

COP30 at Belém, Brazil: CRIA's First-Hand Briefing

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COP30 signalled a transformational moment for carbon dioxide removal (CDR). For the first time, CDR had a dedicated **CDR30 pavilion**, formal recognition under COP's Action Agenda, and a clear seat in global climate cooperation and finance.

Throughout the gathering, **Asitava Sen, CEO of the [Carbon Removal India Alliance \(CRIA\)](#)**, represented India and the broader Global South across five major platforms, championing a clear message: **the future of carbon removal must be shaped with the Global South, not retrofitted for it.**

From India's agricultural strengths, large coastlines to the Global South's cost, labour, weather and land advantages, he highlighted why emerging economies are uniquely positioned to lead the next era of global CDR deployment.

My personal take

This was indeed my first COP attendance! Firstly, I thank the **Carbon to Sea Initiative** team under the leadership of **Diane Hoskins** for awarding me their "[Ripple Grant](#)" which made my 30 hour / 15000km long and arduous journey from Delhi to Belém possible. The planning itself was an exhilarating process with tremendous "process" learning for the tricks of availing the coveted blue zone badge, and getting other logistics sorted in short time.

COP is an experience of a lifetime! Over 55,000 delegates from 193 countries congregated in one place with one common purpose – to make the planet a better place to live! There was never a dull moment at COP. I met complete strangers in food queues and had lively chats about the hot and humid weather in Belém, their work, countries and people. Democracy was in full display with voices from both peaceful protesters, and delegates side by side. Belém is a lively and very welcoming city, where I got a glimpse of the people and culture; and managed to learn exchanging basic Portuguese pleasantries.



(Asitava speaking on soil carbon, biomass-based removal, and farmer livelihoods at India-Brazil Day)

And of course, there was lot of work, spilling over the weekend – speaking at panel discussions, attending other important sessions to learn, making meaningful in-person connections and discussions with important global partners and friends! Apart from nature-based solutions and tech-based CDR pathways like biochar and ERW; there was increased focus and interest in marine CDR opportunities and collaborations.

Among many other friends and collaborators, my personal appreciation and gratitude to the CDR30 team under the leadership of [Chris Sherwood](#), Negative Emission Platform for making the dedicated CDR pavilion possible; and [Chris Neidl](#), CDR lead for UN High-Level Climate Champions; who's boundless energy and tireless efforts were instrumental to take the CDR agenda forward and find its legitimate place in the mainstream COP Action Agenda.

India's Contributions Across COP30

A Gigaton-Scale Pathway Rooted in Agriculture

At the CDR30 Pavilion's flagship **2030 Paradigm Shift, A Mutirão for Carbon Removals: Mobilizing for Massive Change by 2030** session – moderated by [Chris Neidl](#), CDR lead for UN High-Level Climate Champions – Asitava presented CRIA's vision for embedding durable carbon removal directly into India's agricultural support systems.

With India already investing ~USD 25 billion annually on farm inputs that reach over 120 million farmers, integrating biochar-enriched fertilisers and enhanced rock weathering presents a transformative opportunity. These solutions could unlock up to **0.9Gt of durable removals each year**, while simultaneously improving soil health, boosting farm productivity, and strengthening climate resilience across rural India.

Scaling Biochar with Investor Confidence

At the **Global Pathways for Biochar** panel **hosted by A Healthier Earth**, Asitava shared insights from India's rapidly evolving biochar ecosystem. He noted how blended finance can help bridge today's pilot projects to tomorrow's large-scale facilities. He presented his theory of change emphasising the role that India's Government and major agribusiness companies can play in mainstreaming and monetising the soil and agricultural co-benefits of biochar (and ERW) that can help expand the market. Finally, he presented the need and examples of multi-stakeholder collaboration to make this nascent industry grow to gigaton scale.

Bringing Indian Expertise into South-South Climate Leadership

At the **CEEW Leaders Dialogue**, Asitava contributed to discussions on measuring co-benefits within the International Climate Initiative, offering example of CDR methods like Biochar and ERW and their co-benefits in India's grounded perspective on linking adaptation, mitigation, and development outcomes.



(Asitava speaking on co benefits, CDR pathways, and India's integrated climate and development priorities at the CEEW Leaders Dialogue)

He also contributed to **India-Brazil Day, co-hosted by the Legal Amazon Consortium and the Observer Research Foundation (ORF)**, where discussions explored regenerative agriculture, climate smart farming, and the Water-Food-Energy nexus. Asitava's inputs focused on how soil carbon and biomass-based removal can become real income streams for smallholder farmers across the Global South if market and policy reforms evolve in tandem.

Elevating India's Role in Ocean-Based CDR

At the panel on **Navigating the Policy Landscape for Ocean-based CDR** hosted **by the Carbon to Sea Initiative**, he discussed how ocean-based removals are emerging in India's policy conversations. He emphasised that countries with large coastlines and strong blue economies, like India, have a unique opportunity to participate early in research, safeguards, governance design and commercial deployment – both for ocean alkalisation and biotic solutions.



(Asitava outlining India's opportunity to lead in ocean-based CDR at the Carbon to Sea Initiative panel)

And one of the Biggest Moments: **Launching the Global Carbon Harvest Coalition**

One of the most significant outcomes of COP30 was the launch of the **Global Carbon Harvest Coalition**, bringing together Brazil, India, and Kenya to accelerate soil-based and biomass-based carbon removal at scale. This coalition brings together three agricultural powerhouses with extraordinary scientific ecosystems and vast agricultural ecosystems. Global Institutions like [CGIAR](#), [XPRIZE](#) and [Cascade Climate](#) will be involved in various elements of the coordination and implementation.

Asitava and CRIA played a pivotal role in bringing the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** on board as the representative organisation for the Government of India into the coalition. Dr. V. K. Singh, Director General, ICAR-CRIDA represented India in the discussion. Formal political clearance and agreement signing will follow.

The coalition creates a new Global South-led platform focused on:

- Advancing evidence for soil carbon, biochar, and enhanced rock weathering
- Developing shared MRV systems aligned with Article 6
- Scaling inclusive farmer-centered models
- Strengthening collaboration across research institutions like EMBRAPA, ICAR, and KALRO
- Closing key evidence gaps over the next 3 to 5 years

This is a major signal: **India is not just participating in agricultural carbon removal; it is leading design for the global architecture for how these pathways scale.**



(Asitava outlining pathways to scale India's biochar industry at the Global Pathways for Biochar panel)



(COP30 panel at the launch of the Global Carbon Harvest Coalition led by Brazil, India, and Kenya)

What COP30 Made Clear

Across CRIA's engagements at COP30, a few clear themes stood out:

- India is now a key contributor and emerging powerhouse to the global CDR agenda, not a late adopter.
- The Global South is shaping CDR governance with integrity, practicality, cost-competitiveness and community benefits at its core.
- Durable carbon removal is increasingly viewed as a development opportunity, delivering co-benefits that strengthens livelihoods and climate resilience.
- Collaboration between emerging economies is accelerating, offering new alternatives for South-South leadership beyond traditional North-South dynamics.

COP30 will be remembered as the year **carbon removal agenda made significant strides into the mainstream**. It will also be remembered as the year the **Global South stepped forward to lead it**. India, with CRIA's convening power, is firmly part of that leadership.