

SDG 13: CLIMATE ACTION



A LEGAL GUIDE

This Legal Guide to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was first published by Advocates for International Development (A4ID).

Disclaimer

The information contained within this guide is correct at the date of publication.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Chandni Brown, Lisa Egles of Transparency International, Feja Lesniewska of SOAS, Alice Garton of Client Earth, Michelle Radcliffe and Olivia Jamison of CMS, and Allen & Overy LLP for their contributions in the development of this guide.

Thanks are also due to Chetasi Kane for her design inputs.

Publishing information

March 2026

London, United Kingdom

Text and analysis © Advocates for International Development (A4ID), 2026 under Creative Commons Attribution – Non-Commercial – ShareAlike 2.5 licence

About A4ID

Advocates for International Development (A4ID) was founded in 2006 to see the law and lawyers play their full part in the global eradication of poverty. Today, A4ID is the leading international charity that channels legal expertise globally toward the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Through A4ID, the world's top lawyers are able to offer high-quality, free legal support to NGOs, social enterprises, community-based organisations, and developing country governments that are working to advance human dignity, equality, and justice. A4ID also operates as a knowledge and resource hub, exploring how the law can be better used to help achieve the SDGs through a range of courses, publications, and events.



www.a4id.org | [@a4id](https://twitter.com/a4id)

Foreword



The SDG Legal Initiative

There are now fewer than ten years left to meet the lofty ambitions of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with their target date of 2030. Aware of the challenge, Advocates for International Development (A4ID) has been continuing its innovative work towards meeting these targets, by harnessing the power of the law and the work of lawyers. A4ID's SDG Legal Initiative has been developed because it is now more important than ever that lawyers worldwide come together to use their skills to advance positive global change.

For this reason, A4ID's SDG Legal Initiative aims to reach every lawyer in the world and provide them with the knowledge and opportunities to take practical action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The SDG Legal Initiative also aims to build thought leadership, to create communities of practice, and to amplify the role of the legal sector in achieving the SDGs.

Legal Guide to the SDGs

As part of its SDG Legal Initiative, A4ID has developed the world's first Legal Guide to the SDGs. The Legal Guide has been developed as a unique resource, providing a foundational analysis of the role that law can and should play in the achievement of the SDGs. Developed in collaboration with lawyers, academics, and development practitioners, the Guide is made up of 17 distinct chapters, each focussed on one of the 17 goals. Each chapter provides an overview of the relevant regional, national, and international legal frameworks, highlighting how the law can be applied to promote the implementation of the SDGs. The Guide also offers key insights into the legal challenges and opportunities that lawyers may encounter, presenting clear examples of the actions that lawyers can take to help achieve each goal.

Role of Law in Advancing Climate Action

Climate change is the defining issue of our time. From rising sea levels to catastrophic weather events, the impact of climate change is rippling across the world, affecting all persons and places. Now is the time for accelerated action, with 2024 marking the first-year global temperatures exceeded the target of 1.5°C.¹

While recent years have brought climate scepticism, geopolitical instability and misinformation, lawyers have been standing up within courtrooms and boardrooms advocating for climate action, enforcing climate solutions and defending climate rights. Climate commitments are no longer a 'nice to have,' or even a 'must have' – they are already here. The ICJ Advisory Opinion on Climate Change (2025) makes this crystal clear. States already have a binding

legal duty under international law to prevent, mitigate, and remedy significant climate harm – and within this volatile landscape, the legal community offer a key driver in shaping and determining our course of action.

SDG 13 is a reflection of these commitments. Grounded in the 2015 Paris Agreement, it tracks and measures greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions while looking to bolster climate resilience in the wake of volatile natural disasters. This is not just an exercise in data and numbers. As the home we live in becomes more and more inhospitable for human life, climate action is increasingly concerned with people’s lives, welfare and rights, and the health of the planet.

Climate litigation trends have already highlighted these relationships, including the role of climate action within human rights, the need for legal culpability for transnational climate harms, and the responsibility of not only State actors, but large multinational corporations for their climate impact.

Yet there are still a multitude of fundamental justice concerns posed by climate change that we have yet to figure out. Developed countries are for example, the largest emitters of greenhouse gases – and yet it is those living in developing countries that are worst affected. Those most vulnerable to climate impacts are often most dependent on climate-

Yasmin Batliwala

Chief Executive

“We need highest ambition, not point-scoring or lowest common denominator politics. Good intentions won’t halve emissions this decade or save lives right now.” – UN Climate Change Executive Secretary Simon Stiell

sensitive livelihoods and most at risk of being missed out by just transitions.

A4ID believes that lawyers hold a key role in shaping climate conversations and navigating the inevitable tensions that may arise from green transitions. We trust that leading law firms see the significant opportunity that climate action presents – for innovation, investment and industrial transformation. By advising clients, engaging in strategic litigation and helping to create a conducive legal and regulatory landscape, lawyers can lead the way to a more sustainable climate future, all while striving to protect the rights of the most vulnerable and ensuring that the burdens and benefits of climate change are shared fairly.



Contents

2	The Sustainable Development Goals	18	Examples of relevant national legislations
3	Key terms	25	Insights for the legal profession
4	Overview of the targets	25	a) Examples of relevant case studies
9	Key actions lawyers can take	32	b) Legal context and challenges
10	Elements of the international legal framework	36	c) So, what can lawyers do?
16	Regional legal and policy frameworks	40	Endnotes

The Sustainable Development Goals

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people can enjoy peace and prosperity.

Also known as the Agenda 2030, the SDGs were agreed in 2015 by the UN General Assembly (Resolution 70/1). They were adopted by all UN Member States, and 2030 was set as the deadline for achieving them.

Compared to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),



which they succeed, the SDGs cover more ground, with wider ambitions to address inequalities, climate change, economic growth, decent jobs, cities, industrialization, oceans, ecosystems, energy, sustainable consumption and production, peace, and justice. The SDGs are also universal, applying to all countries, whereas the MDGs had only been intended for action in developing countries.

The 17 interdependent goals are broken down into 169 targets. At the global level, progress is monitored and reviewed using a set of 232 indicators. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda provides concrete policies and actions to further support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Each year, the UN Secretary General also publishes a report documenting progress towards the targets. In addition, the annual meetings of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) continues to play a central role in reviewing global progress towards the SDGs.

At the national level, even though the SDGs are not legally binding, governments are expected to implement country-led sustainable development strategies, including resource mobilisation and financing strategies, and to develop their own national indicators to assist in monitoring progress made on the goals and targets.

SDG 17 stresses the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships to achieve the goals. The mobilisation of governments, local authorities, civil society, and the private sector is needed to achieve this aim. Today, progress is being made in many places, but, overall, action to meet the SDGs is not yet advancing at the speed or scale required. This decade must therefore deliver rapid and ambitious action to meet the SDGs by 2030.

Key Terms



SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact*

In the context of SDG 13 and combating climate change, the following term means:

‘**Climate Change**’, as defined in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (1992), is the “change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate

variability observed over comparable time periods.”²

This SDG is unique in that it is marked with an asterisk (*) indicating that “the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.”³

Overview of the targets



Climate change is a global challenge; one that the international community has worked towards through concerted efforts such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992), the Kyoto Protocol (1997) and the Paris Agreement (2016). However, despite this long history, the findings are clear – further attention is still urgently required, as climate change marks what the UN are now terming humanity’s ‘code red’ warning.⁴

The effects of climate change are already felt globally with serious consequences for the environment and for people. Rising global greenhouse gas emissions have resulted in record-breaking temperatures and more extreme weather,

with 2024 marking the hottest year on record and first year to have exceeded the threshold of 1.5°C set under the Paris Agreement.⁵ Extreme weather events are being experienced across all continents, including both the global north and south alike, but with unequitable impacts felt across regions.

According to the latest assessment report by the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), an estimated 3.3 to 3.6 billion people are currently living in contexts that are highly vulnerable to climate change. Many of these communities are concentrated in regions across Africa, Asia, Central and Southern America, least developed countries, small island developing States and the Arctic. In real terms, this has

resulted in a mortality rate that was 15 times higher for these communities as compared with regions with very low climate vulnerability.⁶

“The scientific evidence is unequivocal: climate change is a threat to human well-being and the health of the planet. Any further delay in concerted global action will miss a brief and rapidly closing window to secure a liveable future.” - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

Extreme weather conditions have a role to play within the landscape of many other SDG targets. Droughts, severe flooding and heatwaves threaten livelihoods as much as they do lives, putting the provision of decent shelter and personal welfare at risk. At a time when food security is already under threat from geopolitical tensions including the Russian invasion of Ukraine, extreme weather creates added pressure on food production in many regions of the world. It is clear therefore that the significance of progress towards SDG 13 is directly relevant to progress against many other goals under the SDG Agenda.

If the current trends continue, the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction project that medium- to large- scale disaster events could reach up to 560 a year,⁷ as sea levels are measured to have risen faster than in any preceding century, and as biodiversity loss is accelerating.

In order to combat these shifts, two strategies are to be pursued simultaneously: mitigation and adaptation. Mitigation aims at limiting the increase of global temperature by reducing human-produced GHG emissions; for example, efforts

towards just transition as the world looks to move away from traditional fossil fuel-based economies to carbon neutral ones. Adaptation, however, refers to the measures taken to reduce harm from the changing climate environment. This includes infrastructure projects, such as seawalls, and technological shifts, like more efficient irrigation methods. In fact, climate change policies are increasingly focused on impact reduction – measures to minimise the adverse effects of climate-related hazards and build resilience to recover from natural disasters.

The following breakdown of SDG 13 targets provide an insight into climate mitigation and adaptation efforts, highlighting key challenges relevant to the achievement of both.





Target 13.1 **Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.**

Target 13.1 aims to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries. Progress is measured by:

- The number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population;
- The number of countries that adopt and implement national disaster risk reduction strategies in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030; and
- The proportion of local governments that adopt and implement local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national disaster risk reduction strategies.

According to the 2025 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction, climate resilience and adaptive capacity have improved in recent years with the number of disaster-related deaths and missing persons per 100,000 falling from 1.61 (2005-2014) to 0.79 (2014-2023). This is the case despite a greater volume and scale of climate disasters over the last decade and is attributable to a sizable increase in the number of countries with national disaster risk reduction strategies; rising to 131 countries in 2023 as compared with 57 in 2015.⁸

While not all national strategies are closely aligned with the Sendai Framework, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) notes positive trends in this respect. As the Sendai Framework advocates for a whole-of-government approach to reduce existing disasters and prevent future risks,⁹ this has seen a positive increase in the number of local disaster

risk reduction strategies; now reported in 110 countries (as of 2023) as compared with 50 in 2015.¹⁰

However, despite these broader trends, progress is uneven, and the number of people affected by disasters has increased by 75%.¹¹ Least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states face higher disaster risk and yet fewer resources and technical capacity for disaster risk reduction. To bolster resilience across the board, initiatives such as ‘The UN Early Warnings for All Initiative’ have been launched. Managed jointly between the UNDRR, World Meteorological Organization, International Telecommunication Union and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, this initiative seeks to ensure all persons are protected from hazardous weather, water, or climate events through life-saving early warning systems by the end of 2027.¹²



Target 13.2 **Integrating climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.**

Target 13.2 focuses on integrating climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning. Progress is measured by:


- The number of countries with nationally determined contributions (NDCs), long-term strategies, national adaptation plans and adaptation communications, as reported to the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; and
- The total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions per year.

2025 marked the deadline for countries to submit updated national climate plans and/or NDCs with new targets for 2035. 100 countries reached this deadline, representing two thirds of all global greenhouse gas emissions and setting out renewed

commitments for climate action. Notably, these developments included the first economy-wide emissions reduction targets from countries including China and Nigeria; both among the top 25 global emitters.

Among various long-term strategies and national adaptation plans were acute focuses on emission targets, forest conservation, fossil fuels, renewable energy, building climate resilience, and climate financing; alongside solutions-based dialogue on (*inter alia*) energy transitions, financing, information integrity, digital infrastructure and the role of non-state actors.¹³ Of particular relevance to the legal community, was the emphasis on countering narratives that suggest climate action and private interests are incompatible and the need for transitions to take place in a manner that is just, equitable, accountable and credible. As non-state actors in their own right, lawyers have a role to play in supporting others – businesses, financial institutions, and subnational governments – in moving beyond voluntary contributions and towards net-zero.

TARGET	13-3	Improving education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.
---------------	-------------	--



Target 13.3 focuses on improving education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.

Under this target, Climate Change Education (CCE) is seen as a catalyst for long term change, by way of facilitating changes in behaviour. While there are challenges in tracking CCE commitments on a global scale, UNESCO continues in its efforts to help people better understand the impact of

“Certain narratives suggest that accelerating climate action is detrimental to businesses, the financial sector, and subnational governments. Evidence shows the opposite.” – Climate Summit 2025

These commitments for renewed action emerge within an increasingly challenging environment: 2024 marked the hottest year in 175 years, at approximately 1.55°C above pre-industrial levels; GHG emissions hit a record high in 2023;¹⁴ and January 2026 marked the second withdrawal of the United States of America – the second largest global GHG emitter – from the Paris Agreement. As a result, the UN Environment Programme emphasises that to limit overshoot and get back to 1.5°C by 2100, the world will need a 26% and 46% reduction in 2030 and 2035 emissions respectively.¹⁵

global warming and increase ‘climate literacy’ among young people through its Climate Change Education for Sustainable Development programme.

In order to provide some benchmark for countries to assess and improve CCE, a 0-100 index was developed. According to the 2025 UN SDG Report, only 25% of countries met the suggested benchmark of 50, with the average score sitting at 40 (albeit this fluctuated from 55 for content relating to the environment/sustainability and 21 for matters specifically relating to climate change). Here it was noted that CCE trends tend to be stronger within science-based subjects and among older students, requiring a greater emphasis in social science fields and across age ranges.¹⁶

TARGET 13·A



Implement the commitment undertaken by developed-country parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to a goal of mobilizing jointly \$100 billion annually by 2020 from all sources to address

the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation and fully operationalize the Green Climate Fund through its capitalization as soon as possible.

Target 13.a seeks the mobilisation of significant financial commitments in order to assist developing countries through projects administered and pledged through the Green Climate Fund. The Fund itself was established in 2010 as the operating mechanism of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), with the purpose of mobilising funding at scale, channelling investment toward low-emission

and climate-resilient development. It is guided each year by nations party to the Conference of the Parties (COP) and is largely concerned with assisting projects in areas highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, including least developed countries, small island developing states, and many African nations.¹⁷

Target 13.a held an initial aim of attracting \$100bn USD of investment per year by 2020 – a target that was later extended to 2025 after only \$52.49bn had been achieved by the initial date.¹⁸ Despite this target having never been reached,¹⁹ COP29 saw renewed commitments for developed nations to mobilize triple this amount, pledging at least \$300 billion annually by 2035 to support developing nations.²⁰ While this is a positive step in recognising that greater support and investment are still required for climate action, many have argued that this is still not sufficient in addressing the scale of the problem, and it is yet to be seen whether these renewed commitments will be any more effective than prior pledges.²¹

TARGET 13·B



Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities.

Target 13.b aims to increase the number of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) that have national adaptation plans, nationally determined contributions, and other long-term strategies focused on climate adaptation and resilience.

According to latest data, there are 44 LDCs in the world, as

identified by the UN Conference on Trade and Development.²² Of these, only 22 have national adaptation plans for climate change.²³ Similarly, of the 39 SIDS identified by the Office of the High Representative,²⁴ only 13 currently have national adaptation strategies.²⁵

In putting these strategies in place, this target places extra attention to the groups considered within them, especially where these groups are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Encouragingly, the UNFCCC note that as of September 2025 majority of the 144 national adaptation plans submitted had integrated considerations of gender and vulnerable groups.²⁶

Key actions lawyers can take

The final section of this chapter provides more details on how the international legal community can engage in efforts to advance SDG 13. However, the following short summary

describes some of the key actions that lawyers can take to contribute to the sustainable development agenda on climate action.

Learn and educate

Climate change poses a fundamental justice concern. By enhancing their understanding of climate change – as well as the policy and programmatic efforts to mitigate its impact and to adapt to its consequences – lawyers can play a key

role in promoting ‘climate justice’. Law firms with expertise in this area can consider organising seminars and workshops on international climate change obligations to raise awareness of the existing laws relevant to climate change.

Integrate

In many law firms, climate change has become a specialised area of practice. However, all legal departments can now consider the ways in which climate change can affect their practice areas. Law firms can use their unique positioning and expertise to ensure that the burdens and benefits of climate change are shared equitably; to encourage their

clients to introduce and monitor carbon management strategies; and to safeguard the rights of those communities that are most vulnerable to climate change. This is especially prudent as climate transitions quicken and as voluntary pledges become less sufficient from a consumer, investor and regulatory standpoint.

Act

Climate change litigation is on the rise and courts are starting to show willingness to hold corporations accountable for their contributions to GHG emissions. Commercial lawyers can work with their clients to develop effective climate change policies, which respond to international legal frameworks on climate change and future-proof businesses.

Lawyers can also support the fight against climate change by using their legal expertise to advise on climate mitigation and adaptation strategies being developed internationally. Partnering with A4ID’s pro bono legal network, law firms, corporate legal departments, judiciaries and barrister’s chambers can contribute this expertise directly to relevant governmental and non-governmental organisations.

Elements of the international legal framework



The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Adopted: 9 May 1992

Entered into force: 21 March 1994

Status of ratification (as of March 2026): 198 Parties

Adopted at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, the UNFCCC is the first internationally negotiated instrument to combat climate change.

The UNFCCC's objective is to "stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous interference with the climate system" (Article 2). The Convention is founded on the principles of equity and 'common but differentiated responsibilities', according to which developed countries have to 'take the lead' in combating climate change (Article 3.1).

While all Parties to the Convention commit to implement

measures to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change (Article 4.1), only developed countries (listed in Annex I) are required to limit the emissions of greenhouse gases that are the results of human activity. (Article 4.2.). However, the Convention itself contains no binding targets or enforcement mechanisms.

The UNFCCC contains provisions to support research and systematic observation (Article 5) and to promote education, training and public awareness of climate disruption (Article 6). A solidarity financing mechanism is established to support developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change (Articles 4.3. and 11).

Every year since 1995, governments meet in a Conference of the Parties (COP) to measure progress in the implementation of the UNFCCC. COPs have also been used as fora to negotiate protocols and agreements.

The Kyoto Protocol

Adopted: 11 December 1997

Entered into force: 16 February 2005

Status of ratification (as of March 2026): 192 Parties

In 1997, parties to the UNFCCC concluded the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC, which contains legally binding obligations upon 37 industrialised countries and the European Union to reduce GHG emissions by an average of 5.2% by 2012 as compared to 1990 levels (Article 3 and Annex B). When the Protocol came into force in 2005, it became the first international, legally binding agreement that set emission reduction targets.

As a flexibility mechanism, the Protocol allows developed countries to trade their emissions in order to fulfil their reduction commitments (Article 17).

Nearly every industrialised country ratified the Protocol, with

the notable exception of the United States. According to the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibilities', the Protocol does not impose new obligations on developing countries, including China and India which were nevertheless major contributors to global GHG emissions. The United States, whilst a Signatory Party to the Protocol, has never ratified it, citing this lack of quantitative commitments from emerging economies as the reason. The fact that the Protocol does not apply to three of the world's major economies has considerably undermined its impact. Moreover, the Protocol has not been fully implemented by its ratifying parties: for instance, when it appeared, in December 2011, that Canada would not reach its target, it withdrew from the Protocol.

The emission reduction commitments covered the period from 2008 to 2012. The Doha Amendment extended the Kyoto obligations to 2020.

The Paris Agreement

Adopted: 12 December 2015

Entered into force: 4 November 2016

Status of ratification (as of March 2026): 194 Parties

In December 2015, parties to the UNFCCC reached a landmark agreement in Paris, establishing a legally binding agreement that would replace the Kyoto regime after 2020. The Paris Agreement has three objectives (Article 2): i) to limit global warming to less than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit the rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius, ii) to improve the ability to adapt to climate change and foster climate resilience, and iii) to make finance flows consistent with the above objectives.

The distinction between developing and developed countries, which previously quantified reduction targets under the Kyoto Protocol, is abandoned under the agreement. Instead, each party determines its own nationally determined contributions (NDC) to the overarching aim (Article 4), which then becomes legally binding. With this system, the Paris Agreement moves away from the 'common but differentiated responsibilities' principle on which the UNFCCC was based, and instead focuses on common commitments for countries of both the Global South and the Global North according to their capacities.

However, flexibility and solidarity mechanisms in favour of developing countries remain: while developed countries

“should continue taking the lead by undertaking economy-wide absolute emission reduction targets,” developing countries are only “encouraged to move over time” towards absolute reduction targets (Article 4.5). In addition Parties commit to provide financial support, transfer of technology and capacity building to assist developing countries with climate mitigation and adaptation (Article 9, 10 and 11).

“The clean energy shift is now unstoppable: because of the colossal scale of economic opportunity it presents. Because when 2 trillion dollars flow into clean energy and infrastructure in just one year... you can be sure it’s not because of virtue signalling.” – Simon Stiell (UN Climate Change Executive Secretary) 2025

The Paris Agreement has been criticised however, for its lack of enforcement mechanism to ensure that States set meaningful emission targets and effectively attain them. To promote implementation, the Agreement relies on an ‘enhanced transparency mechanism’ (Article 13). Each party has to regularly submit a report on its emissions with the information necessary to track progress in achieving its NDC. The reports submitted then undergo a review by an expert committee and the COP will periodically assess global progress towards the Agreement’s long-term goals.

When the Paris Agreement was adopted in 2015, it was clear that further rules and procedures for its effective implementation needed to be negotiated. Countries set a deadline to complete these negotiations on the implementation guidelines (or rulebook) in 2018 at the COP24

in Katowice (Poland). The Katowice outcome is a complex package of procedures and mechanisms, achieved through in-depth technical discussions and political compromise, containing operational guidance on the exact information that governments have to provide in their NDCs, the rules of the transparency framework, how to assess progress on the development and transfer of technology, and how to provide information on financial support to developing countries.²⁷

In between the annual COP, the Subsidiary Body for Implementation meets in Bonn (Germany). Its agenda is shaped around key building blocks for implementation of the UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement, with a focus on monitoring, reporting and verification, while also enhancing the ambition of Parties on all aspects of its agenda.²⁸

The Paris Agreement is on the way to universal ratification, with climate activists calling for greater enforcement and uptake. However, the United States, a key geopolitical actor and the second largest global GHG emitter, withdrew from the agreement for a second time effective as of January 2026.



Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer

Adopted: 22 March 1985

Entered into force: 22 September 1988

Status of ratification (as of March 2026): 198 Parties

On the initiative of the UN Environment Programme, the

Vienna Convention was signed to address the damage caused to the ozone layer. State parties agree to cooperate through systematic observations, research and information exchange and to adopt measures against activities likely to have adverse effects on the ozone layer. However, the Convention itself did not require states to ban specific ozone-depleting chemicals.

Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer

Adopted: 16 September 1987

Entered into force: 1 January 1989

Status of ratification (as of March 2026): 198 Parties

In 1989, the Montreal Protocol to the Vienna Convention on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer entered into force, imposing specific obligations in respect of harmful

substances that deplete the ozone. This includes phasing out the production of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) commonly used as refrigerants. The Protocol includes an adjustment provision that enables Parties to respond quickly to new scientific information and control new chemicals, as well as a mechanism to provide financial and technical support to Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in the economic burden they would face when complying with these regulations.



Soft law and declarations

UN General Assembly Resolutions

Since 1988, the UN General Assembly regularly adopts Resolutions affirming that climate change is ‘one of the greatest challenges of our time’. The General Assembly also closely monitors the climate negotiations under the UNFCCC. The most recent climate related resolution to be regarded by the General Assembly is Resolution 77/276 (2023), which sought an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the legal obligations of states regarding climate change.²⁹ The ICJ confirmed in 2025 that legally binding state obligations in this respect, include (*inter alia*):

For State Parties under the UNFCCC

- An obligation to adopt measures contributing to the mitigation of GHG emissions and adapting to climate change;
- Obligations on State parties under Annex 1 to take the lead in combating climate change by limiting GHG emissions and enhancing GHG sinks and reservoirs; and
- A duty to co-operate with each other in order to achieve the Convention’s underlying objective.

For State Parties under the Kyoto Protocol:

- Compliance with applicable provisions.

For State Parties under the Paris Agreement:

- An obligation to act with due diligence in taking measures in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities in contributing to the temperature goal set out in the Agreement;

- An obligation to prepare, communicate and maintain successive and progressive NDCs, and pursue measures capable of achieving the objectives set out in successive NDCs; and
- Obligations of adaptation and co-operation, including through technology and financial transfers, which must be performed in good faith.

For all States under customary international law:

- A duty to prevent significant harm to the environment by acting with due diligence and to use all means at their disposal to prevent activities carried out within their jurisdiction or control from causing significant harm to the climate system and other parts of the environment, in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities; and
- A duty to co-operate with each other in good faith to prevent significant harm to the climate system and other parts of the environment, which requires sustained and continuous forms of co-operation by States when taking such measures.³⁰

In addition to the ICJ’s advisory note, Resolution 48/13 (2021) of the Human Rights Council affirmed for the first time that having a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is a human right; a decision later adopted by the UN General Assembly in Resolution 76/300 (2022).³¹ This established environmental degradation and climate change as interconnected human rights issues, prompting the establishment of a Special Rapporteur dedicated specifically to this issue.³²

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Reports

The IPCC is composed of UN Member States and was created in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organisation and the UN Environment Programme to assess the science related to climate change. IPCC assessment reports are written and reviewed by hundreds of leading scientists.

As part of these reports, the IPCC's objective is not to produce environmental norms or regulations but to provide policymakers with scientific information and projections based on different scenarios. The intergovernmental and scientific nature of the IPCC confers significant influence on its reports.

In 2023, the IPCC published a Synthesis Report as part of its Sixth Assessment Cycle (AR6) summarising the state of knowledge of climate change, alongside impacts, risks, mitigation efforts and adaptation. The AR6 Synthesis Report integrates findings from three earlier working groups focused on: the physical science basis of climate change; climate impacts, adaptation and vulnerability; and the mitigation of climate change. The report finds that "human activities, principally through emissions of greenhouse gases, have unequivocally caused global warming,"³³ with widespread and irreversible damage caused to people and planet.

The report highlights that historic and ongoing contributions to GHG emissions have been unequal, creating injustices for vulnerable communities who have contributed the least to climate change and yet are most affected. Interlinkages with food and water insecurity are evidenced as reasons why it is found, with high confidence, that climate change has hindered efforts to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. However wider linkages are also drawn to SDG 3 (given an increase in climate-related diseases and mental health challenges), SDG 8 (owing to loss of livelihoods), SDG 11 (with damage to key infrastructure) and SDG 5 (as climate change creates adverse

impacts on gender and social equity).

While the report notes that climate adaptation efforts have improved, calls are voiced for: increased private sector and citizen engagement; more investment towards climate financing and resourcing; enhanced climate literacy; and the need for greater political commitment towards climate action.

Similarly, while mitigation efforts are noted –with an increase in laws and policies concerning emission targets, energy efficiency, reduced food waste, environmental management and technology-centred climate solutions – enforcement and commitment levels are found to be uneven and lie short of combating global warming projections. With little time left to course correct, the report emphasises two critical enablers for climate action: greater financial flows and the need for transnational partnerships.

In light of the report's findings, lawyers would do well to prioritise enforcement efforts within climate commitments to improve accountability, transparency and targeted action. Within the public sector, this requires greater formalisation of climate commitments with effective tracking, monitoring and reporting mechanisms in place to ensure effective compliance. Among the private sector, this requires efforts to create a cultural and operational shift away from 'voluntary undertakings', and towards more concerted and measurable climate commitments within the supply chain, business transactions, due diligence processes, and day-to-day business practices. At the same time, lawyers specialising in transactional law may be able to lend their expertise towards mobilising climate finance and building transnational partnerships in support of accelerated climate solutions.

Regional legal and policy frameworks

African Union

Agenda 2063 – The Africa We Want (2015)

Agenda 2063 is a strategic document, adopted by the African Union in 2015, to accelerate progress and reach sustainable development in Africa, consisting of both a vision and a framework for action.

One of the key actions set within the agenda is to “act with a sense of urgency on climate change and the environment.”³⁴

Here priority is afforded to building adaptation measures to reduce the adverse consequences of climate change, especially for vulnerable populations (§ para.16 and 17). This is because, while African nations pledge to take part in global mitigation efforts, the region contributes less than 5% of global emissions and yet is highly vulnerable to climate shocks.

Asia

Association of South East Asian Nations

The ASEAN Climate Change Strategic Action Plan (ACCSAP) (2025-2030) was established in August 2025, providing a roadmap for the region towards net-zero ambitions, strengthened adaptive capacity and inclusive implementation of the Paris Agreement.³⁵

The Action Plan sets out five key objectives concerning: 1). climate finance, technology and capacity building; 2). accelerating implementation of the region’s prior Action Plan (2019-2025); 3). sector specific and cross-sectoral plans for climate action; 4). transitions to net-zero; and 5). the establishment of a new ASEAN Climate Change Centre.

In October 2025 the ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment was also

passed,³⁶ reiterating the UN General Assembly Resolution 76/300 (2022) that established environmental degradation and climate change as interconnected human rights issues.



European Union

Directive 2003/87/EC – European Union Emissions Trading System

The European Union Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) was launched in 2005 as the first international emissions trading system and remains the largest one to date. The Trading System aims at reducing industrial GHG emissions cost-effectively through a 'cap and trade' system, which limits the total amount of GHGs emitted and allows a trade of emission allowances within that limit.

The cap is reduced each year in line with European CO2 emissions reduction targets. Businesses and industries

receive or buy allowances, each allowance giving them the right to emit one tonne of CO2. Based on their actual level of emissions, companies can then trade these allowances on an exchange market, thus fixing the price per tonne of CO2 through supply and demand. Companies that do not acquire sufficient allowances to cover their emissions face heavy fines. The EU ETS covers power stations, oil refineries, coke ovens, iron and steel plants, certain kind of factories, and aviation, which together are responsible for around 40% of the EU's GHG emissions.

Regulation 2018/842 of the European Parliament and of the Council (2018)

In line with the objective set in the Paris Agreement, the European Union adopted a new Regulation setting a more ambitious target of 30% reduction of emissions by 2030 compared with 2005 levels. The Regulation sets new binding

national emission reduction targets for sectors outside of the EU ETS, ranging from 0% for Bulgaria to -40% for Luxembourg and Sweden.³⁷

The European Green Deal (2019)

In order for States to fulfill their obligations under the Paris Agreement, they must reduce emissions by 45% by 2030, and reach net zero in greenhouse gases by 2050. In order to achieve this while affecting a just and inclusive transition across the region, the European Union produced the European Green Deal, first presented by the European Council in 2019.

The Green Deal encompasses a host of policy initiatives that seek to bolster the EUs just transition efforts, while maintaining and expanding its status as a competitive and innovative

economy. Accordingly, initiatives under the Deal span a wide set of industries, ranging from those directly concerned with the changing climate and environmental degradation, to interrelated industries of energy, transport, and industry. Of particular note, are initiatives such as 'Fit for 55', which refers to the target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the EU by 55% by 2030, or the European Climate Law (2021), which places the 2050 climate neutrality ambition as a legal obligation. Implementation of these initiatives is ongoing.³⁸

Examples of relevant national legislation

Australia

Climate Change Bill (2022)

On 14 September 2022, the Climate Change Act 2022 (Cth) (Climate Act) and the Climate Change (Consequential Amendments) Act 2022 (Cth) (Consequential Amendments Act) commenced.

This legislation implements Australia's net-zero commitments and codifies Australia's net 2030 and 2050 GHG emissions reductions targets under the Paris Agreement, namely: a net GHG emissions reduction to 43% below 2005 levels by 2030, and net-zero by 2050. While the legislation does not impose direct obligations on companies, it provides the backdrop for sector-based reforms aimed at implementing the 2030 target and emissions budget, which will have a corresponding impact on businesses.

The legislation also brings with it increased accountability to track progress against the targets, as the Minister for Climate and Energy is now required to prepare and table

an annual climate change statement, with advice from the Climate Change Authority. At least once every five years, the Climate Change Authority will need to advise the Minister on the targets it considers should be included in the Nationally Determined Contributions. In 2025, these targets were updated to include a new commitment for a 62-70% reduction in GHG emissions by 2035.

“For Australians, climate change is no longer a distant threat. Our rivers are dying, bush fires are more ferocious and more frequent and our natural wonders – the Great Barrier Reef, Kakadu, our rainforests – are now at risk.” - Kevin Rudd

USA

Inflation Reduction Act (2022)

This Act aims to curb inflation through policies that will reduce the cost of energy and the federal deficit. It does so by boosting and supporting renewable energy and introducing new credits to support climate technologies including energy storage and green hydrogen.

The Act commits to an investment of \$369 billion in climate solutions and environmental justice, with the aim of putting the US on a path to 40% emissions reduction by 2030.

Sweden

Statement of Government Policy (2022)

In October 2022, Sweden's new Prime Minister transposed the coalition's political agreement into government. This included a change to Sweden's climate targets, from achieving 100%

'renewable energy' to 100% 'fossil free energy', so that the government can pursue its nuclear ambitions. The commitment to retain the net zero target for 2045 remains.

Nigeria

Energy Transition Plan (2022)

In August 2022, the government of Nigeria launched a new Energy Transition Plan strengthening its commitments under the Climate Change Act 2021.

The plan seeks to use a data driven approach to generate new funding and investment opportunities for the energy

transition in Nigeria. This was made in line with the country's goal of achieving Carbon Neutrality by 2060.

The plan sets out emissions reduction pathways and investment needs in order to achieve emissions reductions in energy, transport, oil and gas, cooking, and industry.



The Bahamas

Climate Change and Carbon Market Initiatives Act (2022)

This legislation seeks to enable the Government of the Bahamas to create incentives and implement initiatives to support the overall global target of GHG emissions reduction consistent with its Nationally Determined Contributions. It is intended to ensure compliance by The Bahamas of its

obligations under the Paris Agreement (acknowledging the UNFCCC provisions for small island developing states); and enable the establishment of a market in The Bahamas to trade in carbon credits.

Chile

Framework Law on Climate Change (2022)

This legislation aims to meet the challenges posed by climate change, so as to move towards a low-carbon development, prior to reaching and maintaining carbon neutrality by 2050.

As its name suggests, the law puts into place the general framework needed in order to regulate and rectify climate-related issues. This includes various legislative instruments,

principles and policies required for climate governance in the country.

It also seeks to set out the necessary legislation for Chile to adapt to climate change, reduce vulnerability and increase resilience to the adverse effects of climate change, and comply with international commitments.

The Philippines

Climate Change Act (2009)

The Philippines Climate Change Act (2009) and the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act (2010) are considered model legislations in the Asia Pacific region by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.³⁹

Contrary to other legislation, the Philippine Climate Change

Act and its Action Plan (2011–2028) have no legally binding targets on GHG emissions but prioritise adaptation to reduce vulnerability. The legislation is remarkable for its cross-sectoral approach: it involves all ministries and state entities at national and local levels.

Denmark

Climate Act (2020)

This legislation sets out Denmark's net-zero commitments, namely: a 70% GHG emissions reduction below 1990 levels by 2030, and climate neutrality by 2050. The Act establishes a rolling five-year target, prompting regular review of progress

by an independent Climate Council.⁴⁰ As part of this process, reporting obligations are placed on the Danish government including the submission of annual reports for parliamentary examination.

Germany

Federal Climate Change Act (KSG) (2019)

This Act codifies Germany's commitments to achieve net-zero by 2045, including a 65% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.

The Act originally imposed annual, binding, sector-specific

reduction targets with immediate action programmes implemented where these were not achieved. However, this has since been softened following the latest 2024 amendment to allow for more flexible multi-year approaches.

China

Ecological and Environmental Code (2026)

This Code was passed in 2026 to unify over 30 Chinese environmental laws and more than 100 administrative regulations in line with the country's ambitions for achieving carbon neutrality by 2060.⁴¹ As the country's second formal legal code of its kind (after the Civil Code), it contains 1,242 articles split into five parts, namely: 1). general provisions; 2). pollution prevention and control; 3). ecological conservation; 4). green and low-carbon development and 5). legal liability and supplementary provisions.

“By codifying the proven practices, the legislation provides a viable choice for other developing nations toward sustainability, opening new possibilities for global ecological governance.” - Li Hongzhong (NPC Standing Committee, Vice-chairman)

Papua New Guinea

Climate Change Management Act (2015)

The Papua New Guinea Climate Change Management Act establishes a Climate Change and Development Authority (CCDA) to promote and manage “climate compatible development through climate change mitigation and adaptation activities.”

The CCDA has extensive powers, including administering the Climate Change and Green Growth Trust Fund, raising

money through fees and levies for the Fund, and establishing planning committees within regulated sectors. The Act also provides for mitigation targets to be set by the minister in charge, on the advice of the CCDA and relevant government departments. The targets set are to allow for economic growth in a developing country, while also aiming to minimise carbon intensity within particular sectors.

United Kingdom

Climate Change Act (2008)

The Climate Change Act was passed in 2008 with the aim of creating an economically credible emissions reduction path. It includes a 2050 Target to reduce GHG emissions by at least 80% by 2050 from 1990 levels. The Act also sets legally binding ‘carbon-budgets’ and established a new Committee

on Climate Change.⁴²

In 2025, the UK published The Carbon Budget and Growth Delivery Plan, setting out new measures for how the Act’s ambitions shall be realised for the years 2025-2037.

Portugal

Framework Climate Law No 98/2021

This legislation codifies Portugal’s commitment to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045 and covers: climate rights and duties; the right to citizen participation; climate policy governance; planning and evaluation instruments;

economic and financial instruments; and sector climate policy instruments. At the same time, the Act established a Climate Action Council as an independent, advisory body on climate-related matters.

Mozambique

National Climate Change Strategy (2012)

This Strategy establishes Mozambique's 12-year-plan to reduce the country's vulnerability to climate change and improve the living conditions of the Mozambican people. The Strategy is centred around three core themes: (i) adaptation and climate risk management; (ii) mitigation and low carbon development and (iii) cross-cutting issues.

In 2025, the country published a follow up National Climate

Finance Strategy (2025-2034) focusing on climate resilience and the need for proactive investment in mobilising climate action. The Strategy seeks to: (i) create a favourable regulatory environment; (ii) integrate climate into budgetary and fiscal management; (iii) reorient the financial system towards green investment; (iv) strengthen capacities in the public, private and higher education sectors; and (v) improve access to climate finance, including innovative instruments.

India

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Rules (2025)

These rules set out India's first legally binding compliance targets for GHG emissions, covering four carbon-intensive sectors: aluminium, cement, pulp & paper, and chlor-alkali. The Rules are intended to support India's domestic carbon market under the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (2023).

The SHANTI Act (2025)

The SHANTI Act (Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India) aims to accelerate India's clean energy transition in support of ambitions for achieving net-zero by 2070. The Act enables private sector and foreign participation in India's nuclear energy market (previously State-owned) while imposing liability caps and strengthening regulatory oversight by the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board.



Russia

Federal Law No. 296-FZ (2021)

This law governs the monitoring, reporting and verification of GHG emissions, establishing mandatory reporting requirements on polluting companies as of 2023 and setting emission reduction targets. The law further introduces options for carbon units and trading, while seeking to incentivise voluntary climate projects.

Climate Doctrine (2023)

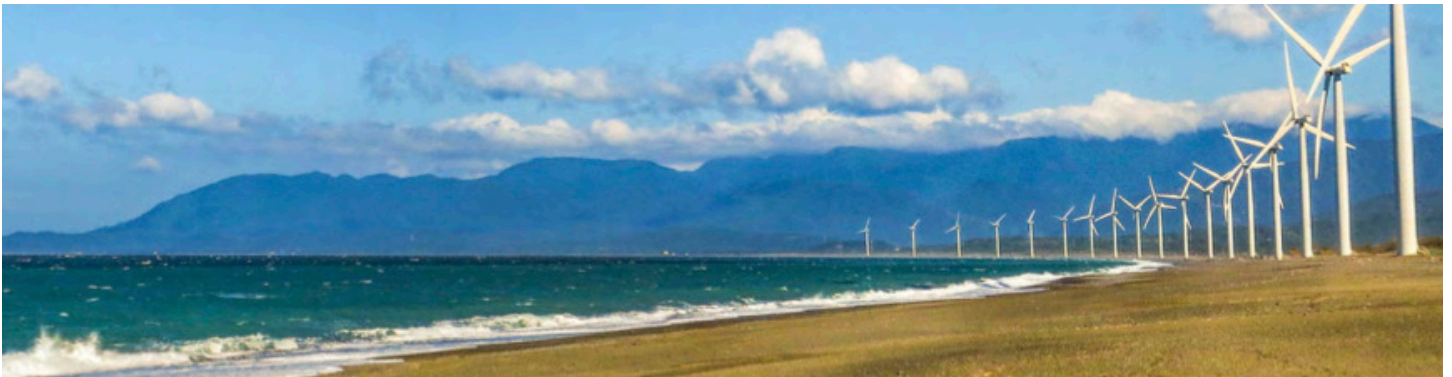
In 2023, Russia passed a renewed Climate Doctrine as a non-binding strategic document for how government policies should work towards achieving ambitions of climate neutrality by 2060. However, the Doctrine has been criticised for scaling back on climate ambitions as compared with the country's earlier 2009 Climate Doctrine.⁴³

Indonesia

Climate Change Management Bill (2026)

This Bill seeks to establish Indonesia's first unified legal framework on climate action, codifying the country's ambitions for climate neutrality by 2060. The Bill includes provisions for: environmental regulation; carbon trading; climate adaptation and mitigation efforts; climate finance; and climate justice.

The Bill has been included within the country's priority legislative agenda for 2026, however similar efforts have been shelved in previous years,⁴⁴ and contentions arise from NGO groups that the draft bill should have been developed with greater external consultation and refocused towards Climate Justice.⁴⁵



Insights for the legal profession

a) Examples of Relevant Litigation and Cases



The 2025 UN report, *'Climate Change in the Courtroom,'* highlights a rapidly growing body of climate litigation seeking to clarify and enforce legal obligations in respect of climate change. This growing body of law emerges against the backdrop of the International Court of Justice's Advisory Opinion and now spans 55 jurisdictions and multiple international tribunals.⁴⁶

Trends among legal cases and proceedings include: an increased reliance on human-rights based arguments for the enforcement of state obligations; a focus on both substantive

and procedural environmental rights; the growing role for transnational narratives in shaping climate governance standards; greater use of scientific evidence in court proceedings; and an emphasis on practical remedies based on minimum standards. Of note, is the role that climate litigation can play where other avenues for climate advocacy and reform have failed.⁴⁷

The following cases highlight a handful of instances where climate litigation has played a significant role in furthering the ambitions of SDG 13.

Australia

PCWP and Others v. Glencore (2022) (Pending)

This complaint was lodged in 2022 on behalf of The Plains Clan of the Wonnarua People (PCWP) and Lock the Gate Alliance against mining giant Glencore – Australia’s largest coal producer and biggest contributor of GHG emissions from coal mining.

The complaint, filed with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) and Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC), argues that Glencore’s public claims of decarbonisation are misleading after a legal

investigation by the Environmental Defenders Office found no evidence supporting them.

The claimants argue that these unsubstantiated claims, coupled with Glencore’s behaviour towards Traditional Owners, are evidence of ‘greenwashing’ under the Corporations Act (2001) or Australian consumer law. Lawyers from ClientEarth have since backed the action. The outcome of the case is still pending.

Netherlands

Urgenda Foundation v. The State of Netherlands (2015-2019)

This case was brought by Urgenda, an environmental organisation representing 886 Dutch citizens, against the Dutch government after the organisation’s request for the government to commit to a higher GHG emissions reduction target by 2020 (relative to 1990 levels) was rejected.

Urgenda argued that existing commitments of less than 25% emissions reduction was inadequate in light of findings by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change urging for significant reductions in the short-term, alongside goals set by the European Union for member states to achieve a 40% reduction by 2030.

In 2015, the District Court of The Hague ruled in favour of Urgenda, noting that the Dutch government’s emissions reduction targets had been practically halved from 30% (in

2010) to 14-17%. The court ordered that these commitments be readjusted to a target of at least 25% reduction by 2020.

In October 2018, The Hague Court of Appeal upheld the District Court’s order holding that, by doing too little to prevent climate change, the State had failed to fulfil its duty of care under Articles 2 and 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, protecting respectively the right to life and the right to private and family life. This ruling was upheld once again by the Supreme Court in 2019.

This landmark case is significant globally as the first instance in which a human-rights based approach was successfully used to establish that governments have a legal obligation to reduce GHG emissions in order to mitigate the effects of climate change for their citizens.

Milieudefensie et al. v. Royal Dutch Shell plc (2021)

In April 2019, Milieudefensie, also known as Friends of the Earth Netherlands, served a court summons against Shell, with 6 other NGOs and more than 17,000 Dutch citizens as co-plaintiffs.

The plaintiff argued that Shell's contributions to climate change violated its duty of care under Article 6:162 of the Dutch civil code (the general basis for claims of damages under tort law) as well as violating Articles 2 and 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (the right to life and the right to private and family life). It was additionally argued that Shell had been aware of the damaging impact of its emissions for years, without taking any significant action. Shell, on the other hand, argued that the case held no legal basis, and that emissions reduction was the mandate of states alone.

In 2021, the Hague District Court ordered the oil giant to reduce its emissions by 45% by the end of 2030 compared to 2019 levels, as per the Paris Agreement. In 2024 however, the Court of Appeal overturned the 45% reduction order, concluding that specific, binding reduction targets were unwarranted. However, Shell's duty of care to reduce emissions under human rights standards were maintained, building on the principles applied in the landmark Urgenda case. This duty of care extends to the level of CO2 emissions produced, including direct emissions, indirect emissions, and emissions produced as a result of third-party use.

This landmark ruling was the first of its kind to establish that corporations have a legal duty of care to mitigate climate change, and the first major example of a successful climate litigation case against a corporation based on human rights principles.

FossilVrij NL v. KLM (2022)

In July 2022, following a pre-action letter delivered to KLM during its Annual General Meeting, FossilVrij NL filed a claim in the Amsterdam District Court against Dutch airline company KLM over alleged misleading advertising claims, specifically that KLM was making flying sustainable through carbon-offsetting schemes (the 'Fly Responsibly' campaign).

The case followed a decision by the national Advertisement Code Commission in April 2022, which ruled that elements of the KLM promotion telling customers they could fly carbon-emission free was misleading. Reference was made to the slogans "Be a hero, fly CO2ZERO" or "CO2 neutral: KLM compensates for the CO2 emissions of your KLM Holidays flight."

"Greenwashing complaints typically allege that companies have misrepresented the environmental benefits or climate neutrality of their products or services... Climate-washing cases go further, challenging broader narratives or public messaging about an actor's contribution to climate solutions." – UNEP, 2025

The case is among a growing body of 'greenwashing' and 'climate-washing' claims and referrals made to advertising standards authorities in different jurisdictions.

Pakistan

Asghar Leghari v. Federation of Pakistan, Lahore High Court Green Bench (2015)

Asghar Leghari, a Pakistani farmer, brought a public interest litigation against the provincial and federal governments to challenge their inaction in implementing the National Climate Change Policy (2012) and its Framework for Implementation (2014-2030). The Lahore High Court acknowledged the public interest significance of climate change, noting frequent floods and droughts that had led to water scarcity and a lack of food security.

The Court found that ‘the delay and lethargy of the State’

in implementing national climate change policies violated Constitutional provisions for protecting the right to life and the right to human dignity, as well as international environmental principles for sustainable development, the precautionary principle and climate justice.

The Court ordered (*inter alia*) several government ministries to each nominate ‘a climate change focal person’ to help implementation of the Climate Change Policy, and established a Climate Change Commission for oversight.

Switzerland

KlimaSeniorinnen v Switzerland (2024)

This case was brought by four elderly women and the Senior Women for Climate Protection Switzerland association (representing over 2,000 older women) in response to Switzerland’s alleged failure to adequately meet climate change ambitions as set under the Federal Act on the Reduction of CO2 Emissions (2013). The claimants argued that these failings exposed them to life-threatening heatwaves, which were specifically detrimental to those aged over 75.

The case was rejected by the Swiss courts but eventually accepted by the European Court of Human Rights and resulted in a landmark ruling which established that failure to implement sufficient climate action violated Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (the right to private and family life). The Court established a five-step test

to determine whether a State’s actions provide adequate protection including: whether general and intermediate targets for carbon neutrality are adopted and regularly updated; whether reduction pathways are implemented; whether there has been demonstrated compliance to meet agreed targets, and whether actions taken are taken in good time and in an appropriate and consistent manner.

“Th[is] judgment establishes a clear human rights-based obligation on States to mitigate climate change, marking a milestone for both European and global climate litigation.” – UNEP, 2025

Asmania et al. vs Holcim (2022) (Pending)

This claim focuses on the civil liability of major GHG emitters for climate change-related damages suffered in a different jurisdiction. In this case, four Indonesian fishermen from the island of Pari (supported by three NGOs) filed an application in 2022 in Switzerland to hold the buildings materials company, Holcim, accountable for its CO2 emissions.

The claimants request proportional compensation for climate change-related damages on Pari, a 43% reduction of CO2 emissions compared to 2019 levels by 2030 (or according

to findings of climate science in order to limit global warming to 1.5°C), and financial contribution for adaptation measures on Pari. The request is novel in its approach as it seeks compensation, but also retrospective *and* prospective accountability.

In December 2025 the court rendered the case admissible establishing that major GHG emitters can be held accountable for climate damages through the civil courts in Switzerland. The outcome of the case is still pending.

Brazil

Conectas Direitos Humanos v. BNDES and BNDESPAR (2022) (Pending)

This claim was brought in 2022 by the Environmental NGO, Conectas against BNDES (Brazil's Development Bank) and BNDESPar (the bank's investment arm responsible for managing shareholdings in various Brazilian companies). The claim argued that BNDESPar, which is publicly owned, has no rules or protocols in place for assessing the impacts of its investments on the climate crisis, violating commitments made under the Paris Agreement and Brazil's National Policy on Climate Change.

The claimants request (*inter alia*) that BNDESPar and its parent company (BNDES) be given 30 days to adopt transparency measures and create rules and mechanisms that bind their investments and divestments to the reduction of GHG emissions by the companies they finance. At the same time, the claim requests a Plan for the Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions to be presented within 90 days, and a new

Climate Situation Room to be installed to ensure compliance with the new plan.

BNDES group issued a statement in response, arguing that the requested actions are not needed as BNDES already adopts international and national protocols of best ESG and climate practices as part of the bank's systems. Notably, it stated that as state-owned enterprises, the bank does not have autonomy to develop their own environmental policy, and that climate litigation of this kind implied a violation of the Separation of Powers.

The case highlights new trends in climate litigation that seek to clarify the extent to which financial institutions have a responsibility towards climate action. The outcome of the case is still pending.

UK

Friends of the Earth, ClientEarth, Good Law Project v Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (2022-2024)

In January 2022, Client Earth, Friends of the Earth and the Good Law Project brought an application for judicial review to the High Court, arguing that the UK government's Net Zero Strategy (2021) failed to include sufficient information about how the policies would reduce emissions sufficiently to meet legally binding carbon budgets. As a result, the claimants asserted that the strategy did not meet the Government's obligations under the Climate Change Act (2008).

In a July 2022 judgement, the High Court found in favour of the claimants and requested that the UK Government update the climate strategy to include a quantified account of how the policies would achieve climate targets based on a realistic assessment of delivery. The updated strategy would need to stand up to scrutiny from both Parliament and the Committee on Climate Change (CCC).

Following the 2022 judgment, the UK Government published the Carbon Budget Delivery Plan (2023). While it was conceded that the new plan saw some improvements, the claimants issued proceedings once again, on the basis that it still failed to adequately address how it would deliver 100% emissions cuts in light of significant delivery risks as identified by the CCC.

In a 2024 High Court judgment, the court found once again in favour of the claimants, issuing that the government had failed to meet its responsibilities under the Climate Change Act (2008). As a result, the government was required to update their strategy for reducing carbon emissions for a second time.

France

Greenpeace France and Others v. Total Energies Se And Totalenergies Se Electricité Et Gaz France

In March 2022, three French NGOs, led by Greenpeace France and supported by ClientEarth, commenced proceedings against TotalEnergies Electricité et Gaz France and the head of its corporate group, TotalEnergies SE (TotalEnergies), alleging that TotalEnergies' advertising campaign has misled French consumers.

Compensation and an injunction to stop the campaign are now being sought. It is asserted that false claims have been made about the companies' aims for carbon neutrality by 2050, along with misleading assertions as to the environmental virtues of other fuels, such as biofuels being a "low-carbon alternative" that "emit half as much CO₂ as their fossil equivalents".

US

Held v State of Montana (2024)

This claim was brought by Our Children's Trust on behalf of 16 young persons against the State of Montana on the grounds that amendments to the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) – which limit inclusion of GHG emissions within environmental reviews – was unconstitutional. The claimants further argued that the state's support of fossil fuel industries exacerbated the climate crisis with negative impacts on their lives.

The case was first heard before the District Court and then the Supreme Court, where in both instances, the courts found in favour of the claimants. The Supreme Court ruling held that the 'right to a clean and healthful environment' under

the Montana Constitution included the right to a stable climate system, and therefore that the MEPA limitation was unconstitutional.

The case is significant as the first constitutional climate trial in U.S. history, establishing a relationship between climate action and constitutional rights.

In 2025, the claimants filed a further petition at the Montana State Supreme Court alleging that new amendments under MEPA and the Montana Clean Air Act are unconstitutional and directly contradict the earlier 2024 ruling.

Germany

Neubauer v Germany (2021)

This claim was brought by a group of young activists, backed by leading NGOs (including Fridays for Future, Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth), against the German government. The claimants argued that the target set by the Federal Climate Protection Act (2019) for a 55% reduction of GHG emissions by 2030, was insufficient and constituted a breach of their fundamental rights under the German constitution.

The Constitutional Court ruled that the Federal Climate Protection Act (2019) was unconstitutional in so far as it shifted excessive emission reduction burdens to a post-2030 period, disproportionately burdening young and future generations.

The Court found that the constitution did not only require climate action, but "also concerns how environmental burdens are spread out between different generations."⁴⁸ As a result, the German government amended the Act to include stricter emissions reduction targets both pre- and post-2030.

The landmark ruling is significant in having established the constitutional principle of intergenerational freedom (or intertemporal freedom), highlighting that constitutional rights do not only extend to current generations, but to future ones too – closely aligning with the notion of sustainable development.

b) Legal context and challenges



Climate change poses a fundamental justice concern: the countries that have contributed the least to GHG emissions are disproportionately affected by the effects of global warming and have the fewest resources to adapt to and protect themselves from it.

The principle of ‘common but differentiated responsibilities,’ first formulated in the UNFCCC, implies that all states share an obligation to protect the climate system, but that equity also commands to take into consideration the different responsibilities and respective capabilities of each. Concretely, the UNFCCC states that developed countries ‘should take the lead in combating climate change’ (Article 3.1) and that the ‘specific needs and special circumstances’ of developing and most vulnerable countries ‘should be given

full consideration’ (Article 3.2).

One of the most challenging factors for climate litigation, however, is that the international legal framework is still largely governed by voluntary commitments as opposed to binding legal obligations, leading to lax enforcement and issues of justiciability. SDG 13 on climate change expressly states that “the UNFCCC is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change,” with the Paris Agreement considered the cornerstone in the fight against global warming.

However, the Paris Agreement does not impose binding emissions reduction targets on parties, opting instead for a system of ‘nationally determined contributions’ (NDCs) with

an inbuilt review mechanism. This move away from binding commitments (as contained within the earlier Kyoto Protocol) was made in the hope that a ‘name and shame’ system, combined with global public pressure and a growing urgency to take action, would compel States to set ambitious GHG emissions reduction targets and meet them.

Unfortunately, the reality has proved different and the mild optimism that followed the signing of the Paris Agreement was short-lived. In its 2025 NDC Synthesis Report, the UNFCCC identified significant gaps in current pledges for emissions reduction and what is actually needed to limit global warming to 1.5°C.⁴⁹ These findings, coupled with the rise of climate scepticism in certain countries and the second withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Agreement, raises fresh concerns around the international community’s ability to mitigate the climate crisis without increased accountability, enforcement and oversight.

Human Rights Based Litigation

The concept of ‘climate justice’ links climate change and human rights with the purpose of safeguarding the rights of the most vulnerable people and ensuring that the burdens and benefits of climate change are shared equitably.⁵⁰ Neither the Universal Declaration of Human Rights nor the Human Rights Covenants explicitly recognise a right to a safe and healthy environment.

However, climate change undoubtedly has – and will have to a greater extent in the future – an impact on the enjoyment of specific human rights, especially for the most vulnerable population. Climate disruption will affect the rights to food, to water, to decent housing, and, in the most extreme cases, the right to life. Consequently, there is a growing body of climate litigation, building on the findings in the cases of Urgenda

“If we put our money where our mouth is, then there will be a future. If not, the Paris Agreement will be only a moment when we decided to act on climate change, but failed.” - Adina-Ioana Valean, European Commissioner for Transport

To ensure climate commitments are honoured and encourage further action, climate litigation is increasingly relied upon to fill the enforcement gap as public interest bodies, NGOs, activist groups and environmental organisations seek to hold governments, public institutions and businesses to account for their climate impacts. In doing so, the following challenges and litigation trends have emerged.

and Milieudefensie, that move beyond environmental regulations and seek to enforce climate action on the basis of human-rights violations.

This has proven particularly effective in instances where regional human rights frameworks and/or constitutions explicitly recognise the right to a healthy environment, reinforcing State obligations in this regard. However, human-rights based arguments may also be invoked to question the procedural dimensions of climate policies and environmental decision making, particularly where these have failed to integrate adequate public consultation or impact assessments for affected groups.

Separation of Powers

As climate commitments are often rooted in national policies as opposed to legally binding obligations, questions of justiciability may arise where climate litigation inadvertently places the court in a quasi-regulatory or advisory position.

The UN Environment Programme finds that this is often the case where remedies sought are “perceived as overly broad, indeterminate or incompatible with the separation of powers.”⁵¹ For example, this may be the case where courts are asked to determine the efficacy or adequacy of climate policies with a view to creating new commitments such as higher emissions targets or comprehensive action plans.

To overcome this challenge, both claims and remedies must be framed narrowly and grounded in clear legal standards, drawing on wider State obligations. For example, climate litigation may seek to establish that State conduct under existing climate policies:

- Violates constitutional or human rights obligations;
- Violates existing minimum legal standards (e.g.: due diligence standards or the State’s duty of care);
- Does not adequately meet the procedural requirements for policy formation; or
- Contributes to specific harms evidenced by scientific findings.

“Designing remedies that align with judicial norms of institutional restraint, while still advancing meaningful accountability, remains a central challenge in climate litigation.” – UN Environment Programme (2025)

Standing and Jurisdiction

The causes and impacts of climate change are not neatly confined within national borders. The impacts of high emissions in one country may be felt thousands of miles away in an entirely different jurisdiction, while the climate impacts of multinational corporations may be felt a long way down the global supply chain. As a result, climate impacts are often extraterritorial and transboundary in nature, creating additional challenges around establishing legal standing and causation, while overcoming territorial limits.

One key way of overcoming these challenges is through strategic engagement across jurisdictions and expertise, with many of the leading successful climate litigation cases having

been brought as class action lawsuits mobilised through joint efforts between multiple INGOs and local groups with contributions from legal and scientific experts. Partnerships such as these are not only necessary for assembling the sheer volume of resources needed to bring large-scale climate litigation claims, but for overcoming the structural disparities across jurisdictions that risk claims falling through.

Promisingly however, cases such as *Asmania* suggest that courts may now be more willing to permit cases against major corporations for climate damages caused in third party jurisdictions.

Greenwashing and Misrepresentation

Recent years have seen a rapid trend within climate litigation of claims against private sector corporations for 'greenwashing' and 'climate washing', false advertising and misrepresentation within climate-related disclosures. This goes hand in hand with the increased pressure placed on corporations from consumers and investors to account for and report on their climate impacts.

These claims have advanced beyond GHG emissions, encompassing broader narratives around a corporation's contributions to climate solutions, green futures and the circular economy. As a result, corporations from across multiple sectors have come under increasing scrutiny.



c) So, what can lawyers do?

This section highlights several areas for action, encouraging lawyers to use their skills, expertise and influence to contribute

both nationally and internationally to the fight against climate change.

Learn and Educate

Lawyers can enhance their understanding of climate change along with the policy and programmatic efforts to mitigate it and to adapt to its consequences.

In 2012, the International Bar Association set up a Task Force on Climate Change Justice and Human Rights. The Task Force produces regular reports on the climate crisis and the role of lawyers and justice within it, starting with its seminal report: *'Achieving justice and human rights in an era of climate disruption'*.⁵² The report analyses international legal frameworks relevant to climate change (e.g.: environmental law, human rights treaties, trade instruments), promotes an approach of climate change centred on justice and human rights, and forms recommendations for various stakeholders, from international organisations and states to the private sector.

The Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the environment, from the London School of Economics and Political Science, also offers a free global database on legislation and litigation linked with climate change.⁵³ The database houses over 7,000 climate laws, policies and UNFCCC submissions that practitioners can easily filter through to identify relevant cases, developments and topics of interest.

Finally, the Law and Climate Change Toolkit is an online

and open database developed by the UN Climate Change secretariat, UN Environment, and the Commonwealth Secretariat working in close collaboration with partner countries, other international organisations and research institutions. The toolkit aims to provide a global resource to help countries put in place the legal frameworks necessary for effective domestic implementation of the Paris Agreement and their nationally determined contributions (NDCs).⁵⁴



Integrate

The adoption of the UN Sustainable Development Goals provides impetus for law firms, corporate legal departments, and other law-related organisations to examine and re-align their own policies and practices in line with the 17 SDGs. As the impacts of the climate crisis magnify, particular attention has been paid towards climate action under SDG 13 with a growing emphasis on ESG, carbon markets and finance, environmental regulations and transitions to the circular economy.

Within law firms, all departments should now be assessing the way climate change will affect their practice areas, be it pensions, mergers and acquisitions, energy, financial regulation, property or planning. When completing any internal and client-facing work, all commercial lawyers should assess carbon management strategies and corporate social

responsibility policies that take into account climate change and its impact on the enjoyment of human rights, especially for vulnerable communities.

The last few years have already seen rapid changes in climate litigation, and it is expected that this growing area of law will only expand as the climate crisis worsens. A better understanding of climate change science has already seen greater ability for courts to adjudicate on these cases, overcoming traditional challenges of causation, standing and jurisdiction. For law firms and their clients, understanding climate obligations is now part and parcel of the minimum due diligence expected from investors, consumers, business partnerships and wider stakeholders, and necessary for long-term business viability.

Act

Many law firms are working to make their pro bono work more strategic, collaborative and sustainable. By aligning their work with the SDGs, lawyers can be confident that they are taking practical steps towards a comprehensive and inclusive roadmap for sustainable development. This can help firms to establish and develop collaborative, cross-sector partnerships with other organisations that are working towards the same goals.

Developing a pro bono strategy with clearly identified goals enables firms to assess the effectiveness of pro bono work over time and therefore increase its impact. The SDG framework offers law firms the opportunity to effectively

measure and demonstrate their positive impact towards globally recognised goals. There is wide recognition that pro bono work, which is focused on progressing long-term goals and implemented in partnership with relevant organisations will lead to more sustainable results than ad hoc pro bono assistance.

The SDGs thus present a compelling opportunity for law firms, corporate legal departments and other lawyers to expand their pro bono legal activities domestically and abroad. In regard to SDG 13, law firms and lawyers can expand their pro bono work in several ways, including:

Strategic Litigation

Strategic litigation has already proven itself to be a decisive force in holding governments to account for their existing climate commitments, while encouraging states to commit to more ambitious climate action policies by establishing wider linkages with the constitutional and human rights of citizens. The precedence set by the Urgenda case, an increased awareness and understanding of climate change casualties and impacts, and more sophisticated use of attribution science in case proceedings, suggest that the role of climate litigation in the fight against climate change is only going to grow in quality and quantity.

However, climate litigation remains a costly and complex area of law, often requiring transnational input and expert advice from various actors. Many of the most successful climate litigation cases have been brought as joint efforts between various organisations. Law firms with transnational expertise have a particular skillset to offer in strengthening claims, especially for litigants based in the Global South who face significant obstacles including: limited evidentiary capacity; constrained judicial independence; information asymmetry; short limitation periods, and weak enforcement mechanisms.⁵⁵

Climate Mitigation and Adaptation

Legal resources and skills should be used by law firms to look beyond their firm and support the fight against climate change by bringing their legal expertise to climate mitigation and adaptation strategies.

Many developing countries, which are most affected by the consequences of global warming, are elaborating adaptation plans, disaster risk management strategies and environmental regulations, and are mainstreaming climate change into their policy and legal frameworks in line with SDG 13 and the Paris Agreement. The provision of pro bono

expertise on legal issues related to these climate change strategies can be very valuable.

For instance, Legal Response International (LRI) provides free legal support to poor and particularly climate vulnerable developing countries as well as civil society observer organisations during climate change negotiations in order to create a more level playing field between actors and, once an international agreement is reached, to implement it into national legislation.⁵⁶

Supporting Climate Transitions

Commercial lawyers are well placed to support clients in their climate transitions given their expertise in: drafting green contracts; assessing and managing climate risks; integrating ESG within business practices; meeting environmental regulations and reporting standards, and even mobilising

sustainable finance. Given the rise in litigation cases concerning greenwashing and misrepresentation, these lawyers may also act as an additional safeguard to ensure that public environmental claims are backed by legal and actionable commitments.

“Limiting the devastating impacts of climate change on people and nature requires a rapid transformation of how we produce and consume energy — and the legal profession has a critical role in enabling that change... Recent advisory opinions from international courts clarify the legal obligations of states and businesses to act on climate change in ways consistent with human rights. These opinions will shape future climate negotiations, legislation and litigation...”
– Jaime Carey (IBA Past President, 2025)



Legal and Regulatory Reforms

While majority of climate commitments are governed by non-binding international commitments and domestic policies, recent shifts have been made towards legally binding frameworks for governing climate obligations. This is seen in the entrenchment of net-zero commitments within national laws, as well as the increase in reporting obligations and

regulatory oversight measures to monitor progress.

Lawyers can support these shifts by offering their expertise in the development and drafting of new legislation, as well as within wider policy and advocacy efforts towards more accountable climate action.

Endnotes

- 1 United Nations (2025). *The Sustainable Development Goals Report (2025)*, p.34. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/3vps9d9n>
- 2 United Nations (n.d.). *Goal 13: Targets and Indicators: Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform*. Available at: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal13>
- 3 United Nations (1992). *United Nations Framework on Climate Change*. Available at: <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf>
- 4 United Nations (2022). *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022*, p.53. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/j4jxs34v>
- 5 United Nations (2025). *The Sustainable Development Goals Report (2025)*, p.34. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/3vps9d9n>
- 6 IPCC (2023). *Climate Change: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Summary for Policymakers*, p.5. Available at: https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_SYR_SPM.pdf
- 7 United Nations (2022). *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022*, p.53. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/j4jxs34v>
- 8 UNDRR (2025). *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction*, pp.4-5. Available at: https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl1411/files/documents/2025-05/undrr-gar2025-web_0.pdf
- 9 United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015). *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/3cmdk7fn>
- 10 UNDRR (2025). *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction*, pp.4-5. Available at: https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl1411/files/documents/2025-05/undrr-gar2025-web_0.pdf
- 11 United Nations (2025). *The Sustainable Development Goals Report (2025)*, p.35. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/3vps9d9n>
- 12 Early Warnings for All (n.d.) Available at: <https://earlywarningsforall.org/site/early-warnings-all>
- 13 United Nations (2025). *Climate Summit 2025, Press Release*. Available at: https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/climate_summit_2025_-_press_release.pdf
- 14 United Nations (2025). *The Sustainable Development Goals Report (2025)*, p.34. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/3vps9d9n>
- 15 UNEP (2025). *Emissions Gap Report 2025 – Off Target*, p.xi & p.9. Available at: <https://wedocs.unep.org/rest/api/core/bitstreams/4830e1a8-14c0-44a5-a066-cdd2ba5b3e10/content>
- 16 United Nations (2025). *The Sustainable Development Goals Report (2025)*, p.35. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/3vps9d9n>
- 17 UNEP (2022). *Green Climate Fund*. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/eaj6fpx3>
- 18 Our World In Data (OWID) (2023). *Sustainable Development Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*. Available at: <https://ourworldindata.org/sdgs/climate-action>
- 19 UNCTAD (2023). *Considerations for a New Collective Quantified Goal*. Available at: https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/gds2023d7_en.pdf
- 20 UNFCCC (2024). *COP29 UN Climate Conference Agrees to Triple Finance to Developing Countries, Protecting Lives and Livelihoods*. Available at: <https://unfccc.int/news/cop29-un-climate-conference-agrees-to-triple-finance-to-developing-countries-protecting-lives-and>
- 21 United Nations (2024). *COP29 Climate Talks End with \$300 billion annual pledge, Guterres calls deal a 'base to build on.'* Available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/11/1157416>
- 22 UNCTAD (n.d.). *UN list of least developed countries*. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/5n79krkb> [Last Accessed in March 2026]
- 23 Our World In Data (OWID) (n.d.). *Promote mechanisms to raise capacity for planning and management*. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/49jxkw9d> [Last Accessed in March 2026]
- 24 United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (n.d.) *About Small Island Developing States*. Available at: <https://www.un.org/ohrls/content/about-small-island-developing-states> [Last Accessed in March 2026]
- 25 Our World In Data (OWID) (n.d.). *Promote mechanisms to raise capacity for planning and management*. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/49jxkw9d> [Last Accessed in March 2026]
- 26 UNFCCC LDC Expert Group (2025). *National Adaptation Plans 2025: Progress in the Formulation and Implementation of National Adaptation Plans*. Available at: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/NAP_progress_report_2025.pdf
- 27 UNFCCC (2023). *Katowice climate package*. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/57xhtrr4>
- 28 UNFCCC (2023). *Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI)*. Available at: <https://unfccc.int/process/bodies/subsidiary-bodies/sbi>
- 29 United Nations (2023). *Request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the obligations of States in respect of climate change*, Resolution 77/276. Available at: <https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/77/276>
- 30 ICJ (2025). *Obligations of States in Respect of Climate Change*, Advisory Opinion. Available at: <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/187/187-20250723-adv-01-00-en.pdf>
- 31 United Nations (2022). *The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment*, Resolution 76/300. Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3982508?ln=en&v=pdf#files>
- 32 United Nations (2021). *Access to a healthy environment, declared a human right by UN rights council*. Available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/10/1102582>
- 33 IPCC (2023). *Climate Change: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Summary for Policymakers*, p.4. Available at: https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_SYR_SPM.pdf
- 34 African Union Commission (2015). *Agenda 2063, The Africa We Want*, p. 16. Available at: https://au.int/Agenda2063/popular_version
- 35 Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (n.d.) *The ASEAN Climate Change Strategic Action Plan 2025-2030 Project*. Available at: <https://www.iges.or.jp/en/projects/accsap2024> [Last Accessed in March 2026]
- 36 ASEAN (2025). *ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment*. Available at: <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/5.-ASEAN-Declaration-on-the-Right-to-a-Clean-Safe-Healthy-and-Suitable-Environment.pdf>
- 37 European Parliament and European Council (2018). *Regulation (EU) 2018/842 on binding annual greenhouse gas emission reductions by Member States from 2021 to 2030 contributing to climate action to meet commitments under the Paris Agreement and amending Regulation (EU) No 525/2013, L 156/26*, Official Journal of the

- European Union. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/mr3ek5hx>
- 38 Council of the European Union (n.d.) *European Green Deal*. Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/european-green-deal/> [Last Accessed in March 2026]
- 39 Smith, T. Climate Home News (2012). *Is the Philippines' climate law the best in the world?* Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/mws5zbpX>
- 40 Klimarådet (Danish Council on Climate Change). *About the Danish Council on Climate Change*. Available at: <https://klimaraadet.dk/en/about-danish-council-climate-change>
- 41 The State Council of the People's Republic of China (2026). *China adopts landmark legislation to propel green modernization*. Available at: https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202603/13/content_WS69b36ae1c6d00ca5f9a09d90.html
- 42 Climate Change Committee (n.d.) *About the Climate Change Committee*. Available at: <https://www.theccc.org.uk/about/> [Last Accessed in March 2026]
- 43 Climate Action Tracker (n.d.) *Russian Federation*. Available at: <https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/russian-federation/policies-action/> [Last Accessed in March 2026]
- 44 Westminster Foundation for Democracy (2025). *Inside Indonesia's Legislative Push for a Climate Change Law*, Commentary by Ravio Patra. Available at: <https://www.wfd.org/commentary/inside-indonesias-legislative-push-climate-change-law>
- 45 Jejakin (2025). *Climate Change Management Bill: Indonesia's New Legal Framework to Tackle the Climate Crisis*. Available at: <https://www.jejakin.com/en/blog/climate-change-management-bill-indonesias-new-legal-framework-to-tackle-the-climate-crisis>
- 46 UNEP (2025). *Climate Change in the Courtroom: Trends, Impacts and Emerging Lessons*, Climate Litigation Report 2025, p.vii. Available at: <https://wedocs.unep.org/rest/api/core/bitstreams/ae56f4d1-de87-4500-8da1-50362bd97ccc/content>
- 47 UNEP (2025). *Climate Change in the Courtroom: Trends, Impacts and Emerging Lessons*, Climate Litigation Report 2025, pp.47-50. Available at: <https://wedocs.unep.org/rest/api/core/bitstreams/ae56f4d1-de87-4500-8da1-50362bd97ccc/content>
- 48 Climate Litigation Database (n.d.) *Neubauer, et al. v. Germany*. Available at: https://www.climatecasechart.com/document/neubauer-et-al-v-germany_0a3e [Last Accessed in March 2026]
- 49 World Resources Institute (2025). *UN Report Finds Country Climate Commitments Falling Short*, Statement. Available at: <https://www.wri.org/news/statement-un-report-finds-country-climate-commitments-falling-short>
- 50 Mary Robinson Foundation (2022). *Principles of Climate Justice*. Available at: <https://www.mrfcj.org/principles-of-climate-justice/>
- 51 UNEP (2025). *Climate Change in the Courtroom: Trends, Impacts and Emerging Lessons*, Climate Litigation Report 2025, p.52. Available at: <https://wedocs.unep.org/rest/api/core/bitstreams/ae56f4d1-de87-4500-8da1-50362bd97ccc/content>
- 52 International Bar Association (IBA) (2014). *Achieving Justice and Human Rights in an Era of Climate Disruption*. Available at: <https://www.ibanet.org/MediaHandler?id=0f8cee12-ee56-4452-bf43-cfcab196cc04>
- 53 Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment (2023). *Climate Change Laws of the World*. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/2n3xkdt5>
- 54 UN Climate Change secretariat, UNEP, and Commonwealth Secretariat (2023). *Law and Climate Change Toolkit*. Available at: <https://climatelawtoolkit.org/>
- 55 UNEP (2025). *Climate Change in the Courtroom: Trends, Impacts and Emerging Lessons*, Climate Litigation Report 2025, p.52. Available at: <https://wedocs.unep.org/rest/api/core/bitstreams/ae56f4d1-de87-4500-8da1-50362bd97ccc/content>
- 56 For further information, see: Legal Response International (LRI) (n.d.). Available at: <https://legalresponse.org/> [Last Accessed in March 2026]

Photo credits

Page 1: Matthias B./Flickr; page 2: Martin Snicer/Flickr; page 3: Mark Garten/UN Photo; page 4: Mathew Kirby/Flickr; page 5: Donal Bason/USAID; page 10: Master Sgt. Paul Wade/Released; page 12: EU Parliament; page 13: Alexandre/Flickr; page 16 Asia Development Bank; page 19: Soren H/Unsplash; page 23: Dana Smillie/World Bank; page 24: Wayne S. Grazio/Flickr; page 25: Mark Garten/UN Photo; page 32, USAID; page 35: John Englart/Flickr; page 36: World Meteorological Organization/Flickr; page 39: Mark Dixon/Flickr.