



RANGERS:

A WORKFORCE VITAL FOR ACHIEVING
SUCCESS IN CONSERVATION

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) COP16

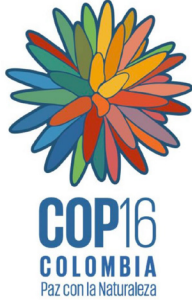
Cali, Colombia

CONTENT

INTRO	3
PERU	4
COLOMBIA	6
MEXICO	8
ANNEX 1	10



INTRO



Sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP16)

It was the first COP after the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) in 2022. The theme of the meeting was "Peace With Nature".

The International Ranger Federation (IRF), the Universal Ranger Support Alliance (URSA), and the ICCF Group hosted the event ***Rangers: A Workforce Vital for Achieving Success*** in Conservation at the British House on October 24th during COP16 of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Cali, Colombia. The event brought together Conservation Caucus members from across Latin America, including House Representative Julia Miranda from Colombia, Congresswoman Karol Paredes from Peru, and former Congresswoman Edna Díaz from Mexico, along with leading conservation experts and ranger representatives.

The objective of the event was to share experiences from the legislative process in developing laws for rangers in different countries, allowing legislators to exchange key success factors and lessons learned with their international peers.

The event began with welcoming remarks from ICCF Group Vice President Jaime Cavelier, followed by a presentation by the IRF Development Officer Mónica Álvarez Malvido titled [*The Ranger Workforce Today: Highlights from the State of the Ranger Report*](#). This was followed by a presentation from the URSA Chair Mike Appleton on [*Rangers for the 30x30 Framework*](#) and the [*Ranger's Message to Cali*](#) by Juan Ivan Sánchez Bernal, President of the Ranger Association of Colombia. In his address, the President encouraged legislators to work towards stronger legislation that addresses the needs of the ranger workforce (see Annex 1 for more details on the presentations).

The second part of the event featured a panel discussion with the two current legislators from Colombia and Peru, along with the former

legislator from Mexico. They shared their experiences in working towards legislation that formally recognizes rangers, offering insights into how to initiate the legislative process, overcome challenges, and apply lessons learned to inspire other policymakers. The legislators emphasized the need for a robust legal framework to improve rangers' working conditions, thereby strengthening the financial sustainability of protected areas.

A central theme of the discussion was the importance of legislative action in establishing special labor regimes that formally recognize the role of rangers and allocate the necessary resources to allow rangers to be effective in their roles. Given the unique challenges rangers face in their daily fieldwork, their well-being is essential to the success of conservation initiatives. Participants also underscored the significance of international cooperation in ensuring that countries can effectively implement conservation programs in protected areas.

The discussion sessions highlighted successful policies supporting rangers and ongoing legislative initiatives, demonstrating how lawmakers contribute to overcoming conservation challenges in their respective countries. This exchange of ideas reinforced how well-crafted legislation can enhance rangers' working conditions, ensure effective ecosystem protection, and support the long-term financial sustainability of conservation efforts within protected areas.

¹ This event was co-funded by the GEF-funded and URSA partners, UNEP implemented project (ID10921): *Enhancing Political Will for Sustainable Protected Areas Financing*.

PERU. A CASE STUDY OF A COUNTRY WITH A LAW FOR RANGERS RECENTLY APPROVED.

“Rangers leave their families and personal lives behind to dedicate themselves to conserving natural resources. We need to recognize and value their role, and we must do so through concrete actions.”

- Karol Paredes, Congresswoman from Peru.

She shared her experience in passing a [law to benefit rangers](#) that while biodiversity loss and climate change remain primary concerns for parliamentarians, they are particularly troubled by illegal activities such as illegal mining, illegal logging, and organized crime—issues that rangers know well and face daily. Rangers often work alone, and when they lose their lives in the line of duty, there is no guarantee that justice will be served. They lack adequate training, safety, and protection.

Beyond legislation, Paredes stressed the need for organizations

dedicated to safeguarding the rights of rangers who work tirelessly to protect biodiversity. Ensuring their human rights and the well-being of their families is essential. A ranger who is treated with dignity and respect will have peace of mind, knowing their family is secure. She called for greater recognition of these individuals, true heroes in preserving natural resources.

Finally, she underscored the importance of collaboration, urging the legislative and executive branches, civil society, and relevant organizations to commit to protecting rangers and supporting

THREE SUGGESTED STEPS FOR PASSING A LAW RECOGNIZING RANGERS:

1



A coordinated work plan must be established between the legislative and executive branches.

2



Improving rangers' working conditions is impossible without legislation that guarantees the necessary financial resources.

3



The executive branch has the authority to allocate and manage these resources.

KEY INGREDIENTS OF SUCCESS

- Convincing and collaborating with the executive branch. In Peru, the Minister of Environment was persuaded that rangers needed to be recognized.
- Ensuring that ranger unions are included in the conversation. Their participation is essential to the process.
- Visibilizing that rangers are part of their communities, giving them unique skills and local knowledge that many others lack. Also, that they have invaluable insights as they understand their environment, their reality, and where the problems lie.

- Improving salaries and budgets must be prioritized through the executive branch.
- Regulating the law to ensure it is implemented. In Peru, it was officially regulated on October 11th of the current year.
- Persistence and political will are key to achieving lasting change.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Not involving relevant local groups at the beginning can complicate the process.

COLOMBIA. A CASE STUDY OF A COUNTRY WITH A PROJECT OF LAW FOR RANGERS THAT IS IN PROCESS.

"We are working on a much-needed law to protect those who protect nature. A protected area without proper management is not truly protected. We need rangers working on the ground every day to ensure the effectiveness of these areas. Their presence is essential to achieving positive results in preserving unique biodiversity and reducing its loss."

- Julia Miranda, House Representative from Colombia.

Julia Miranda shared her experiences and insights from the ongoing process of passing a law for rangers, titled *"Establishing a Specific Administrative Career System for Rangers of the Special Administrative Unit of National Natural Parks of Colombia."* The bill aims to:

- Establish a dedicated administrative career system to ensure the suitability, specialization, and professionalization of rangers as key actors in protected area management.
- Provide rangers with dignified and adequate working conditions, safeguarding their rights as public servants while enhancing their capacity to effectively fulfill their responsibilities.

She continued, *"We sought resources to hire the best legal and financial experts to assess the bill's fiscal viability. Most importantly, we collaborated closely with rangers, the national ranger association in Colombia, and the two ranger unions, alongside the Director of the National Parks Agency. We spent considerable time envisioning an ideal law for rangers and then refining it into a realistic and feasible proposal, drawing from international experiences. This was achieved through an extensive consultation process. Ultimately, we developed a viable bill with the strong support of committed legislators and stakeholders. Now, we have a real opportunity to pass a law that will benefit Colombian rangers, whose hands safeguard our country's biodiversity."*

Miranda reflected on her experience: *"I had the privilege of serving as the director of the National Natural Parks Agency in Colombia for 17 years, which allowed me to witness firsthand the reality of rangers. They are currently classified under the same labor regime as other public servants, expected to work an office schedule from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.—a system that does not reflect the demands of their work in the field. Because of this, I always dreamed of passing a law to improve their situation. When I entered Congress, drafting a bill for rangers was my first priority."*



CRITICAL STEPS TAKEN IN DRAFTING THE LAW

- Establishing specific working conditions and benefits for Colombia's ranger workforce, including early retirement and insurance coverage due to the high-risk nature of the occupation.
- Conducting a development analysis at the outset is essential to determine whether sufficient resources are available to finance the proposed measures.
- Evaluating the fiscal aspects and viability of the new law.
- Engaging in a thorough consultation process by studying international experiences. In this case, they examined models from the U.S., Spain, Canada, Costa Rica, Argentina, Peru, and others.
- Avoiding overstepping the executive branch. The responsibility should ultimately be passed to the national government to develop and formalize the law.
- Building alliances in Congress. Gaining support from all political parties, as has been done in Colombia, strengthens the bill's chances of success.
- Organizing field missions to bring decision-makers directly to the workplaces of rangers, allowing them to witness their challenges firsthand.

MEXICO. A CASE STUDY OF A COUNTRY WITH NO LEGISLATION ON RANGERS

“We have more protected areas, but no additional human or financial resources to support them. We also need to include the professionalization, recognition, and allocation of resources for rangers in our legislation.”

- Edna Díaz, former representative in the Mexican Congress.

She continued, *“In Mexico, more protected areas have been declared, but without the necessary resources or personnel to manage them. We must incorporate into Mexican legislation provisions for the professionalization of rangers, guarantee a continuous source of funding, and ensure the recognition of rangers, who are often undervalued and ignored.”*



FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The event concluded with a strong call for collaboration among governments and legislators to work closely with ranger organizations, ensuring the well-being of those who serve as the first line of defense for biodiversity. Key takeaways included the importance of bipartisan congressional support, executive cooperation, and the engagement of national protected area agencies, rangers, and other private or non-governmental entities involved in legislation and its implementation. Participants also emphasized the need to pair new laws with appropriate regulations and the financial resources necessary for effective enforcement.

- It is important to note that the three countries featured in the case studies are among the most dangerous for environmental defenders, many of whom are rangers. This helps to explain the urgency in recognizing the profession within legislation.
- The role of legislation in improving rangers' working conditions is crucial. It can help ensure the effective protection of ecosystems and the financial sustainability of conservation efforts within protected areas.
- Legislators from Peru and Colombia could become champions of the lessons learned through these processes, influencing other countries on different continents to follow their example.
- It is also suggested that this document be expanded with additional examples or case studies from other countries.
- A key question remains: How can the impact of these laws on rangers be measured?

Photo: COP16 side event: Rangers: a workforce vital for achieving success in conservation.



ANNEX 1. PRESENTATIONS

1. STATE OF THE RANGER REPORT FINDINGS.

MÓNICA ÁLVAREZ MALVIDO - IRF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER.

Some highlights of *State of the Ranger Report* on working conditions of rangers:

- Almost half of rangers feel they do not have the right resources to do their job
- Less than 40% of rangers have insurance and less than 60% have adequate health and safety training
- 40% believe their wages are insufficient to cover their basic needs
- 65% of employers do not feel the number of rangers operating in their area(s) is adequate.



Recommendations to Governments and Policymakers:

- Recognize rangers as essential planetary health workers and their crucial role in achieving global commitments. The ranger profession needs to be recognized by the International Labour Organization.
- Provide opportunities for rangers to become involved in decision-making processes.
- Allocate resources to increase the number of rangers with a diversity of skills.
- Support protected area agencies and organizations who employ or work with rangers to professionalize their workforce.

2. RANGERS FOR 30 BY 30 FRAMEWORK

MIKE APPLETON - UNIVERSAL RANGER SUPPORT ALLIANCE CHAIR.

The *Rangers for 30 by 30 Framework* defines essential requirements for Conditions, Conduct and Competence for a Workforce that is sufficient in numbers, diverse and recognized.

Rangers for 30 by 30 Framework



3. HYÈRES RANGER DECLARATION AND CALL TO CALL.

JUAN IVAN SÁNCHEZ BERNAL - PRESIDENT OF COLOMBIAN RANGER ASSOCIATION.

The [Hyères Ranger Declaration](#) (voice of 450 rangers from 88 countries) reaffirms the commitment from rangers to our shared Global targets adopted during COP15. In return, rangers call upon the CBD community to provide the necessary commitment and support to equip them with the resources needed to fully harness the potential of this often-overlooked conservation workforce.

Rangers urge governments, NGOs and ranger employers to endorse this message and demonstrate their support for rangers at COP16.

- Recognize rangers are Planetary Health Workers addressing the converging issues of climate change, biodiversity loss, and the spread of zoonotic diseases.
- There is the need for a professional, inclusive ranger and resourced workforce.
- There is a pressing need for ranger recognition, both at the national and international level.
- Competency and skill development for rangers is critical to achieving global conservation goals.
- Diversity and inclusivity in ranger roles must be actively promoted, including support for Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and women.
- The Code of Conduct and accountability measures for rangers are essential for professional integrity.
- Rangers' contributions to global biodiversity, climate objectives, and conservation finance must be recognized, along with their role in preserving cultural heritage.

Photo: 10th IRF World Ranger Congress at Hyères France (Photo: Ranjan Ramchandani - WWF)





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