



The Law Society
of England and Wales



Human Rights
Institute

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

60th Session of the UN Human Rights Council

Item 3: Interactive Dialogue on the Secretary-General's synthesis report on the impact of climate change on human rights

17 September 2025

Joint oral statement

Mr. President,

Lawyers for Lawyers, together with the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada, and the Law Society of England and Wales, thank the Secretary-General for his synthesis report and echo his call for just transitions to be guided by a rights-based approach.

Among those at the forefront of advancing just transitions are environmental lawyers, who play a vital but increasingly perilous role in promoting climate justice. They ensure accountability for environmental harms, provide access to justice, and equip marginalised groups with the tools necessary to defend their rights and livelihoods.

Yet, these lawyers face escalating reprisals for their legitimate work. Our recent report documents widespread interference with their work – ranging from physical attacks and arbitrary prosecutions to surveillance and stigmatisation.¹ They are often vilified as “anti-development” or “enemies of the state,” undermining both their safety and their credibility.

We condemn these attacks which, combined with persistent resource constraints, pose a chilling effect that deters other lawyers from taking up environmental cases. This ultimately leaves vulnerable communities without legal representation.

Without independent legal counsel, meaningful redress for environmental harms is severely jeopardised – threatening global sustainability and human rights objectives, including the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

We urge States to fulfil their obligations by ensuring the independence, safety, and effective functioning of environmental lawyers. We also call on UN bodies and professional associations of lawyers to recognise and support their indispensable role in advancing access to climate justice.

Thank you.

This statement was delivered by:

Tara Fiechter, Programme Officer
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¹ Lawyers for Lawyers, ‘Access to Environmental Justice under Threat: The Role, Risks, and Rights of Environmental Lawyers’ (2025) <www.lawyersforlawyers.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Access-to-Environmental-Justice-under-Threat-Lawyer-for-Lawyers-single-pages.pdf>.