INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION

the global voice of the legal profession

NEWS RELEASE

Friday 13 November 2026



IBA brings global legal profession into COP31 debates on climate literacy for lawyers and the role of courts in corporate climate responsibility

Sessions in Antalya on 13 and 19 November will ask whether climate knowledge is now a core skill for lawyers and what court rulings mean for business.

The **International Bar Association** (IBA), *the global voice of the legal profession,* will bring legal professionals into two significant debates at the **31st Conference of the Parties** (COP31) to the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**, in Antalya, Türkiye. Two co-hosted events will examine the changing responsibilities of lawyers in the face of the climate crisis.

Through its **Legal Policy & Research Unit** (LPRU), the IBA is hosting a session at the **Climate Law and Governance Day** (CLGD), running parallel to the COP31, and will host a formal side event in the official **Blue Zone**. Together, the events will put a fundamental question to the profession: as climate change increasingly reshapes laws, markets, corporate responsibilities and litigation, is the legal profession adequately equipped to respond?

Bringing together judges, lawyers, bar associations and law society representatives, corporate counsel and legal academics, the discussions will examine two interconnected challenges: the need to embed climate literacy throughout legal education and professional development, and the growing influence of courts in defining the climate responsibilities of businesses and those who advise them.

The IBA's participation comes at a critical moment for international climate action. As COP31 seeks to move the global response from commitments to implementation, the legal implications of climate change are becoming increasingly difficult for governments, businesses and the legal profession to ignore.

The landmark **July 2025 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on states' obligations in respect of climate change** has further reinforced the significance of international law in addressing the climate crisis. Meanwhile, the expanding landscape of climate litigation is raising important questions about corporate accountability, directors' duties and the legal advice businesses need to navigate an evolving regulatory and judicial environment.

Against this backdrop, the IBA's two COP31 events will consider not only how the law is changing, but also what those changes demand of the legal profession.

Climate literacy: a professional competency, not a specialism

Climate Law and Governance Day: Friday 13 November 2026, 1415–1530 TRT

The CLGD is an annual gathering of the international climate law community, convened alongside COP, which typically draws more than 1,000 participants. The first event, '**Mainstreaming Climate Literacy in Legal Education**', will take place on Friday 13 November at **Antalya Bilim University** in a hybrid format, with participants joining in person and online via livestream.

Building on collaboration in previous years, the IBA will co-host the session with the **Brazilian Bar Association** (OAB), the **American Bar Association** (ABA) and the **Law Society of England and Wales** (LSEW).

The central proposition is that climate change can no longer be treated as a specialist subject. From corporate transactions, finance and property law to litigation, employment, human rights and commercial regulation, climate-related developments are increasingly relevant across virtually every area of the profession.

The session will highlight initiatives to integrate climate considerations into law school curricula, continuing professional development and professional guidance, including for bar associations and law societies, in-house counsel, real estate lawyers and members of the judiciary, recognising that lawyers

need to understand how climate change affects both their clients and their own professional responsibilities.

The session is co-chaired by **Letícia Perrone Campos Mello**, a member of the International Relations Committee of the OAB Federal Council and Representative of the OAB Federal Council at COP31, and **Lara Douvartzidis,** an officer of the **IBA Business Human Rights Committee** and Associate Fellow of the Centre for International Sustainable Development Law.

Speakers will include **Justice John Carey,** a judge of the National and Supreme Court of Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Judge Administrator of the PNG Centre for Judicial Excellence; **Professor John Dernbach,** Emeritus Professor at the Widener University Commonwealth Law School; **Vesselina Haralampieva,** Senior Counsel at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; **Professor James May,** Richard S Righter Distinguished Professor of Law at Washburn University and a representative of the ABA; and **Emily Morison**, an officer of the IBA Environment, Health and Safety Committee and member of the IBA Bar Issues Commission (BIC) Climate Change Working Group.

How courts are reshaping corporate climate responsibility

Official Blue Zone side event: Thursday 19 November 2026, 1500–1630 TRT

The second event, '**How Courts Are Shaping Corporate Climate Responsibility**', will take place on Thursday 19 November, from 1500–1630 in Side Event Room 6 – Katip Çelebi within the official COP31 Blue Zone.

Co-hosted by the IBA LPRU and the OAB, and supported by the ABA and LSEW, the event will bring together judges, corporate lawyers and bar representatives to explore corporate accountability, directors' duties, disclosure, legal risk, the evolving role of the legal profession and what the growing body of climate litigation means for those advising boards and clients.

The discussion will also address a wider question for the profession: where does the responsibility of lawyers begin and end when advising businesses operating in an economy undergoing profound climate-related legal and regulatory change?

Speakers will include **Sir Robin Knowles CBE**, a UK High Court judge and representative of the Standing International Forum of Commercial Courts (SIFoCC); **Annabell Brüggemann**, Senior Legal Advisor at the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights; **Professor James May**, Richard S Righter Distinguished Professor of Law at Washburn University and a representative of the ABA; and **Marina Monné de Oliviera**, a partner and Carbon & Risk Manager at ECCON Environmental Solutions. It will be moderated by **Siena Hopkinson** of the IBA LPRU.

A global legal profession preparing for a changing climate landscape

Building on the IBA's climate work

The two COP31 sessions form part of the IBA's wider programme of work to strengthen climate awareness, knowledge and capacity across the international legal community.

In 2025, the **IBA BIC** convened a virtual roundtable of more than 70 representatives from almost 50 bar associations and law societies in over 30 jurisdictions to share their climate initiatives, challenges and requirements. The resulting report, ***Roundtable on bar association and law society climate initiatives***, identified the challenges facing professional legal organisations, as well as opportunities and best practices to develop and implement effective climate initiatives.

One of the most significant findings identified by participating organisations was the demand for greater support with climate legal education, including accessible educational resources, training on how climate change affects day-to-day legal practice and a clearer understanding of how lawyers' professional competency obligations intersect with climate change and wider environmental law.

Since March 2024, the **IBA Climate Registry** has also given bar associations and law societies a platform to share climate policies and declarations, carbon footprint reports, practitioner guidance and educational initiatives.

This work builds on the **IBA's Climate Crisis Statement**, issued in 2020, which calls on the legal profession to play a leading role in upholding the rule of law as the world responds to the climate crisis. Among its recommendations are for bar associations and law societies to engage law students and law schools on the legal aspects of the climate crisis, develop educational tools for continuing legal education and establish climate committees where none exist. Many bars and law societies have since set up dedicated committees or working groups on climate change, sustainability and environmental, social and governance issues.

As climate-related law continues to develop, the legal profession can either respond reactively to an increasingly complex body of climate law or proactively equip itself to help shape its implementation.

Through its presence at COP31, the IBA, together with partners, aims to advance that conversation internationally, bringing together those who make, interpret, practise and teach the law to consider what an effective legal response to the climate crisis must look like.

****ENDS****

Contact: IBApressoffice@int-bar.org

Notes:

1. **About LPRU**:

   The **Legal Policy & Research Unit** (LPRU) is the International Bar Association's engine for research, policy and projects. It undertakes research, and develops and implements innovative strategies, projects and initiatives relevant to business and the rule of law, the global legal profession and the broader global community. The LPRU oversees the work of the IBA **Bar Issues Commission** project lawyers and is led by the IBA Legal Projects Director.

   Its flagship projects include:

   - **Ethics and Anti-Corruption**
   - **Raising the Bar: Women in Law**
   - **Climate Crisis**
   - **Mental Wellbeing**

2. The **International Bar Association** (IBA), *the global voice of the legal profession*, is the foremost organisation for international legal practitioners, bar associations and law societies. Established in 1947, shortly after the creation of the **United Nations**, with the aim of protecting and promoting the rule of law globally, it was born out of the conviction that an organisation made up of the world's bar associations could contribute to global stability and peace through the administration of justice.

   The IBA acts as a connector enabler, and influencer, for fair practice and accountability worldwide. The IBA has collaborated on a broad range of ground-breaking, international projects with the **United Nations**, the **European Parliament**, the **Council of Europe**, **The Commonwealth**, the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development** (OECD), the **World Trade Organization**, the **International Monetary Fund** and the **World Bank**, among others.

3. Find the IBA on social media here:

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