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GLOBAL LEADERS, JUDGES, AND LEGAL EXPERTS EXAMINE HOW TO TURN GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY COMMITMENTS INTO ACTION AT BIODIVERSITY LAW & GOVERNANCE DAY 2026

Held online during CBD COP17 in Yerevan, the fifth Biodiversity Law & Governance Day drew 4,480 registrants from 170 countries as Parties undertake the first global review of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

Yerevan, Armenia – The *Biodiversity Law & Governance Day 2026* (BLGD 2026), held online on 24 October 2026 during the seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and co-hosted by Yerevan State University, brought together judges, treaty leaders, legal scholars, practitioners, Indigenous and youth representatives to examine how international biodiversity commitments can become enforceable law and measurable results, under the theme *Implementing Biodiversity Law through Treaties, Courts, Finance and Practice*.

COP17 marks the first global review of collective progress under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), and speakers throughout the Day acknowledged that implementation is not yet proceeding at the pace or scale required. BLGD 2026 was convened by the Biodiversity Law and Governance Initiative (BLGI) with the Centre for International Sustainable Development Law (CISDL), the University of Cambridge, the University of Costa Rica, Asia Pacific University of Technology & Innovation and Yerevan State University, with the support of the Asian Development Bank.

Event Highlights and Themes

Plenaries with leaders of biodiversity treaty secretariats, judges and practitioners framed nine concurrent expert roundtables and workshops. Key messages included:

- **Synergies Across Agreements**: A recurring message of the plenaries was that the commitments of the biodiversity-related agreements are best delivered together. Leaders of CITES, the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Plant Treaty) called for closer coherence between regimes, pointing to joint programmes and shared staff between secretariats and to the alignment of the CMS strategic plan with the KMGBF, while warning that national focal points for different conventions too often work in silos. **Adv. Andy Raine**, Executive Secretary of CMS, noted that national-level synergies are "where the real action happens". Speakers extended the point to the Rio conventions and the Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement), and, closing the Day, IUCN Director-General **Dr. Grethel Aguilar** urged that climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution be tackled together rather than in separate institutional silos.
- **From Commitments to Enforceable Law**: Speakers repeatedly stressed that the KMGBF's targets must be translated into national legislation, institutions and budgets.
- **Courts, Rights and Future Generations**: In the Judicial Leadership Plenary, judges from Pakistan, Hungary and Germany described how courts have recognised the right to a healthy environment, duties towards

future generations and rights of nature, and debated where judge-made law should give way to legislation.

- **Proactive Restoration Law**: The Society for Ecological Restoration presented a model for legislation addressing persistent and historical degradation that existing laws leave unaddressed, with the EU Nature Restoration Regulation cited as an example of binding, time-bound restoration obligations.
- **Markets and Mandates**: Discussions on financing nature restoration pointed to a combination of the two: because ecosystems are public goods, market incentives were considered to require supportive legal and policy frameworks.
- **Credible Conservation and Genuine Participation**: Sessions on area-based and marine conservation, including under the BBNJ Agreement, cautioned that progress towards the 30x30 target must be judged by the quality and durability of conservation, not by area alone. Speakers also called for Indigenous Peoples, local communities and youth to be decision-makers, not merely consulted.

Opening the substantive programme, **Hon. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema**, UN Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme, noted, *"A framework is just a promise. It is not yet protection."* She stressed that coherence across treaties is essential, with the CBD working alongside CITES, CMS, the Ramsar Convention, the Plant Treaty, the BBNJ Agreement and the climate and desertification conventions, and described the reform of harmful incentives as fundamental to the Framework.

In the Judicial Leadership Plenary, **Adv. Nina Pindham**, Chair of the UK Environmental Law Association, argued that, because the climate and biodiversity crises breach fundamental human rights, they are failures of the rule of law that fall squarely within the remit of courts.

Building a Community of Practice

Student scholars from Yerevan State University and the University of Cambridge served as moderators and rapporteurs. The Day closed with the announcement of the initiation of an International Law Association Armenia Branch.

Looking Ahead

The conversation continues at COP17 events on legal pathways for other effective area-based conservation measures (26 and 28 October 2026) and at Climate Law and Governance Day 2026 on 13 November 2026 at Antalya Bilim University and online during UNFCCC COP31.

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