Enabling Climate Justice: Proposal for a United Nations Climate Justice Chamber

Contribution of the Permanent Latin America Committee for Crime Prevention (COPLAD) to the 15th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

From 26th September to 1st October 2026

CG 177 - 2026 COPLAD

PERMANENT LATIN AMERICA COMMITTEE FOR CRIME PREVENTION - COPLAD

General Coordination

Abu Dhabi - United Arab Emirates

March 1st , 2026.

To: Mr. Jo Dedeyne-Amann

Secretary of the 15th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, from 26 September to 1 October 2026

Email: unodc-sgb@un.org

Reference:

Proposal for the Creation of the Climate Justice Chamber of the International Court of Justice of the United Nations.

Support for the Proposal:

Written Statement:

Under the Rules of the 15th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, Session **V** - Submission of Papers, Paragraph **61,** Page **9**.

Link with the Agenda:

Under the Rules of the 15th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Session **VII**, Paragraph **29 (a),** Page **5** on Advancing innovative and evidence - based crime prevention strategies towarsds social, economic and environmental development.

STATEMENT OF REASONS

Dear Mr. Jo Dedeyne-Amann:

With our sincere regards, we hope all is very well with you.

We kindly request your attention to the proposal that the Permanent Latin America Committee for Crime Prevention – COPLAD is submitting to the Leadership and Participants

of the 15th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

The present proposal highlights the opportunity to establish **the Climate Justice Chamber of the International Court of Justice of the United Nations.**

The initial idea was transformed into a concrete recommendation in perfect harmony with the principles of the United Nations Climate Summit, in the sense of overcoming difficulties and challenges, opening up spaces towards the engagement of efforts and multilateral cooperation in society, feeding the benefit of environmental protection and appropriate management in ecosystems, following the *Resolution A/Res 68/309 - The Future We Want* adopted on September 10, 2014 by the General Assembly of the United Nations, this being the Resolution that paved the way for the 17 Sustainable Development Goals - Agenda 2030 of the United Nations.

Indeed, we are living in a scenario of climate emergency which has fueled the increase in poverty, the proliferation of diseases, risks, crises, disasters, calamities and productivity losses. Hence the purpose of giving greater importance regarding the Rights of Nature and their complementary with the Human Rights and the Humanitarian Law, improving the flow of public and private strategies on the map of good initiatives related to the sensitive biodiversity in a world reshaped by climate disruption.

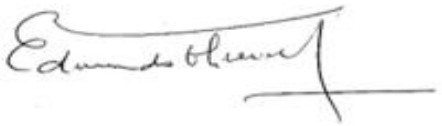
In this context, the **Climate Justice Chamber of the International Court of Justice of the United Nations** will provide substance through appropriate responses and diagnoses to models of governance in frames of catalyze collective actions that are essential for a future with environmental well-being on our planet, from generation to generation, as inserted in the *Resolution A - Res 77 - 169 - Harmony With Nature* adopted on December 14, 2022 by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

We also suggest that the **Climate Justice Chamber of the International Court of Justice of the United Nations** include a Judge representing the Amazonia in its composition. Without the Amazonia Rainforest we will lose the fight against climate extremes. The Amazonia Region is the lungs of our planet.

The Permanent Latin America Committee for Crime Prevention (COPLAD) is always willing to cooperate with the United Nations to broaden horizons, through guidelines, in favor of constructing a better tomorrow for humanity in global geopolitics, advancing peace, justice, security, dignity and equality, in a globalized word that needs present and active institutions, in the flow of cooperation for maintenance of smart and sustainable cities to reduce the environment impact and improve the quality of life.

The supplementary text of the proposal is attached with the aim of addressing approaches to drive achievement of the **Climate Justice Chamber of the International Court of Justice of the United Nations.**

Yours sincerely,



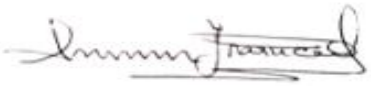
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Introduction and Justification of the Proposal

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The initial idea was transformed into a concrete recommendation in perfect harmony with the principles of the United Nations Climate Summit, in the sense of overcoming difficulties and challenges, opening up spaces towards the engagement of efforts and multilateral cooperation in society, feeding the benefit of environmental protection and appropriate management in ecosystems, following the Resolution A/Res 68/309 - The Future We Want adopted on September 10, 2014 by the General Assembly of the United Nations, this being the Resolution that paved the way for the 17 Sustainable Development Goals - Agenda 2030 of the United Nations.

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In this context, the Climate Justice Chamber of the International Court of Justice of the United Nations will provide substance through appropriate responses and diagnoses to models of governance in frames of catalyze collective actions that are essential for a future with environmental well-being on our Planet, from generation to generation, as inserted in the Resolution A - Res 77 - 169 - Harmony With Nature adopted on December 14, 2022 by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

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The Amazonia Rainforest is the lungs of our Planet.

From Climate Emergency to Climate Justice

- Global warming and biodiversity loss are aggravating food, water and health insecurity, especially in vulnerable regions.
- The climate crisis is not only an environmental problem; it is also a matter of human rights, human security and intergenerational equity.
- International law is evolving towards recognizing a right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and States' duties to prevent climate harm.





The commitment of United Nations agencies and regional governments is essential to overcome the organized crime market in the Latin American Amazon, where approximately 13 million people live under the control or influence of organized criminal groups.

COPLAD and the Belém Process

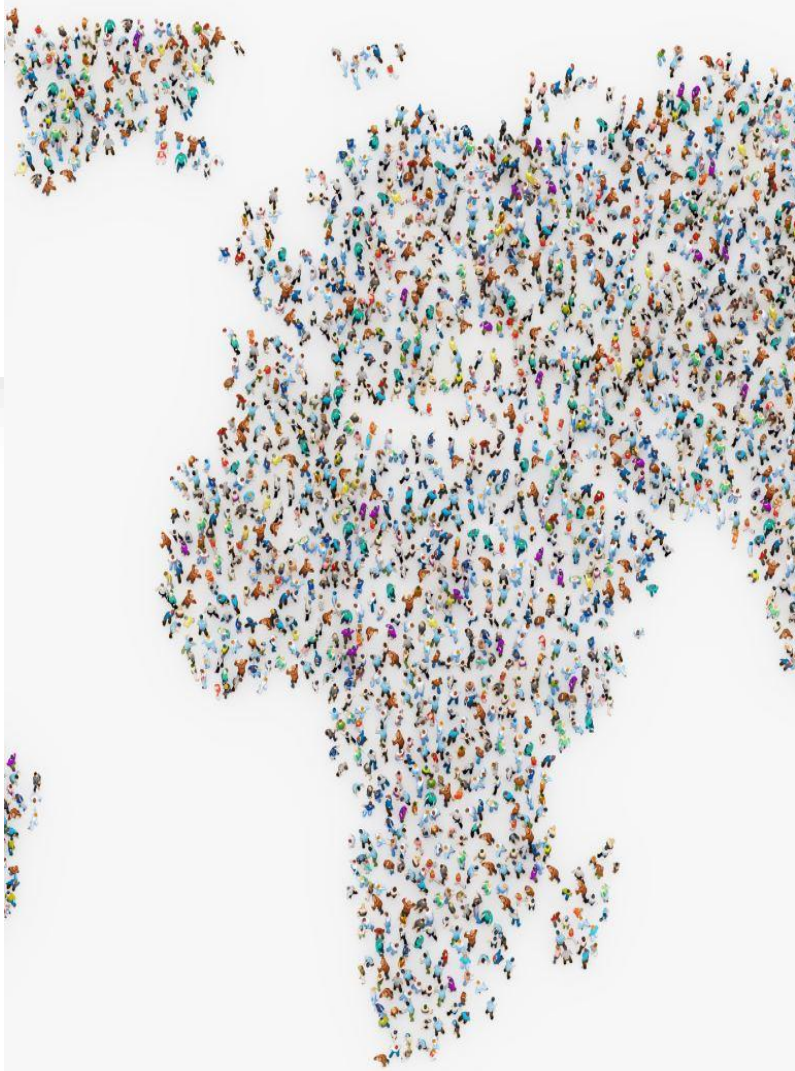
COPLAD is the Latin American Permanent Committee for Crime Prevention, a programme of the International Penal and Penitentiary Foundation with ECOSOC consultative status.

On 7 April 2025, COPLAD convened the High-Level Pre-COP-30 Conference in Belém, Amazon, focused on human security and climate justice.

The “Belém Declaration – Pact for the Future of the Amazon” was transmitted to the President of the International Court of Justice as a contribution to United Nations COP-30.

Key Messages of the Belém Declaration

- Justice systems must play a central role in climate governance and the enforcement of environmental rights.
- The constitutional right to an ecologically balanced environment must be protected at national, regional and international levels.
- Climate policies should integrate social, economic and environmental dimensions, including Environmental social Governance criteria, prioritizing vulnerable communities in the Amazon.
- Multilateral cooperation is essential to confront the climate emergency and preserve the Amazon as a strategic global common.



Climate Justice in Contemporary International Law

- The United Nations General Assembly has recognized the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and requested an International Court of Justice advisory opinion on States' obligations regarding climate change.
- In 2025, the International Court of Justice confirmed that climate change is an "urgent and existential" threat and that States have stringent obligations to prevent significant climate harm.
- International Court of Justice case law on environmental protection has progressively recognized duties of prevention, cooperation and environmental impact assessment.
- These developments open a legal space for an institutional mechanism specialized in climate justice.

Why a Climate Justice Chamber within the International Court of Justice?

Concentrates expertise on complex climate-science, environmental and human-rights issues.

Ensures consistency in interpreting States' climate obligations across contentious cases and advisory opinions.

Avoids the costs and delays of creating a new international court by using the existing International Court of Justice structure in The Hague.

Strengthens the enforceability of climate-related commitments under the United Nations Charter and multilateral environmental agreements.

Mandate of the Proposed Climate Justice Chamber

Hear contentious cases on transboundary climate harm, including failures to adopt adequate mitigation and adaptation measures.

Provide advisory opinions to United Nations organs on climate-related questions, including the protection of the Amazon and other critical ecosystems.

Address links between environmental degradation, organised crime and money-laundering that finance climate-relevant offences.

Support national courts and regional human-rights bodies through persuasive jurisprudence on climate justice.



Institutional Design and Feasibility

Chamber composed of International Court of Justice judges, with the possibility of ad hoc judges from climate-vulnerable regions, including the Amazon basin.

Use of the existing Registry, Peace Palace facilities and procedural rules, minimizing financial and administrative costs.

Creation of specialized scientific and socio-environmental advisory panels to assist the Chamber in complex cases.

Coordination with United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and regional organizations to avoid overlap and enhance implementation.



The Amazon as a Global Climate Regulator

- The Amazon hosts the largest tropical forest on Earth and around half of the planet's terrestrial biodiversity, acting as a planetary climate engine.
- Its forests store enormous quantities of carbon and regulate rainfall patterns across South America and other regions.
- Degradation of the Amazon risks triggering tipping points with irreversible impacts on global temperature, food systems and water cycles.
- Protecting the Amazon is therefore indispensable for any credible strategy to avoid planetary climate disruption.


Caribbean
Sea
COSTA RICA
PANAMA CITY
PANAMA
CARACAS
PORT OF SPAIN
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
VENEZUELA
NORTH
ATLANTIC
OCEAN
GEORGETOWN
PARAMARIBO
GUYANA
SURINAME
Cayenne
French Guiana
BOGOTA
COLOMBIA
QUITO
ECUADOR
R. Negro
R. Amazonas
Manaus
Belem
Iquitos
Porto Velho
Imperatriz
PERU
LIMA
BOLIVIA
LA PAZ
SUCRE
BRAZIL
BRASILIA
SOUTH
PACIFIC
OCEAN
PARAGUAY
CHILE
ARGENTINA

Environmental Crime and Climate Injustice in the Amazon

Illegal deforestation, mining and land-grabbing are often linked to transnational criminal networks and sophisticated money-laundering schemes.

These activities “make the Amazon bleed”, undermining the rights of local communities and the stability of the global climate system.

Traditional environmental regulation alone is insufficient; a climate-justice approach must integrate criminal law, financial transparency and human-rights protection.

A Climate Justice Chamber can clarify States’ duties to prevent, investigate and punish such environmental crimes with cross-border effects.

Safeguarding Amazonian Climate Foundations

Innovative strategy to contain climate extremes: safeguarding the Amazon is essential for global climate stability. The Amazon cannot be replaced; its degradation could trigger systemic disruption across the planet's climate.

A Climate Justice Chamber to support the pursuit of new opportunities for peoples in a world in transition, where resilience and adaptation are essential to achieving inclusive development and overcoming educational, technological, economic, social, and environmental challenges.

A Climate Justice Chamber to support the search for new opportunities for peoples in a world in transition, where resilience and adaptation are needed in pursuit of inclusive development, in order to overcome educational, technological, economic, social, and environmental challenges in a technical and appropriate manner.

For these reasons we argue that the Climate Justice Chamber of the International Court of Justice of the United Nations include a Judge representing the Amazonia in its composition. Without the Amazonia Rainforest we will lose the fight against climate extremes.

The Amazonia Rainforest Region is the lungs of our Planet.

Pathway to Establishing the Climate Justice Chamber

Use the momentum of the Belém Declaration and the International Court of Justice's climate advisory opinion to build an intergovernmental coalition in favour of the Chamber.

Encourage United Nations Member States, particularly Amazonian and climate-vulnerable countries, to request the International Court of Justice to create a specialised chamber under Article 26 of its Statute.

Integrate the Chamber's work with COP-30 outcomes, nationally determined contributions and global stocktake processes under the Paris Agreement.

Promote capacity-building and knowledge-sharing among national judiciaries, prosecutors and regulators on climate-justice standards emanating from the Chamber.

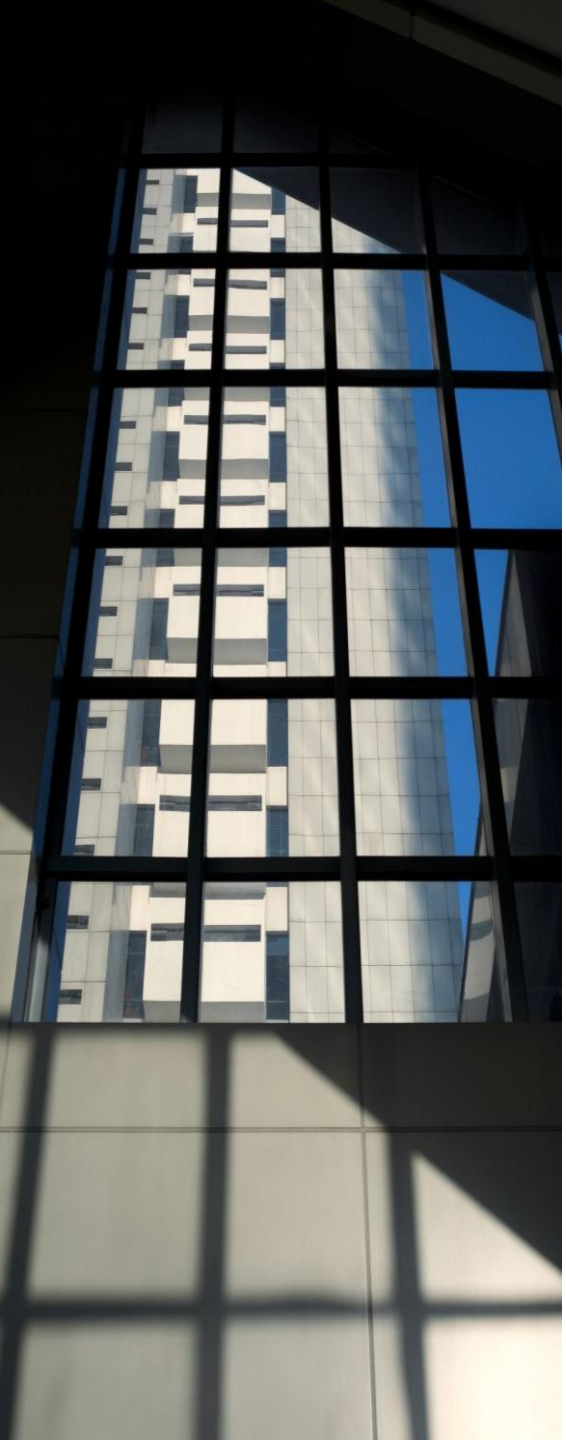
The Permanent Latin America Committee for Crime Prevention's Contribution to the 15th UN Congress

The Permanent Latin America Committee for Crime Prevention's studies combine crime-prevention, human security and environmental governance, with a special focus on the Amazon as a strategic region.

The analysis presented here stems from the Belém Declaration – Pact for the Future of the Amazon and subsequent work on operationalizing climate justice.

The proposal for a Climate Justice Chamber aligns with the 15th UN Congress priorities on rule of law, sustainable development and protection of future generations.

The Permanent Latin America Committee for Crime Prevention stands ready to cooperate with United Nations bodies and Member States in designing and implementing this institutional innovation.



Key Messages for Decision-Makers

- Climate justice requires an enforceable global legal architecture; the International Court of Justice is the natural anchor for this architecture.
- Establishing a Climate Justice Chamber is institutionally feasible, financially modest and normatively urgent.
- Without decisive protection of the Amazon and other critical ecosystems, global climate goals will remain unattainable.
- The 15th United Nations Congress can catalyse political support for this initiative and help transform climate justice from aspiration into reality.

The Rights of Nature

It should be emphasized the Judicial Protection within the Framework of the Rights of Nature and its Complementarity with Human Rights

The Rights of Nature encompass the environment, biodiversity, and ecosystems, recognizing the Earth as a living entity deserving specialized judicial protection, under the safeguarding mantle of environmental, social, economic, and administrative norms at both national and international levels.

Within the legal systems of certain countries, significant bodies of jurisprudence already exist, arising from court decisions that order risk-protection measures, crime-prevention measures, compensation, and reparation for harm, whether in contentious proceedings or in responses to advisory opinions addressing climate-related actions and events. In this regard, one may cite, for example, broad judicial recognition of the Rights of Nature in India, New Zealand, Norway, Germany, Spain, France, Canada, Colombia, and Ecuador.

In this direction, establishing a Climate Justice Chamber within the organizational structure of the United Nations International Court of Justice (ICJ) would make visible the role of the judiciary by drawing attention to crucial matters that demand essential strategies to restore and maintain planetary balance, while ensuring respect for human rights and promoting a healthy quality of life for all living species, wherever they may be.

It is important to note that Chapter XIV, Articles 92 to 96, of the Charter of the United Nations of 26 June 1945 contains no reference to the United Nations International Court of Justice (ICJ) competence to adjudicate, specifically, climate matters and disputes.

Therefore, amid widespread global concern arising from climate extremes, the permanent creation of a Climate Justice Chamber linked to the United Nations International Court of Justice (ICJ) becomes timely and appropriate.

This would, thus, be a major contribution to humanity’s prosperous future.

It is a dream, but dreams can be realized.

THE CLIMATE JUSTICE CHAMBER TO ADVANCE THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF NATURE



The establishment of the **Climate Justice Chamber within the International Court of Justice of the United Nations** will be an important step toward advancing the **Universal Declaration of the Rights of Nature**. It will be essential for catalyzing a global movement that redefines humanity's relationship with nature.

In 2008, Ecuador became the first Country to enshrine the Rights of Nature in its National Constitution. Since then, several Nations have adopted comparable legal frameworks aimed at protecting ecological integrity and promoting harmonious coexistence between human societies and the types of ecosystems in the natural world of animal species, oceans, rivers, forests, deserts, tundras and significant environmental resources such as rare-earth minerals.

Climate commitments are essential to the survival, dignity and well-being from generation to generation.



Permanent Latin America Committee for Crime Prevention - COPLAD