

FIRST PLENARY SESSION

COALITION OF CITIES AND REGIONS UNITED FOR BIODIVERSITY: COALITION AGAINST ILLICIT ECONOMIES

September 30, 2025



SUPPORTED BY



Event Name:	First Plenary Session of the Coalition of United Cities and Regions for Biodiversity: Coalition Against Illicit Economies
Date and Place:	September 30, 2025 – Cali, Colombia
Duration:	3:30–6:30 p.m.
Responsible	Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC), in its role as Secretariat of the Coalition of United Cities and Regions for Biodiversity

Objective

Establish a strong institutional foundation, strengthen coordination among member cities, and give political visibility to the Coalition at the national and international levels.

In addition, the specific objectives were to approve the governance structure that defines the functioning of the coalition and guides collective decision-making, to adopt the first annual work plan, defining priorities and strategic actions, and to elect the presidency and vice-presidency, ensuring the leadership and sustainability of the Coalition.

Participants

Cities and regions present at the plenary session:

Charge	Name	City/Region
Mayor	Alejandro Éder	Cali, Colombia
Delegate	Fernando Xavier Cornejo Valdez	Guayaquil, Ecuador
Delegate	Michel Facundo Clua del Rivero	Panama City, Panama
Mayor	Ana Janniel Matarrita Mc Calla	Limón, Costa Rica
Delegate	Telmo Xavier Barrera Vidal	Cuenca, Ecuador
Mayor	Oleksandr Syenkevych	Mykolaiv, Ukraine
Delegate	Manuel Antonio Walter Conrado	Colon, Panama
Delegate	Yury Yessenia Borja Mosquera	Quibdó, Colombia
Delegate	Andre Silva Loureiro Godinho	Belém, Brazil
Delegate	Edgar Heredia	Manta, Ecuador
Delegate	Pollyana Bernardes	Amazon Cities Forum
Governor	Dilian Francisca Toro	Valle del Cauca, Colombia

Observers present at the plenary meeting:

Name	Organization
Ambassador George Hodgson	Embassy of the United Kingdom
Diego Quintero	UNODC
Alex Castro	TEFOS – Embassy of the United Kingdom
Mauricio Cabrera	Vice Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development



Angelica Mayolo	Technical Secretariat, Alliance for the Chocó Biogeographic Region
Juan Cristóbal Lloret	Province of Azuay
Andrés Velazco	CONALDEF
Caroline Pritchard	Embassy of the United Kingdom
Vladimir Chong Ríos	Maynas Province
Baltazar Avelino	Quezon City
Major Sacha Razmilic Burgos	Antofagasta

SUMMARY OF THE PLENARY SESSION

The session began with the welcoming words of the mayor of Cali, national authorities and international representatives, followed by the objectives of the session and the agenda of the meeting. The first point discussed the presentation of the governance structure, emphasizing the guiding principles of the Coalition (Results-based actions, voluntary participation, horizontal collaboration, transparency and trust, amplification of local voices, inclusiveness, evidence-based actions, non-partisan), the roles and functions within it (plenary, presidency, vice-presidency and technical secretariat), composition and election of each of them, among others.

Next, the governance structure was discussed and voted on, which was approved unanimously. This is the first collaborative agreement of the Coalition.

The second moment was the presentation of the action plan, which has three strategic lines: the identification of environmental damage by cities, multilateral spokesperson and the internal functioning of the Coalition and its sustainability. During the discussion of the action plan, it was suggested not only to focus on the diagnosis and identification of environmental damage, but also the collection and exchange of success stories. In strategic line two, there was a call for attention to the occupations of local representatives, so representations in multilateral advocacy spaces were limited to a maximum of three per year. Finally, the cities stressed the importance of increasing the coverage and representativeness of member cities as part of strategic line three. Once these changes were incorporated into the action plan, it was voted on and approved unanimously. Thus becoming the second collaborative agreement of the Coalition.

During the third moment, the election of the presidency and vice-presidency of the Coalition was held. The delegate of Panama City nominated Cali for the presidency, a nomination that was accepted by Mayor Alejandro Eder. Cali's nomination was then put into consideration, which was approved unanimously. Likewise, the mayor of Limón proposed the city of Mykolaiv for the vice presidency, this nomination was accepted by Mayor Oleksandr Syenkevych. After the acceptance, Mykolaiv's nomination was put to the plenary for consideration, which was also unanimously approved.

Thematic Presentation - Environmental Damage Caused by Organized Crime: Experts Marcena Hunter and Simone Haysom gave a presentation on the environmental impact generated by organized crime, emphasizing illegal extractive activities, and a preliminary explanation of a



methodological proposal that will be used within the framework of the coalition to carry out a self-assessment by member cities and regions was explained.

Later, the space was opened for the intervention of the members present. Each mayor shared experiences and initiatives in the face of the environmental impacts of organized crime and the motivations for joining the Coalition. Some experiences are shared below:

Quibdó	Problem: Illegal gold mining Experiences: commitment to the reconversion of forests in areas affected by illegal gold mining.
Mykolaiv	Problems: Amber mining and garbage trafficking resulting from the conflict Experiences: The possibility of transferring drone technologies used in the context of the conflict for environmental protection.
Basin	Problem: Debate about the carrying out of legal or illegal mining in protected areas of the municipality that represent 70% of Cuenca. Motivation: Learn from the experience of other cities in the coalition to contain illegal mining that may exist in the municipality.
Lemon	Problem: Impact on corals and maritime areas as a result of cocaine trafficking. Experiences: bets on blue economies and alternative development for fishing communities.
Blanket	Problem: trafficking and sale of illicit drugs. Experience: commitment to conversation as a prevention strategy.
Belem do Pará	Problem: cocaine trafficking and deforestation in the Amazon Experiences: articulation between the city and state governments to generate responses.
Cali	Problem: Illegal gold mining in the Farallones National Natural Park Experience: governance scheme between local governments, national government and law enforcement agencies for the closure of the illegal gold mine.

During the penultimate item on the agenda, the ratification of the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) as Technical Secretariat was put to the consideration of the members of the plenary. This proposal was accepted unanimously.

The session concluded with a summary of the agreements by the technical secretariat, and closing remarks by the Coalition's president, the Mayor of Cali, reaffirming the cities' commitment to collective action, regional cooperation and joint advocacy in global forums on the environment and governance.

COMMITMENTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The first plenary session marked a milestone in the establishment of the Coalition of United Cities and Regions for Biodiversity. The broad participation of mayors and observers demonstrated a strong commitment to addressing environmental challenges linked to organized crime. The adoption of the governance structure and action plan, as well as the first two collaborative agreements, provide a solid basis for coordinated action.



The participants emphasized the importance of expanding the number of members of the Coalition and seeking the representativeness of other global regions, strengthening its transnational reach, defining this commitment as the main objective of the presidency and vice-presidency for this period. Finally, the technical secretariat reaffirmed its role in providing continuous technical support to ensure the effective implementation of the approved objectives and the achievement of the desired impacts.

Participants agreed that the technical secretariat, with the support of member and observer cities, will represent the Coalition at upcoming multilateral events with the aim of inviting new cities to join and promote the goals set out in the action plan.

