


HRC60 Side Event

PROTECTING ENVIRONMENTAL LAWYERS ADVANCING CLIMATE JUSTICE

"Guarding Gaia"
Documentary preview 

Environmental lawyers play an indispensable role in defending the rule of law and advancing climate justice. Join us to discuss the growing risks they face and explore solutions to strengthen their protection.



22 September 2025
2:00 pm - 3:00 pm (CEST)



Room VII
Palais des Nations

Keynotes

Michel Forst
Special Rapporteur on
Environmental Defenders
under the Aarhus Convention

Astrid Puentes Riaño
UN Special Rapporteur on
the Human Right to a
Healthy Environment

Speakers

- **Cătălina Rădulescu**, Environmental lawyer from Romania
- **Maureen Harris**, Senior Advisor, International Rivers
- **Sandra Epal Ratjen**, International Commission of Jurists
- **Xenia Rivkin**, Geneva Bar Association

Concluding remarks by Francesca Restifo, International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute

Moderated by Tara Fiechter, Lawyers for Lawyers

 International Service
for Human Rights

**LAWYERS
FOR
LAWYERS**

 **CIEL**
CENTER for INTERNATIONAL
ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

 **icj** International
Commission
of Jurists

 INTERNATIONAL
BAR ASSOCIATION
Human Rights
Institute

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada
NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

130 ans  **Ordre des Avocats
Genève**

 **Franciscans International**
A voice at the United Nations

Event description

By providing legal representation, bringing litigation, and ensuring accountability for climate-related abuses, **environmental lawyers** play a key role in advancing climate justice and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Yet across regions, these lawyers increasingly face serious threats: criminalisation, surveillance, restrictions to clients and information, harassment, and physical attacks - **as documented in Lawyers for Lawyers' June 2025 report**. Such targeting not only undermines their independence and security but also limits access to environmental justice and hampers efforts to ensure an equitable and sustainable future for all.

This event aims to raise awareness of the indispensable work of environmental lawyers and the growing risks they face, while fostering dialogue on concrete responses. It will bring together States, UN mandates, and civil society actors to explore how to strengthen protections for environmental lawyers, reinforce legal and institutional safeguards, and support inclusive, rights-based approaches to enhance environmental justice, in line with the **2030 Sustainable Development Agenda** and amid global rule of law backsliding.



"Access to Environmental Justice Under Threat: the Role, Risks, and Rights of Environmental Lawyers" (June 2025) by Lawyers for Lawyers

Download
the report



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