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# Roundtable on bar association and law society climate initiatives



## Post-event report

# Contents

<b>Roundtable on bar association and law society climate initiatives: implementation and inspiration – post-event report</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Introduction</i>	<b>3</b>
<i>Background</i>	<b>3</b>
<b>Key roundtable findings</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Detailed summary of roundtable discussions</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Opening remarks</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Approaches to developing and implementing climate change initiatives</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Challenges</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Areas for support and cooperation</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Reflections and future directions</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Conclusions and next steps at the IBA</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Annex 1: Resources</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Annex 2: Attendee organisations</b>	<b>22</b>

# Roundtable on bar association and law society climate initiatives: implementation and inspiration – post-event report

## Executive summary

### *Introduction*

On 13 February 2025, the International Bar Association (IBA) Bar Issues Commission (BIC) – with support from the Brazilian Bar Association (OAB), American Bar Association (ABA), Law Society of England and Wales (LSEW), United Kingdom Environmental Law Association (UKELA) and IBA Legal Policy & Research Unit (LRPU) – convened an online **roundtable on bar association and law society climate initiatives: implementation and inspiration**. The roundtable brought together more than 70 representatives from almost 50 bar associations and law societies around the globe to engage in rich discussions regarding challenges, opportunities and good practices from their experiences of formulating and implementing climate initiatives in their jurisdictions, and to share visions for their work in 2025 and beyond.

### *Background*

In May 2023, the LSEW hosted a roundtable discussion among bar association and law society leaders to explore the roles these organisations can play in addressing the climate crisis, as well as practical strategies for incorporating an awareness of climate change into missions, policies and activities. This initial roundtable led to the IBA, OAB, ABA and LSEW having discussions regarding how bar associations could help develop legal tools to address climate change and help lawyers build climate competency. One of these tools was the IBA Climate Registry,<sup>1</sup> launched in March 2024. A growing number of bar associations and law societies from around the world are now sharing their climate policies and declarations, carbon footprint reports, practitioner guidance and educational events on this online platform.

Building on this momentum, in May 2024 the IBA BIC convened five roundtable discussions during its Bar Leaders' Conference in Bucharest, with attending representatives discussing their experiences in different jurisdictions.

In February 2025, the IBA BIC invited representatives of bar associations and law societies or their climate or environmental law committees to share reflections in a comprehensive, online roundtable on the following guiding questions:

1. What has guided your organisation's approach to developing or implementing climate change initiatives?
2. What challenges has your organisation (or committee) faced when developing or implementing climate-related initiatives? How have these been overcome?

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1 'IBA Climate Registry' (International Bar Association) available at [www.ibanet.org/IBA-Climate-Registry](http://www.ibanet.org/IBA-Climate-Registry) accessed 31 March 2025.

3. What does your organisation need to assist its future work in this space?
4. What does climate success look like for your organisation or committee in 2025 and beyond?

Key findings from the roundtable are set out in the following pages.

## Key roundtable findings

### *Question one: Approaches*

The roundtable discussions revealed that organisations are employing a wide range of strategies to integrate climate considerations into legal education, legal practice, and legislation and policy development. Consistent with the IBA Climate Crisis Statement<sup>2</sup> – which encourages organisations to consider establishing committees focusing on the climate crisis and its consequences – numerous organisations have established dedicated committees or working groups focused on climate change, sustainability or ESG (environmental, social and governance) issues. Participants highlighted the array of innovative initiatives that these bodies have led to address intersections between the legal profession and the climate crisis, including:

- initiatives to better equip lawyers (and judges, in some organisations) to navigate the complexities of climate change in legal advice, including specialised training programmes, climate-focused seminars, guidance documents and reports on how climate change is affecting particular areas of practice;
- engagement in policy advocacy, and providing inputs to consultations on environment and climate-related legal frameworks, strategies and action plans;
- measuring and reducing organisations’ operational climate impacts; and
- supporting law firms in implementing sustainable business practices and addressing climate impacts associated with legal advice.

The roundtables highlighted the value of emphasising to members the opportunities (not just the risks) linked to integrating climate considerations into legal practice, and the importance of consulting with all members in developing climate initiatives to ensure buy-in.

### *Question two: Challenges*

However, key challenges remain. Roundtable participants identified challenges, including resistance to climate initiatives within organisations. Some representatives pointed to ideological differences, which has led to the re-scaling of initiatives to ensure their appeal to a broad audience.

Engagement with senior legal professionals and business lawyers on climate issues has also proven challenging for some organisations. In regions with less stringent climate regulations for businesses, interest in climate-related matters is more limited. The absence of mandatory continuing professional development in some jurisdictions further limits efforts to engage lawyers in climate education.

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<sup>2</sup> ‘Climate Crisis Statement’ (IBA, 2020) available at [www.ibanet.org/Climate-Crisis-Statement](http://www.ibanet.org/Climate-Crisis-Statement) accessed 31 March 2025.

Another challenge for organisations is keeping pace with a rapidly evolving regulatory landscape, which can make it difficult for organisations to keep climate-related resources and materials up to date, and to respond to consultations in a timely manner.

### *Question three: Areas for support and cooperation*

Participants identified a number of key areas where support from the IBA and collaboration with global partners would assist with overcoming challenges. These include advancing integration of climate considerations into legal education by developing specialised courses to help lawyers understand the intersections of climate change with legal practice and their professional responsibilities; supporting training for judges; and providing guidance for lawyers and firms on managing advised emissions. Some organisations could also benefit from guidance on how to address their own operational emissions.

Moreover, participants expressed a desire for enhanced international support and networking opportunities within the climate legal space. This could involve connecting lawyers working on climate issues and facilitating collaborations on specific transactions. Additionally, participants recognised the importance of continuing to share knowledge and experiences through future roundtable discussions, to continue to foster cross-border collaboration among organisations.

### *Reflections and future directions*

Roundtable participants shared a range of reflections to guide and inspire work going forward: the urgent need for all members of the legal profession to support climate mitigation and adaptation measures, particularly to achieve justice in regions already experiencing the most severe impacts of climate change, was highlighted.

It was emphasised that the law must play a very important role in safeguarding the climate from further destruction. It is critical that those involved in launching climate justice legal actions, which prioritise equity and human rights, are supported to coordinate their efforts.

Despite a challenging geopolitical and regulatory environment, there was a strong sense of optimism and commitment among participants, and a sense of responsibility to reduce individual environmental footprints, while also continuing efforts at an organisational level.

The IBA Bar Issues Commission and supporting organisations are grateful for the valuable and candid insights shared by participants throughout the roundtable, and looking ahead, will explore further avenues for action based on the calls for support shared during discussions.

The remainder of this report sets out the outcomes of the roundtable, and next steps, in detail.

# Detailed summary of roundtable discussions

The roundtable was held at two different times, to cater for participants joining from different jurisdictions. Twenty-four representatives from 18 organisations<sup>3</sup> and 13 jurisdictions attended Meeting 1 (at 0600 UTC), and 56 representatives from 35 organisations and 25 jurisdictions attended Meeting 2 (at 1400 UTC). Altogether, 74 participants from 46 organisations and 32 jurisdictions attended the roundtables.<sup>4</sup> A list of organisations represented in discussions is contained at Annex 2. Discussions were held under Chatham House Rules<sup>5</sup> and were facilitated by Emily Morison (Project Lawyer, IBA LPRU).

## Opening remarks

Dominique Hogan-Doran SC (Chair, IBA BIC Regulation Committee) provided welcoming remarks at Meeting 1, and Steven Richman (Chair, IBA BIC) provided welcoming remarks at Meeting 2.

In their comments, Richman and Hogan-Doran emphasised the critical role that lawyers have to play in the transition to a sustainable world that is aligned with the goals of the Paris Agreement and that, in order to fulfil this role, lawyers need education and guidance. Bar associations and law societies are powerful gatherings of lawyers that are crucial to addressing that need, and many of these bodies are already leading the way in this space, as demonstrated by contributions to the IBA Climate Registry.

They highlighted that supporting bar associations to act on climate change is a key priority for the BIC. In this regard, they referred to previous efforts of the IBA and BIC to encourage knowledge sharing among bar associations on how to address the climate crisis, including roundtables on the subject convened at the 2024 IBA Bar Leaders Forum in Bucharest and the launch of the IBA Climate Registry. They emphasised that the February 2025 roundtable is intended to form part of an ongoing conversation among organisation representatives of how to implement meaningful activities in this space.

## Approaches to developing and implementing climate change initiatives

At both meetings, participants shared a range of different approaches that their organisations are taking to addressing climate change in their jurisdictions. Many participants belonged to organisations with specialised climate change, sustainability or ESG or similar working groups or committees, and many of these groups are working to raise awareness of climate issues among their members through initiatives such as training programmes, seminars and conference presentations on climate change and law (and related topics). Some organisations have issued specific guidance for practitioners on climate change, while a number of others are in the process of developing similar materials.

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<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this report, the term ‘organisation’ has been used as an umbrella term to cover bar associations, law societies, legal alliances and similar bodies.

<sup>4</sup> Please note that these numbers include participants from the IBA, and the IBA as an organisation. Some individuals attended both Meeting 1 and Meeting 2, and some organisations were represented at both Meeting 1 and Meeting 2.

<sup>5</sup> Where a particular person or organisation is named in this report, this is with their consent.

Examples of different approaches include:

- **Law Council of Australia (Australia):** A representative of the Law Council of Australia (LCA) outlined LCA's approach to developing its climate change policy, which forms the basis for LCA's advocacy on climate-related issues and engaging in law reform, and also provides guidance for practitioners. It was noted that the policy is rooted in the principles of fair transition, upholding Australia's international obligations, the rule of law and principles of good law-making. The policy addresses the requirement for lawyers to advise clients on the legal implications of climate change in accordance with professional ethics. The representative noted that LCA's climate working group comprises lawyers from a variety of different practice areas, as well as personnel involved in operational climate disclosure reporting, and considered that the multidisciplinary nature of the group has proven to be a strength.
- **Azerbaijani Bar Association (Azerbaijan):** A representative from the Azerbaijani Bar Association highlighted that Azerbaijan's position as a country that is rich in oil and natural resources has guided the Bar Association to recognise climate change not only as an environmental issue, but also a legal and economic challenge that requires a proactive legal response. The bar's approach has been shaped by three pillars: national responsibility, global integration and legal capacity building, and the bar integrates climate-related legal education into its professional development programmes and also gives input into legislation relating to climate change. The bar's aim is to mainstream climate-conscious lawyering.
- **Law Society of New South Wales (Australia):** Representatives of the Law Society of New South Wales (LSNSW) noted that the publication of policies by other associations, which articulate a duty of care for lawyers to address climate change implications when giving legal advice on a legal problem, was an important driver for LSNSW's climate initiatives. It was observed that while all lawyers will be aware of climate physical impacts (such as the increasing prevalence of bush fires and floods), many would consider that advising on such impacts fall outside their retainers, which may not be the case. LSNSW convened a Climate Change Working Group that has developed practitioner guidance on climate change, which seeks to identify key areas of legal practice which are most impacted by climate change, and to provide overviews of potential risks which lawyers should be aware of when advising clients. LSNSW has also convened a number of thought leadership events to upskill lawyers in its jurisdiction on topics such as property law transactions and climate change, and has contributed to consultations on climate-related legislation. The representatives emphasised the importance of ensuring that members of the Climate Change Working Group represented a diverse array of legal practice areas, including those with expertise in laws relating to First Nations Peoples, rural practitioners, property lawyers and corporate lawyers. It was noted that ensuring such diversity is an ongoing project and is important for ensuring that the outcomes of the Group's work deliver for its members and reflect a broad array of climate-related issues.
- **Pakistan Bar Council (Pakistan):** A representative and head of the Directorate of Legal Education of the Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) – the highest body of lawyers in Pakistan and also the regulator of Pakistan's legal profession – highlighted that the key focus of their organisation is reforming the law curriculum in Pakistan, given that currently subjects on environmental law and climate change are not mandatory elements of bachelor- or master-level legal courses. This is particularly important, given the significant jurisprudence on climate change that has been developed by Pakistan's

superior courts. The representative highlighted that a key achievement of the PBC was successfully advocating for a new provision (Article 9A) to be introduced into the Constitution of Pakistan, explicitly guaranteeing every citizen of Pakistan the right to a healthy, safe and secure environment. The representative also highlighted the PBC's work to develop a plan for training lawyers on climate change, and invited collaboration with other organisations globally to develop a guidebook for lawyers and litigators on climate change and environmental law.

- **Singapore Law Society (Singapore):** Representatives of the Law Society of Singapore (LSS) noted that the mission of their organisation is to represent, protect and facilitate the acquisition of legal knowledge for lawyers in Singapore. Against this background, the LSS's ESG Working Group has a dual focus. First, it seeks to equip lawyers with the necessary knowledge to advise clients on climate-related issues. Second, it seeks to help lawyers and firms address climate impacts associated with legal advice (often referred to as 'advised emissions'). They noted that the organisation's decision to establish an ESG Working Group was inspired by seeing another law society with such a group. The LSS ESG Working Group's approach has been informed by government policy developments, including the Singapore Green Plan 2030 and requirements for sustainability reporting from the Singapore Exchange, which has also recommended a list of 27 core ESG metrics that has provided a guiding framework for LSS's activities. The Working Group's approach has also been informed by recent comments on advancing environmental rule of law and the role of the court in the climate crisis by the Honourable Justice Philip Jeyaretnam (President of the Singapore International Commercial Court).
- **Nigerian Bar Association (Nigeria):** A representative of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) observed that the NBA is the largest body of lawyers in Africa, with over 100,000 members. The NBA's Climate Justice Committee is committed to positioning the NBA as a key driver in shaping Nigeria's legal response to climate change. The Committee is still in its formative stages, and is guided by the following objectives: to advocate for equitable climate policies in Nigeria through legal interventions and policy engagement; support strategic climate litigation to advance environmental and social justice; foster partnerships with local and international organisations to build legal capacity in climate governance; work towards integrating climate education into legal training and practice (in alignment with Nigeria's Climate Change Act 2021, which explicitly provides for climate change to be integrated into education); and engage with Nigeria's National Council on Climate Change and other stakeholders to enhance legal expertise in climate-related matters. The committee is developing an implementation plan to achieve these objectives.
- **Taipei Bar Association (Taiwan):** A representative of the Taipei Bar Association highlighted its work to align with the IBA Climate Crisis Statement by establishing specialist committees. These include the Energy Law Committee, which is examining how legal professionals can facilitate industry engagement in international carbon markets and implementing substantive carbon reduction strategies, and the Environmental Law Committee, which has convened conferences on climate adaptation with sessions covering how the rule of law intersects with climate adaptation, and legal frameworks surrounding nature-based solutions, ecosystem services and biodiversity. In 2025, this committee will convene a Green Finance conference for small and medium-sized enterprises in Taiwan, which, in particular, need guidance on climate change risk governance, and climate mitigation and adaptation. The representative noted that given the importance of



green energy development for Taiwan's transition, the bar association is aiming to address topics such as geothermal energy and hydrogen. The association advocates for the importance of human rights protection in implementing a just transition. The representative emphasised the importance of collaboration across different committees to address climate change, because of the need for expertise from a diverse range of practice areas to address this issue.

- **Victorian Bar (Australia):** A representative of the Victorian Bar noted that the organisation's Climate Section was established for the purpose of educating members on intersections between climate and different areas of legal practice, and to support development of climate-conscious legal practice. As part of this work, the organisation has also published an annual climate change litigation review.
- **Taiwan Bar Association (Taiwan):** A representative from the Taiwan Bar Association highlighted the association's work to organise and support climate-focused webinars, conferences and training programmes. Examples of such initiatives include a webinar convened with civil society organisations focused on constitutional climate litigation, and a webinar on advancing 'net zero' through human rights: this webinar brought together professionals from across government and civil society organisations to improve understanding and alignment on climate policy (for example, in relation to national reduction targets, adaptation strategies and renewable energy development). The association has also held specific climate litigation training.
- **Bar Association of the Kingdom of Cambodia (Cambodia):** A representative from the Bar Association of the Kingdom of Cambodia noted efforts that their association makes at an operational level to minimise its environmental impact, from signs reminding staff to switch off lights and reduce water consumption, to arranging events outside to minimise energy consumption and save costs.
- **Law Society of Scotland (Scotland):** A representative of the Law Society of Scotland's Sustainability Committee emphasised that recognition of the profound impacts of climate change on the planet and on humanity prompted the Law Society of Scotland to include sustainability as a key focus of its five-year plan. The plan includes commitments to raising awareness of the need for climate-conscious lawyering with the organisation's members: this is a key focus of the Sustainability Committee.
- **Law Society of England and Wales (England/Wales):** Representatives of the Law Society of England and Wales (LSEW) observed that demands from its members for information on how the LSEW would address climate change, particularly in the lead up to COP26 in Glasgow, prompted the LSEW to act, including by declaring a climate emergency and establishing a Climate Change Working Group. The Group devoted significant time to consulting with members, which showed that there was a diverse range of views among the membership, with some members being hesitant to accept the role they had in addressing climate change. This prompted the LSEW to recognise that part of its mission was to help explain how climate change impacts different areas of the profession, from tax lawyers and corporate lawyers to government lawyers and in-house counsel. In 2023, the LSEW released guidance on the impacts of climate change on solicitors, with the intention of providing high-level guidance aimed at explaining how climate change affects all areas of practice, and some of the ethical issues that lawyers should consider around retainer, accepting instructions and limiting liability. The LSEW has since issued guidance on specific areas such as green leases and

greenwashing. The LSEW is now reviewing and updating its climate change guidance, and will soon release a practice note on impacts on climate change on real estate for real estate lawyers.

- **Sindh High Court Bar Association (Pakistan):** A representative of Sindh High Court Bar Association noted that the organisation's environmental committee is tasked with taking measures to mitigate climate change impacts. This has included assisting the provincial government in efforts to combat deforestation.
- **Bar Council of England and Wales (England/Wales):** A representative of the Bar Council of England and Wales noted that their organisation established a climate crisis working group with three focuses: firstly, tracking chambers' (ie, groups of barristers) operational emissions (particularly Scope 1 and 2) and developing a 'Carbon Calculator' tool to help members to calculate their carbon footprint and then take steps to reduce their carbon footprint; second, addressing 'advised emissions' and considering how lawyers' professional duties and obligations should be interpreted in light of the climate crisis; and third, leveraging legal knowledge to advocate for climate-sensible policies. The representative highlighted the important assistance that the IBA could provide in developing and making available basic training on climate change for lawyers, to develop climate-conscious practice, as the physics of climate change and the international framework dealing with it are the same across jurisdictions, so the IBA is well placed to assist.
- **Madrid Bar Association (Spain):** A representative of the Madrid Bar Association highlighted that its Energy and Environment Section has recently been renamed the 'Environment and Climate Section', and has implemented activities including seminars for lawyers (for example, on human rights and climate litigation) and also programmes to improve judges' understanding of environment and climate issues jointly with the Instituto Internacional de Derecho y Medio Ambiente (IIDMA).
- **American Bar Association (US):** Representatives from the American Bar Association (ABA) noted that their association has been engaged on climate change issues for more than two decades. Efforts of the ABA Section of Environment, Energy, and Resources to press for a resolution on climate change (which was unanimously passed in 2019) were driven by the desire to make a bold statement about the fact that climate change is a real threat, and that lawyers have an obligation to do more to address it. Since that time, the ABA has been active in coordinating activities at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conferences of the Parties (COPs) as an official observer organisation, in collaboration with other organisations, and in pursuing initiatives to raise awareness that lawyers have a professional competency obligation to address climate change issues as part of their practices.
- **Islamabad High Court Bar Association (Pakistan):** A representative of the Islamabad High Court Bar Association (IHCBA) highlighted that the IHCBA's decision to launch a new Climate Change Committee was inspired by the launch of the IBA Climate Registry, which gave visibility to what lawyers around the world are doing in this space. The main objective of the Committee is to promote climate literacy among lawyers through two avenues: first, collaborating with stakeholders – including government and non-government organisations in Pakistan (for example, The Ministry of National Health Services Regulations & Coordination, the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry) – on climate literacy. Second, the Committee has been working to raise

interest among lawyers in the issue of climate change. The representative noted that a large number of young people and graduates are interested in the Committee's work: as these groups are not eligible for IHCBA membership, they have been able to be engaged in the Committee's climate activities as volunteer researchers and contributors.

- **Law Association of Zambia (Zambia):** Representatives from the Law Association of Zambia (LAZ) highlighted that the severe climate impacts faced by Southern African countries make it clear that the legal profession must rise and look for ways to address this issue. LAZ responded by forming a Climate Change Task Force with a mandate to raise awareness and facilitate capacity building of members on climate change issues, and the Task Force has since developed a capacity building programme aimed at enabling lawyers to effectively engage with the climate change space, contribute to current and future legislative, regulatory and policy development; and to support and advise their clients in addressing their contribution to climate change. LAZ also published a climate change statement in 2024. Representatives noted that recent legislative developments in Zambia, including passing of the Green Economy and Climate Change Act 2024, have created an environment conducive to carrying out this work.
- **Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (EU):** A representative of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) highlighted recent efforts of their organisation including establishing an Environment and Climate Change Committee in 2022, and issuing an Initial Statement on Climate Change in 2023 which highlights the role of the legal profession in addressing the urgency of the climate crisis. They also noted that the CCBE publishes its carbon footprint, in recognition of the responsibility that lawyers should take for their own carbon impacts.
- **Law Society of Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland):** A representative of the Law Society of Northern Ireland (LSNI) highlighted the work of their organisation, which commenced with developing a sustainability strategy and assessing operational carbon emissions. The LSNI's more recent activities have included work to raise awareness within the profession of environmental challenges, with a focus on the themes of energy, air, water and soil. In 2025, the LSNI will convene its second annual conference on lawyers and climate matters; and the organisation supports a 'Climate Action Programme', aimed at educating businesses to take proactive steps towards climate action. The organisation also makes submissions to government reviews on environmental matters.
- **City of London Law Society (England):** A representative from the City of London Law Society (CLLS) highlighted the organisation's work in responding to consultations concerning proposed legislation, regulations and guidance relevant to the City of London. The CLLS's ESG Committee in particular seeks to do this in relation to ESG factors, including climate change. Through this work the CLLS believes it plays an important role in advocating for better and more effective regulation of the City's activities to enhance its efficacy. The CLLS ESG Committee also works to deliver the positive message that investing in developing lawyers with ESG, and climate and biodiversity expertise is a sensible commercial proposition for law firms: law firms have a responsibility to invest in ensuring that their lawyers have the skills to advise clients in relation to, for example, building renewable infrastructure and other elements required to develop a green economy.
- **Comhshaol (Ireland):** A representative from Comhshaol (Climate Bar Association of Ireland) noted that one of its objectives in the past year has been to bridge the communication gap between

lawyers and the general public, helping to combat incorrect perceptions that members of the public may have about the legal profession. They emphasised the role for lawyers in engaging in public debate and with the media, to raise awareness of the important role of law and science in addressing climate challenges.

- **Le Barreau du Québec (Québec):** A representative from Le Barreau du Québec highlighted that their organisation's climate journey originated with its members, who voted on a resolution asking the organisation for assistance with advising clients in relation to climate issues. This triggered the development of a policy built on three pillars: calculating the organisation's carbon footprint and taking actions to reduce that footprint; supporting members by providing them with tools and training; and engaging with media and politicians. This third pillar includes participating in dialogue in relation to climate legislation, and providing briefs to legislators and the media on this subject. The organisation has also developed a practical guide for law firms on eco-responsible practices, inspired by the Québec sustainable development standard for businesses.
- **Chilean Bar Association (Chile):** A representative from the Chilean Bar Association highlighted their efforts to be involved and study proposals during 2025 to support the implementation of Chile's Climate Change Framework Law (2022), which establishes the institutional framework for the development of policies and action plans to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- **Conseil national des barreaux (France):** In January 2024, the Conseil national des barreaux created a working group dedicated to environmental law as a follow-up to its climate policy adopted in January 2023. The working group has several objectives: to raise awareness among bar associations and lawyers of climate change issues and how to calculate their carbon footprint; to strengthen and adapt training for lawyers in environmental law; and to work with the public authorities to develop legislation to improve the apprehension of environmental damage. The working group is currently working on guidance dedicated to the role of French lawyers in the ecological transition, which will be finalised in the summer of 2025 and will bring together all the information needed to navigate the institutional and legal landscape of environmental law and to mobilise the relevant procedures.

## Challenges

Participants shared various challenges that their organisations or climate groups have faced when developing or implementing climate-related initiatives. A summary of these is set out below.

Challenge	Comments
<p><b>Resistance to climate initiatives</b></p>	<p>Several participants noted challenges with respect to gaining broad support for undertaking climate initiatives in their organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One representative considered that a key challenge for their organisation’s climate group is ideological, and that this has required the group to narrow the scope of its initiatives to appeal to a wide audience, and refrain from taking particular positions.</li> <li>• Similarly, a representative of a UK-based organisation stated that their organisation has received pushback against efforts to put new guidance in place in relation to the ethical dimension of climate change and lawyers’ responsibilities.</li> <li>• A representative from an organisation with multiple local branches highlighted challenges with respect to building support and consensus for a climate change resolution, finding differences of view in different regions of the jurisdiction. Members from the oil and gas sector were particularly vocal in opposing the resolution. Further, some members did not understand what climate-conscious lawyering means. Ultimately, the resolution did not pass. Politicisation of climate change in parts of the jurisdiction is also a challenge. The organisation has since pivoted to framing climate as a professional competency issue, and also as a human rights issue – given that the jurisdiction has a large population of Indigenous peoples, whose traditional ways of life are particularly vulnerable to climate impacts. The organisation is now focusing more on climate legal education in collaboration with civil society organisations, and is not pursuing a resolution for the time being. The representative noted the importance of knowledge sharing of success stories among other bar associations (such as at this roundtable), to help build imperative and urgency for further action.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Providing climate guidance as a regulator</b></p>	<p>A representative from an organisation that functions as both the national regulator and representative body of the legal profession in its jurisdiction noted that this dual role poses challenges with respect to developing guidance on climate change for practitioners: as a regulator, their organisation must be careful that any guidance it issues is not automatically interpreted as indicating that disciplinary consequences will flow from non-adherence to such guidance. The representative also observed that in future there will be a need for regulators to explain what is expected of lawyers under their professional duty of competency in the context of climate change (for example, where an individual complains to the organisation that their lawyer did not make them aware of climate risks or impacts associated with property transactions).</p>

Challenge	Comments
<b>Engaging with business lawyers and middle/senior lawyers</b>	A representative from an Asian organisation highlighted challenges relating to fragmentation of both expertise and interest in climate change among the organisation's members. In particular, the organisation's climate change group has faced challenges with engaging with business lawyer members of their organisation on climate change – including links between climate and human rights – in circumstances where, in their jurisdiction, corporations are not subject to strong climate regulation and few climate litigation lawsuits have been brought against businesses. The representative invited others to share any success stories they had from engaging with business (corporate) lawyers in their jurisdictions. This organisation also faced challenges with respect to garnering support for climate initiatives from senior leadership teams. A representative from an Asian jurisdiction faced challenges with respect to engaging with lawyers – particularly middle and senior level lawyers – on climate education in circumstances where the jurisdiction does not have compulsory continuing professional development requirements for lawyers.
<b>Limited operational knowledge</b>	A representative from a European organisation noted internal challenges regarding lack of methods to calculate its carbon footprint, or knowledge of how to improve environmental behaviour at an operational level.
<b>Pace of regulatory developments</b>	Representatives from organisations that have issued materials on climate change intersections with different areas of law noted challenges with respect to keeping these materials up-to-date in a rapidly changing legislative and regulatory environment. They also noted challenges associated with responding to consultations on climate-related legislation in short consultation time frames.
<b>Challenging legal environment</b>	A representative from a UK-based organisation highlighted deficiencies in national environmental laws and regulations, and compartmentalisation of government departments, which do not reflect the importance of a healthy and flourishing environment. For example, statutory nuisance laws are not well suited for managing environmental harms that cross local authority boundaries. Their organisation called for a cohesive approach to environmental governance, including clear rules and procedures for planning, investigation and enforcement.
<b>Conflict</b>	A representative highlighted that the critical blocker to their work has been armed conflict in their jurisdiction, which has caused significant environmental damage, including damage to renewable energy infrastructure.

## Areas for support and cooperation

Participants identified several needs for support from the IBA and opportunities for collaboration with other organisations across the world to assist their work going forward. These are summarised below.

Need	Comments
<b>Education and capacity building</b>	<p>The most common need identified among organisations was for climate legal education. Participants highlighted needs for access to educational resources; a specific course on climate change for lawyers; training on how climate impacts daily legal practice; training on how lawyers' competency obligations interact with climate change; training on broader environmental law issues; and specific training for lawyers on environmental law issues. Participants highlighted the need for basic training and awareness on how to take a climate-conscious approach for all jurisdictions, noting that the IBA as an international organisation is well placed to provide such training.</p> <p>A representative from a European organisation noted the need for judges to be trained on climate issues.</p>
<b>Collaboration</b>	<p>Participants called for collaboration to build expertise and awareness. A representative highlighted value in their organisation collaborating with other law societies around the world on capacity building, particularly those that are ahead in undertaking climate initiatives or any form of climate change capacity building even if it is by way of issuing guidance notes. They also suggested collaboration with educational institutions – such as the Environmental Law Institution, which is already delivering training on environmental and climate change issues for lawyers – and with other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the finance sector. One participant highlighted that the more organisations calling attention to the importance of addressing climate change, the more weight this issue has in the community.</p>
<b>Addressing operational emissions</b>	<p>Participants sought guidance and insights from other organisations on how they were addressing their Scope 1, 2 and 3 operational emissions to meet organisational 'net zero' targets – including with respect to emissions associated with buildings, international travel and other Scope 3 emissions.</p>
<b>Climate statements</b>	<p>One representative sought a specific invitation from the IBA to the organisation's senior leadership, encouraging them to adopt a climate change statement.</p>
<b>International support and networking</b>	<p>Participants sought increased international support in this area, including organisational membership of the IBA. They requested the IBA to connect lawyers who are working in the climate space, so that they can engage with each other not only on capacity-building training, but also on specific transactions, such as carbon market transactions. A representative from the IBA noted that carbon markets are a critical area where lawyers can play a role in helping both governments and the private sector understand how international and domestic carbon markets work, and that bar associations have an opportunity to improve technical knowledge in this field.</p>
<b>Advised emissions guidance</b>	<p>A participant raised the question of the role that lawyers should play in reducing their clients' emissions, and whether law firms should decline instructions if asked to advise on, for example, a new coal plant transaction. The representative observed the emergence of thought leadership pieces addressing advised emissions, and suggested that it would be helpful to have local, regional or global guidance to empower law firms to tell a client that, because of the firm's commitment to promoting climate friendly policies, the firm is unable to advise on a particular instruction (eg, a new coal plant transaction). It was observed that the more guidance bar associations deliver in this area that provides a rational basis for declining instructions, the more comfortable law firms will feel doing so.</p>

Need	Comments
<b>Effective regulatory tools</b>	A representative from an organisation which is supporting development of policies and action plans to implement national climate laws sought examples of different regulatory tools from other jurisdictions to assist these efforts.
<b>Further dialogues</b>	Participants emphasised the importance of sharing knowledge and experiences among organisations, and requested the IBA to consider hosting further roundtables, noting that the high levels of participation at the roundtable could attest to this need.

## Reflections and future directions

Participants shared a range of reflections to guide and inspire work going forward.

Theme	Comments
<b>Keeping urgency of the issue front of mind</b>	Participants from several jurisdictions, particularly climate-vulnerable jurisdictions across Africa and Asia, emphasised the severe impacts that climate change is having on their daily lives and their countries' economies. Representatives from bar associations in Pakistan highlighted extreme impacts across their country including rainfall scarcity, changing seasonal patterns, glacial melt and associated flooding, and whole changes in ecosystems and plant and animal life. Similarly, a representative of an African organisation noted that their country has been limited to seven hours of hydropower each day for months. These comments brought into stark relief the importance of all actors, including lawyers and bar associations, taking proactive steps to support climate change mitigation and adaptation.
<b>Importance of law and climate justice</b>	A participant highlighted that the law must play a very important role in safeguarding the climate from further destruction, and that it is critical that those involved in launching climate justice legal actions are supported to coordinate their efforts.
<b>Maintaining steadiness in the face of geopolitical challenges</b>	A participant emphasised that the legal community must find a way to support American colleagues working in the climate space in the wake of the US decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. In a similar vein, a participant highlighted that lawyers have a competency obligation to address climate change within their legal practices and that there is a need for education on this, regardless of what governments might be doing.
<b>Consulting with members</b>	Participants emphasised the importance of consulting with all members in developing climate initiatives. One representative noted that that lawyers in their membership had been open to changing their attitudes, and wanting to engage and adapt their practice when time is taken to sit down with people and explain how climate might affect their client base.
<b>Focusing on opportunities</b>	Participants emphasised the importance of highlighting to members the opportunities (not just the risks) linked to integrating climate considerations into legal practice – including enhancing business resilience – and for in-house counsel, helping their boards to stay ahead of the curve and prepare for future risks and opportunities. They highlighted that while the geopolitical environment is shifting (for example, there is pushback against ESG approaches in some jurisdictions), corporate sustainability reporting and governance are only going to grow in importance, and this presents an opportunity for lawyers.
<b>Optimism and personal responsibility</b>	A participant highlighted the need for all associations working in this space to maintain optimism, and not to lose sight of the importance of each lawyer taking individual responsibility for their impacts on the climate and the broader environment.



Theme	Comments
<p><b>Practical steps can be taken now</b></p>	<p>A representative from the IBA highlighted a range of possible actions that bar associations can take to address climate change now, depending on their roles as regulators and/or representative bodies, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• adoption of a resolution or statement on climate change by the senior governing body;</li> <li>• setting regulations or ethical rules engaging climate change issues (for example, professional conduct rules on competence could extend to building relevant knowledge of climate-related legal risks);</li> <li>• participating actively in legislative and policy dialogue with government and regulators, including by making submissions on draft legislation, drawing on expertise of members and working parties or committees;</li> <li>• providing information and/or training to members on climate change issues, and developing precedents, templates and other knowledge materials for members; and</li> <li>• demonstrating commitment to environmentally responsible behaviours in the management of the association's operations (for example, this could involve adoption of a 'net zero' commitment, with accompanying implementation pathway).</li> </ul>

## Conclusions and next steps at the IBA

The insightful contributions to the roundtable from bar association and law society representatives from around the globe demonstrated that addressing climate change at an operational level and through engagement with members is a priority for a large number of organisations across the IBA's membership and beyond, even in the face of geopolitical challenges.

In 2025, the IBA Bar Issues Commission, with support from the IBA Legal Policy & Research Unit, will prioritise a number of initiatives aimed at enhancing capacity of organisations and their member lawyers in this space, including:

- developing a publication on bar association and law society approaches to addressing the climate crisis;
- collaborating with other organisations to develop a strong and positive presence at the upcoming UNFCCC Bonn Climate Change Conference and COP30 in Brazil, including the potential for developing a joint statement on the role of lawyers and bar associations in advancing international climate action and sustainability efforts. Ideally this would be finalised by COP30;
- developing initiatives to support climate legal education across jurisdictions and collaboration and knowledge sharing among organisations; and
- undertaking a review and potential update of the IBA's 2020 Climate Crisis Statement in light of the significant regulatory and litigation developments, and increasing recognition of linkages between climate and biodiversity and human rights challenges, that have evolved in the five years since the statement was issued, as well as the significant actions taken by bar associations and law societies across the world in that period.

The IBA Bar Issues Commission and IBA Legal Policy & Research Unit are grateful for the valuable and candid insights shared by participants throughout the roundtable, and looking ahead, will explore further avenues for action based on the calls for support shared during discussions.

All organisations interested in being involved in the IBA's activities at COP30, including contributing to the development of a joint statement, are welcome to email [emily.morison@int-bar.org](mailto:emily.morison@int-bar.org).

In the meantime, this roundtable was intended to be the start (and, for many organisations, the continuation) of ongoing dialogue and cooperation on climate initiatives: organisations are encouraged to connect with each other to continue this dialogue, and to ensure that their climate initiatives are available to inspire others by contributing to the **IBA Climate Registry**.

# Annex 1: Resources

In preparation for, during and following the roundtables, participants shared a range of resources, including:

- Conseil national des barreaux, Droit de l'environnement webpage, available at: [www.cnb.avocat.fr/fr/droit-de-lenvironnement](http://www.cnb.avocat.fr/fr/droit-de-lenvironnement)
- De Gay, Sarah, 'Do England & Wales Qualified Solicitors Have a Legal Duty to Advise Their Clients on Climate-Related Risks?' (August 2022) available at: [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=4184766](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4184766)
- Dernbach, John C and Russell, Irma S and Bogoshian, Matthew, 'The Lawyer's Duty of Competence in a Climate-Imperiled World' (29 February 2024), University of Missouri-Kansas City Law Review, 92(4) 2023, Widener Law Commonwealth Research Paper No 24-02, available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4742669>
- DLA Piper, 'Net Zero Deep Dive' (2024), available at: [www.dlapiper.com/-/media/project/dlapiper-tenant/dlapiper/about-us/sustainability/sustainability-report-23-24/net-zero-deep-dive-2024.pdf](http://www.dlapiper.com/-/media/project/dlapiper-tenant/dlapiper/about-us/sustainability/sustainability-report-23-24/net-zero-deep-dive-2024.pdf)
- Hester, Tracy, 'Can Counselors Be Complicit?' (November–December 2024), 41(6), University of Houston Law Center, available at: [www.eli.org/the-environmental-forum/can-counselors-be-complicit](http://www.eli.org/the-environmental-forum/can-counselors-be-complicit)
- International Bar Association, 'Climate Crisis Statement' (2020) available at: [www.ibanet.org/document?id=822C1967-F851-4819-8200-2FE298164922](http://www.ibanet.org/document?id=822C1967-F851-4819-8200-2FE298164922)
- International Bar Association, Climate Registry webpage, available at: [www.ibanet.org/IBA-Climate-Registry](http://www.ibanet.org/IBA-Climate-Registry)
- International Bar Association, ESG Accelerator Training Programme webpage, available at: [www.ibanet.org/IBA-ESG-Accelerator-Training-Programme](http://www.ibanet.org/IBA-ESG-Accelerator-Training-Programme)
- Justice Philip Jeyaretnam, keynote address delivered at the 'Courts in The Climate Crisis: Accountability and Action Conference' (October 2024), available at: [www.judiciary.gov.sg/news-and-resources/news/news-details/justice-philip-jeyaretnam-keynote-address-delivered-at-the-courts-in-the-climate-crisis-accountability-and-action-conference](http://www.judiciary.gov.sg/news-and-resources/news/news-details/justice-philip-jeyaretnam-keynote-address-delivered-at-the-courts-in-the-climate-crisis-accountability-and-action-conference)
- Justice Philip Jeyaretnam, 'Advancing the Environmental Rule of Law – Roles and Responsibilities of the Community' opening address delivered at Conversations with the Community (July 2024), available at: [www.judiciary.gov.sg/news-and-resources/news/news-details/justice-philip-jeyaretnam-speech-delivered-at-conversations-with-the-community-on-26-july-2024](http://www.judiciary.gov.sg/news-and-resources/news/news-details/justice-philip-jeyaretnam-speech-delivered-at-conversations-with-the-community-on-26-july-2024)
- Kaminski, Isabella, 'Brazilian court world's first to recognise Paris Agreement as human rights treaty' (7 July 2022). Climate Home News, available at: [www.climatechangenews.com/2022/07/07/brazilian-court-worlds-first-to-recognise-paris-agreement-as-human-rights-treaty/](http://www.climatechangenews.com/2022/07/07/brazilian-court-worlds-first-to-recognise-paris-agreement-as-human-rights-treaty/)

- McGivern, Alexis and Rajan, Ranjita, *Catalysing Climate Action: The Role of Professional Service Providers in Realizing a Net-Zero Future* (23 September 2025). University of Oxford, available at: <https://netzeroclimate.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/The-role-of-professional-service-providers-in-realizing-a-net-zero-future.pdf>
- Net Zero Alliance for Lawyers, 'Framework for Net Zero Alignment for Commercial Law Firms' (May 2024), available at: [https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/65bb9ebee081d228a8003b56/664de3384e8c9dd19c7cc9a7\\_Framework%20for%20Net%20Zero%20Alignment.pdf](https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/65bb9ebee081d228a8003b56/664de3384e8c9dd19c7cc9a7_Framework%20for%20Net%20Zero%20Alignment.pdf)
- Law Council of Australia, 'Climate Change Policy Statement' (2021), available at: <https://lnkd.in/g2wXnTuy>
- Legal Charter 1.5 webpage, available at: <https://legalcharter1point5.com/>
- Liao, Carol, 'Lawyers in a Warming World' (2 July 2024). McGill SGI Research Papers in Business, Finance, Law and Society Research Paper No 2024-18, *Alberta Law Review* (2024), available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4883547> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4883547>
- Omiunu, Ebaide, 'Is the Nigerian Bar Association Ready to Take the Lead? Promoting Sustainability in Nigeria: The Role of the NBA' (12 February 2025). *Sustained Solutions*, available at: <https://sustainedsolutions.com/is-the-nigerian-bar-association-ready-to-take-the-lead-promoting-sustainability-in-nigeria-the-role-of-the-nba/>
- Oxygen House, 'White Paper L1: Measuring "Advised Emissions" A Framework for Assessing the Carbon Footprint of a Law Firm's Advice' (September 2023), available at: <https://legalsustainabilityalliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Measuring-Advised-Emissions-final-200923.pdf>
- Preston, Brian, 'Climate Conscious Lawyering' (24 October 2021), *95 Australian Law Journal* 51, available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3949080>
- *PSB et al v Brazil (on Climate Fund)* available at: <https://climatecasechart.com/non-us-case/psb-et-al-v-federal-union/>
- Québec Bar Association, *Guide des meilleures pratiques écoresponsables pour les services juridiques* (2024), available at: [www.barreau.qc.ca/media/rmjpwxc2/guide-meilleures-pratiques-ecoresponsables-services-juridiques.pdf](http://www.barreau.qc.ca/media/rmjpwxc2/guide-meilleures-pratiques-ecoresponsables-services-juridiques.pdf)
- Taipei Bar Association, *Declaration by the Taipei Bar Association on the Global Climate Crisis* (2020), available at: [www.tba.org.tw/announcement?id=65fa9c9be9f1e5cf47f5aa28](http://www.tba.org.tw/announcement?id=65fa9c9be9f1e5cf47f5aa28)
- Law and Climate Atlas webpage, available at: <https://lawclimateatlas.org/>
- Law Society of New South Wales, 'Climate Change Practitioner Guidance' (2024), available at: [www.lawsociety.com.au/legal-implications-climate-change/practitioner-guidance](http://www.lawsociety.com.au/legal-implications-climate-change/practitioner-guidance)
- United Nations Climate Change, *High-Level Champions* webpage, available at: [www.climatechampions.net/](http://www.climatechampions.net/)

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## Annex 2: Attendee organisations

- American Bar Association
- Azerbaijani Bar Association
- Bar Association of the Kingdom of Cambodia
- Bar Association of the Republic of Srpska
- Bar Council of England and Wales
- Brazilian Bar Association
- Buenos Aires City Bar Association
- Canadian Bar Association
- Chilean Bar Association
- City of London Law Society
- Comhshaol (Climate Bar Association) at the Bar of Ireland
- Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe
- Conseil national des barreaux
- Danish Bar & Law Society
- Danish Bar Association
- Finnish Bar Association
- International Bar Association
- Islamabad High Court Bar Association
- Japan Federation of Bar Associations
- Lahore High Court Bar Association
- Law Association of Zambia
- Law Council of Australia
- Law Society of England & Wales
- Law Society of New Brunswick
- Law Society of New South Wales
- Law Society of Northern Ireland
- Law Society of Scotland
- Law Society of Singapore
- Law Society of Zimbabwe
- Le Barreau du Québec
- Madrid Bar Association
- National Environmental Law Association
- New York City Bar Association
- New Zealand Law Society
- Nigerian Bar Association
- Order of the Flemish Bars
- Pakistan Bar Council
- Peshawar High Court Bar Association
- Sindh High Court Bar Association
- Swedish Bar Association
- Taipei Bar Association
- Taiwan Bar Association
- Ukrainian Bar Association
- United Kingdom Environmental Law Association
- Victorian Bar



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