



The Law Society
of England and Wales



59th Session of the UN Human Rights Council

Item 4 – Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on human rights in the context of climate change

Joint oral statement

30 June 2025

Mr. President,

Lawyers for Lawyers, the Law Society for England and Wales, Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada and the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, thank the Special Rapporteur for her continued efforts to place human rights at the heart of a just transition.

We welcome her emphasis on criminalisation of environmental human rights defenders. These include environmental lawyers, who play a vital role in advancing 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 simply for performing their legitimate duties. We recently documented widespread interference with their work –from physical attacks and arbitrary prosecutions to surveillance and stigmatisation.¹ They are often labelled 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 human rights and global sustainability, including the realisation of the SDGs.

We urge States to fulfil their obligations to ensure independence and protection for environmental lawyers so that they can work safely, without fear or pressure. We also call on UN bodies and professional associations of lawyers to recognise and support their indispensable role in advancing climate justice.

Thank you.

This statement was delivered by:

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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>.