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the legal profession*



United Nations



IBA LPRU AND UN ENGAGEMENT IN 2023

Expertise in Action

In 2023 the International Bar Association (IBA) Legal Policy and Research Unit (LPRU) increased its global engagement and advocacy on critical policy priorities including climate change, anti-corruption and legal ethics. Strategic initiatives such as attendance at COP28, publishing a new guidance on business and human rights, and establishing a Memorandum of Understanding with the International Federation of Accountants Association (IFAC), have reinforced its commitment to amplify the legal profession’s voice on the international stage. This commitment was particularly evident in the IBA’s interactions with the United Nations and affiliated organisations.

In December 2023, the IBA resumed the role of an official observer at COP28 and COSP10, the 28th Conference of Parties under the United Nations Framework Convention Against Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the 10th Conference of States Parties under the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC). These forums brought together national signatories and stakeholder organisations to assess treaty implementation progress and commit to further actions. The IBA actively participated in discussions about utilising the legal profession to better understand and address issues on climate change and corruption, showcasing its dedication to contributing legal perspectives to these global challenges.



Pictured: Director of Legal Projects, Sara Carnegie speaking at COSP10 in December 2023.

The IBA at COSP10

Simultaneously, at UNCAC COSP10 in Atlanta, the IBA served as an official observer organisation, as had been the case at the previous COSP in Egypt in 2021. IBA Director of Legal Projects, Sara Carnegie and BIC Project Lawyer Dr George Artley attended COSP10 in December. The discussions focussed on several resolutions regarding strengthening whistleblower protection legislation and implementation, strengthening beneficial ownership transparency, the role of gender in fighting corruption, and public procurement transparency and integrity.

In addition to the IBA’s participation at the UNCAC COSP as an observer, the IBA was also a participant in the UNCAC Private Sector Forum, adjacent to the plenary proceedings. Sara Carnegie, spoke alongside IFAC, Transparency International, the Antiquities Coalition and the World Economic Forum’s Gatekeepers Task Force as part of the Private Sector Forum session: ‘Between

crime and compliance: The ambiguous role of gatekeepers in the global financial system.’ The session explored the interplay between global standards, local implementation, and the role of professional bodies in the fight against money laundering and corruption. Sara spoke specifically on role of lawyers as ethical gatekeepers, and their responsibilities and obligations when providing legal services, in a culture of increased expectations from consumers, investors, governments and employees, who are placing business integrity at the forefront of the private sector’s agenda.

The IBA’s engagement with the UNCAC COSP demonstrates the global legal profession’s commitment to fighting corruption and related economic crimes, and provides a platform for IBA to highlight key messages including the positive role that the legal profession plays in fighting corruption in public practice, in business, and the public sector.

IBA with the UNFCCC at COP 28

The IBA's involvement at UNFCCC COP28 in Dubai included a noteworthy presence as an official "Blue Zone" Observer. In a high-level panel featuring IBA representatives, discussions included climate competent legal advice and consequences of not considering climate change alongside legal services. Representatives from the LPRU received multiple requests for the IBA to do more in this space and facilitate peer-to-peer learning and capacity building.

Following COP28, the IBA LPRU intend to launch an IBA Climate Registry online, for law societies and bar associations to share up to date responses and initiatives, for example climate change resolutions and guidance.

Earlier in June 2023, the IBA participated in a UNFCCC side session panel at SB58 in Bonn titled "The role of lawyers and law associations in the Global Stocktake: Implementation at a domestic level", discussing the unique role of law and law associations in regulating, training, and sharing best legal practice examples to further climate objectives & implementation strategies for the net zero transition.

The offsite event was co-hosted by the IBA, the American Bar Association, the Law Society of England and Wales and the Brazilian Bar Association. This coalition began working together following COP26, to capacity build across legal jurisdictions and promote the profession at the UNFCCC. Lara also moderated an event at the 2023 Climate Law and Governance Day on the role of lawyers and bars in tackling the climate crisis. She also participated in a panel within the Blue Zone at the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Pavilion alongside the bars listed above.



Pictured: LPRU's Lara Douvartzidis moderating a panel at an IBA co-hosted offsite event, supported by DLA Piper at COP28, Dubai. Also pictured from right to left: Alasdair Cameron (on screen), Law Society of England & Wales; Nadia Ahmad (American Bar Association), Ahmed Elseidi, Leticia Perrone Campos Mello (Brazilian Bar Association OAB), Georgina Beasley (Net Zero Lawyers Alliance).



Pictured: LPRU's Lara Douvartzidis participating in Blue Zone events with representatives from the Climate Law and Governance Initiative and Centre for International Sustainable Development Law, including Professor Marie-Claire Cordonier Segger, the Inaugural Chair of Sustainable Development Law at the University of Cambridge.



Pictured: LPRU's Sara Carnegie and Lara Douvartzidis attending the IBA co-hosted offsite event in Dubai, supported by DLA Piper at COP28, titled "Everything, everywhere, all at once: Lawyers tackling the climate crisis". Joining them is Dr Sharon Fitzgerald (Partner, DLA Piper), Pamela Steer (President and CEO of CPA Canada), Prof Marie-Claire Cordonier Segger (University of Cambridge).

Additional UN engagement

Beyond COP events, the Anurag Bana from LPRU was invited to present in two key UN expert consultation meetings regarding digital economy held in Geneva in May 2023. The meetings were organised by the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UNCEFACT) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Anurag provided substantive inputs and shared information on IBA's legal research projects concerning cybersecurity, data governance, digital identity, AI and business human rights. This also included existing best practice documents and contributions made by various IBA entities in international and intergovernmental organisations.

The LPRU's Lara Douvartzidis spoke at the Conference on Business and Human Rights in Tbilisi, which was supported by the UN Global Compact Network Georgia and UN OHCHR. Discussions focused on international and regional legal frameworks, the prevention of human rights violations by businesses and best practice guidance.



Pictured: LPRU's Anurag Banu with Laura Cyron, Economic Affairs Officer, UNCTAD in Geneva.

What's next in 2024?



Pictured: LPRU Team in November 2023

The IBA is dedicated to bringing the legal profession's voice to the global stage. Its ongoing engagement with the UN and other key stakeholders reflects its recognition of the central role of the legal profession in meeting existing commitments under UN treaties and furthering best practice to promote and protect the rule of law. The LPRU looks forward to clarifying the scope of professional obligations with respect to various thematic topics such as climate change, business and human rights, judicial integrity, digital innovation, gender parity and anti-corruption, to further strengthen our collective understanding and appreciation for the profession.