Biodiversity Law & Governance Initiative

Biodiversity Law and Governance Day 2026
Held during the ***COP17 of the Convention on Biological Diversity*** *in* ***Yerevan, Armenia***

Proceedings Report



Biodiversity Law & Governance Day 2026
Proceedings Report

Implementing Biodiversity Law through Treaties, Courts, Finance and Practice

Held online on 24th October 2026, during the 17th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Yerevan, Armenia

With appreciation for the support of the CBD COP17 Presidency and community:

COP17 YEREVAN ARMENIA
TAKING ACTION FOR NATURE
19-30 OCTOBER 2026

With warmest thanks for the contributions of experts from leading international organisations:

With warmest thanks to our government partners:

With grateful recognition of leading law journals, publishers and other partners:

With special recognition to BLGD 2026 partners and supporters:

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With warmest thanks to our academic collaborators and institutional partners:

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About the Biodiversity Law and Governance Initiative

The BLGI supports and generates knowledge-sharing activities, an active community of practice, and specialised biodiversity law and governance capacity-building events and courses alongside the Conferences of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. It coordinates the work of a broad coalition of international organisations, academic institutions, leading law associations and law firms, courts and tribunals.

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Foreword

It was an honour to co-chair the **2026 Biodiversity Law and Governance Day (BLGD)**, held online on 24 October 2026 during the seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Yerevan, Armenia, and co-hosted by Yerevan State University. The fifth edition of the BLGD since its inception alongside CBD COP13 in Cancún in 2016, BLGD 2026 took place at a decisive moment. COP17 is the occasion of the first global review of collective progress under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and speakers throughout the Day acknowledged that implementation is not yet proceeding at the pace or scale required.

Under the theme *Implementing Biodiversity Law through Treaties, Courts, Finance and Practice*, we examined how commitments can be turned into results: through cooperation and compliance among the biodiversity-related treaty regimes, through the work of courts and judges, through legal frameworks that enable finance for conservation and restoration, and through the practice of lawyers, institutions and communities. Our discussions ranged from the credibility of other effective area-based conservation measures and the case for proactive restoration legislation, to the financing of nature restoration, marine conservation under the Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction, youth participation in local governance, and the role of the judiciary in protecting nature and future generations.

With *4,480* registrants from *170* countries, the BLGD 2026 reflected the breadth and dedication of the global biodiversity law and governance community of practice. We are especially grateful for the contributions of the next generation of legal professionals, including the student scholars who served as online moderators and rapporteurs throughout the Day.

Biodiversity Law and Governance Day 2026 was made possible by the Biodiversity Law and Governance Initiative (BLGI) and its partners, including 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. We extend our sincere thanks to the CBD COP17 Presidency, to our session hosts and partner organisations, and to every chair, speaker, moderator and rapporteur who gave their time and expertise.

This Proceedings Report records the dialogues of the Day as documented by session rapporteurs and organisers. We hope that the analysis and recommendations it brings together will serve as a resource for Parties, practitioners and scholars as implementation of the Framework continues beyond COP17, and we look forward to continuing this work together.

Professor Marie-Claire Cordonier Segger
Chair, Biodiversity Law and Governance Initiative
Senior Director, Centre for International Sustainable Development Law
Co-Chair, Biodiversity Law and Governance Day 2026

Professor Jorge Cabrera Medaglia
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Professor Yeghishe Kirakosyan
Professor of Law & Director, LLM in International Courts and Arbitration, Yerevan State University
Co-Chair, Biodiversity Law and Governance Day 2026

Table of Contents

Foreword v

BLGD 2026 in Pictures 2

Biodiversity Law and Governance Day 2026 3

2026 Biodiversity Law & Governance Day Grand Opening 4

Opening Plenary: Implementing International Biodiversity Law – From Commitments to Cooperation and Compliance 6

I. Expert Roundtable: Transitioning from Recognition to Results – Legal and Governance Pathways for Credible OECMs 12

II. Expert Roundtable: Implementing Biodiversity Treaties in Post-Conflict Settings – From Conflict to Dialogue 13

III. Expert Roundtable: Rights-Based Conservation, Community Stewardship and Restoration in Africa 14

IV. Expert Roundtable: Financing Nature Restoration: Markets, Mandates, or Both? 15

V. Expert Roundtable: Advancing Landscape-Seascape Restoration Through Proactive Law and Policy Coherence 16

VI. Expert Roundtable: Exploring New Developments for the Implementation of Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS) 19

Judicial Leadership Plenary: Nature on Trial – Courts, Rights and Biodiversity 20

VII. Expert Roundtable: Implementing Target 3: Partnerships, Capacity, and Global Marine Conservation Pathways for 30x30 23

VIII. Participatory Workshop: Activating Youth and Local Biodiversity Governance for Implementation Beyond COP17 24

IX. Expert Roundtable: Advancing Indigenous Laws, Legal Pluralism and Diverse Value Systems of Nature in Latin America and the Caribbean 26

Closing Plenary: From Commitments to Delivery – Biodiversity Law in Practice 27

Cross-Cutting Messages 31

Concluding Observations 32

Acknowledgements 33

2026 BLGD Chairs 33

2026 Online Programme Team 33

BLGD 2026 in Pictures

Biodiversity Law and Governance Day 2026

On 24 October 2026, during the seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Yerevan, Armenia, the **2026 Biodiversity Law & Governance Day** (BLGD 2026) convened online as a full-day symposium, co-hosted by Yerevan State University. The Day offered a timely forum to accelerate implementation, raise ambition and strengthen legal and institutional capacity for achieving the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), bringing together judges, negotiators, legal scholars, policymakers, representatives of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, practitioners, civil society organisations and emerging professionals for knowledge exchange, peer learning and the co-creation of practical legal and governance solutions. BLGD 2026 attracted 4,480 registrants from 170 countries.

The 2026 Biodiversity Law & Governance Day sought to facilitate dialogue, knowledge exchange, capacity-building and action to support effective, equitable and rights-based implementation of the CBD and the KMGBF. Through the Biodiversity Law and Governance Initiative (BLGI), experts from the Centre for International Sustainable Development Law (CISDL), the University of Cambridge, the University of Costa Rica, Asia Pacific University of Technology & Innovation (APU), Yerevan State University (YSU) and partner institutions, with the support of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), engaged CBD Parties, intergovernmental organisations, observers and partners to accelerate implementation of the CBD and its protocols through law and governance. BLGD 2026 built upon the previous Biodiversity Law and Governance Days convened during CBD COP13 in Cancún in 2016, COP14 in Sharm El-Sheikh in 2018, COP15 in Montreal in 2022 and COP16 in Cali in 2024.

The BLGD 2026 took place as COP17 undertook the first global review of collective progress under the KMGBF, and speakers across the programme acknowledged that implementation is not yet proceeding at the pace or scale required. The programme was organised around the overarching theme *Implementing Biodiversity Law through Treaties, Courts, Finance and Practice*. An Opening Plenary on cooperation and compliance among the biodiversity-related treaty regimes, a Judicial Leadership Plenary on the role of courts and a Closing Plenary on the practice of biodiversity law framed nine concurrent expert roundtables and participatory workshops, held in three rounds.

Themes of Biodiversity Law & Governance Day 2026:

- **Accelerating KMGBF Implementation and Review through Law and Governance:** the first global review of collective progress; implementation gaps identified through national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) and seventh national reports; monitoring, reporting and accountability; domestic legal reform; Indigenous laws and legal pluralism; and institutional coordination and biodiversity mainstreaming.
- **Governing Area-Based Conservation, OECMs and Rights-Based Approaches:** legal recognition and governance of other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs); effective, equitable and durable Target 3 implementation; marine governance and linkages with the Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement); diverse governance models and community-led conservation; tenure, stewardship, consent and benefit-sharing; and pathways for durable conservation outcomes.
- **Advancing Access and Benefit-Sharing, DSI and Responsible Biodiversity Technologies:** equitable access and benefit-sharing (ABS) implementation; operationalisation of the multilateral mechanism for digital sequence information (DSI) and the Cali Fund; Indigenous traditional knowledge, intellectual authority and data governance; national regulatory approaches; interactions with the Nagoya Protocol and other regimes; and technology-enabled monitoring and accountability.
- **Mobilising Finance, Capacity and Partnerships for KMGBF Implementation:** biodiversity finance and resource mobilisation; legal enabling conditions; reform of harmful incentives; public and private finance; mainstreaming across economic sectors; capacity-building; inclusive implementation partnerships; and sustained cooperation beyond COP17.

Through high-level plenaries, specialist panels, legal roundtables and participatory workshops, BLGD 2026 aimed to:

- Profile legal, policy and institutional innovations that translate KMGBF commitments into effective, equitable and enforceable implementation;

- Connect Parties, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, practitioners, researchers, youth and partner institutions across regions and sectors; and
- Generate concrete outputs, partnerships, capacity-building opportunities and implementation pathways before, during and after CBD COP17.

About this Report

This Proceedings Report is based on the reports prepared by session rapporteurs and organisers. Views attributed to individual speakers reflect their own contributions and do not represent positions agreed by participants or by the organising institutions; BLGD 2026 did not adopt a collective declaration or negotiated outcome.

2026 Biodiversity Law & Governance Day Grand Opening

Welcome from Masters of Ceremonies: **Dr Daniel Ruiz de Garibay** (Senior Lecturer, Asia Pacific Univ / Associate Fellow & BLGI Programme Coordinator, CISDL); **Dr Tejas Rao** (Research Director, CISDL / Postdoctoral Research Associate, Univ Cambridge); **Assoc Prof Olympia Geghamyan** (Acting Head, Chair of Civil Procedure / Head, A. Iskoyan Center for Environmental Law, YSU)

Chairs: **Prof Marie-Claire Cordonier Segger WIJA** (Chair, BLGI & Senior Director, CISDL / Chair in Sustainable Development Law & Policy, Univ Cambridge); **Prof Jorge Cabrera Medaglia** (Chair, BLGI & Lead Counsel, CISDL / Professor of Law, Univ Costa Rica); **Prof Yeghishe Kirakosyan** (Professor of Law & Director LLM Intl Courts & Arbitration, YSU)

Welcome: **Prof Hovhannes Hovhannisyan** (Rector, Yerevan State Univ); **H.E. Srbuhi Galyan** (Minister of Justice of the Republic of Armenia); **H.E. Aram Meymaryan** (Deputy Minister of Environment of the Republic of Armenia); **Prof Markus W. Gehring** (Professor in European and International Law, Univ Cambridge / Lead Counsel, CISDL); **Prof Tenia Kyriazi** (Secretary-General, Intl Law Association – UAE)

Session outcomes:

Opening the Day, the Masters of Ceremonies welcomed participants to the fifth Biodiversity Law and Governance Day, following earlier editions in Cancún, Sharm El-Sheikh, Montreal and Cali, and co-hosted by the University of Cambridge, the University of Costa Rica, Asia Pacific University of Technology & Innovation, Yerevan State University and CISDL. They introduced a programme comprising the Opening Plenary, three rounds of concurrent sessions, the Judicial Leadership Plenary and the Closing Plenary, concluding with the launch of the International Law Association Armenia Branch, and announced that participants joining at least three sessions would be eligible for a certificate of attendance, and that recordings and this Proceedings Report would be made available to registrants unable to join live.

Speaking on behalf of the host university, **Prof Hovhannes Hovhannisyan** observed that Armenia is home to remarkable natural diversity, much of it in vulnerable ecosystems. He emphasised the responsibility of universities to connect disciplines, so that lawyers recognise scientific evidence and public servants base their decisions on knowledge and on long-term consequences, and described the hosting of COP17 as an opportunity to strengthen international connections and build partnerships for lasting results. He closed by observing that the future of nature depends not only on how well it is understood, but on how responsibly societies act on what they know.

H.E. Srbuhi Galyan, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Armenia, stressed that international environmental commitments must become effective national legislation, accountable institutions and tangible results, and described biodiversity protection as inseparable from the rule of law, good governance, human rights and responsibilities towards future generations. Drawing on Armenia's experience, she noted that post-conflict settings face intensified environmental pressure from institutional constraints, disrupted cooperation and the lasting effects of conflict, which call for coherent domestic legislation, clear institutional mandates and effective coordination.

Because environmental challenges transcend political boundaries, she concluded, the protection of shared natural resources requires international law, mutual responsibility and constructive engagement.



Opening Plenary: Implementing International Biodiversity Law – From Commitments to Cooperation and Compliance

How can leading international biodiversity treaties and organisations accelerate coherent, effective and rights-based compliance with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, despite a challenging geopolitical context?

Hosted by CISDL, Univ Cambridge, Univ Costa Rica, Asia Pacific Univ and Yerevan State Univ

Chairs: **Prof Marie-Claire Cordonier Segger WIJA** (Chair, BLGI & Senior Director, CISDL / Chair in Sustainable Development Law & Policy, Univ Cambridge); **Prof Jorge Cabrera Medaglia** (Chair, BLGI & Lead Counsel, CISDL / Professor of Law, Univ Costa Rica); **Prof Yeghishe Kirakosyan** (Professor of Law & Director LLM Intl Courts & Arbitration, YSU)

Keynote: **Hon Elizabeth Maruma Mrema** (UN Assistant Secretary-General & Deputy Executive Director, UNEP), by video address

Plenary Speakers: **Hon Ivonne Higuero** (Secretary-General, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna & Flora CITES); **Adv Andy Raine** (Executive Secretary, Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, CMS); **Adv Maria-Goreti Muavesi** (Chair, IUCN WCEL Biodiversity Law Specialist Group); **Dr Kent Nnadozie** (Secretary, International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food & Agriculture ITPGRFA / FAO), by video address

Session outcomes:

The Opening Plenary took place against the backdrop of COP17's first global review of collective progress under the KMGBF. In her keynote address, **Hon Elizabeth Maruma Mrema** called for NBSAPs to move beyond planning documents into national law and domestic legal reform, land-use and spatial planning, sectoral policy for agriculture, fisheries, forests and infrastructure, environmental impact assessment, and the rules governing investment and trade, noting that UNEP and UNDP are supporting countries, through a Global Environment Facility programme, to update their NBSAPs and strengthen national biodiversity reporting. Biodiversity, she argued, cannot remain the responsibility of environment ministries alone: finance, planning and sectoral ministries need clear mandates, adequate budgets and effective coordination. She described monitoring and reporting frameworks as accountability tools rather than technical formalities, observed that courts are increasingly treating environmental commitments as legal obligations rather than political aspirations, and, citing UNEP's *State of Finance for Nature* report, observed that financial flows to nature-negative activities, including environmentally harmful public subsidies, far exceed investment in nature-based solutions; the reform and redirection of harmful incentives was, in her view, fundamental to the Framework rather than peripheral to it. Among the decisions before Parties in Yerevan, she highlighted the monitoring, reporting and review framework, fair, predictable and workable benefit-sharing from the use of DSI through the Cali Fund, and the strengthening of the financial mechanism, particularly for least developed countries and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Rights-based implementation, in her view, requires secure tenure, free, prior and informed consent (FPIC), meaningful participation, access to information and justice, and the protection of environmental human rights defenders. She concluded 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.

Speaking for CITES, **Hon Ivonne Higuero** explained that implementation of the Convention rests on trade in wild species being legal, sustainable and traceable, which national authorities must verify before permits are issued, a discipline directly relevant to KMGBF Target 5. Recalling that she had urged the Parties at the twentieth meeting of the CITES Conference of the Parties in Samarkand to build wildlife conservation into other national and international processes, she observed that national focal points for different conventions often work in silos and require closer coordination. On finance, she noted that biodiversity funding remains significantly lower than climate funding, encouraged proposals that capture co-benefits across biodiversity, climate and chemicals, citing the conservation of forest elephants, which maintains ecosystems that provide climate resilience. Because public budgets alone cannot meet the scale of need, she pointed to blended finance, private investment and innovative

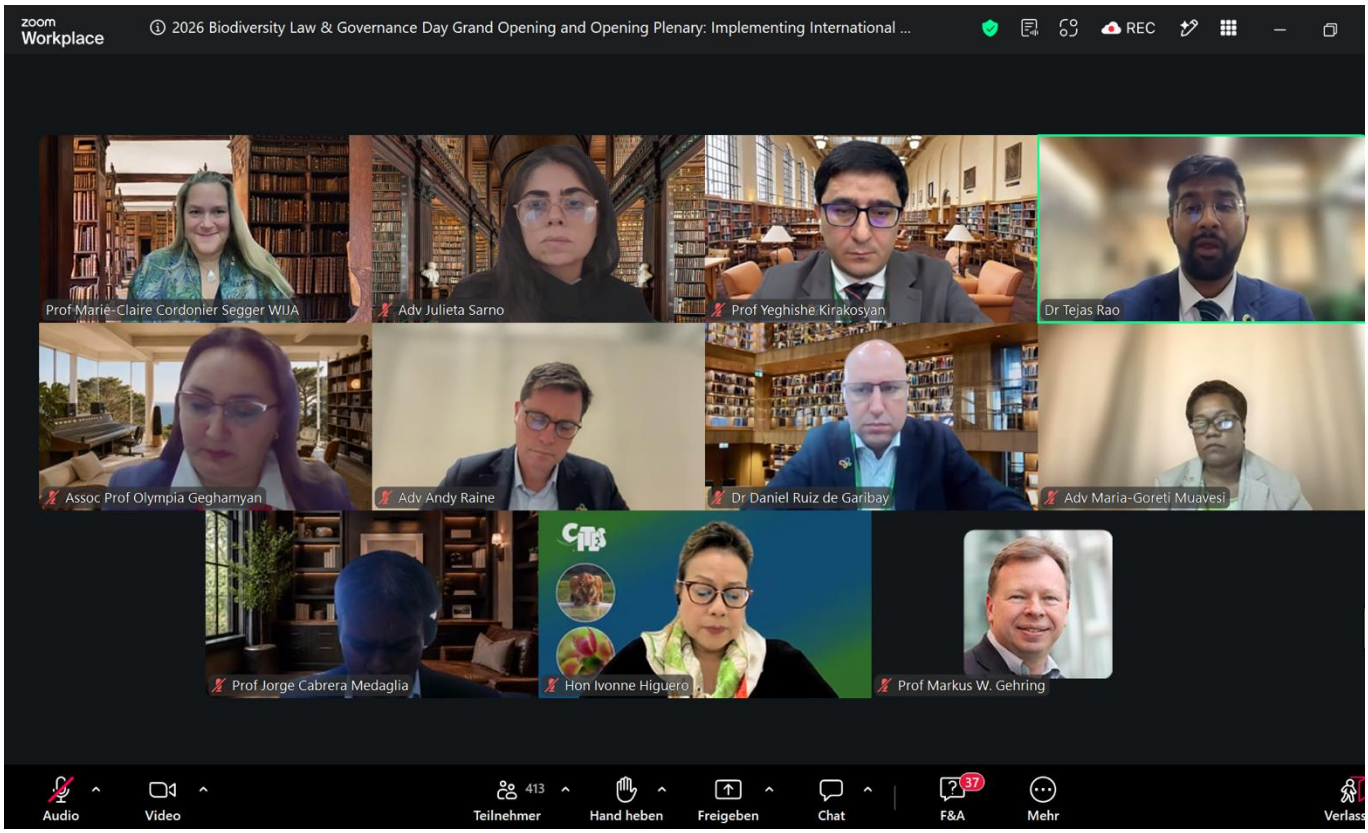
instruments such as rhino bonds, tiger bonds and landscape and ecosystem bonds, which depend on governments creating the enabling conditions to attract investment. She described the stewardship of Indigenous Peoples and local communities as central to implementation.

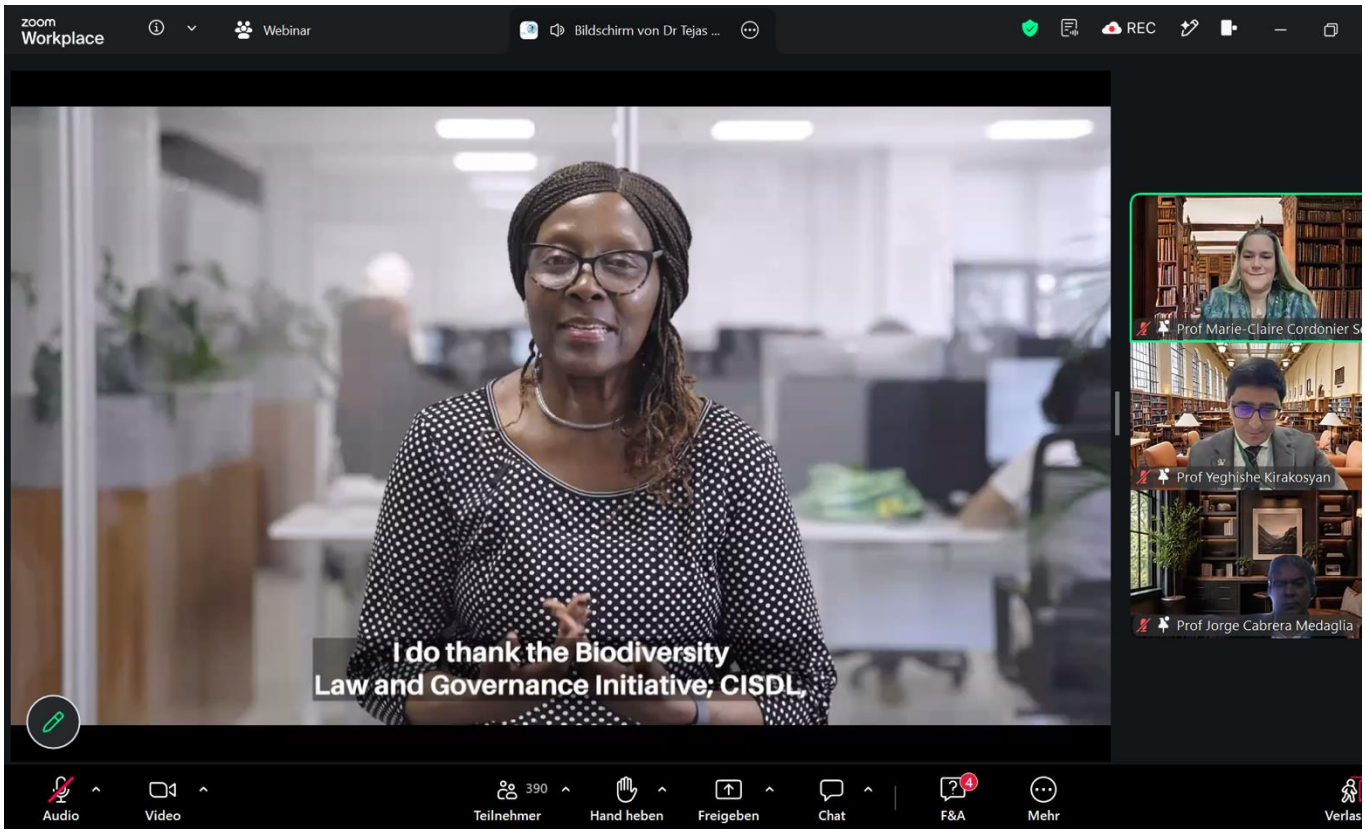
Adv Andy Raine argued that, although multilateralism is under pressure, it continues to deliver results, citing the return of the saiga antelope from the brink of extinction and the recovery of turtle populations through cooperation under CMS. He explained that the CMS Samarkand Plan for Migratory Species has been deliberately aligned with the KMGBF, with goals spanning species recovery, habitat restoration and connectivity, threat reduction, knowledge and capacity, and governance and international cooperation, and that the Convention's monitoring framework has likewise been aligned. He stressed that, for Target 3, protected areas must be well connected; ecological connectivity, he suggested, may be emerging as a principle of international environmental law. He illustrated cooperation in practice through joint programmes between CMS and CITES, with a further programme under negotiation, joint work with the International Whaling Commission and among CMS family instruments on strandings, and the sharing of staff between secretariats where capacity allows, while emphasising that national-level synergies are where implementation ultimately takes place. He closed by encouraging students and researchers that they have an important opportunity to make a positive difference.

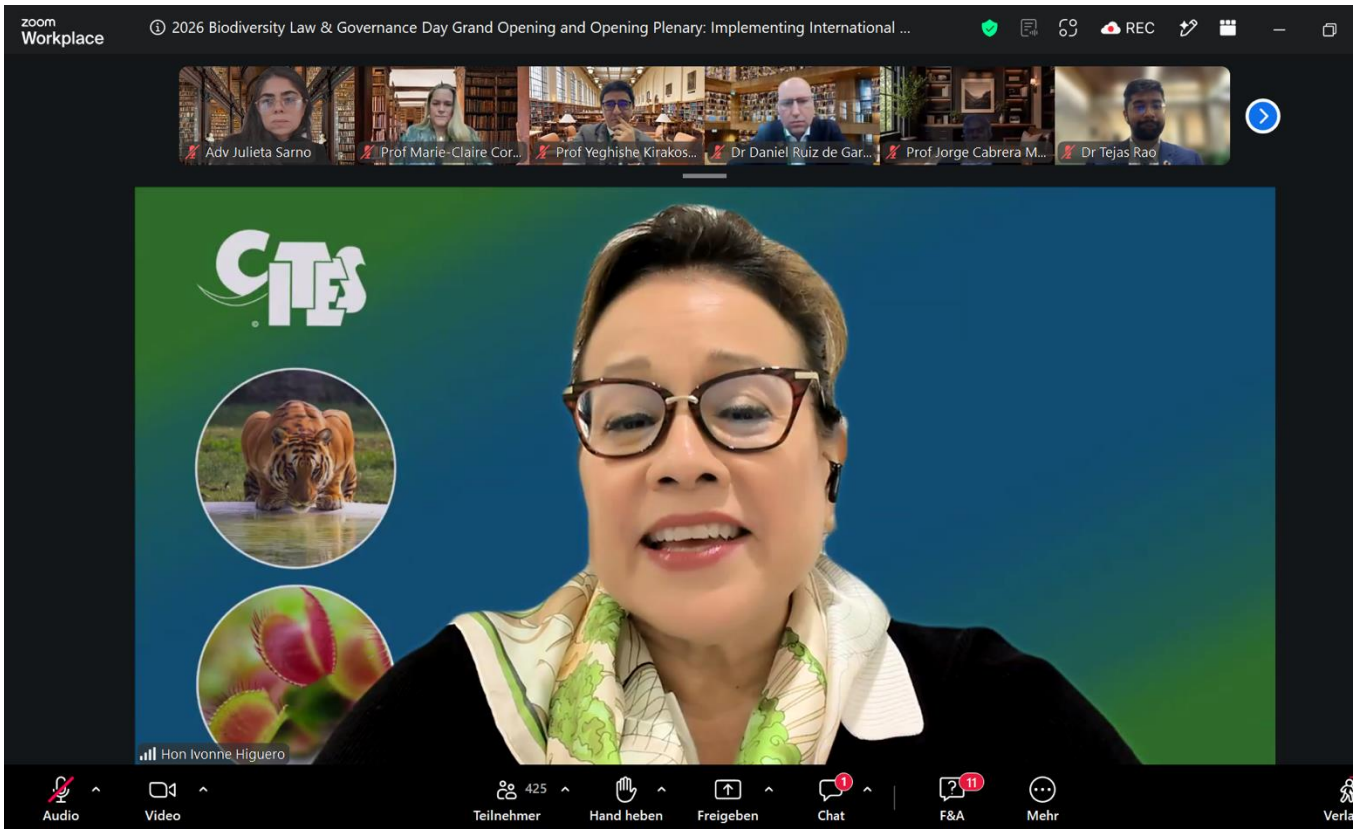
Adv Maria-Goreti Muavesi characterised implementation gaps as governance challenges rather than merely technical ones, pointing to persistent weaknesses in policy coherence, institutional coordination, participation, financing, capacity and data systems, and to the acute capacity constraints of the small government agencies of Pacific SIDS. Environmental law, she argued, does more than regulate: it establishes institutions, creates accountability, supports participation, enables transparency and provides compliance and enforcement mechanisms. She noted that the 2026–2029 work programme of the IUCN WCEL Biodiversity Law Specialist Group includes legal pathways for Target 3, protected areas, OECMs and biodiversity governance frameworks, and the implementation of the BBNJ Agreement and its coherence with existing treaties, alongside rights-based and equitable biodiversity governance as a second priority. She closed with Prof Christina Voigt's framing of law as the governance tool that translates science into action and helps bring about systemic change.

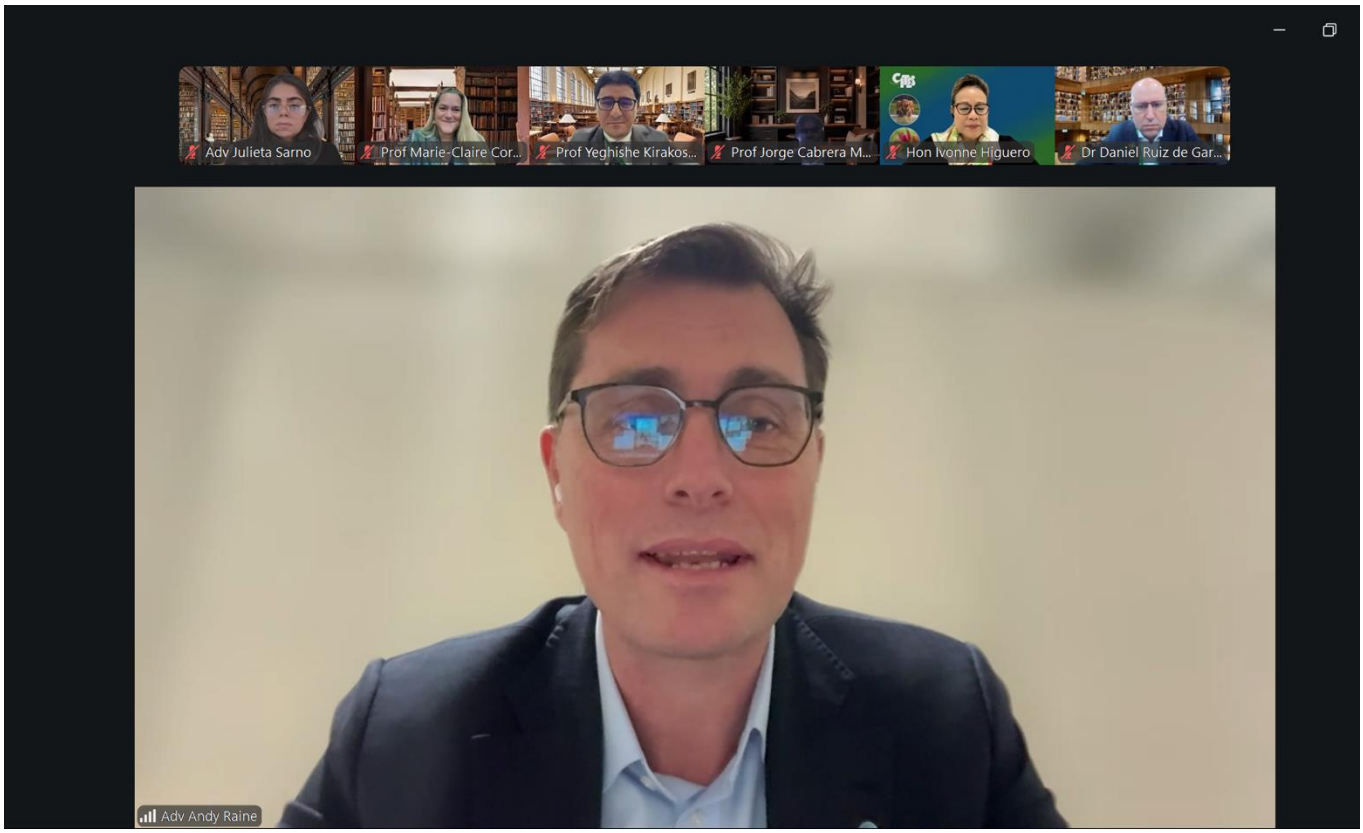
By video address, **Dr Kent Nnadozie** explained how the ITPGRFA links the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources with fair and equitable benefit-sharing through its multilateral system, supporting agricultural research, breeding and food security, and giving farmers and researchers options to respond to drought, pests and diseases. He emphasised the centrality of Farmers' Rights and of the contributions of local and Indigenous communities to conserving crop diversity. He identified three priorities for the legal and governance community: strengthening implementation through clear legal measures, capable institutions and adequate resources; supporting coherence across biodiversity, agriculture, food security and climate resilience instruments; and placing farmers and communities at the centre, with meaningful participation and a fair share of benefits.

Across these contributions, speakers converged on coherence, both between treaty regimes and among national institutions, as a precondition for compliance. Questions from participants addressed what genuine coherence between the biodiversity and climate regimes requires in practice; how the rights and livelihoods of local communities, Indigenous Peoples and youth can be protected, including in conflict-affected, resource-rich countries undergoing green energy transitions; and which legal and governance steps could most effectively close the implementation gap in developing countries.


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2026 Biodiversity Law & Governance Day Grand Opening and Opening Plenary: Implementing International ...
REC
Prof Marie-Claire Cordonier Segger WIJA
Adv Julieta Sarno
Prof Yeghishe Kirakosyan
Dr Tejas Rao
Assoc Prof Olympia Geghamyan
Adv Andy Raine
Dr Daniel Ruiz de Garibay
Adv Maria-Goreti Muavesi
Prof Jorge Cabrera Medaglia
Hon Ivonne Higuero
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Adv Julieta Sarno
Prof Marie-Claire Cor...
Prof Yeghishe Kirakos...
Prof Jorge Cabrera M...
Hon Ivonne Higuero
Dr Daniel Ruiz de Gar...
Adv Andy Raine



I. Expert Roundtable: Transitioning from Recognition to Results – Legal and Governance Pathways for Credible OECMs

How can legal and policy frameworks move OECMs from recognition to credible and durable conservation outcomes? What governance arrangements, rights safeguards and participation mechanisms are needed to ensure legitimacy and effectiveness? How can monitoring, reporting and review strengthen OECM implementation under Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework?

Hosted by CISDL and WWF

Chairs: **Dr Daniel Ruiz de Garibay** (Senior Lecturer, Asia Pacific Univ / Associate Fellow & BLGI Programme Coordinator, CISDL); **Dr Harry D. Jonas** (Director, Conservation Areas, WWF-US)

Speakers / Discussants: **Carolina Hazin** (Global Senior Policy Advisor for Area-Based Conservation Measures, The Nature Conservancy; IUCN WCPA); **Laure Germain-Thomas** (Programme Officer for Protected Areas & Naturalness, IUCN French Committee); **Marianne A. Fahed** (PhD Candidate, Holy Spirit Univ Kaslik, Lebanon); **Hari Kushardanto** (Vice President, Rare Indonesia)

Session outcomes:

Discussions highlighted the rapid expansion of OECMs across countries and their growing importance for achieving Target 3 of the KMGBF, including the 30x30 target, while cautioning that recognition alone does not guarantee effective and lasting conservation outcomes. Participants emphasised that OECMs should not be understood simply as protected areas under another name, but as a distinct and complementary conservation approach. Experiences from different countries underlined the importance of appropriate legal and policy

frameworks, effective governance arrangements, and safeguards for the rights and participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

Particular attention was given to monitoring, transparent reporting and periodic review as the means of ensuring accountability and assessing the effectiveness of OECM implementation. The session concluded that, while the rapid expansion of OECMs represents encouraging progress towards international commitments, OECMs cannot serve as a universal solution: achieving 30x30 requires a comprehensive approach that combines OECMs with other conservation mechanisms, so that the expansion of recognised conservation areas translates into credible, equitable and durable biodiversity outcomes.

II. Expert Roundtable: Implementing Biodiversity Treaties in Post-Conflict Settings – From Conflict to Dialogue

How has Armenia implemented its obligations under CBD and other biodiversity treaties, in a post-conflict setting? How do biodiversity treaty obligations apply in the aftermath of a conflict and across contested or closed borders? How effective are compliance and dispute-settlement mechanisms under conservation treaties in such settings? Can shared biodiversity treaty obligations create channels for dialogue, cooperation and sustainable peace between states?

Hosted by Yerevan State Univ (YSU)

Chairs: **Prof Yeghishe Kirakosyan** (Professor of Law & Director LLM Intl Courts & Arbitration, YSU); **Assoc Prof Olympia Geghamyan** (Acting Head, Chair of Civil Procedure / Head, A. Iskoyan Center for Environmental Law, YSU)

Speakers / Discussants: **Dr Gor Samvel** (Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action Post-Doc, UiT The Arctic Univ of Norway); **Adv Kristine Khanazadyan** (Founding Partner, Equity Law Partners); **Adv Anna Karapetyan** (Deputy Minister of Justice, Republic of Armenia); **Dr Irina Ghaplanyan** (Senior Climate Change Specialist, World Bank Group)

Session outcomes:

Hosted by Yerevan State University, one of the co-hosts of the Day, this expert roundtable was convened in the first round of concurrent sessions to examine how biodiversity treaty obligations are implemented in post-conflict settings, taking Armenia's experience under the CBD and other biodiversity treaties as its point of departure. The programme set out to explore how such obligations apply in the aftermath of conflict and across contested or closed borders, how effective the compliance and dispute-settlement mechanisms of conservation treaties are in these circumstances, and whether shared treaty obligations can open channels for dialogue, cooperation and sustainable peace between States. The relationship between post-conflict settings and environmental governance was also raised in the Grand Opening by the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Armenia.

Chaired by Prof Yeghishe Kirakosyan and Assoc Prof Olympia Geghamyan of Yerevan State University, the roundtable was programmed to bring together perspectives from academic research, legal practice, the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Armenia and the World Bank Group.

III. Expert Roundtable: Rights-Based Conservation, Community Stewardship and Restoration in Africa

How can African countries strengthen rights-based and community-led approaches to biodiversity conservation and restoration? What legal and governance frameworks are needed to support community stewardship, women-led conservation and livelihood initiatives, OECMs and restoration of degraded landscapes? What lessons from Zambia, Benin and other African countries can support effective implementation of Targets 2 and 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework?

Hosted by Afrique Espérance & Développement (AfREDE) & Shibuyunji District Women's Cooperatives

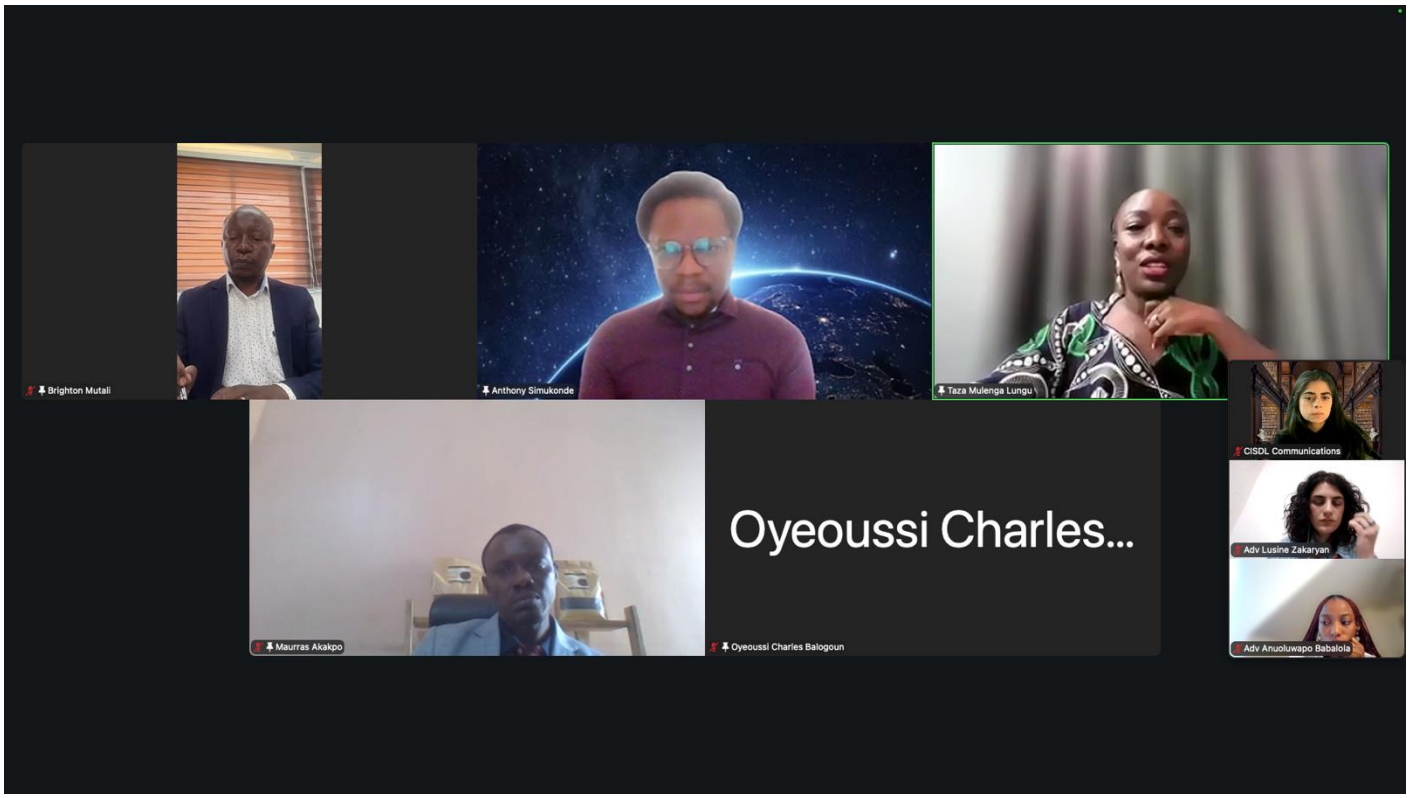
Chairs: **Oyeoussi Charles Balogoun** (CEO & Founder, Afrique Espérance & Développement, AfREDE Benin); **Taza Mulenga Lungu** (Shibuyunji District Women's Cooperatives, Zambia)

Speakers / Discussants: **Brighton Mutali** (Shibuyunji District Women's Cooperatives, Zambia); **Anthony Simukonde** (Executive Director & Founder, Greenit Enviro Management Network, Zambia); **Dieu Donné Razaramaro** (Founder, Mi'Art Eco, Madagascar); **Innocent Antoine Houedji** (Executive Director, Youth Initiative for Land in Africa YILAA, Benin); **Maurras Akakpo** (Executive Director, BIOSPHERE, Benin)

Session outcomes:

Hosted by Afrique Espérance & Développement (AfREDE) and the Shibuyunji District Women's Cooperatives, this expert roundtable was convened in the first round of concurrent sessions to examine how African countries can strengthen rights-based and community-led approaches to biodiversity conservation and restoration. The programme set out to consider the legal and governance frameworks needed to support community stewardship, women-led conservation and livelihood initiatives, OECMs and the restoration of degraded landscapes, and to draw lessons from Zambia, Benin and other African countries for the implementation of Targets 2 and 3 of the KMGBF.

Chaired by representatives of AfREDE in Benin and of the Shibuyunji District Women's Cooperatives in Zambia, the roundtable was programmed to bring together community-based, youth and environmental organisations from Africa, giving particular prominence to practitioner and community perspectives from the continent.



IV. Expert Roundtable: Financing Nature Restoration: Markets, Mandates, or Both?

What is the private-sector business case for financing nature restoration and adaptation today? Given that ecosystems are public goods, is mandatory intervention essential to achieve the goals of 30x30? Can a hybrid model combine the strengths of market-led finance with legal and policy mandates to deliver effective and durable nature restoration?

Hosted by Hogan Lovells Cadwalader

Chair: **Adv Emily Julier** (Counsel Knowledge Lawyer, Hogan Lovells Cadwalader)

Speakers / Discussants: **Eoin Murray** (Chief Investment Officer, Rebalance Earth); **Adv Bryony Widdup** (Partner, Co-Head of Sustainable Finance & Investment, Hogan Lovells Cadwalader); **Ian Herbert** (New Zealand BIOFIN Assessment Lead / Univ Otago Business School / Member, CBD Academic & Research Group); **Adv Harry Wright** (CEO & Founder, Bright Tide); **Sangeeta Laudus** (Strategic Development Advisor, London Wildlife Trust)

Session outcomes:

Speakers examined the significant global funding gap for biodiversity conservation, nature restoration and climate adaptation, and the growing role of private-sector finance in addressing it. Particular attention was given to the Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN), supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), whose assessments, ongoing in many countries, help to identify financing needs and develop strategies to close existing gaps. Country experiences indicated that biodiversity conservation often receives a very limited share of national budgets, underlining the need for diversified and sustainable financing mechanisms.

The session explored public subsidies, nature-based carbon credits and other market-driven instruments as means of encouraging greater private investment, while recognising the particular challenges faced by countries with less developed financial markets, where opportunities to mobilise private capital may be limited. In answer to the question posed in its title, the discussion pointed towards a combination of markets and mandates: given the public-

good nature of ecosystems, market incentives were considered to require appropriate legal and policy frameworks. Achieving the 30x30 target was accordingly seen to depend on a balanced approach that integrates public finance, private-sector participation and effective regulation, so that financial investment translates into meaningful, equitable and lasting outcomes for conservation and restoration.

[Photographs from BLGD 2026 to be inserted.]

V. Expert Roundtable: Advancing Landscape-Seascape Restoration Through Proactive Law and Policy Coherence

How can legal and policy frameworks accelerate implementation of Target 2 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework? What forms of policy coherence, incentives and institutional coordination are needed to scale up effective landscape and seascape restoration, and how can proactive legislation drive them? How can governments, practitioners and international partnerships translate restoration commitments into durable implementation supported by proactive legislation that transcends political cycles?

Hosted by Commonland, with participation from Global Partnership on Forest & Landscape Restoration (GPFLR), Society for Ecological Restoration (SER), WWF, Global Landscapes Forum (GLF), G20 Global Land Initiative & GIZ

Chairs: **Dr Victoria Gutierrez** (Head of Global Policy, Commonland); **Bethanie Walder** (Executive Director, Society for Ecological Restoration)

Opening Remarks: **Dr Yasmine Fouad** (UN Under-Secretary-General & Executive Secretary, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, UNCCD), by video address

Speakers / Discussants: **Anita Diederichsen** (Forest Landscape Restoration Global Lead, WWF / Chair, Global Partnership on Forest & Landscape Restoration); **Adv Joann Lee** (Programme Officer, UNCCD G20 Global Land Initiative); **John Colmey** (Co-Founder & Senior Strategic Adviser, Global Landscapes Forum / Senior Director, Landscape Alliance); **Juan Carlos Losada Vargas** (Former Member, House of Representatives of Colombia 2018–2026); **Prof An Cliquet** (Professor of Environmental & Biodiversity Law, Ghent Univ)

Session outcomes:

The roundtable examined how proactive legislation and coherent public policy can accelerate landscape and seascape restoration and translate international commitments, including Target 2 of the KMGBF, into practical action. Opening remarks by video address from **Dr Yasmine Fouad** emphasised that biodiversity loss, land degradation and climate change are deeply interconnected, and that restoring land at scale requires enabling laws and governance frameworks that make restoration the norm rather than the exception: clarifying rights and responsibilities, strengthening integrated land-use planning, aligning public and private incentives and investment, and giving Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and young people a meaningful role in decisions affecting their lands. She called for closer convergence between the Rio conventions, so that countries need not choose between restoring land, conserving biodiversity and responding to climate change. **Anita Diederichsen** identified synergies among the conventions as one of the key topics of COP17 and, in closing, described restoration as a delivery mechanism that brings those synergies to the ground at the landscape level.

The session's central contribution was a presentation by **Bethanie Walder** on Proactive Ecosystem Restoration Legislation. She explained that existing restoration law follows three main approaches: incident-related legislation, which mandates restoration following discrete degradation events; compensatory legislation, which requires restoration to offset permitted degradation under the mitigation hierarchy; and place-based legislation underpinning large-scale restoration of particular landscapes. Together, these leave a substantial, as yet unquantified gap of persistent and historical degradation that no legislation addresses and that currently depends on voluntary action. The proposal developed by SER with a legal team drawn from each continent is to mandate or strongly incentivise the restoration of such persistent degradation, legislatively decoupled from the restoration of new damage, through obligations that are ambitious, achievable and enforceable and that integrate restoration finance. The work

identifies fourteen legislative components and provides sample legislative text for adoption at national or subnational level, including quantitative restoration targets and deadlines, standards-based restoration, the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, finance provisions, permitting structures purpose-built for restoration, and objectives oriented towards social and ecological net gain. The accompanying paper was undergoing peer review at the time of the Day, with publication in *Restoration Ecology* anticipated in early 2027.

Panellists considered how such legislation could operate in practice. **Juan Carlos Losada Vargas**, drawing on his experience in Colombia's House of Representatives, identified three values of framework legislation: it turns a target such as Target 2 into a duty with deadlines, institutions and budgets; it enforces coherence where the same State funds restoration while subsidising activities that drive degradation, such as cattle expansion and extractive projects in the Amazon; and it confers legitimacy by giving Indigenous Peoples and local communities, who already manage vast territories, authority, resources and a seat at the table. Durable environmental laws, he added, require coalitions that extend beyond a single party and government, implementation provisions written into the text of the law itself, and close relationships with the territories where restoration takes place. **Prof An Cliquet** presented the EU Nature Restoration Regulation as, to her knowledge, the most comprehensive binding legal instrument on proactive restoration, noting its detailed and time-bound obligations extending beyond protected areas to urban and agricultural ecosystems, its national restoration plans and its monitoring and reporting requirements. Its definitions, non-deterioration provisions, implementation mechanisms and future case law, she suggested, could offer lessons for other jurisdictions.

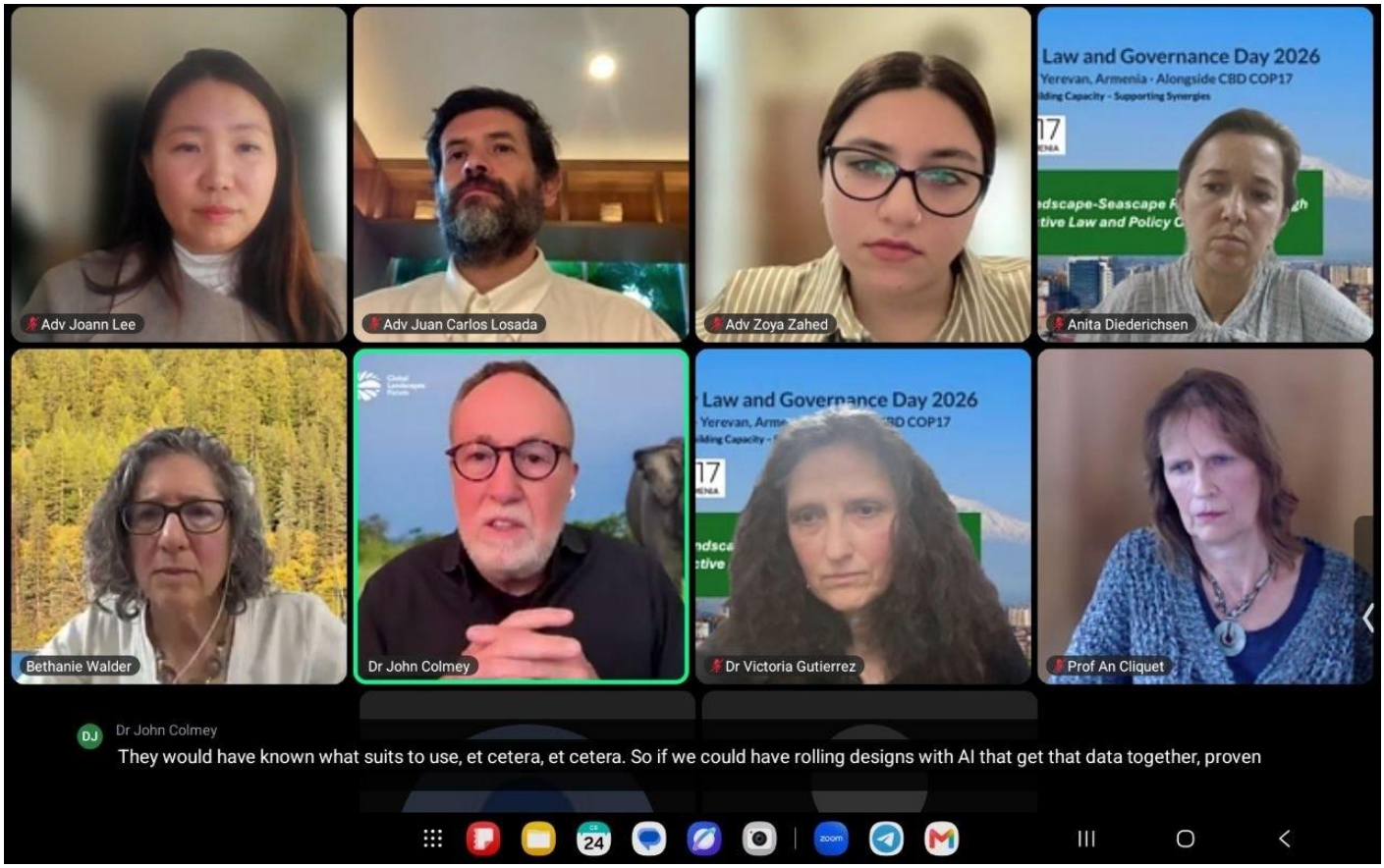
On finance and implementation, **Adv Joann Lee** reported that analyses of restoration markets show legislation and regulation to be the principal drivers of the restoration economy, with the potential to create green jobs and strengthen rural economies. She described the UNCCD G20 Global Land Initiative's Global Changemakers Academy for Parliamentarians as a platform through which legislators can examine a model restoration law against their own legal and institutional frameworks and adapt it, so that such legislation is co-developed with parliamentarians rather than designed globally and handed down. **John Colmey** argued that the principal obstacle to restoration finance is less a shortage of capital than a shortage of accessible, trustworthy information connecting credible, locally led projects with investors, and outlined how artificial intelligence could combine satellite imagery, scientific research, biodiversity data, local knowledge and legal frameworks to close that gap, provided such tools are transparent, science-guided, independently verified where appropriate and based on community consent.

Discussion with participants surfaced a nuanced exchange on the precautionary principle. Bethanie Walder cautioned that, because the principle is designed to prevent harm under uncertainty, it could in some circumstances be invoked against restoration interventions such as the assisted migration of species, and explained that SER's proposal therefore also draws on the principle of *in dubio pro natura*. Prof Cliquet regarded both the preventive and the precautionary principles as foundations of restoration law, pointing to the case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union on the precautionary principle in nature conservation cases. In response to a question on accountability, panellists affirmed that restoration must never be used to justify continued degradation, a principle embedded in SER's standards. They also discussed complementary measures such as progressive restoration and recycling in the mining sector, the combination of top-down obligations with community-led initiatives, and pathways for locally driven restoration finance in Africa.

The session report records the following key takeaways, presented as shared messages emerging from the discussion rather than as formally adopted recommendations:

- **Advance proactive restoration legislation** that addresses persistent and historical ecosystem degradation, establishes measurable targets and supports ecological and social net gain;
- **Strengthen policy coherence**, aligning environmental, agricultural, mining, climate and economic policies so that public decisions support rather than undermine restoration objectives;
- **Connect international commitments with national implementation** through enforceable national laws, clear institutional responsibilities, adequate budgets and transparent monitoring;

- **Ensure meaningful community participation**, involving Indigenous Peoples and local communities in developing and implementing restoration laws and recognising their knowledge, rights and leadership;
- **Mobilise sustainable restoration finance** through public and private mechanisms and improved access to investment for credible, locally led projects;
- **Promote evidence-based and accountable restoration**, guided by scientific standards, transparent data, appropriate verification and safeguards, including in the use of emerging technologies; and
- **Strengthen international and cross-sector cooperation** among governments, parliamentarians, researchers, civil society, investors and environmental conventions.



VI. Expert Roundtable: Exploring New Developments for the Implementation of Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS)

What are the emerging issues, trends and challenges for effective implementation of ABS? How do the Nagoya Protocol, WIPO Treaty on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge (GRATK Treaty), ITPGRFA and other international regimes intersect, and how can more coherent national regulations be crafted?

Hosted by Univ Costa Rica, Univ Cambridge, Univ Ottawa and Max Planck Institute

Chairs: **Prof Jorge Cabrera Medaglia** (Chair, BLGI & Lead Counsel, CISDL / Professor of Law, Univ Costa Rica); **Prof Markus W. Gehring** (Professor in European and International Law, Univ Cambridge / Lead Counsel, CISDL)

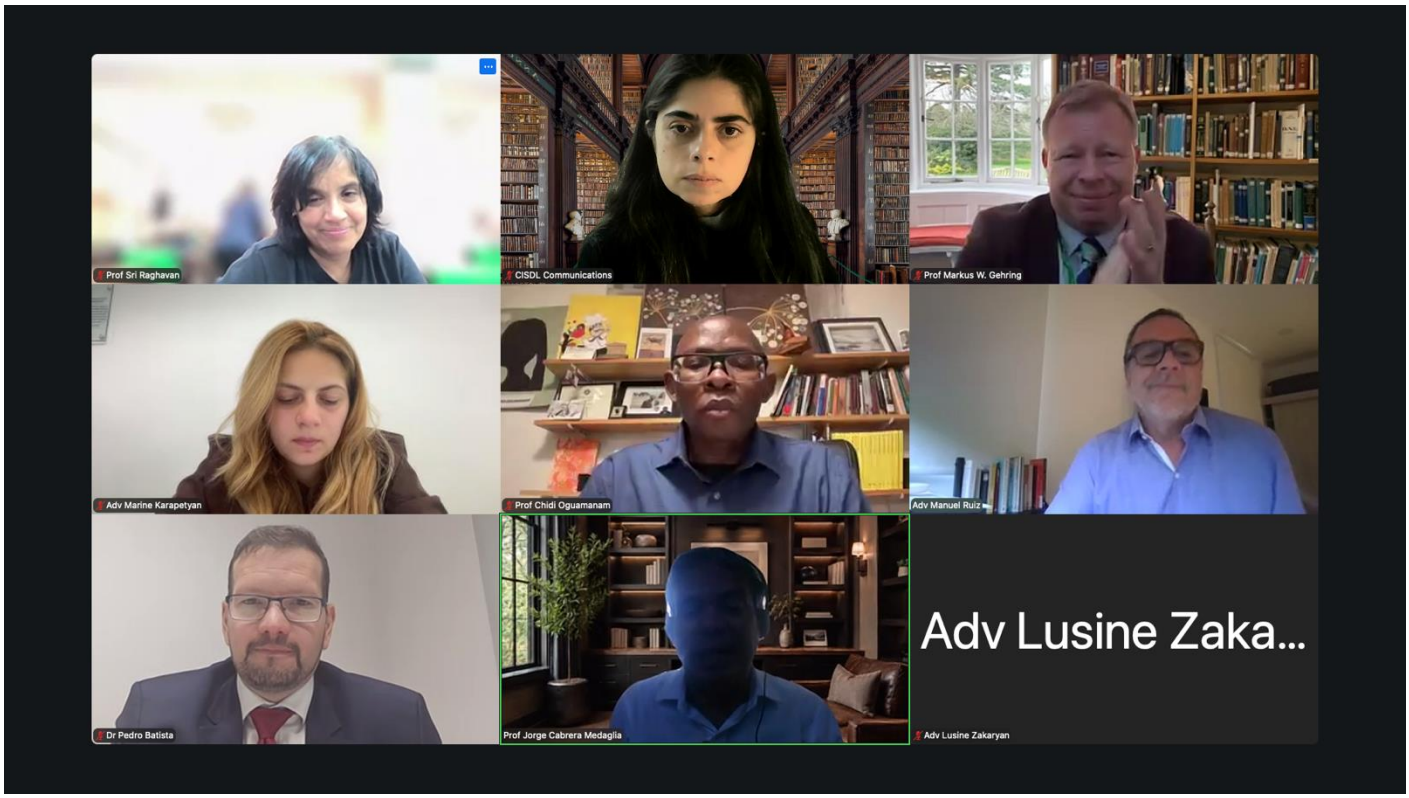
Speakers / Discussants: **Adv Manuel Ruiz** (Fellow, CISDL); **Prof Chidi Oguamanam** (Professor of Law, Univ Ottawa); **Dr Pedro Batista** (Affiliated Research Fellow, Max Planck Institute Munich / Leibniz Institute for Information Infrastructure Karlsruhe); **Prof Christine Frison** (Research Professor, Univ Liège), by video address

Session outcomes:

The session identified several emerging challenges for the effective implementation of access and benefit-sharing: the growing use of DSI, fragmented international regulation, and the limited delivery of tangible benefits to the countries and communities that conserve genetic resources. Although new mechanisms have been established, monetary contributions remain far below expectations and voluntary funding has proved insufficient. Participants also pointed to the absence of a universally agreed definition of DSI, the difficulty of tracing its use across international value chains, uncertainty over how benefits should be calculated and distributed, and the risk of overlapping obligations, double payments and legal uncertainty.

Discussion of regime interactions emphasised that the Nagoya Protocol, the WIPO Treaty on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge (GRATK Treaty) and the ITPGRFA operate under different mandates. The Nagoya Protocol establishes a framework for access and benefit-sharing; the GRATK Treaty introduces mandatory disclosure requirements in patent applications involving certain genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge but, being principally directed at improving patent quality, does not establish a comprehensive benefit-sharing system; and the ITPGRFA provides a multilateral system that facilitates access to specified plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and links their use to benefit-sharing. These regimes also intersect with other frameworks, including those governing marine biodiversity and pandemic preparedness, particularly in discussions concerning DSI.

To improve coherence, the session report records that countries should develop coordinated national frameworks integrating intellectual property, environmental, development and climate policies, and that regulations should clarify the scope of obligations, establish transparent benefit-sharing mechanisms, strengthen institutional capacity, and protect the interests of Indigenous Peoples and local communities through meaningful participation and research ethics. At the international level, cooperation should promote common triggers, a clearer allocation of benefits, mutual support between regimes and the avoidance of duplication. The session concluded that ABS frameworks must move beyond formal legal commitments and transactional exchanges towards practical systems that generate equitable benefits, support biodiversity conservation and provide legal certainty for researchers, businesses and communities.



Judicial Leadership Plenary: Nature on Trial – Courts, Rights and Biodiversity

How are courts and judges shaping the implementation of biodiversity law, environmental rights and duties to future generations? What are the most important trends, barriers and opportunities for progress?

Chairs: **Prof Alessandra Lehmen** (Fellow, CISDL / Professor of Law, Univ Caxias do Sul); **Tim Scott** (Senior Policy Advisor on Environmental Governance, UNDP); **Adv Nina Pindham** (Chair, UKELA / Barrister, Cornerstone Barristers)

Plenary Speakers: **Hon Judge Prof Marcel Szabó** (Justice, Constitutional Court of Hungary); **Hon Judge Jawad Hassan** (Justice, Lahore High Court, Pakistan); **Hon Judge Dr Martin Borowsky** (Judge, Regional Court (Landgericht) Erfurt, Germany)

Session outcomes:

The Judicial Leadership Plenary considered how courts and judges are shaping the implementation of biodiversity law, environmental rights and duties to future generations. Judges from Pakistan, Hungary and Germany offered national perspectives, followed by two rounds of questions drawn from participants in many regions.

Hon Judge Jawad Hassan argued that much of the world's environmental and climate jurisprudence originated in the Global South. Pakistan's Constitution long contained no explicit right to a healthy environment; the Supreme Court filled that gap in 1994 by holding that the right to life encompasses the right to a healthy environment and, because its decisions on questions of law are binding under Article 189 of the Constitution, principles drawn from international soft law, including the Stockholm and Rio Declarations and the precautionary principle, acquired binding force in domestic law. Courts have since extended the common law public trust doctrine to natural resources, water and biodiversity, and, in a case concerning smog in Lahore brought by a three-year-old child, recognised that a person of any age may bring an environmental claim, drawing on the concept of intergenerational equity. Judge Hassan observed that the language of environmental harm has evolved towards climate finance,

and stressed that the demand of affected countries is for technology transfer rather than aid. On enforcement, he emphasised strengthening regulators, including the securities regulator responsible for the corporate entities that are the principal polluters, together with reform of the code of corporate governance in line with ESG requirements; the leverage of trade-related environmental conditionality; environmental impact assessment as the primary gatekeeping mechanism; and Pakistan's legislation on mandatory mediation as a faster route to resolving environmental disputes. He also noted that a constitutional amendment has since strengthened the right to a healthy environment in Pakistan.

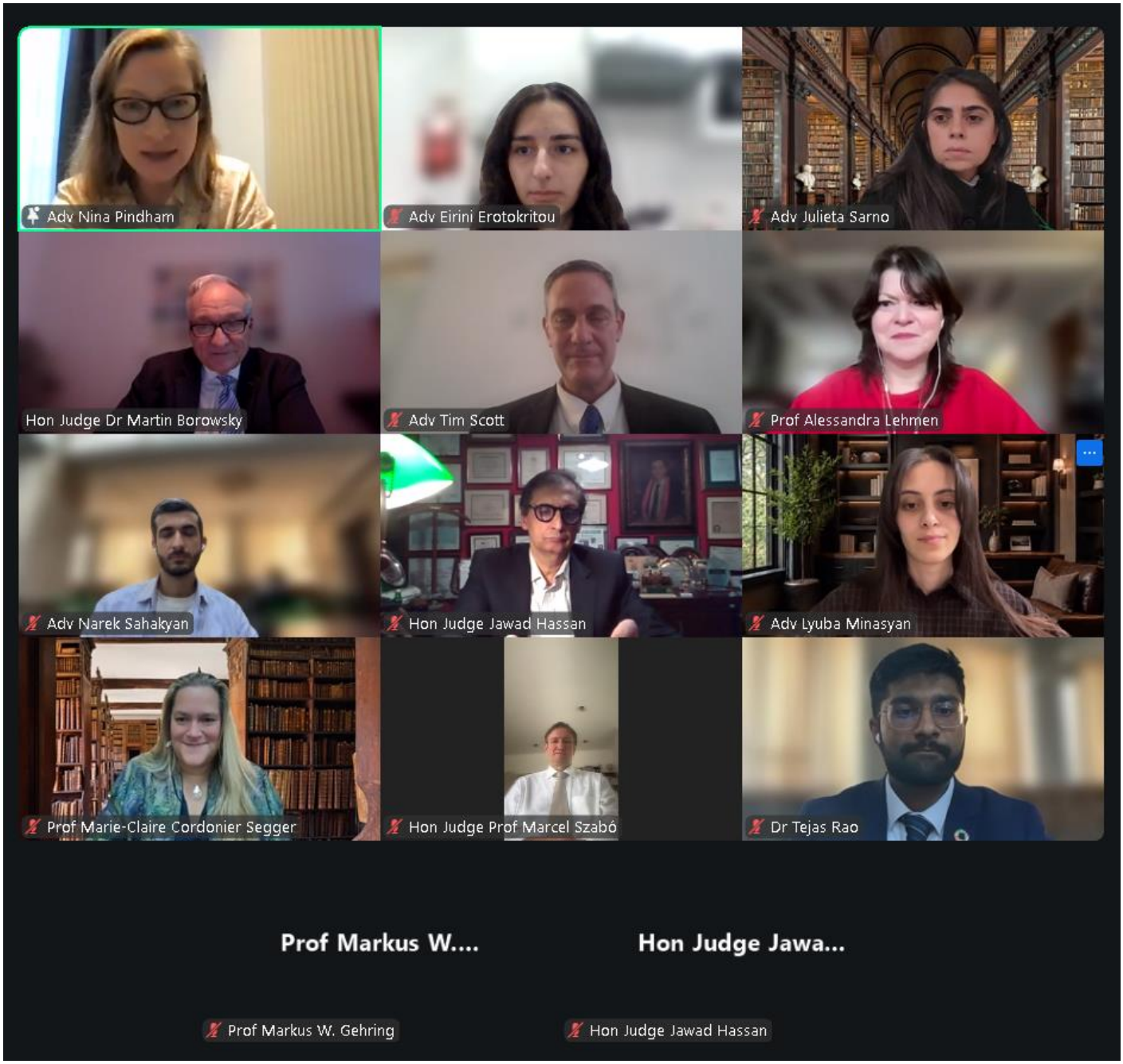
Hon Judge Prof Marcel Szabó began from the observation that nature cannot itself appear before a court, which gives constitutional adjudication an increasingly important role in environmental protection. Article P(1) of Hungary's Fundamental Law declares natural resources, including biodiversity and native plant and animal species, part of the common heritage of the nation, whose protection and preservation for future generations is an obligation of the State and of everyone; biodiversity is thereby a constitutional value, explicitly connected with intergenerational justice. The Constitutional Court has articulated three requirements for protecting future generations, inspired by the work of Professor Edith Brown Weiss: the preservation of choice, of quality and of access. It has also developed a principle of non-regression, under which any reduction in the existing level of environmental protection requires particularly careful constitutional justification. Judge Szabó explained that this obligation is dynamic: legislation that was once acceptable may become unconstitutional as scientific understanding and environmental conditions, notably climate change, evolve. He described decisions holding that forests cannot be understood solely as economic resources and that environmental protection must be effective in practice rather than merely formal, and a recent climate decision treating climate and biodiversity protection as interconnected constitutional responsibilities. He commended the Hungarian Ombudsman for Future Generations, an office he previously held, as an institutional model able to draw courts' attention to the interests of nature and future generations and to prompt constitutional review of legislation inconsistent with international obligations, including under the CBD. He also noted that scientific institutions acting as expert witnesses can help to rebalance proceedings between well-resourced companies and individual litigants, and urged judges to be brave and to interpret the law creatively with a view to the decades ahead, recalling the role of courts in building European law.

Hon Judge Dr Martin Borowsky described how, in the diesel emissions cases before German courts, he had treated manufacturers' unlawful pollution of the environment as one criterion in calculating damages, on the basis that it violated the rights of nature. He reasoned that the notion of the person, or of everyone, in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights is broad enough to encompass nature, or particular ecological entities such as a river or a forest, and on that basis acknowledged rights of nature within EU law in two rulings. Situating this within a global trend led largely by the Global South, through constitutional recognition in Ecuador, judge-made law in Colombia and legislation in New Zealand, he described its arrival in Europe as a reverse legal transplant. He was also openly self-critical: judge-made rights of nature, in his view, are only a second-best route, and legislation, with its democratic foundation and public debate, as in Spain's recognition of the rights of the Mar Menor lagoon, is preferable, particularly for resolving questions such as who may speak on behalf of a river or a forest. He nonetheless urged judges to treat law as a living instrument, to consider scientific evidence alongside the knowledge of Indigenous communities, and to sustain global judicial dialogue.

The judges shared an emphasis on intergenerational justice, on the importance of scientific evidence and on judicial independence, while recognising the limits of domestic legislation and the economic and political pressures that courts face. They differed, however, on the proper reach of judicial creativity. Judge Szabó encouraged judges to interpret legal boundaries creatively and to think in decades; Judge Borowsky questioned whether judges should be the ones driving the recognition of rights of nature and favoured legislative action; and Judge Hassan placed particular weight on strengthening regulators and on mediation alongside court orders.

In closing, **Adv Nina Pindham** argued that, since the climate and biodiversity crises breach fundamental human rights and the rule of law requires the protection of those rights, the crises represent failures of the rule of law that fall squarely within the remit of courts, making judicial independence central to the response. She proposed that a

judicial panel be included at every future Biodiversity and Climate Law and Governance Day; Prof Cordonier Segger indicated that a proposal for a judicial panel at the next COP itself was being actively considered.



VII. Expert Roundtable: Implementing Target 3: Partnerships, Capacity, and Global Marine Conservation Pathways for 30x30

Four years after the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), which places particular emphasis on a whole-of-society approach to implementation, what is the single most important lesson it can offer BBNJ Parties as they prepare for COP1? How can BBNJ help fill the legal and policy gaps towards implementation of KMGBF Target 3? How can we ensure that recognising community-led and Indigenous stewardship strengthens their rights and authority, rather than simply helping governments meet numerical conservation targets?

Hosted by The Pew Charitable Trusts

Chairs: **Adv Masha Kalinina** (Senior Officer, The Pew Charitable Trusts); **Arianna Beeray** (High Seas Youth Ambassador from Trinidad & Tobago)

Speakers / Discussants: **Fariz Ahmadov** (Senior Policy Advisor, Fisheries & Oceans Canada); **Candeze Mongaya** (Manager, Policy & Government Initiatives, Rare Philippines); **Solomon Kahoʻohalahala** (Hawaiian Elder & Leadership Council Leader for One Oceania)

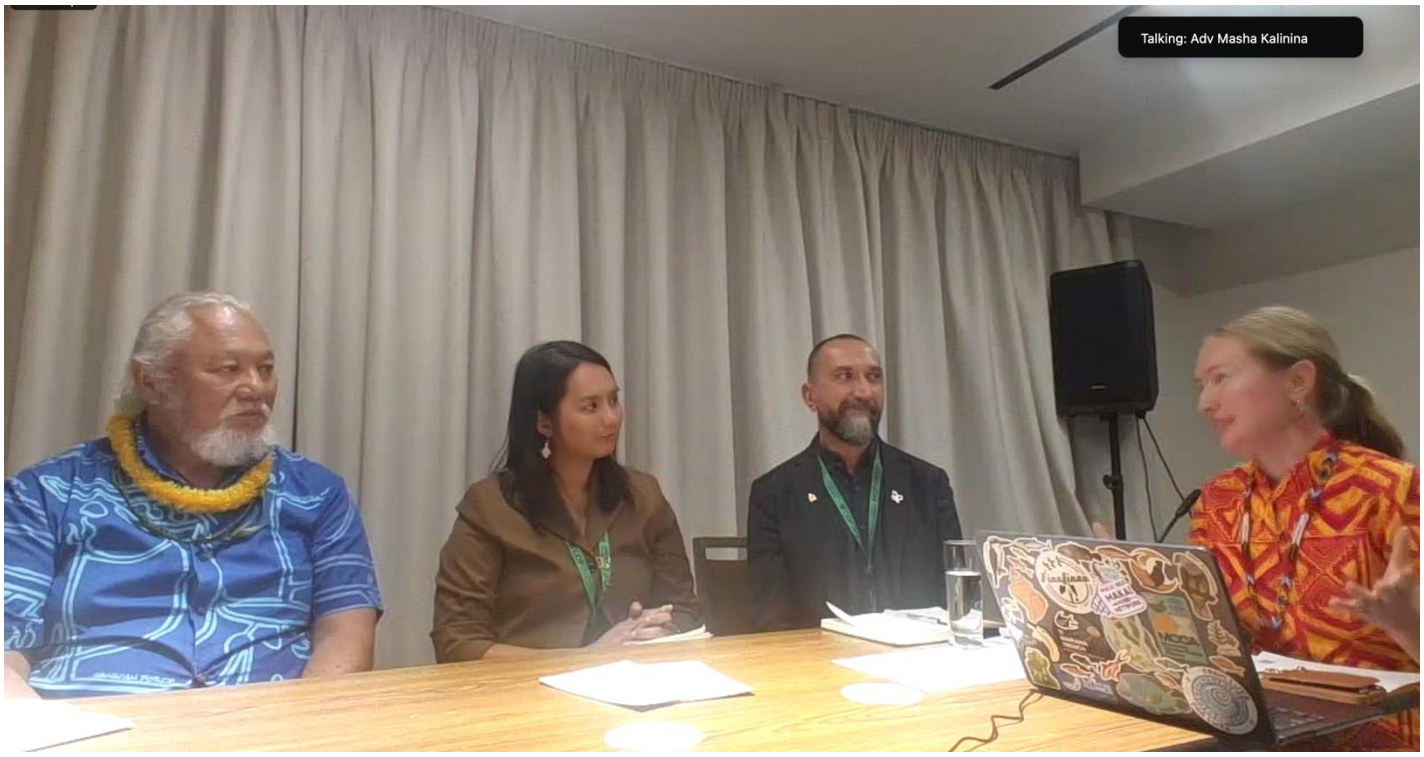
Session outcomes:

The roundtable explored how the BBNJ Agreement can contribute to the implementation of Target 3 of the KMGBF, with particular emphasis on inclusive governance, Indigenous participation, institutional cooperation and effective marine conservation. A central message was that marine conservation must move beyond numerical protection targets towards effective, equitable and sustainable implementation: the success of 30x30 depends not only on the extent of protected areas, but on the quality of governance, the effectiveness of conservation measures and their long-term sustainability.

Participants emphasised that Indigenous Peoples and local communities should be recognised not merely as stakeholders or sources of traditional knowledge, but as active participants in decision-making and conservation governance, whose longstanding knowledge of marine ecosystems, including migratory patterns and ecological change, is essential to effective protection; FPIC and genuine representation were stressed. The BBNJ Agreement was seen as an opportunity to address existing gaps in marine governance by strengthening cooperation among States, international organisations and regional institutions, with conservation measures complementing existing legal frameworks, clearly defined institutional responsibilities and effective implementation mechanisms; marine spatial planning was highlighted as an important governance tool.

Meaningful participation was considered to require adequate financial and technical support, particularly for Indigenous representatives, developing countries and small island communities, including support to overcome the cost of travel and other practical barriers to participation in international decision-making. Mobilising resources and connecting donors with implementation needs were identified as immediate priorities. Discussions also underlined the ecological interconnectedness of marine, coastal and terrestrial systems, illustrated by Indigenous navigation traditions and knowledge of ocean connectivity extending to areas beyond national jurisdiction, as well as the importance of public awareness, scientific cooperation, technological accessibility and partnerships among Pacific and other island communities.

As Parties prepare for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the BBNJ Agreement, the roundtable identified as priorities meaningful Indigenous representation, accessible financing, institutional coordination and conservation mechanisms that deliver measurable and lasting ecological benefits rather than merely satisfying numerical targets.



VIII. Participatory Workshop: Activating Youth and Local Biodiversity Governance for Implementation Beyond COP17

How can young people participate meaningfully in local biodiversity governance and implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework? How can youth-led action contribute to the protection and restoration of local ecosystems, wetlands and waterways? What legal, institutional and capacity-building partnerships are needed to sustain youth engagement and local implementation beyond COP17?

Hosted by Global Youth Council on Science, Law & Sustainability (GYC-SLS); Voices of Future Generations Children's Initiative (VoFG CI); Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN) & Youth Negotiators Academy (YNA)

Chairs: **Portia Garnons-Williams** (Chair, GYC-SLS); **Nico Roman** (Vice-Chair, GYC-SLS / STP Student, UWC Atlantic College); **Ela Martinez** (Programme Manager, VoFG CI)

Speakers / Discussants: **Seth Thomas** (Co-founder, GYBN USA); **Jeremi Trojak** (Councillor & Fenlands Youth Advisor, GYC-SLS); **Michelle Bidima** (Representative, YNA); **Matthew Carvalho** (Health Programme Coordinator, CISDL / Researcher, Georgetown Univ Law Center / YNA); **Sophia Grac** (Councillor & Fenlands Youth Advisor, GYC-SLS); **James Bonsall** (Scholar, Winchester College)

Closing Keynote: **Vienna Swampy** (Indigenous Child Author, Voices of Future Generations / Youth Leader, Samson Cree Nation), by video address

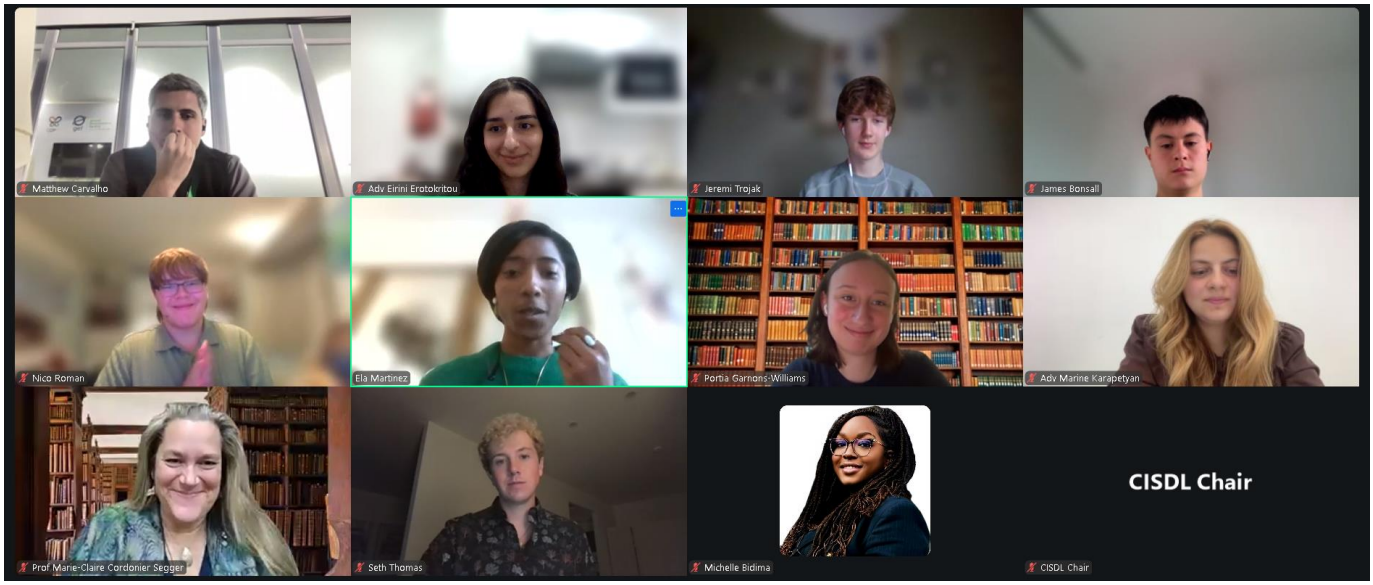
Session outcomes:

The workshop explored how young people can contribute meaningfully to local biodiversity governance and to implementation of the KMGBF, with particular attention to youth-led ecosystem restoration and to the legal, institutional and capacity-building partnerships needed to sustain engagement beyond COP17. A central message was that meaningful youth participation must go beyond consultation and awareness-raising, so that young people's contributions influence decisions and lead to action. Participants highlighted the role of young people as

sources of knowledge for local authorities, including on international negotiations and treaties and on successful policy approaches elsewhere, and the importance of education, volunteering and network-building.

An example from Burkina Faso illustrated how youth-led initiatives can mobilise communities around river restoration, biodiversity awareness and the sustainable management of shared natural resources. The workshop emphasised that restoration should go beyond one-off activities, involving communities in identifying problems and developing inclusive solutions that support livelihoods and peaceful coexistence, and that young people can help to connect local implementation with multilateral negotiations; education initiatives involving children were also seen to strengthen community involvement.

To sustain engagement beyond COP17, participants stressed partnerships with local authorities and youth organisations, and access to technical knowledge, resources and negotiation training. The discussion also highlighted the need to recognise young people explicitly in biodiversity targets relating to finance, monitoring and implementation, and to refer to youth directly in environmental texts in order to consolidate their role. The workshop concluded that young people are not merely future custodians of nature but are already engaged in biodiversity governance and implementation, and that sustaining their contribution requires meaningful participation in decision-making, adequate resources and long-term partnerships connecting local action with international processes.



IX. Expert Roundtable: Advancing Indigenous Laws, Legal Pluralism and Diverse Value Systems of Nature in Latin America and the Caribbean

How can Indigenous laws and legal pluralism strengthen implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework in Latin America and the Caribbean? How can diverse values of nature, traditional knowledge and community governance be better reflected in NBSAPs and biodiversity policy? What legal and institutional reforms are needed to ensure meaningful participation, rights protection and recognition of Indigenous and local governance systems?

Hosted by Asociación Ciudadana por los Derechos Humanos (ACDH), Latin American and Caribbean Ecofeminist Network and Univ Buenos Aires

Chair: **Prof María José Lubertino** (President, Asociación Ciudadana por los Derechos Humanos / Professor, Faculty of Law, Univ Buenos Aires)

Speakers / Discussants: **Berta Medrano** (Leader, CBD Women's Caucus); **Xiomara Acevedo** (Founder & Executive Director, Fundación Barranquilla+20, Colombia); **Paula Alvarado Mamani** (Assistant Secretary, ACDH Argentina); **Adv María Paula González Espinel** (Coordinator, Alternatives to Development Programme, Asociación Ambiente y Sociedad, Colombia); **Adv Dalia Fernanda Márquez Añez** (Global Co-Chair, UNEP Women's Major Group)

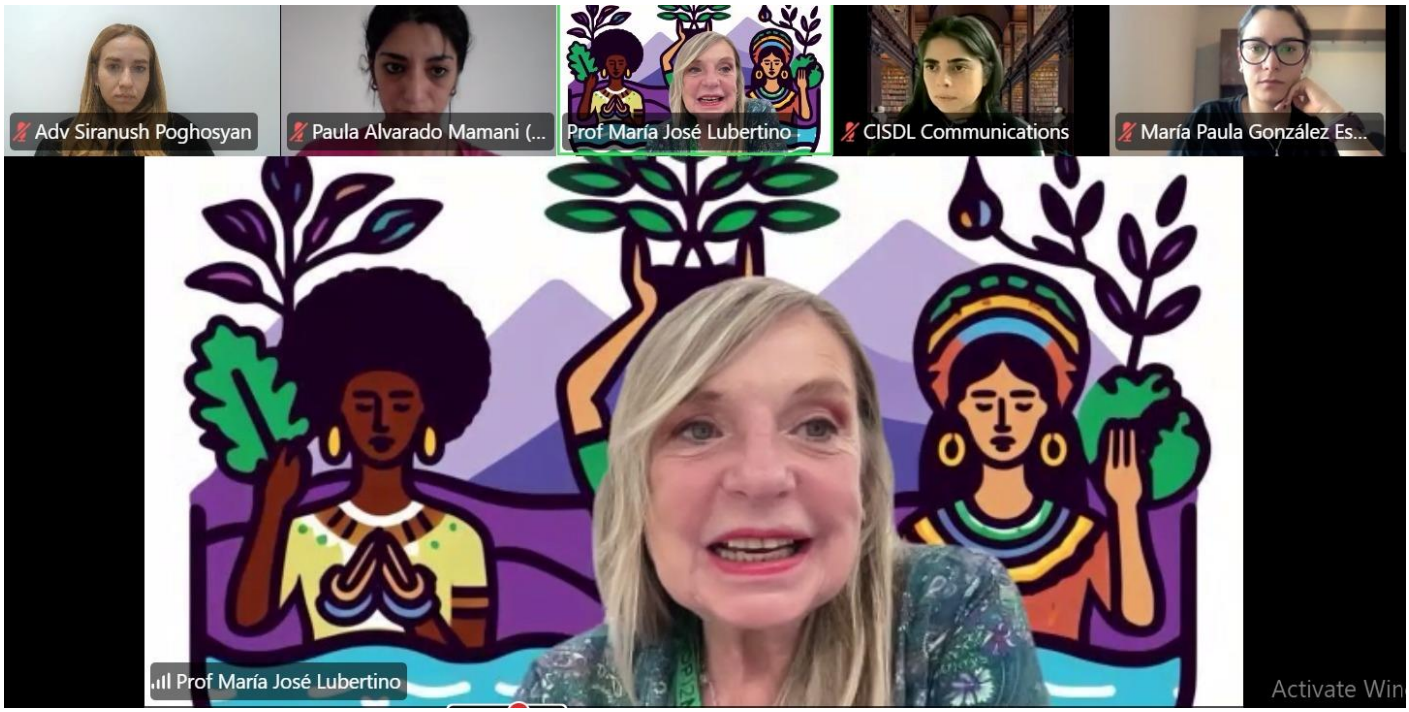
Session outcomes:

The session explored how Indigenous legal systems, traditional knowledge and community governance can strengthen implementation of the KMGBF in Latin America and the Caribbean. Speakers emphasised the need to recognise Indigenous Peoples and local communities as rights-holders and essential contributors to biodiversity conservation, rather than merely as stakeholders.

A major concern was the gap between international commitments and national implementation, particularly in relation to KMGBF Targets 22 and 23, which address participation, access to justice and the protection of environmental human rights defenders, as well as gender equality and women's empowerment. The discussion highlighted insufficient funding, a lack of measurable indicators and weak legal protection mechanisms, while Colombia, Mexico and Chile were noted for their progress in integrating these objectives into their national biodiversity strategies.

The session also stressed the interconnection between biodiversity loss and gender inequality, and the importance of recognising women's contributions to ecosystem protection and traditional knowledge. Ecocentric approaches and the recognition of the rights of nature were presented as alternatives to conventional conservation models. The Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement) was identified as a key regional instrument for ensuring access to environmental information, public participation and access to justice, and for protecting environmental defenders.

Proposed measures included recognising Indigenous governance systems and jurisdictions, providing direct financial support to community institutions, and incorporating community-generated knowledge into biodiversity monitoring and national policies. The session concluded that effective biodiversity governance requires legal pluralism, gender-responsive policies and meaningful community participation if international commitments are to translate into practical and inclusive conservation outcomes.



Closing Plenary: From Commitments to Delivery – Biodiversity Law in Practice

What does effective implementation of biodiversity law require in practice from lawyers, conservation organisations, governments, clients and institutional partners after COP17?

Chairs: **Prof Marie-Claire Cordonier Segger WIJA** (Chair, BLGI & Senior Director, CISDL / Chair in Sustainable Development Law & Policy, Univ Cambridge); **Prof Jorge Cabrera Medaglia** (Chair, BLGI & Lead Counsel, CISDL / Professor of Law, Univ Costa Rica); **Prof Yeghishe Kirakosyan** (Professor of Law & Director LLM Intl Courts & Arbitration, YSU)

Closing Keynote: **Dr Grethel Aguilar** (Director-General, Intl Union for Conservation of Nature IUCN), by video address

Speakers / Discussants: **Prof Carlos Andrés Echeverry Restrepo** (Associate Professor & Director, Dept of Legal & Political Science, Pontificia Univ Javeriana, Cali); **Tim Scott** (Senior Policy Advisor on Environmental Governance, UNDP); **Adv Bryony Widdup** (Partner, Co-Head of Sustainable Finance & Investment, Hogan Lovells Cadwalader); **Adv Vesselina Haralampieva** (Head of Sustainable Finance Governance & Regulation, EBRD); **Audrey Wagner** (Coordinator, Academic & Research Organisations Caucus to the CBD)

Celebratory Launch of the International Law Association Armenia Branch: **Prof Yeghishe Kirakosyan** (Professor of Law & Director LLM Intl Courts & Arbitration, YSU)

Session outcomes:

Delivering the closing keynote by video address, **Dr Grethel Aguilar** called for the interlinked crises of pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss to be addressed together rather than in separate institutional silos, and observed that, while progress is real, political will is not yet translating into action of sufficient speed or scale. She urged the conservation and legal communities to embrace the knowledge of Indigenous Peoples more fully, described law as a critical and underutilised tool, and called for binding commitments across all sectors, supported by systems of checks and balances, so that the ambitious targets of the KMGBF are matched by enforceable implementation mechanisms.

Reporting from Yerevan, **Tim Scott** offered a perspective on the first week of the COP17 negotiations, in which discussions on resource mobilisation and finance, the repurposing of harmful subsidies, monitoring and the global review, Indigenous Peoples and local communities under Article 8(j), gender and youth, and human rights and the rights of nature were continuing. He noted that implementation of the KMGBF is not on track, but suggested that the capacity of the COP to convene, debate, disagree and seek consensus is itself evidence that multilateralism, environmental governance and the rule of law continue to function.

Prof Carlos Andrés Echeverry Restrepo, Co-Chair of BLGD 2024, reflected on the continuity between COP16 in Cali, which made the urgency of the biodiversity crisis visible and showed that protection cannot depend on a single sector, and COP17 in Yerevan, as the opportunity to ensure that targets translate into concrete results. He highlighted the role of universities in rigorous research, professional training and the evaluation of public policy, in cooperation with governments, communities, responsible businesses and civil society, called for a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach with clear responsibilities and verification mechanisms, and reaffirmed the commitment of the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana to supporting the Biodiversity Law and Governance Day.

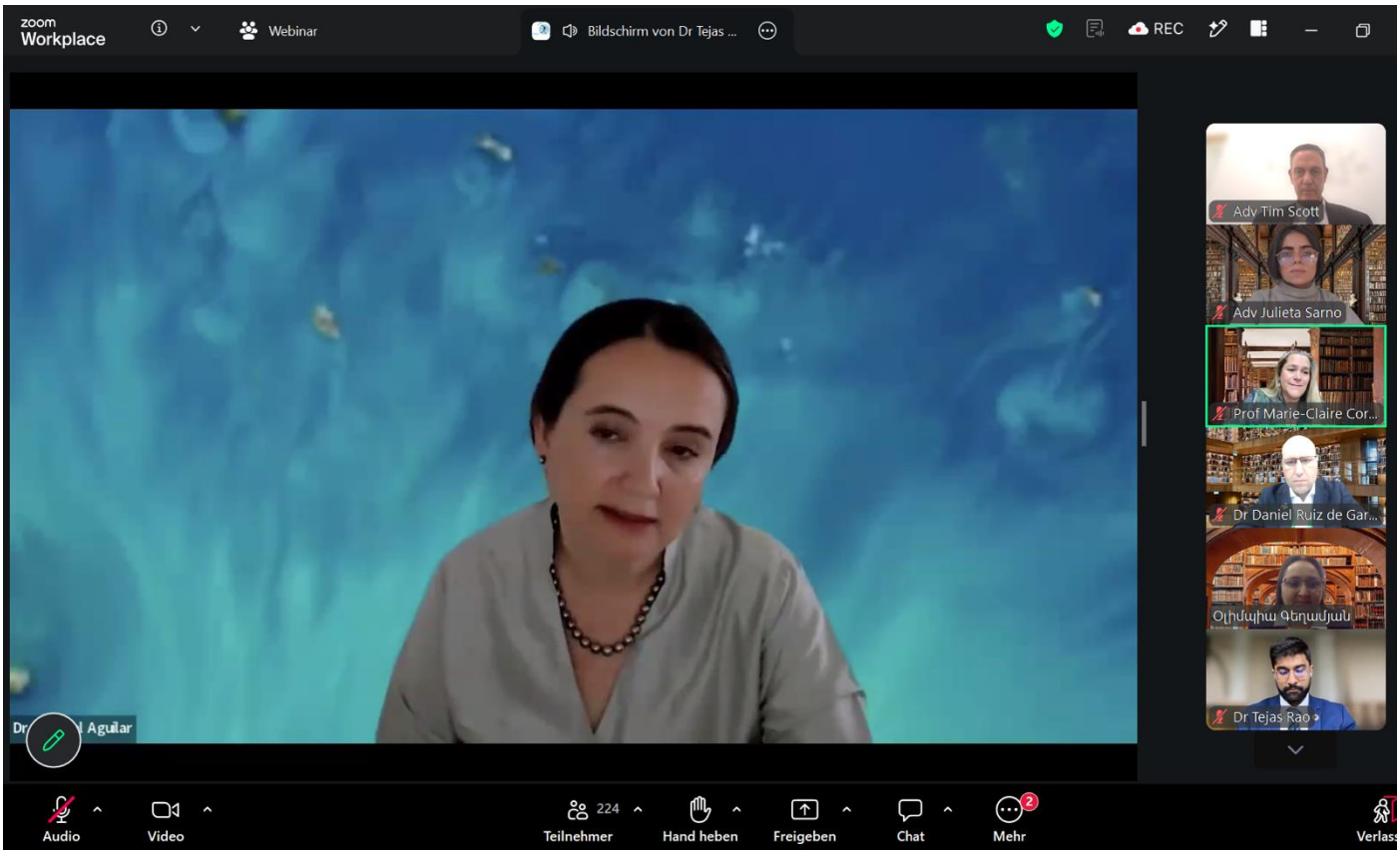
Adv Bryony Widdup considered how law firms can develop the governance, litigation, disputes and enforcement skills of commercially trained lawyers in the service of nature, and encouraged more firms to establish dedicated nature and biodiversity practices. She identified blended finance, international supply-chain finance and standardised, internationally comparable conservation designations as finance-law tools for biodiversity, and observed that hybrid public-private models consistently emerge as the most effective structure, with the public sector playing both a catalytic financing role and a mandatory regulatory role, particularly in high-impact sectors such as technology, energy and infrastructure.

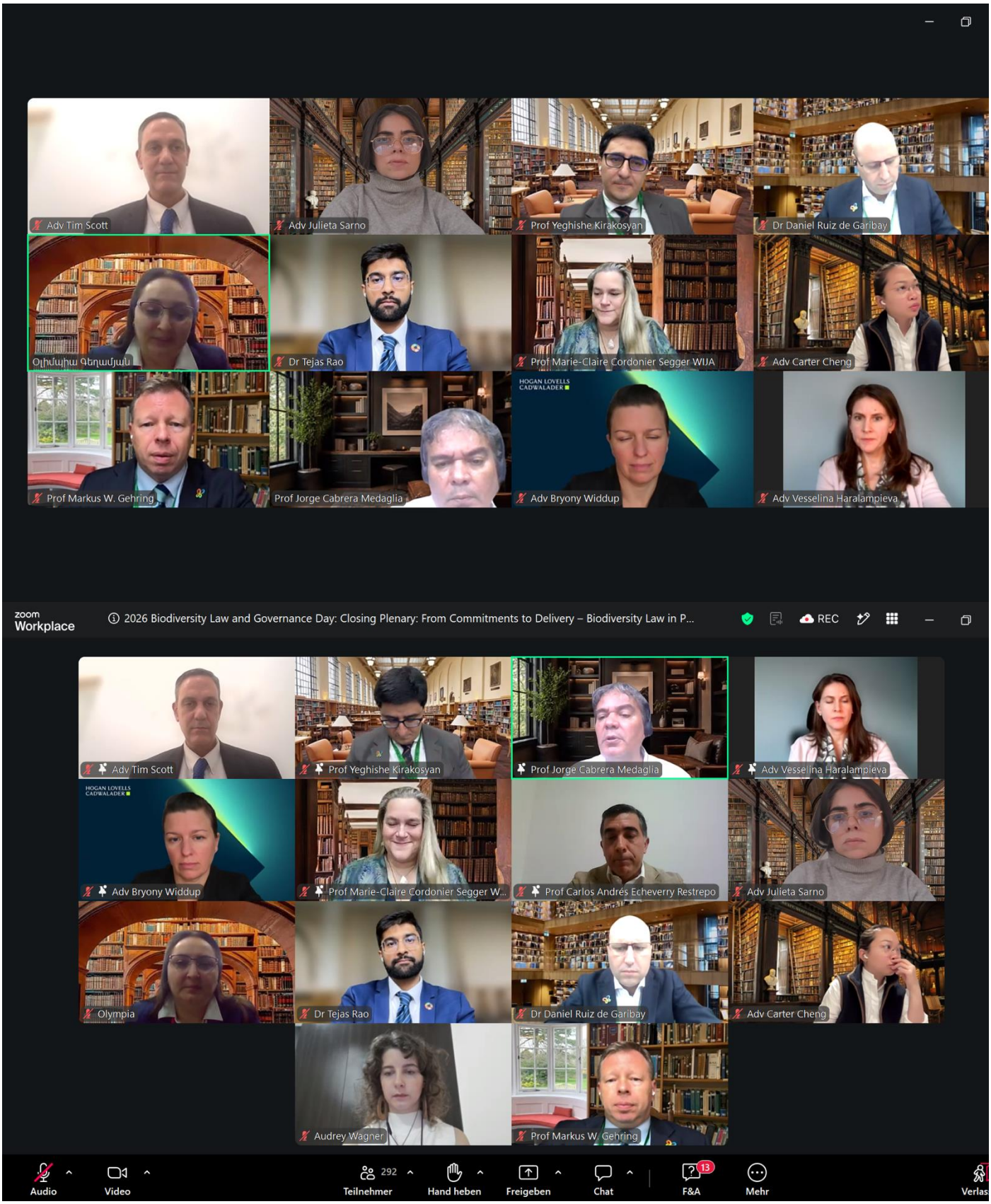
Adv Vesselina Haralampieva argued that finance alone is insufficient without clear laws, functioning institutions and predictable regulation. She set out five practical dimensions for making biodiversity ambition operational: national laws and regulations that translate international commitments into enforceable rules, marked by clarity, consistency across sectoral laws, enforceability and predictability; enforceable project-level obligations embedded in legal agreements through conditions precedent, performance requirements, measurable milestones and remedies for non-compliance; legal certainty to mobilise nature finance, including national-level answers on ownership of benefits and on verification for nature credits and payments for ecosystem services; the integration of biodiversity into financial and corporate governance as a source of material risk; and clear accountability. She noted a shift from treating biodiversity as a safeguard towards recognising conservation and restoration as investment objectives in their own right, and concluded that lawyers in every discipline have a role in enabling such investment.

Speaking from COP17, **Audrey Wagner** observed that the IPBES Transformative Change Assessment identifies the main barriers to implementing the KMGBF as largely sociopolitical rather than technical, making legal and governance expertise more critical than ever. She described how the Academic & Research Organisations Caucus to the CBD provides a collective, inclusive voice in CBD processes for academics, including social scientists, law and governance scholars and early-career researchers, and serves as a capacity-building entity for those new to science-policy spaces.

Prof Yeghishe Kirakosyan announced the initiation of the International Law Association Armenia Branch: initial members have been assembled, and its statutes and initial Executive Council membership have been submitted to the ILA Executive Council, whose confirmation was pending at the time of the BLGD 2026. The initiative follows the launch of the ILA UAE Branch at a previous Climate Law and Governance Day, and is expected to create new opportunities for scholarly discussion of international law in Armenia and its diaspora.

Closing announcements invited participants to forthcoming events at COP17 on legal pathways for OECMs, at the Academic and Research Hub on 26 October 2026 and on the Green Zone Main Stage on 28 October 2026, and to Climate Law and Governance Day 2026, to be held on 13 November 2026 at Antalya Bilim University and online during UNFCCC COP31.


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Adv Tim Scott
Adv Julieta Sarno
Prof Marie-Claire Cor...
Dr Daniel Ruiz de Gar...
Dr Tejas Rao
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Adv Tim Scott
Adv Julieta Sarno
Prof Yeghishe Kirakosyan
Dr Daniel Ruiz de Garibay
Olympia
Dr Tejas Rao
Prof Marie-Claire Cordonier Segger WIJA
Adv Carter Cheng
Prof Markus W. Gehring
Prof Jorge Cabrera Medaglia
Adv Bryony Widdup
Adv Vesselina Haralampieva
zoom Workplace
2026 Biodiversity Law and Governance Day: Closing Plenary: From Commitments to Delivery – Biodiversity Law in P...
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Prof Jorge Cabrera Medaglia
Adv Vesselina Haralampieva
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Prof Carlos Andrés Echeverry Restrepo
Adv Julieta Sarno
Olympia
Dr Tejas Rao
Dr Daniel Ruiz de Garibay
Adv Carter Cheng
Audrey Wagner
Prof Markus W. Gehring
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Cross-Cutting Messages

Although each plenary and session addressed a distinct question, several messages recurred across the documented discussions. They are presented here as areas of convergence among speakers, identified from the session reports, and not as formally agreed outcomes of the Day.

From commitments to enforceable law and institutions. The most consistent message of the Day was that the targets of the KMGBF must be translated into national law, institutions and budgets. In the Opening Plenary, Hon Elizabeth Maruma Mrema called for NBSAPs to be embedded in domestic legal reform, spatial planning, sectoral policy, environmental impact assessment and the rules governing investment and trade, and Adv Maria-Goreti Muavesi characterised implementation gaps as governance rather than technical challenges; H.E. Srbuhi Galyan made the same point in the Grand Opening. In Session V, speakers argued that framework legislation converts restoration targets into duties with deadlines, institutions and budgets, and in the Closing Plenary Adv Vesselina Haralampieva identified clarity, consistency, enforceability and predictability as the qualities on which such frameworks depend. By way of context, the KMGBF was adopted by decision of the CBD Conference of the Parties and is generally understood not to create new treaty obligations of its own; its targets acquire legal effect largely through domestic legislation, existing treaty obligations and, as the Judicial Leadership Plenary illustrated, judicial interpretation. This helps to explain why so many contributions focused on national legal reform.

Coherence across institutions and regimes. Speakers presented coherence not as an administrative refinement but as a condition of effective implementation. In the Opening Plenary, Hon Ivonne Higuero pointed to national focal points working in silos, Adv Andy Raine described joint programmes and shared staff between treaty secretariats, and Dr Kent Nnadozie called for coherence across biodiversity, agriculture, food security and climate resilience instruments. In Session V, Dr Yasmine Fouad called for convergence between the Rio conventions and Juan Carlos Losada Vargas described a State that funds restoration while subsidising the drivers of degradation; Session VI called for coordinated national frameworks and for mutual support between the Nagoya Protocol, the GRATK Treaty and the ITPGRFA, avoiding duplication and double payments; Session VII emphasised that conservation measures under the BBNJ Agreement should complement existing legal frameworks; and in the Closing Plenary Dr Grethel Aguilar called for the interlinked planetary crises to be addressed together.

Law as an enabling condition for finance. Discussions of finance repeatedly returned to the legal conditions on which investment depends. Session IV concluded that, because ecosystems are public goods, market incentives require appropriate legal and policy frameworks; in the Closing Plenary, Adv Bryony Widdup described hybrid public-private models as the most effective structure and Adv Vesselina Haralampieva stressed the legal certainty needed for nature credits and payments for ecosystem services. In Session V, Adv Joann Lee identified legislation as the principal driver of the restoration economy, while in the Opening Plenary Hon Elizabeth Maruma Mrema treated the reform of harmful incentives as fundamental to the Framework. Across these sessions, the documented contributions paired market-based instruments with regulatory and legal frameworks rather than presenting them as alternatives.

Rights, participation and knowledge. A recurring distinction was drawn between consultation and genuine participation in decision-making. Session VII called for Indigenous Peoples and local communities to be recognised as decision-makers rather than merely stakeholders or sources of traditional knowledge, with FPIC and genuine representation; Session VIII called for youth participation that goes beyond consultation and influences decisions; and in Session V Juan Carlos Losada Vargas argued that restoration laws should give Indigenous Peoples and local communities authority, resources and a seat at the table. These messages echoed the requirements for rights-based implementation set out in the Opening Plenary, the attention to rights safeguards in Session I, and calls in the Judicial Leadership and Closing Plenaries for Indigenous knowledge to be given greater weight, including alongside scientific evidence in judicial reasoning.

Credibility and accountability in area-based conservation and restoration. Several sessions cautioned against measuring progress by area or commitment alone. Session I concluded that recognition of OECMs does not guarantee effective outcomes and emphasised monitoring, transparent reporting and periodic review; Session VII argued that the success of 30x30 depends on the quality of governance and the effectiveness of measures rather than on

numerical targets; and Session V affirmed that restoration must never be used to justify continued degradation. In the Opening Plenary, Adv Andy Raine stressed that protected areas must be connected, and Hon Elizabeth Maruma Mrema described monitoring and reporting frameworks as accountability tools.

Courts, the rule of law and future generations. The Judicial Leadership Plenary showed courts translating principles of international environmental law and intergenerational equity into enforceable domestic standards, through the expansion of constitutional rights in Pakistan, constitutional protection of biodiversity and future generations in Hungary, and the recognition of rights of nature under EU law in Germany. These themes connected with Hon Elizabeth Maruma Mrema's observation that courts increasingly treat environmental commitments as legal obligations, with H.E. Srbuhi Galyan's linkage of biodiversity protection to the rule of law and future generations, with the youth workshop's focus on intergenerational participation, and with Tim Scott's assessment that multilateralism and the rule of law continue to function despite slow progress.

Open questions and differences of view

The discussions also revealed differences of view and questions that remained open:

- **The respective roles of courts and legislatures.** Judges in the Judicial Leadership Plenary differed on how far judicial creativity should extend, with Judge Borowsky regarding legislation as the preferable route to recognising rights of nature; speakers in Session V likewise placed the emphasis on legislative action to secure durable restoration obligations.
- **The precautionary principle in restoration.** In Session V, Bethanie Walder cautioned that the precautionary principle could in some circumstances be invoked against restoration interventions and drew on *in dubio pro natura*, while Prof An Cliquet regarded precaution as a foundation of restoration law.
- **Finance where markets are thin.** Session IV recognised that countries with less developed financial markets face particular constraints in mobilising private capital, and participants in Session V asked how African countries can develop locally driven restoration finance that reduces dependence on international donors.

Concluding Observations

BLGD 2026 took place at a moment of stocktaking. Across the documented sessions, speakers identified the principal obstacles to implementing the KMGBF less in a lack of targets than in gaps in law, institutions, coherence, finance and accountability; as Audrey Wagner noted with reference to the IPBES Transformative Change Assessment, the main barriers are largely sociopolitical rather than technical. This places the legal and governance community at the centre of the implementation phase.

BLGD 2026 also illustrated the range of legal tools available, and the importance of distinguishing among them. They include binding regional legislation such as the EU Nature Restoration Regulation; constitutional adjudication protecting biodiversity and future generations in Hungary; judicial interpretation extending rights and doctrines in Pakistan and Germany; cooperation between treaty secretariats; contractual, project-level obligations of the kind used by the EBRD; and proposals, such as SER's model for proactive restoration legislation, that are not yet law. The recommendations recorded in this Report are, for the most part, proposals and shared messages directed at legislators, courts, institutions and practitioners; they are not obligations, and they were not adopted as a collective outcome of the Day.

Several follow-up initiatives were documented. SER's paper on Proactive Ecosystem Restoration Legislation was under peer review, with publication anticipated in early 2027, and the UNCCD G20 Global Land Initiative described using its Global Changemakers Academy for Parliamentarians to co-develop model restoration legislation with legislators. A proposal to include a judicial panel at future Biodiversity and Climate Law and Governance Days, and at the next COP, was reported to be under active consideration. The statutes of an International Law Association Armenia Branch were submitted for confirmation by the ILA Executive Council. Participants were invited to continue the conversation at COP17 events on legal pathways for OECMs and at Climate Law and Governance Day 2026 during UNFCCC COP31.

Acknowledgements

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We are particularly grateful to the Masters of Ceremonies, online operators, moderators and rapporteurs, many of them student scholars at Yerevan State University and the University of Cambridge, whose work made the Day and this Report possible. All Parties and Observers are very welcome to join the BLGI in the future as sponsors, partners, session hosts, thematic leaders or participants.

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