

In memoriam

Christine von Weizsäcker

1944-2026

With deep sorrow we share with you that our dear friend and colleague, Christine von Weizsäcker, passed away on Friday last week.

For decades, since the adoption of the Convention itself, Christine has been an unwavering presence at many CBD meetings.

She would always be sitting as an observer at the back of the room - but doing so much more than just observing. She would listen carefully, and, whenever needed, she would raise her voice and intervene with constructive suggestions on a way forward, or with a sharp analysis of the issue, or with a reminder of rules or decisions already taken that newer negotiators may not have been aware of.

She was so good at connecting people and creating unlikely alliances. She worked with many colleagues from civil society organisations around the world, with Indigenous Peoples and local communities, with women and with youth. She mentored many of us. She also worked with many delegates and staff members of the Secretariat. She was not 'just another participant' - she was a fantastic colleague and a beloved friend.

She was a never ending source of advice on how to formulate something, on which text to look out for, on the meaning behind the text - a truly institutional repository of knowledge and wisdom. But she was not only concerned with text, she was especially concerned with the people that the text would affect, and with the values behind the text.

And she was also the human warmth that carried us through so many meetings, through hungry late nights and moments of despair in grey conference rooms.

She was a true friend, and through her values-based commitments and never-ending kindness and generosity, she has prepared her forever place in our hearts.

The Convention will not be the same without her. Her loss leaves a big hole in the fabric of the world. We miss her dearly.

Let us honour her memory by continuing her work, by caring for this world and all the peoples in it.

If you would like to share your thoughts and memories with the CBD community and her family: A book of condolences is available at the NGO hub (Level 1, opposite Contact Group 1).



old knowledge like the buried roots of trees

here sun beats down
on scorched earth,
too dry for plant and animal,
no tree in sight,
become a desert ...

yet deep in the parched ground
where farmers once raised beef to sell abroad
then left the land they'd ruined,
the roots of trees they felled remain,
invisible, waiting to grow again -

for, it seems, however many times
the trees themselves
are felled, their generous roots still live,
and, if allowed, will shoot again,
give shade and water, food, life and hope.

they often say old knowledge
is of the past, outdated, mere superstition
they claim their science is precious, infallible,
sole path to the future -

but what do the roots say?

we will be trees once more
they will whisper to the listening stars:
to have a future, you must hear the past;

the soil of insight
must be enriched through time -

with living roots
still deep in earth
we wait our time
to return.

Helena Paul