

JUDGES DAY

a Major Parallel Event of the 17th UN Biodiversity Conference

09:00–17:30
Yerevan time

COP17 Blue Zone, Meridian Expo
and Event Center, Yerevan, Armenia

29 October 2026
Thursday



Global Judicial Institute
on the Environment
Institut Judiciaire Mondial
de l'Environnement
Instituto Judicial Mundial
del Ambiente



Convention on
Biological Diversity



Judges Day, a Major Parallel Event of the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 17)

Thursday, 29 October 2026 | 09:00–17:30, Yerevan Time

**Dilijan Room (Contact Group 5), COP17 Blue Zone,
Meridian Expo and Event Center, Yerevan, Armenia**

Co-organized by the Global Judicial Institute on the Environment, United Nations Environment Programme, IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law and Asian Development Bank, with support from the CBD Secretariat and Brazil

Judges Day is one of the major parallel events that will be held during the Seventeenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP17). It will be comprised of **two complementary events**: (1) **Launch of the Model Framework Forest Act – From Global Partnership to the Legal Protection of Forests**; and (2) **Judicial Dialogue on Nature: The Role of the Courts in Biodiversity, Climate, Water and Forest Protection**.

CBD COP17 marks the first global review of progress under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), providing an important opportunity to assess whether international commitments and national biodiversity targets are being translated into measurable actions and outcomes. Effective implementation of the KMGBF requires more than policy commitments. It depends on sustained collaboration among legislatures, executive agencies, regulators, courts, communities, and other stakeholders, as well as integrated responses to the interconnected challenges of biodiversity loss, deforestation, climate change, water insecurity, land degradation and pollution.

By linking biodiversity legal frameworks and justice institutions, Judges Day offers the wider CBD COP17 community a unique platform to examine how global biodiversity commitments can be embedded in domestic legal frameworks, implemented by capable and accountable institutions, and enforced through the rule of law. In doing so, it helps bridge the gap between international commitments and practical implementation on the ground.



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Judges Day brings together strong legal frameworks and courts as two parts of a single environmental-rule-of-law continuum:

- The **first event of the Judges Day** is the ***Launch of the Model Framework Forest Act – From Global Partnership to the Legal Protection of Forests*** which focuses on the legislative architecture needed to protect forests and biodiversity. It presents a modern, coherent and adaptable framework that countries may draw upon when designing or enhancing national and subnational forest laws. By linking forest governance with biodiversity, climate resilience, ecosystem services, rights, institutions, incentives, implementation and enforcement, the Model Framework Forest Act seeks to support domestic legal frameworks capable of advancing the KMGBF in diverse national contexts.
- The **second event of the Judges Day** is the ***Judicial Dialogue on Nature: The Role of the Courts in Biodiversity, Climate, Water and Forest Protection*** which turns to the role of courts in interpreting and applying environmental law, enforcing legal obligations and devising remedies in cases properly brought before them. It provides a forum for comparative judicial exchange on biodiversity, forests, climate, water, pollution and land, bringing together judges from numerous jurisdictions.

Judges Day Objectives

- support the translation of global biodiversity commitments into effective, coherent and adaptable domestic legal frameworks;
- strengthen understanding of implementation, compliance, enforcement and remedies under environmental law;
- promote coherence across biodiversity, forests, climate, water, pollution and land governance;
- facilitate the exchange of comparative experience, good practices and transferable lessons; and
- connect the modernization of environmental legislation with its effective interpretation and application by competent institutions, including the courts.

Audience

COP17 participants, including government delegates, policymakers, judges and other justice-sector actors, international and regional organizations, civil society and non-governmental representatives, Indigenous Peoples, academia and others.

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JUDGES DAY - EVENT 1

Launch of the Model Framework Forest Act – From Global Partnership to the Legal Protection of Forests

Thursday, 29 October 2026 | 09:00–13:00, Yerevan Time

Dilijan Room (Contact Group 5), COP17 Blue Zone,
Meridian Expo and Event Center, Yerevan

Description

Forests are among the world's most valuable natural assets, underpinning biodiversity, climate resilience, sustainable development, and human well-being. Covering nearly one-third of the Earth's land surface and supporting the vast majority of terrestrial species, forest ecosystems provide essential services that sustain livelihoods, regulate climate, conserve biodiversity, and strengthen ecosystem resilience.

The Model Forest Act Initiative (MoFAI) is a collaborative initiative to support the modernization of national forest laws in response to 21st challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss and the transition to a circular bioeconomy. MoFAI has developed the **Model Framework Forest Act** and is preparing an **accompanying Legislative Guide** as knowledge resources for legislators and policymakers in designing or revising national and subnational forest legal frameworks. MoFAI provides a systematic way to deliver expertise, efficiency and scale required to match the severity of the global forest crisis.

The event will launch the latest draft of the Model Framework Forest Act and the Executive Summary of the Legislative Guide. It will introduce the Act's structure, rationale and principal elements; examine how it can support implementation of the KMGBF; and explore practical pathways for adapting its provisions to different legal systems, institutional settings and national priorities.

The Model Framework Forest Act is designed as a framework law and legal blueprint rather than a prescriptive template. Its modular “shopping cart” approach enables jurisdictions to select and adapt provisions according to their legal traditions, policy priorities, ecological circumstances and implementation capacities.

The Model Framework Forest Act and legislative guide are being developed by a high-level drafting committee comprised of global experts from the legal, policy and scientific disciplines, informed by consultations with diverse stakeholders from around the globe, as well as an Advisory Council providing technical inputs on specific aspects of the text. Since the launch of the initiative in July 2023, consultations have taken place in Nepal, Philippines, Indonesia, Rome, New York, Tokyo, and the Amazon region.

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MoFAI is supported by a global alliance of partners to advance a global public good vital in safeguarding biodiversity, regulating and adapting to climate change, leveraging ecosystem services, and providing livelihoods and human well-being. The key partners include the Global Judicial Institute on the Environment (GJIE), Asian Development Bank (ADB), IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law (IUCN WCEL), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UN Forum on Forests (UNFF), Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO), the World Bank Group, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Objectives

- **Launch the Model Framework Forest Act and the Executive Summary of the Legislative Guide** as integrated knowledge resources for forest law modernization.
- **Present MoFAI's approach** to developing a structured, interdisciplinary, multi-stakeholder and adaptable model legal framework based on a “shopping cart” approach.
- **Highlight the relationship between forests and biodiversity**, including the contribution of modern forest law to implementation of the KMGBF.
- **Convene global and regional leaders, policymakers and legislatures and international organizations** to discuss dissemination, adaptation and practical implementation of the Model Framework Forest Act.

A Major Parallel Event of the 17th UN Biodiversity Conference (CBD COP17)

JUDGES DAY - EVENT 1

Launch of the Model Framework Forest Act – From Global Partnership to the Legal Protection of Forests

Thursday, 29 October 2026 | 09:00–13:00, Yerevan Time
Dilijan Room (Contact Group 5), COP17 Blue Zone,
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Time	Session	Description
9:00 - 09:15	Welcome Remarks	Moderator: Olivier Rukundo, CBD Secretariat (tbc) Speakers: • Hon. Justice Antonio Herman Benjamin, National High Court of Brazil, MoFAI Chair and President of the Global Judicial Institute on the Environment

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		• Hambardzum Matevosyan, COP17 President and Minister of Environment, Armenia (tbc) • Grethel Aguilar, Director-General, International Union for Conservation of Nature • High-Level Representative, Asian Development Bank
9:15 – 9:30	Keynote Speech: The Role of Forests in Addressing the Triple Planetary Crisis	Forests are among our most powerful natural allies in tackling the triple planetary crisis. This keynote will highlight their critical role in delivering integrated solutions for climate, nature, and sustainable development, and the urgent action needed to safeguard them for future generations. • Inger Andersen, Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme
9:30 – 10:30	Launch of the Model Framework Forest Act: A Panorama of the Structure and Content	This session will officially launch the latest draft of the Model Framework Forest Act and the Executive Summary of the Legislative Guide. It will introduce the structure and key components of the Act, explain its underlying rationale and intended impact and highlight how it can support countries in strengthening forest governance and sustainable forest management. The session will also provide an overview of the collaborative partnership and consultative process that guided its development, underscoring the broad expertise and engagement that informed this landmark initiative. Moderator: Juliana Almeida, Special Assistant, Law Division, United Nations Environment Programme Speakers: • Hon. Justice Antonio Herman Benjamin, National High Court of Brazil, MoFAI Chair and President of the Global Judicial Institute on the Environment • Christina Pak, Head of MoFAI Secretariat and Assistant General Counsel (Law and Policy Reform), Asian Development Bank • Nick Bryner, MoFAI Rapporteur and Professor of Environmental Law at Louisiana State University • Ewald Endres, MoFAI Drafting Committee Member and Professor of Forest Law and Forest Policy, University of Applied Sciences Weihenstephan-Triesdorf

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		Alex Hinrichs, MoFAI Drafting Committee Member and Forest Governance Advisor, Global Partnerships Unit, European Forest Institute Q&A
10:30 – 11:00	<i>Break</i>	
11:00 – 12:15	Avenues for the Implementation of the Model Framework Forest Act	This session will discuss pathways to support the uptake and implementation of the Model Framework Forest Act at national and subnational levels. It will start with a fireside chat among ministers of environment responsible for shaping policy, to be followed by panel discussion with international organizations and other stakeholders. Moderator: Patricia Kameri-Mbote, Director, Law Division, UNEP <i>Fireside Chat Among Ministers of Environment</i> H.E. Mr. Joao Paulo Ribeiro Capobianco, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Brazil (tbc) H.E. Ms. Zanetor Agyeman-Rawlings, Minister of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, Ghana (tbc) H.E. Mr. Sophalleth Eang, Minister of Environment, Cambodia (tbc) Discussants: Andy Raine, Executive Secretary, Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals Midori Paxton, Head of Ecosystems and Biodiversity, United Nations Development Programme Juliette Biao, Director, UN Forum of Forests (tbc) Giovanni Reyes, Philippine ICCA Consortium (tbc)
12:15 – 12:30	Keynote Speech: Forests and the Global Biodiversity Framework	This keynote address will examine the central role of forests in achieving the goals and targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Astrid Schomaker, Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity (tbc)

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12:30 – 13:00	Open Discussion and Next Steps	
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch to be provided by organizers	

JUDGES DAY - EVENT 2

Judicial Dialogue on Nature: The Role of the Courts in Biodiversity, Climate, Water and Forest Protection

Thursday, 29 October 2026 | 14:00–17:30, Yerevan Time
Dilijan Room (Contact Group 5), COP17 Blue Zone,
Meridian Expo and Event Center, Yerevan

Description

The Judicial Dialogue on Nature will provide a high-level forum for judges, policymakers and experts to exchange perspectives on the role of courts in protecting biodiversity and ecosystems, strengthening the environmental rule of law, and supporting effective implementation and enforcement of environmental laws. The dialogue will address the interconnected challenges of biodiversity loss, pollution and climate-related ecosystem stress, including their implications for forests, water resources and land.

Objectives

- **Exchanging insights and building awareness on the environmental rule of law:** based on the historical evolution and recent developments in environmental governance, the participants in this dialogue will discuss the rising role of courts and judges in strengthening ecosystem protection and the importance of application of the environmental rule of law.
- **Exploring legal perspectives on biodiversity protection:** the event will illuminate intersections among biodiversity, water, pollution, and forests, and explore the role of legal frameworks and the need for effective implementation, compliance, and enforcement in addressing these interconnected issues in a coherent and consolidated way.
- **Exchanging good practices and identifying transferable lessons:** experts, policymakers and judges will draw upon recent trends and developments in environmental law and governance, including through rights-based approaches, to explore how to



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translate them into domestic settings, and share good practices, transferable lessons, and common challenges in adjudicating disputes related to biodiversity.

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Judicial Dialogue on Nature: The Role of the Courts in Biodiversity, Climate, Water and Forest Protection		
Thursday, 29 October 2026 14:00–17:30, Yerevan Time Dilijan Room (Contact Group 5), COP17 Blue Zone, Meridian Expo and Event Center, Yerevan		
Time	Session	Description
14:00 – 14:15	Opening: The Role of Courts in Strengthening the Environmental Rule of Law in Principle and Practice	Moderator: Olivier Rukundo, CBD Secretariat (tbc) This opening session will situate the dialogue within CBD COP17 and frame the role of courts in responding to the interconnected challenges of biodiversity loss, pollution, and climate-related ecosystem stress, while strengthening the environmental rule of law and implementation. • Hon. Justice Antonio Herman Benjamin, National High Court of Brazil and President of the Global Judicial Institute on the Environment • Patricia Kameri-Mbote, Director, Law Division, United Nations Environment Programme • Srbuhi Galyan, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Armenia • High-Level Representative, Asian Development Bank
14:15 – 14:30	Role of the Judiciary in the Implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework	This keynote speech will explore the role of the courts in translating biodiversity-related international commitments into domestic legal settings. • Astrid Schomaker, Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity (tbc)
14:30 - 15:30	Panel I – Judicial Perspectives and Approaches to Nature Protection	This panel will examine how courts define, apply and enforce legal protection for biodiversity, species, habitats, and protected areas. It will focus on judicial reasoning in cases involving nature conservation,

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		competing land uses, and ecosystem restoration, as well as their intersections with social inclusion and women's empowerment. Chair: Hon. Justice Antonio Herman Benjamin, National High Court of Brazil and President of the Global Judicial Institute on the Environment Panelists: • Professor Dr. Luc Lavrysen, Former President of Constitutional Court of Belgium and professor emeritus at Ghent University • Hon. Justice Sapana Malla, Supreme Court of Nepal • Hon. Justice Karen Zariqyan, Head of the Administrative Court of Armenia • Hon. Deputy Chief Justice Ambeng Kandakasi, Supreme and National Courts of Papua New Guinea • Hon. Justice Nongmeikapam Kotiswar Singh, Supreme Court of India • Hon. Justice Anne Omollo, Environment and Land Court, Kenya
15:30 – 16:00	<i>Break</i>	
16:00 – 17:00	Panel II – Surveying the Judicial Lifecycle: From Interpretation of Environmental Principles to the Implementation of Protection Practices and Enforcement of Rulings	This panel discussion will examine the role of key environmental principles in judicial decision-making, how courts respond when environmental regulation is contested, how to bridge the formulation of commitments with their practical implementation, and pathways to improving monitoring, compliance and enforcement. Chair: Professor Dr. Luc Lavrysen, Former President of Constitutional Court of Belgium and professor emeritus at Ghent University Panelists: • Anna Vardapetyan, Prosecutor General, Republic of Armenia • Hon. Justice Prakash Shrivastava, Chairperson, National Green Tribunal of India • Hon. Justice Kari Kuusiniemi, President, Supreme Administrative Court of Finland and President of European Forum of Judges for the Environment



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		• Hon. Justice Brian Preston, Land and Environment Court of New South Wales, Australia • Hon. Judge Eufrazina Paiva, Supreme Council of the Judiciary of Angola • Hon. Judge Bambang Mulyono, Chief Judge of The High Court of Medan, North Sumatera, Indonesia
17:00 – 17:15	Keynote Speech: Forward-looking Outlook on Biodiversity Law and Governance	This keynote speech will share insights on future pathways in the application of biodiversity frameworks through environmental rule of law and governance pathways. It will highlight emerging opportunities to strengthen biodiversity outcomes through innovative approaches. • Inger Andersen, Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme
17:15 – 17:30	Closing Remarks	• Hon. Justice Antonio Herman Benjamin, National High Court of Brazil and President of the Global Judicial Institute on the Environment • Tigran Dadunts, Deputy Minister of Justice, Republic of Armenia