

EVENT PROPOSAL

ROAD TO BELÉM:

Shaping the Future of Wetlands in the Climate Agenda



Gruppo dell'Alleanza Progressista dei
Socialisti e Democratici
al Parlamento europeo





Funded by the European Union.

Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or CINEA.

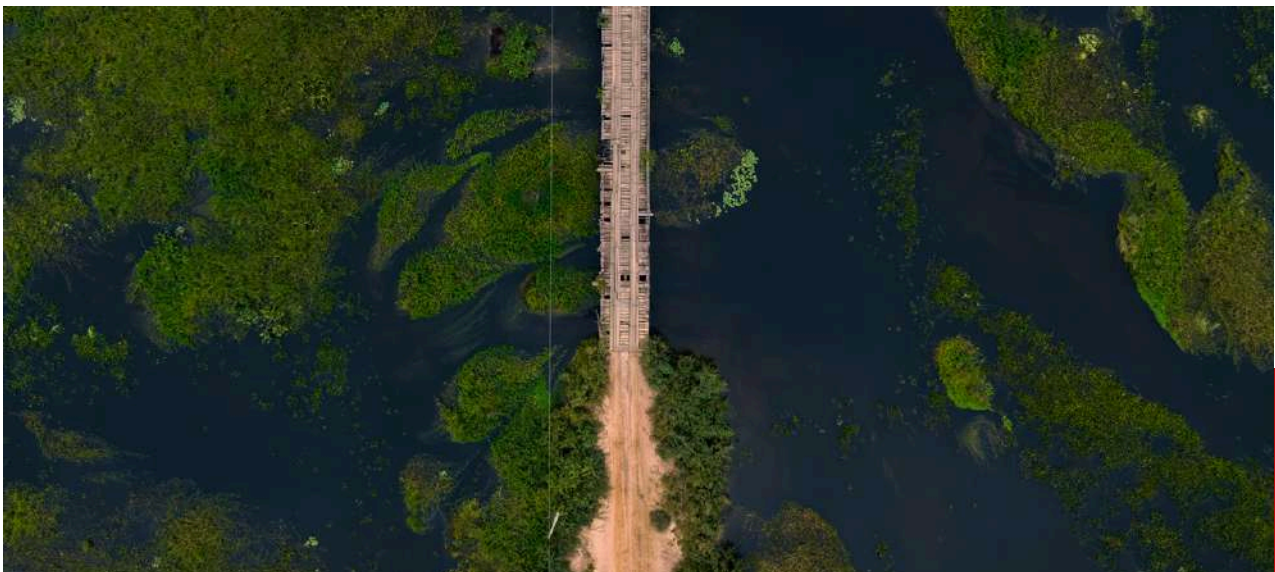
Neither the European Union nor CINEA can be held responsible for them.

Contact at the event:

Sean Paramore
sean.parramore@ejfoundation.org
+ 32 489 71 92 78

Matéo Vigné
mateo.vigne@ejfoundation.org
+ 33 781 88 59 07

Lea Appulo
lea.appulo@wetlands.org
+32 496.031996

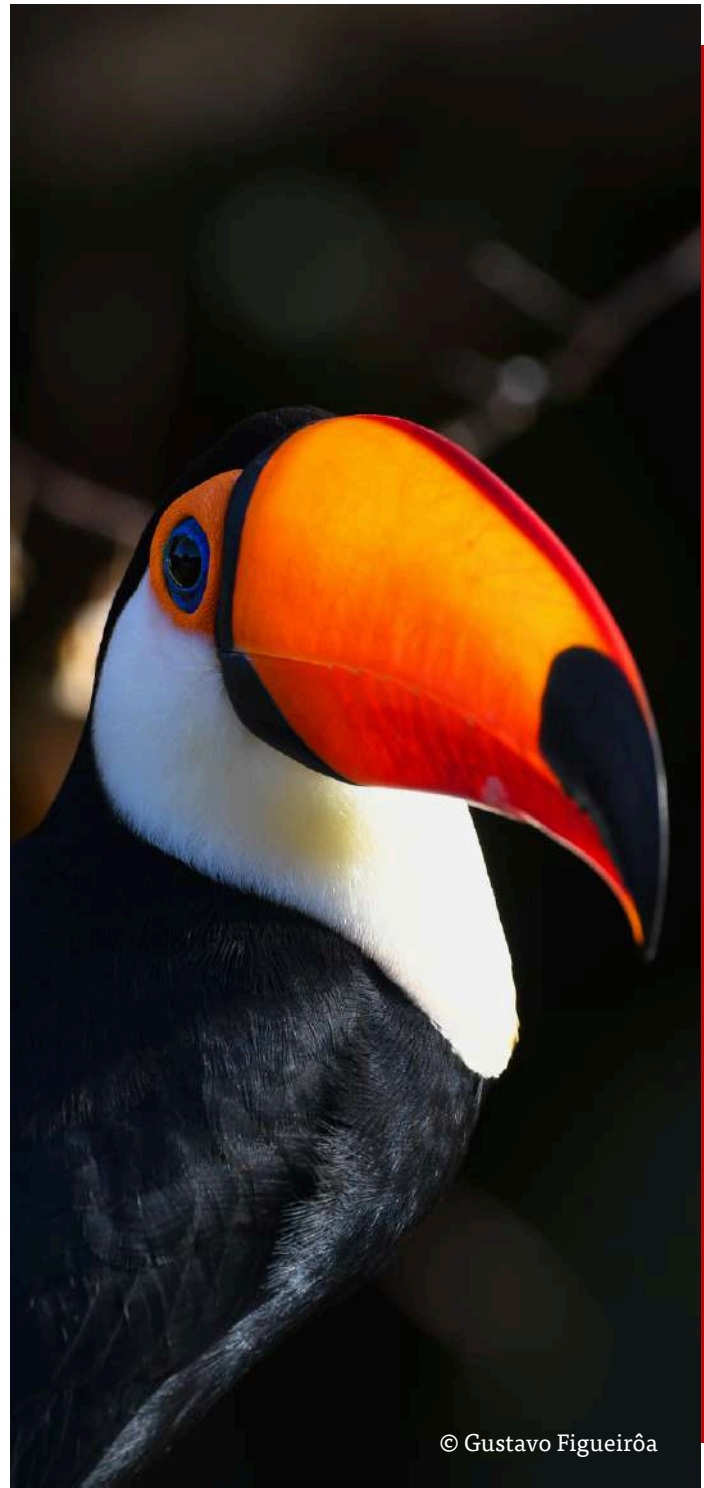




Thank you for your consideration to potentially collaborate on a public event on the protection of wetlands, provisionally entitled:

“Road to Belém: Shaping the Future of Wetlands in the Climate Agenda”.

This concept note includes event information, an overview of the logistics and an agenda with potential speakers, as well as sample pictures for a possible photo exhibition in and around the European Parliament.



© Gustavo Figueirôa

Event description:

An interactive discussion on the EU's role in protecting vital wetlands, with a special focus on the Pantanal, looking at how safeguarding these crucial ecosystems aligns with the global climate agenda as we prepare for COP30 in Belem, Brazil.

Date of event: September 24th, Brussels

Location: European Parliament, Room: Spinelli 3H1

Organising partners: The Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) has been working to expose environmental destruction and associated human rights abuses around the globe. EJF's on-the-ground investigations and films have exposed firsthand, shocking evidence of the destruction of global wetlands, particularly the Pantanal, and the links between this destruction, forced labour, and EU supply chains. EJF has called on the EU to collaborate with third countries to protect these crucial ecosystems, especially through Wetland Partnerships.

In cooperation with Instituto SOS Pantanal, a Brazilian non-profit that has been working in the Pantanal since 2009. Through advocacy and outreach campaigns at state and federal levels, SOS Pantanal influences public policy to ensure the long-term protection of the biome. SOS Pantanal has also pioneered restoration efforts within the biome alongside indigenous communities.

Chalana Esperança is a women-led project founded by four female biologists during the fires of 2020 in the Pantanal. The collective works with environmental education, women empowerment and social entrepreneurship in the Pantanal and its outskirts, with the core belief that the transformations needed at the largest tropical wetland on Earth will ultimately depend on the involvement and commitment of women and the younger generations.

Wetlands International Europe and Wetlands International Brazil are part of the global Wetlands International network, the only global not-for-profit organisation dedicated to the conservation and restoration of wetlands, including in the Pantanal. Wetlands International shares the same Global Strategy and works through its network of 20 offices, partners and experts and to achieve its goals. Our vision is a world where wetlands are treasured and nurtured for their beauty, the life they support and the resources they provide. We combine global and localised approaches. Together with partners, we are calling the EU to place wetlands at the heart of climate and biodiversity agendas through EU Wetland Partnerships.

Overview:

An afternoon to celebrate crucial wetlands, essential for their ecological richness and climate value, in a special gathering at the European Parliament. Wetlands are essential to all life on Earth, serving as home to nearly 40% of the world's plant and animal species and playing a vital role in climate regulation by absorbing 50 times more carbon than rainforests. They provide water, food and livelihoods for over 1 billion people globally. At a time when these critical biomes need urgent protection, guests will have the opportunity to learn about these precious ecosystems and how to protect them for future generations through a dedicated hearing with Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), followed by a photo exhibition and networking reception.

The hearing will bring together MEPs to emphasise the critical role of wetlands in combating global heating, ahead of COP30 in Belém, Brazil, in November 2025. This event aims to galvanise support for, and enhance understanding of the potential of Wetland Partnerships - international agreements in which the EU would support third countries to reverse wetland degradation, promote restoration and sustainable management, and enhance climate and biodiversity protection. There will be a particular focus on the Pantanal in Brazil - the world's largest tropical wetland - and the need for the EU and third countries to collaborate to conserve and sustainably manage this biome for the prosperity of the communities, including indigenous and traditional communities, that inhabit this globally significant wetland.





The photo exhibition will focus on the Pantanal, featuring works by some of Brazil's most prominent photographers who have documented its beauties and threats. The photographs will present contrasting images of the wetland, showcasing its beauty alongside some of the most shocking demonstrations of the destruction and losses experienced in recent years, notably in 2020, when nearly 30% of this biome – an area larger than Belgium – burned and 17 million vertebrates were killed in fires.

Today the Pantanal is, once more, being severely affected by wildfires that are spanning out of control. More than 1.4 million hectares have burnt this year alone and local communities, organisations and researchers fear that the tragedy experienced in 2020 could be repeated. The Pantanal is in the beginning of the dry season, but fires are already spreading fast, reportedly 1000% higher than what has been registered last year.

Logistics

Format: Moderated round of Q&A where MEPs are invited to ask questions to experts on Wetlands, the Pantanal, and the upcoming COP30 in Belem, Brazil.

Refreshments / cocktails will be available. (TBC)

No power points will be used / a film will be screened.

Accreditation and registration: Registration on EventBrite (TBC)



Event attendees

Capacity: 50 people

Profile of attendees: MEPs, Brazilian civil society and authorities, and environmental/climate representatives from EU Member State and third countries.

The audience will not necessarily be expected to have general expertise or understanding of wetlands and their importance. The primary aim of the event is to educate attendees about these vital ecosystems, highlighting their role in combating climate change, supporting diverse species, providing economic and social benefits, and the urgent need to protect them from numerous threats. The event will also bring Brazilian authorities and activists who have witnessed first hand the destruction of the Pantanal and focus on raising questions and providing answers about how the EU could contribute to the protection of wetlands and how they can be included in the EU's climate agenda priorities and at COP30 in Belém, Brazil.

Expected key topics:

- Importance of nature-based solutions in combating climate change, particularly wetlands as water reservoirs, carbon sinks and last refuge for biodiversity.
- Potential of Wetland Partnerships and the key role the EU can play by supporting signatory partner countries in implementing global commitments through these partnerships.
- Protection of the Pantanal, the world's largest tropical wetland, highlighting its ecological and societal importance and the challenges it faces.
- Role that the European Parliament can play in protecting wetlands and supporting Wetland Partnerships.



Provisional agenda

INTRODUCTION 16:30-16:40

- Welcoming - 5 mins: Moderator Annalisa CORRADO, MEP
- Film screening - 5 min: The global importance of wetlands and the Pantanal

EXPERT PANEL 16:40-17:30

- Key note speaker Ms Florika FINK-HOOIJER Director-General, DG Environment, European Commission, 12 mins
- Key note speaker Mr. André Lima, National Secretary for the Control of Deforestation and Environmental Land Management at the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change of Brazil, 12 mins
- Luciana Leite, Country Programme Lead - Brazil, EJP - 7 mins
- Chris Baker, Director of Wetlands International Europe - 7 mins

ROUND OF Q&A – AUDIENCE 17:30-18:00

Co-moderator MEP Ms Anna Cavazzini takes questions from other MEPs and guests

Experts invited to respond- 30 minutes

END

Followed by reception, photo exhibition and cocktails - 30 mins

*The speakers suggested for our panel are being approached by our team and their confirmation is still pending.



© Gustavo Figueirôa



During the reception, we will hold a photo exhibit created by EJJ in partnership with Brazilian organisations working in the Pantanal, inviting MEPs and interesting people to dive into the wonders and tragedies of this precious place. The exhibition will start with images illustrating the Pantanal we have inherited, in all its majesty, vastness and beauty, as a place that has permeated our collective imagination as one of the last wilderness frontiers. Soon after, guests will see images of the Pantanal we are leaving behind - a place scarred by fire, death, drought, monocultures, mining, and the results of the human-induced crisis that engulfs the biome.

The objective behind this duality is to communicate that we live in a crucial time.

We have the opportunity to decide what will happen to this ecosystem: if we are to preserve the biome we have inherited and restore what has been lost, OR if we are to leave a deserted, impoverished Pantanal to future generations, depriving them of the species, ecosystems services and experiences once possible within the largest tropical wetland on the planet.





© Henrique Olsen



© Edson Vandeira





© Gustavo Figuerôa



© Chalana Esperança

F



© Henrique Olsen



© Edson Vandeira



In parallel, these same images and concept to the Esplanade Solidarność 1980, in front of the European Parliament, inviting a broader audience to reflect on the relevance of the Pantanal and other wetlands for climate stability and biodiversity protection as well as the multiple threats currently faced by the biome. The photoexhibition held at the Esplanade will follow the same structure as used by OurFish, in 2023, as displayed in the images below.







Gruppo dell'Alleanza Progressista dei
Socialisti e Democratici
al Parlamento europeo

