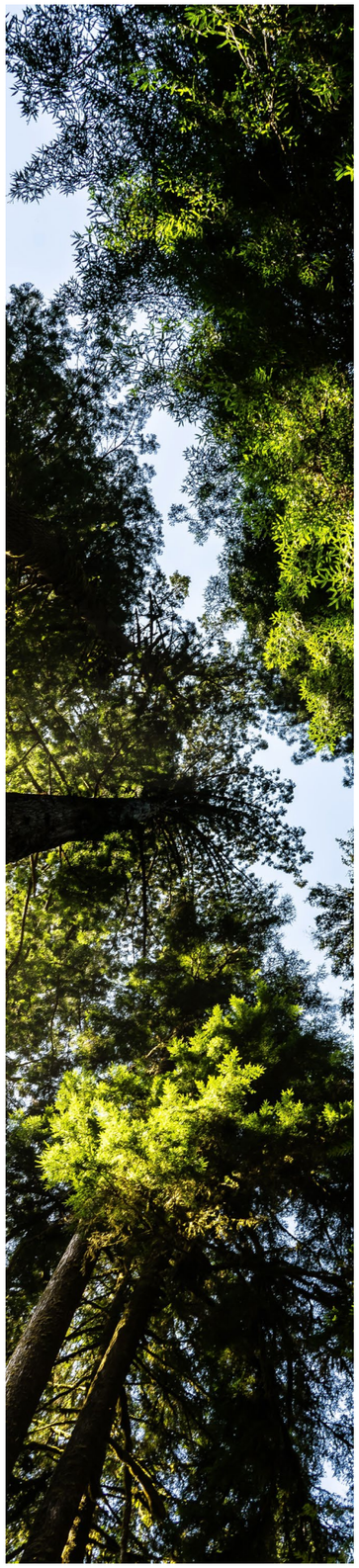

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CHALLENGE: Historically, the global crises of climate change and biodiversity loss have been addressed separately. However, not only do they share deeply interlinked underlying drivers but climate change, combined with land use change, is a major driver of biodiversity loss which in turn contributes to further climate change and reduces resilience to its impacts. This was highlighted in the first joint report of the IPBES and IPCC[1], which stated that **neither climate change or biodiversity loss, "will be successfully resolved unless both are tackled together."**

OPPORTUNITY: Following the agreement of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) at the COP15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in December 2022, there is now a critical opportunity to ensure that this integrated approach is embedded in the outcomes of the UNFCCC COP28 and beyond[2].

Here we highlight ten critical actions that can help achieve this, including addressing the indirect drivers of climate change and biodiversity loss; aligning national planning on climate and biodiversity, i.e. harmonizing Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs); and strengthening and robustly safeguarding the use of nature-based solutions to address both climate change and biodiversity loss in a holistic rights-based way.

NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS (NbS) involve working with nature, as part of nature, to address societal challenges while bringing benefits to people and biodiversity locally[3].

They are "actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems, which address social, economic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human well-being, ecosystem services and resilience and biodiversity benefits" [4]

NbS are essential for adapting to and mitigating climate change, protecting biodiversity and enhancing resilience. However, poorly designed NbS can have adverse impacts. Moreover, it is crucial that investing in NbS doesn't replace the necessity of keeping fossil fuels in the ground. Failing to do so risks turning the biosphere from a carbon sink to a source due to increased extreme events in a warmer world. NbS effectiveness hinges on their careful, evidence-based implementation, as misuse can lead to greenwashing, human rights violations, and biodiversity threats. At COP28, prioritizing high-integrity NbS aligned with the IUCN Global Standard is paramount, ensuring they don't justify inaction on emission reductions.

BIODIVERSITY is the diversity of life from the level of gene to the level of ecosystem, i.e. it is a property of the living world. Decades of research have shown that biodiversity helps secures the flow of the many different benefits humans derive from natural ecosystems. In other words, the more biodiverse an ecosystem, the more able it is to store carbon, reduce flood risk, provide clean air and water, medicines, and support food security and cultural and spiritual values, especially in the face of change. Therefore, strategies and actions to address environmental challenges, including NbS, must support or enhance biodiversity locally to be resilient in a rapidly changing world.

[1] The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) co-created a workshop report on biodiversity and climate change in 2021.
[2] See the full Primer, on which this brief is based, for further details, including a history of the CBD, the outcomes of COP15, the GBF goals and targets, and elaboration on the recommendations. .
[3] Seddon (2022) Harnessing the potential of nature-based solutions for mitigating and adapting to climate change. Science. https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.abn9668
[4] At the resumed fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA 5.2) held in February 2022 in Nairobi, the Assembly adopted resolution 5/5 of 2 March 2022, entitled "Nature-based solutions for supporting sustainable development". The resolution provides the first multilaterally agreed definition of nature-based solutions.

KEY INSIGHTS

GETTING TO THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM: TACKLING COMMON AND INDIRECT DRIVERS

To meet the 2030 and 2050 goals set by the UNFCCC and CBD, we must address the shared drivers of climate change and biodiversity loss. Climate change is a critical driver of biodiversity loss, while land use change (primarily driven by commercial forestry and agriculture) contributes around 21% of greenhouse gas emissions and is the dominant driver of land-based biodiversity loss. Meanwhile, in oceans, interlinked drivers such as warming, direct exploitation, ocean acidification, and pollution stress marine ecosystems[5].

These direct drivers are in turn underpinned by economic, sociocultural and institutional factors such as overconsumption, perverse incentives, harmful subsidies and waste. These can only be fully tackled by enabling transformative change[6] and transitioning to a nature-positive economy that prioritises wellbeing over material wealth. Addressing both direct and indirect drivers requires coordination across policy domains and recognition of time lags and spatial variations in the impact of these drivers.

MOVING BEYOND A 'NET-ZERO' FOCUS TO ESTABLISH A NEW AGENDA ON BIODIVERSITY FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET

Moving forward requires first that we recognise the deep embeddedness of society in nature, and that **biodiverse ecosystems holds multiple values for diverse communities** including as a source of livelihoods, wellbeing and cultural or spiritual identity. If local rights and knowledges are ignored, then any intervention is not only unjust, but its robustness and resilience are likely to be lost.

We need to get beyond solely focusing on nature's role in climate change mitigation and achieving net-zero. **While NbS are valuable for mitigating climate change, with the potential to reduce peak warming by 0.1-0.3°C, they must complement the phase-out of fossil fuels** to prevent the biosphere from shifting from a carbon sink to a source due to increased extreme events in a warmer world. Investors in NbS must therefore prioritise rapid decarbonization to avoid greenwashing and delaying action on fossil fuel phase-out. A narrow focus on net-zero also overlooks the role of NbS in enhancing adaptive capacity to climate change effects. **Acknowledging NbS's critical role in supporting climate change adaptation is crucial at UNFCCC COP28.**

Climate action should also support a 'nature positive' approach, preventing compromises on biodiversity objectives. Potential trade-offs must be acknowledged and limited with safeguards. For instance, trade-offs can occur between carbon sequestration, resilience, biodiversity and human rights in situations where trees are being planted in monocultures or inappropriate places resulting in unhealthy ecosystems and maladaptation, or when Indigenous People and Local Communities (IPLCs) are excluded from their lands and livelihoods.

ALIGNING CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY ACTION

The UNFCCC and CBD, established separately to address global environmental concerns, have evolved over three decades. Urgency and scientific consensus now highlight the imperative of aligning their efforts. The Glasgow Climate Pact at COP26 emphasises harmonising climate action with global biodiversity goals to achieve the Paris Agreement targets. COP27's Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan stresses the comprehensive and sustainable approach needed for addressing climate and biodiversity in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals. However, while NbS were included in the UNFCCC decision text for the first time in COP27, they were narrowly associated with forests, overlooking their applicability in all ecosystems and their key role in climate adaptation. Progress in integrating climate and biodiversity action remained limited in both COPs. COP28 should recognise the necessity of aligning these conventions, including the GBF, and acknowledge NbS across all ecosystems, highlighting their crucial role in adaptation.

In the CBD, the GBF aims for coherence between the biodiversity convention and other multilateral agreements. It integrates climate change into specific action targets, with five key dynamics:

1. Joint tackling of climate change and biodiversity, including through NbS (Targets 8 & 11)
2. Direct biodiversity contributions to climate mitigation and adaptation (Targets 1, 2, 3, 6 & 12)
3. Targeted actions addressing underlying causes of biodiversity and climate change (7, 10, 12, 15, 16 & 18)
4. Biodiversity action's financing implications for climate change (Target 19)
5. Mainstreaming biodiversity presents climate opportunities and challenges (Targets 14, 22, 23).

Despite this significant inclusion of climate change in the GBF, negotiations on formally aligning the two issues within the CBD remained fraught. At COP15, the Agenda Item 23 on Biodiversity and Climate Change ended as a disappointment to many, as agreement could not be found on the text and negotiations broke down, resulting in a largely empty text and pushing back this decision to COP16 in 2024. However, significant progress can be made at COP28 to resolve some issues around this and to further negotiations and parties' positions on the alignment of climate and biodiversity agendas.

[5] IPBES (2019) Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. IPBES Secretariat, Paris.
[6] Transformative change is "fundamental, society-wide reorganization across technological, economic and social factors and structures, including paradigms, goals and values". Visseren-Hamakers & Kok (2022). The Urgency of Transforming Biodiversity Governance. Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency. Cambridge University Press.

TEN CRITICAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCING ACTION ON CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY AT COP28

EMBEDDING A TRIPLE WIN AGENDA FOR CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY AND SOCIETY WITHIN THE UNFCCC

1. **STRENGTHEN AND SAFEGUARD THE USE OF NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS (NBS):** Embed NbS as a holistic response to address climate adaptation, mitigation, biodiversity protection, whilst bringing multiple societal (including economic) benefits. However, this must only be done in tandem with the adoption of robust social and ecological safeguards which ensure that NbS do not result in exploitation, human-rights violations, harm to biodiversity, or greenwashing as a distraction from the need to phase out fossil fuels.

2. **ADDRESS INDIRECT DRIVERS:** Endorse or translate key GBF targets relating indirect drivers including on sustainable production and consumption, pollution reduction and phasing out harmful subsidies into the UNFCCC to harmonise action on indirect drivers of climate change and biodiversity loss.

3. **ALIGN NATIONAL PLANNING:** Harmonise the development of national action plans, particularly NDCs and NAPs in the UNFCCC and NBSAPs in the CBD, for more efficient and effective outcomes.

4. **COMMON STRATEGIC ROADMAP ON FINANCE:** Establish a common reporting platform to account for non-state and subnational actors' financial commitments on climate and biodiversity, to avoid double counting, ensure additionality, and promoting long-term investment plans at the national level.

5. **TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE FOCUS:** While transformative change is at the heart of the GBF and CBD, it is not yet so within the UNFCCC. COP28 could emphasise the central importance of transformative change and adopt stronger language inspired by the GBF especially regarding diversity and inclusion of IPLCs, women and youth.

SUPPORTING THE ACTION AGENDA FOR CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY

6. **BRING BIODIVERSITY INTO THE RACE TO ZERO (RTZ) AND RACE TO RESILIENCE (RTR):** Embed actions aligned with GBF targets within the RtZ and RtR initiatives. While stronger safeguards for biodiversity in the RtZ are urgently needed, the lack of emphasis on biodiversity and NbS in the RtR is particularly problematic, as biodiversity underpins the resilience of the flow of the many ways nature supports people, including our ability to adapt to climate change.

7. **JOINT MEMBERSHIP OF UNFCCC & CBD ACTION AGENDAS:** Building on the stronger emphasis on non-state action in the UNFCCC, the High-Level Champions could encourage organisations to also join initiatives for biodiversity action (e.g. CitiesWithNature).

8. **COMMON REPORTING PLATFORM:** Create a common reporting platform, harmonising existing efforts, to ensure greater accountability of non-state actors' pledges across climate and biodiversity. COP28 could initiate such a platform, endorsing the UNFCCC and CBD to develop it.

9. **DEVELOP SHARED PRINCIPLES FOR FINANCING:** Create shared principles for public and private investment in actions that support climate, biodiversity, and societal outcomes, supporting the mainstreaming of biodiversity and climate into all fiscal and financial flows.

10. **SUPPORT UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR SYSTEM:** Use the UN Resident Coordinator System's convening power to align policies and plans for climate, biodiversity, and the SDGs within a national context, fostering collaboration and innovative initiatives, embedding a 'whole of society' approach.

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER 'LIVING INDUS' INITIATIVE

During COP15, Pakistan's climate change minister announced the multi-stakeholder 'Living Indus' Initiative, which aims to restore and protect the currently degraded Indus Basin. Pakistan, and its Indus basin are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, illustrated by the severe floods in 2022. The large-scale restoration project of the 'lifeline' of Pakistan seeks to enhance the Indus' ecological health and flood resilience. As a so-called 'umbrella' initiative, it aims to mobilise and scale-up new and existing projects and ideas, by engaging with and consulting the public and private sector, academics, aera-specific experts and civil society. This has resulted in a 'living' menu of 25 interventions, including NbS and ecosystem-based approaches, aiming to protect, conserve and restore Indus' ecosystems. As a 'living' list of contributions - including urban forests, promoting permaculture and watershed management along the Indus - these interventions are expected to evolve over time, together aiming to contribute to a healthier, more adaptive and resilient Indus Basin.

The contributors to this policy brief are: Harriet Bulkeley, Sander Chan, Anouk Fransen, Audrey Wagner, Nathalie Seddon and Marcel Kok.

This briefing is based on:

Bulkeley et al. (2023) Building Synergies Between Climate & Biodiversity Governance: A Primer for COP28. 2023.

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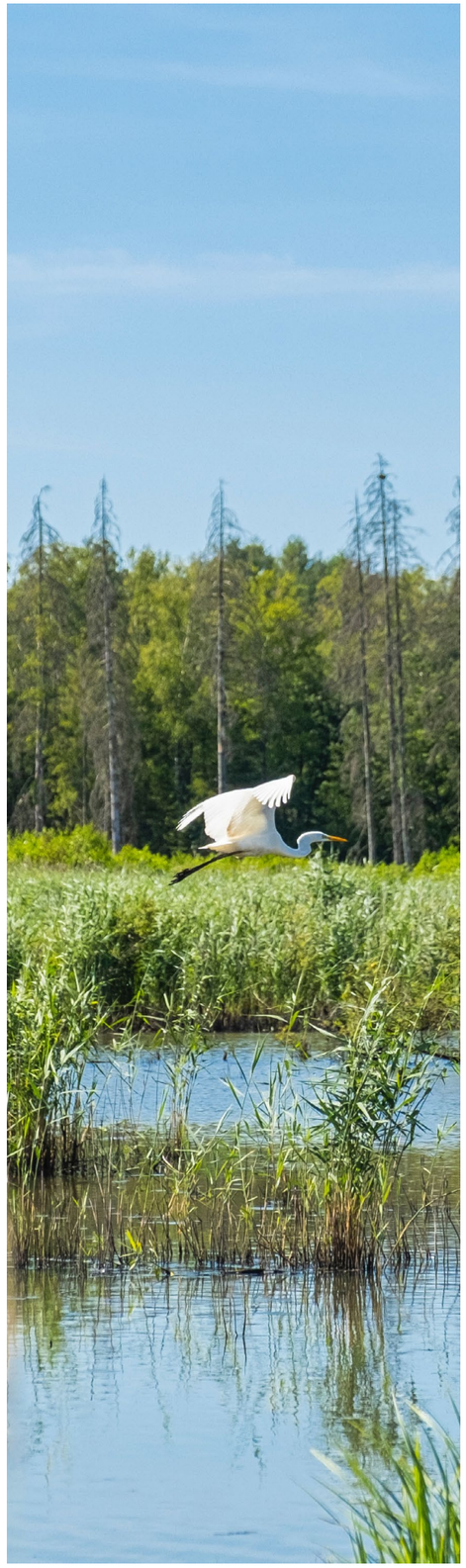

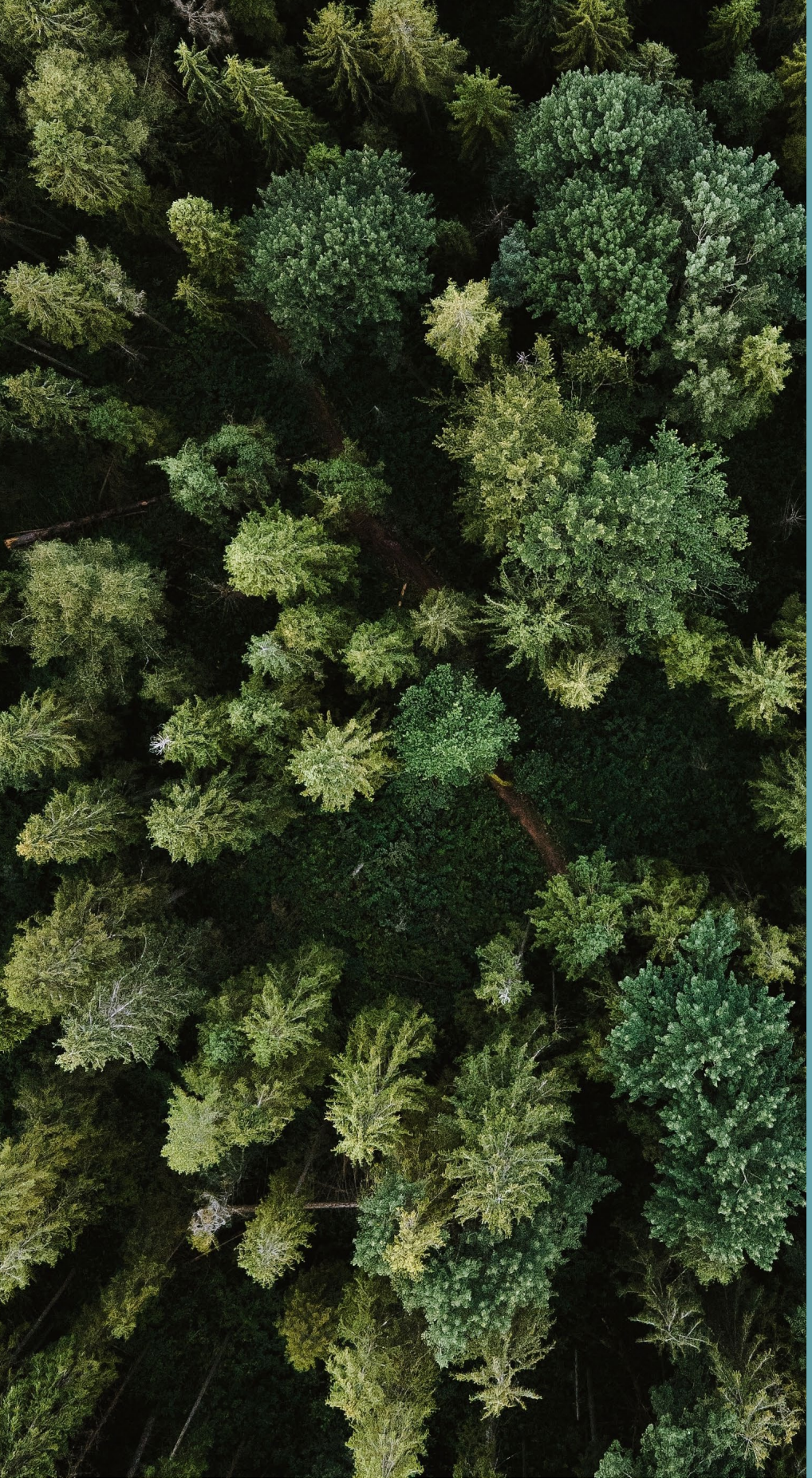

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