

Climate Highlights of the Year

International courts delineated the contours of States' climate obligations

The year 2025 was marked by a number of important climate-related judicial proceedings. Of particular note are the advisory opinions of the International Court of Justice and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.*

Like the [European Court of Human Rights](#) and the [International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea](#) a year earlier, these courts confirmed that States' discretion in setting national climate targets is not unlimited.

① [See the ICLRC's overview \(in Russian\)](#)

At the same time, the courts sought to identify objective criteria that States must consider, including their emission levels and economic capabilities, as well as the global temperature goal.

① [The article by ICLRC's authors on this topic in the Climate Bulletin \(in Russian\)](#)

In May, a similar request for an advisory opinion was submitted to the [African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights](#), which may deliver its opinion as early as next year.

Overall, 2025 saw a sustained interest in climate litigation. According to a [UNEP thematic report](#), as of the end of June there were 3,099 climate-related cases worldwide, across 55 countries and 24 international or regional judicial or quasi-judicial bodies. Many see the shaping of national and international climate policy through court decisions as a promising way to address the climate crisis.

*Such opinions are delivered without reference to a specific inter-State dispute and are not legally binding.

COP30 – the main climate conference of the year with a focus on adaptation

The outcomes of the thirtieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change ([COP30](#)) in Belém demonstrated a shift in the focus of the international climate agenda towards adaptation. Indicators for the Global Goal on Adaptation were adopted, and new benchmarks for adaptation finance were set.

[All COP30 decisions](#) | [Outcomes of the COP30 Global Climate Action Agenda](#)

① [The ICLRC's overview of COP30 outcomes](#)

The Belém Climate Summit launched the first dialogues on trade together with the WTO, UNCTAD, and the International Trade Centre (ITC) of UNCTAD/ WTO for 2026 and 2027. In addition, a two-year work programme was established to discuss the mobilization of climate finance, including in the context of developed countries' financial commitments.

① [An overview of the UNFCCC climate finance architecture in the ICLRC's note](#)

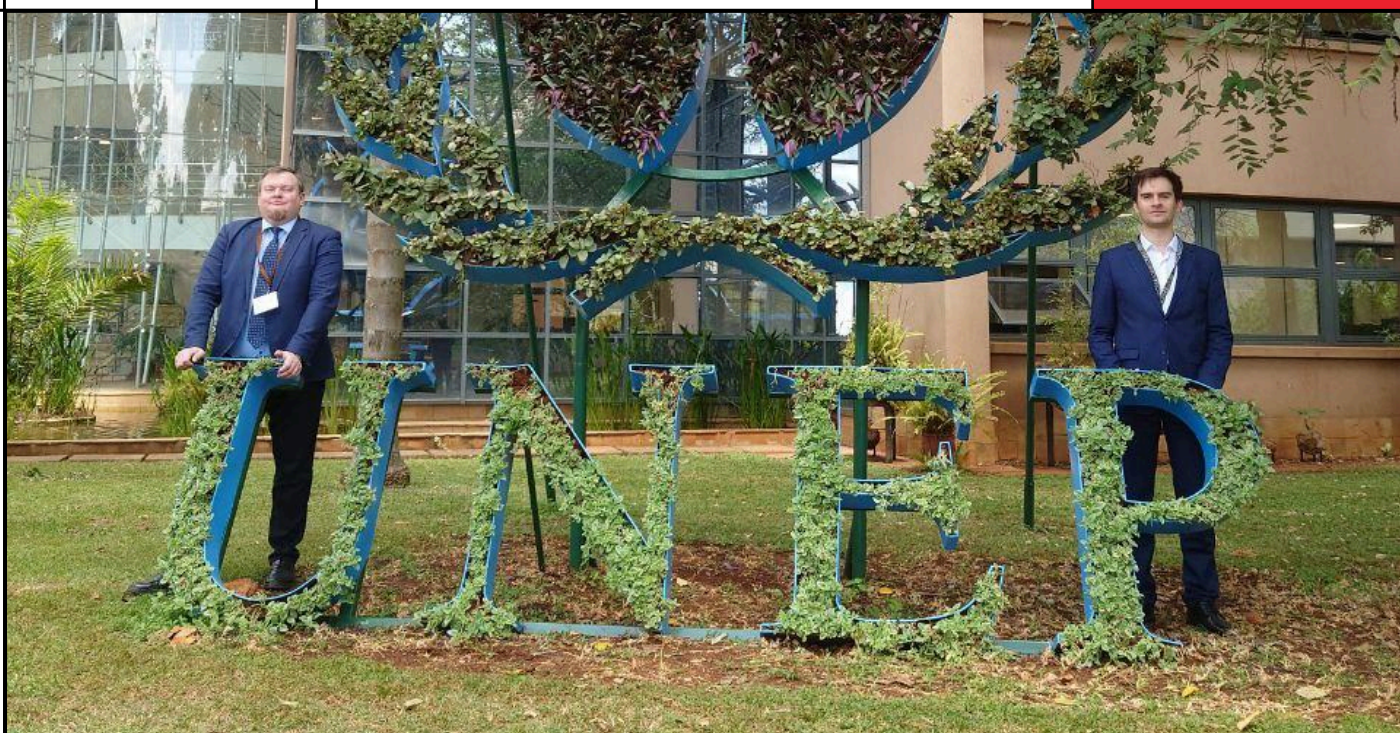


BRICS: climate finance and AI high on the agenda

Within BRICS, in 2025 the [Leaders' Framework Declaration on Climate Finance](#) was adopted. Particular attention in the Declaration is given to the role of the BRICS New Development Bank, which has committed to allocate 40% of its financing to climate projects by 2026. The Declaration also highlights the importance of transition finance to facilitate the decarbonization of high-emitting industries. Work on the roadmap for developing transition finance in BRICS will continue in 2026.

① [More on transition finance in the ICLRC's research paper](#)

The regulation of artificial intelligence was another priority for the group in 2025. The Rio de Janeiro Summit resulted in the adoption of the [Declaration on Global Governance of Artificial Intelligence](#), which underscores the importance of an inclusive approach to global AI governance and of removing technological barriers for countries of the Global South. The topic will remain high on the agenda under [India's BRICS presidency in 2026](#).



UNEA-7 – the main platform for multilateral environmental diplomacy

The outcomes of the seventh session of the United Nations Environment Assembly ([UNEA-7](#)) included, for the first time at the global level, [recognition](#) of the need to minimize the environmental footprint of AI systems and to make full use of their potential for environmental protection. The UNEP Executive Director was requested to prepare a thematic report on this issue.

UNEA-7 also [provided](#) for the launch of intergovernmental dialogues on cooperation in the environmentally sound management of minerals and metals, including “critical” minerals and metals needed for the energy transition.

The Assembly [noted](#) the lack of progress in the sound management of chemicals and waste and stressed the need to step up efforts in this area. One significant development was the establishment of the [Intergovernmental Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution](#) – analogous to the IPCC and IPBES – whose first session will take place in February next year in Geneva (Switzerland).

In addition, the seventh edition of the [Global Environment Outlook](#) – a comprehensive global environmental assessment – was presented.

① [More on UNEA-7 outcomes in the ICLRC's overview](#)

Biodiversity in focus

The 2025 meetings under the Convention on Biological Diversity [resulted](#) in the adoption of a plan for the first global review of progress in the implementation of the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, scheduled for publication in October 2026.

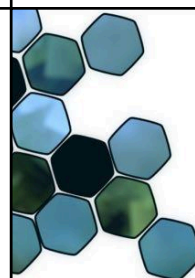
① [The ICLRC's commentary on the Global Biodiversity Framework](#)

This report will provide the first global assessment of States' progress towards national measures to implement the Framework.

① [More on the organization of work under the CBD in the ICLRC's note](#)

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Russia presented a [draft Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity up to 2036](#). Work on the roadmap for the Strategy is planned for 2026. The Strategy considers Russia's international commitments under the CBD and aims to establish a representative system of protected areas, conserve rare species, develop State environmental monitoring and strengthen the legal framework on biodiversity.

① [International legal instruments and international and national case studies are available in ICLRC's Biodiversity Legal Database](#)



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On course for decarbonizing international transport

In 2025, a number of important developments took place in the international aviation and maritime transport decarbonization. The [42nd Assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organization](#) formally adopted the Strategic Plan for 2026–2050 and confirmed the goal of achieving net-zero emissions in the sector by 2050. The year 2026 will be the final year of the voluntary phase of CORSIA; after it ends, air carriers whose emissions from international flights exceed 10,000 tonnes will be required to monitor their fuel consumption and report their CO₂ emissions.

In 2025, the International Maritime Organization approved the [IMO Net-Zero Framework](#), a programme to achieve net-zero emissions in international shipping by 2050. However, due to the lack of consensus, its formal adoption is not expected before October 2026. Failure to comply with the new rules once they enter into force will entail penalties for shipping companies and may result in ships being denied entry into or departure from ports.



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