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Medio Ambiente

Cali cannot be just the city that hosted COP16: Alejandro Eder, Mayor of Cali



Alejandro Éder, Mayor of Cali.

FOTO: EL TIEMPO

In an interview with EL TIEMPO, the mayor of Cali, Alejandro Eder, explains how they prepared to host the summit. He also insists that this is a "golden opportunity" to showcase the country's wealth and its efforts to preserve biodiversity.



ERNESTO CORTÉS - AURA SAAVEDRA

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In 11 days, Cali will open its doors to thousands of national and international guests **who will gather in the city to attend the United Nations Conference on Biological Diversity (COP16).**

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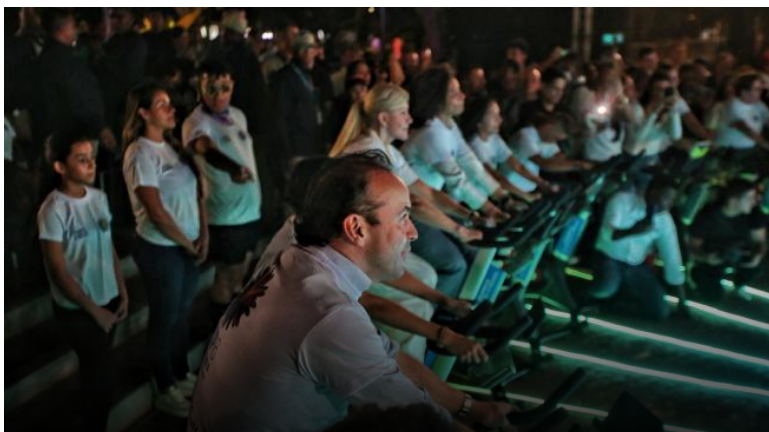
(Lea esta historia en español, aquí)

In a dialogue with EL TIEMPO, **Mayor Alejandro Eder spoke about the importance of this summit**, the adaptations that will be made and how they prepared to host this meeting.

(¿Quiere recibir en su correo electrónico noticias, entrevistas y todos los detalles de la COP16? Regístrese en nuestro boletín).

This COP16 had to be organized in record time, how is Cali 12 days before the event?

Cali is ready to welcome the world to this most important event in the field of the environment. There is no more important event than COP16.



Alejandro Éder, Mayor of Cali.

FOTO: EL TIEMPO

(Siga leyendo: '¿Por qué Estados Unidos no forma parte del convenio que organiza la COP16 de Cali?')

Who will be attending?

We have already confirmed 15,000 official delegates from more than 170 countries, including more than 100 ministers of state. Twelve heads of state from around the world will be in Cali. The Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court will also be there. There will be 720 journalists from all over the world. This event is very important not only for the economy of Cali and for the importance of the issues that will be discussed, but also for Cali and for Colombia, because the whole world will be talking about our city.



Special Forces in Cali for COP16.

FOTO: Ministerio de Defensa

How will the city work?

It will work a little differently. We will have the Blue Zone where the negotiations will take place. That will be in the Pacific Valley Events Center, in the Jumbo. The Green Zone is the official zone of COP16, it will be open to the public in the center, in Caicedo Square, which will be pedestrianized; it will go all along Bulevar del Río up to La Merced Church. There will be samples of green businesses, cultural and handicraft samples from the Southwest of Colombia. There will also be a museum that will explain the importance of biodiversity. Of course, there will be some changes in traffic and mobility, especially in the second week when the heads of state will be there. That is where the impact of COP16 will be felt more, because moving 12 heads of state around the city will require a lot of road closures.

With so many guests, what is the security plan?

We have been working on the security plan since February. As soon as Cali was selected as the host city, the first working group we set up was the security working group. The mayor's office, the ministry of defense, the army, the police, the United Nations, and the governor's office of Valle del Cauca are part of this working group. There, we began to draw up a plan to protect Cali in terms of the security of its citizens; to defend the city against possible terrorist attacks, whether by Colombian or foreign illegal armed groups; and finally, to maintain an atmosphere of order and peace, that is, to be able to carry out any dialogue or debate, but without fighting and without de facto ways. This is a unique opportunity that our country has, the whole planet is coming to our city. It is the moment to raise the name of Colombia to the highest level.



Panoramic view of Cali.

FOTO: EL TIEMPO

(Además: Durante la COP16 no habrá rumba en la tradicional Calle del Sabor, ni en el Bulevar del Río).

In the last few days, the mayor's office and the authorities have intervened against the illegal mines in Farallones Park. How did this process take place?

This is an issue that has been a priority for my administration. From the beginning, even before the city was selected to host COP16, I was committed to closing illegal mines. Cali is one of the most biodiverse cities in the world, precisely because we have the Farallones National Park

within our city limits. Cali is the city of seven rivers, six of which originate here. For more than a decade, some say maybe two, there have been illegal mines and a very large one in the park. This mine had eight parts, so to speak, and eight mines within the mining complex. We have already closed four of those mines and we are in the process of closing the other four. We will do that before the end of the year.

And what will be the next step after these mines are closed?

When we close the mines, we clean up the area. We do all the work. But even after the mines are closed, we need a sustainability plan. So we will develop ecotourism in the area. With the Humboldt Institute, we have designed a research center so that there will be a permanent presence of scientists in the area. This will allow us to monitor the park.

The entrepreneurial strength of the Valle del Cauca in general and the city in particular is crucial for the national economy. What was the private sector's contribution to COP16?

The private sector has played a very important role, for example in financing the green space that we will have. Several companies or guilds contributed resources to be able to exhibit there. The same with the biodiversity zones that Cali is promoting. Many of these business and industrial sectors are supporting the academic agenda that will take place during COP16: there will be more than 200 academic events with panel discussions on everything from how to take care of the Andean moors, to how to mitigate the effects of climate change, to how international conflicts and wars affect biodiversity.



Panoramic view of Cali.

FOTO: EL TIEMPO

(Vea: [COP16: Cali tendrá la vigilancia desde 10.000 pies de altura de aviones con sensores infrarrojos: así se refuerza más la seguridad](#)).

There will be a summit of mayors during COP16. What will they talk about?

This summit will be co-chaired by Cali and Montreal. The issue we are going to raise at this summit is a pact to protect the environment from one of its main threats, which is the illegal economy, which is the drug industry, illegal mining, illegal logging and illegal migration. These are the main destroyers of the environment, and we Colombians would be wrong to invite the world to our country and leave this issue out, because at the end of the day we are victims of these illegal groups. Victims because of their violence, because of their social impact, but also because they destroy the environment. There is a lot to do, we have to move this city forward, we have to move this country forward, and that is what we are doing.



La Ermita, one of the attractions of Cali, a city appreciated by the journalist Milagro Urquieta of "Vogue" will host COP16 from October 21th to November 1st.

FOTO: Juan Pablo Rueda

What will Cali and the country have left after this summit?

The most important thing is that the world is looking at Colombia for a positive reason, and we have to take advantage of that. The economic impact is already visible. If we talk only about the hotels, the occupancy rate in Cali is 86 percent. Fourteen million dollars have already been paid in hotels alone. We are talking about 15,000 rooms, 84 percent of which are already occupied and 70 percent of which are foreign bookings.

What will happen next with the city? What are the priorities?

We cannot just be the city that hosted COP16. We have a huge responsibility to be a model city for environmental sustainability and biodiversity, so we are moving forward with the Farallones Plan. We have also spent several months developing Cali's Environmental Master Plan, which we will present at COP16.

Ernesto Cortés - General Editor and Aura Saavedra - Premium Content Editor

Editor's note: This text is an artificially intelligent English translation of the original Spanish version, which can be found [here](#). Any comment, please write to berdav@eltiempo.com

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