



World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL) Report 2017–2021

Chair: Justice Antonio Benjamin

1. Mission

The WCEL Commission mandate (2016–2020) identifies the following mission:

The mission of the Commission is to assure the integrity and conserve the diversity of nature through the promotion of ethical, legal and institutional concepts and instruments that advance environmental, social, cultural and economic sustainability (hereafter “sustainability”) and to strengthen the capacity of governments, the judiciary, prosecutors, law schools and other stakeholders as they develop and implement environmental law.

2. Vision

The WCEL Commission mandate (2016–2020) identifies the following vision:

WCEL’s vision is a just society that values and conserves nature, supported and sustained by effective laws, with vital environmental stewardship systems at all levels of governance, including indigenous and local communities that affirm the environmental rule of law and work toward ecological sustainability.

3. Goal

The WCEL Commission mandate (2016–2020) identifies the following goal:

WCEL’s goal is to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to employ environmental law for restoring, conserving and sustaining nature, and assuring that uses of natural resources are equitable and ecologically sustainable, through:

- a. advancing local, national, regional and international laws, administrative instruments and customary norms that are grounded in environmental ethics and further ecological sustainability;
- b. conducting research to strengthen environmental law and undertaking capacity building to enable governments and stakeholders to actively participate in the international governance debate;
- c. supporting the implementation of coordinated laws through institutions that respect the environmental rule of law and ensure effective compliance and enforcement;
- d. providing a central world forum for integration of environmental law into all aspects of governance; and
- e. creating and promoting partnerships to support implementation and enforcement of environmental rule of law and extending professional and expert networks dedicated to the legal foundations of ecological sustainability.

4. Objectives

The WCEL Commission mandate (2016–2020) identifies the following objectives:

WCEL will pursue its objectives in concert with the integrated programme of activities adopted by the World Conservation Congress in the IUCN Programme 2017–2020, and in cooperation with IUCN Members and components of the Union, through the Commission members and Specialist Groups, and in partnership with relevant international entities, particularly the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and other expert

environmental law organisations, law schools, associations of judges and environmental prosecutors, as well as judicial institutes and schools, in order to:

- a. promote the 2016 IUCN World Declaration on Environmental Rule of Law and other ethical and innovative legal concepts, legislation, and other legal instruments that conserve nature and natural resources to achieve sustainability;
- b. build knowledge and apply scientific, technical and other capacity in all regions to enable governments to draft, enact and enforce environmental law in an effective manner;
- c. work closely with the Secretariats of relevant Conventions and agreements that protect and conserve nature to support implementation and enforcement of those conventions and agreements;
- d. build capacity and educate governmental officials, including judges and public prosecutors, and stakeholders at all levels on applying law and policy, improving access to information and justice, and facilitating public participation in environmental decision making to ensure that natural resources are managed equitably and sustainably;
- e. engage with Members, National/Regional Membership Committees, and WCEL members to create robust environmental law knowledge networks;
- f. collaborate with each of IUCN's other Commissions; and
- g. collaborate with other components of the Union and Secretariat, especially the IUCN Environmental Law Centre and the IUCN Academy of Environmental Law, and partner institutions, including UNEP, the Organization of American States (OAS), the International Network for Environmental Compliance and Enforcement (INECE), the International Association of Judges, Globe International, the European Union Forum of Judges for the Environment the Asian Development Bank, and UNITAR, to provide education, information and knowledge on law and governance necessary to achieve ecological sustainability.

Priorities and achievements

The WCEL Commission mandate (2016–2020) identifies ten programme priorities. The priorities are listed below followed by a description of the corresponding achievements:

WCEL will implement its objectives through programme priorities that further the IUCN Programme 2017–2020. WCEL's objectives will be implemented in an integrated way through its 2017 to 2020 Strategic Plan, expert membership, its network of collaborating centres of environmental law, the IUCN Environmental Law Centre, the IUCN Academy of Environmental Law, the Union's Regional and National Committees and Offices, and other professional partnerships, as well as with UN institutions pursuant to the Union's UN observer status. WCEL will address the following priorities, contingent on the availability of financial resources and through the voluntary contributions of expertise by its members and partners, in order to:

- a. Strengthen WCEL specialist groups – WCEL will enhance the effectiveness of its specialist groups with particular emphasis on (a) priority legal thematic areas, including biodiversity loss; climate change, energy and biofuels; coastal and marine degradation; natural and cultural heritage conservation; desertification; natural resource management; ecosystem protection; agriculture; soils; freshwater and wetlands; mining; and (b) cross-cutting themes such as environmental ethics, indigenous peoples, protected areas, Arctic and Antarctic polar governance, compliance and enforcement of environmental laws, the judiciary, and national and international financial institutions, and to respond to requests made by the World Conservation Congress. These specialist groups and themes contribute to **all three** Programme Areas (Valuing and conserving nature; Promoting and

supporting effective and equitable governance of natural resources; and Deploying Nature-based Solutions to address societal challenges).

Achievements

During the 2017–2020 quadrennial, WCEL supported ten specialist groups. The [WCEL specialist groups](#) focus on a variety of environmental issues identified in the WCEL Commission mandate (2016–2020) including: (1) [Climate Change](#); (2) [Compliance and Enforcement](#); (3) [Early Career](#); (4) [Ethics](#); (5) [Forests](#); (6) [Indigenous Peoples and Environmental Law](#); (7) [Oceans, Coasts, and Coral Reefs](#); (8) [Peace, Security and Conflict](#); (9) [Soil, Desertification, and Sustainable Agriculture](#); and (10) [Water and Wetlands](#).

The WCEL specialist groups have spearheaded a number of WCEL initiatives. In 2019 and 2020, the WCEL specialist groups contributed to planning for the 2nd World Environmental Law Congress in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (postponed to 2021; see Priority h – Achievement i), and coordinating efforts for the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Marseille, France.

In 2020, many WCEL specialist group Chairs volunteered to help coordinate a webinar for the [WCEL Environmental Law and Policy Webinar series](#). Notably, Climate Change Specialist Group Chair, Christina Voigt, organised and moderated the WCEL webinar “[Climate Change in the Courts](#)” on 11 June 2020, which had over 700 registered participants. Additionally, Water and Wetlands Specialist Group Chair, Stefano Burchi, organised and moderated the WCEL webinar “[The Brasilia Declaration of Judges on Water Justice](#)” on 17 July 2020, which had more than 300 registered participants and was offered with Spanish interpretation.

WCEL specialist groups have also been involved in global initiatives throughout the world. Their accomplishments, including recent activities, events, publications, and upcoming projects are posted on the [WCEL specialist group](#) webpages and highlighted in bi-annual update reports.

- b. Promote the IUCN Academy of Environmental Law – WCEL will promote and collaborate closely with the Academy as the world’s leading network of academic institutions, universities and professors engaged in the research and teaching of environmental law. Highest contribution to: Programme Areas 1 and 2.

Achievements

WCEL has collaborated closely with the [IUCN Academy of Environmental Law](#) over the past four years. The Chair of the IUCN Academy sits *ex officio* on the WCEL Steering Committee, and the WCEL Chair is an *ex officio* member of the Academy Governing Board. Typically, more than 50 WCEL members each year present academic papers and chair sessions at the [Annual Colloquia](#) of the IUCN Academy of Environmental Law.

In July 2018, WCEL Deputy Chair, Denise Antolini, represented WCEL at the [16th IUCN Academy of Environmental Law Colloquium](#), hosted by the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland. Denise participated in the Academy Board of Governors two-day meeting, and WCEL members contributed to the Academy research committee and teaching committees held popular day-long workshops before the Colloquium. A WCEL membership event was held at the Colloquium that engaged over 80 existing and new WCEL members. In August 2019, WCEL Deputy Chair Denise Antolini again represented WCEL at the [17th IUCN Academy of Environmental Law Colloquium](#) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. WCEL hosted a meeting for current and potential WCEL members on the second day of the Colloquium, emphasising the long-standing partnership between WCEL and the Academy. In June 2021, WCEL Chair Antonio Benjamin represented WCEL in the first virtual colloquium of the IUCN

Academy of Environmental Law. Over the course of five days scholars from 40 countries made more than 220 presentations on 65 panels conducted over Zoom.

- c. Collaborate with Centres of Environmental Law – WCEL will continue to recognise, promote and collaborate with Centres, Institutes of Environmental Law and other partners in building coordinated information, research, learning and capacity-building programmes on the legal aspects of biodiversity. Highest contribution to: Programme Area 2.

Achievements

- i. Joint Activities with Environmental Law Centres

WCEL has long-standing partnerships with the leading environmental law centres including the Environmental Law Institute (ELI), Sociedad Peruana de Derecho Ambiental (SPDA), Centro México de Derecho Ambiental (CEMDA), PluriCourts, Centro de Formacao Juridica e Judiciaria (CFJJ), Institute on Economics and Environmental Law (IDEA), European Association of Environmental Law, and the European Union Forum of Judges for the Environment.

WCEL has partnered with ELI on several major events, including the 1st Global Symposium on Judiciary and the Environment: Adjudicating our Future (see Priority f – Achievement 1) and the 2nd Global Symposium on the Judiciary and the Environmental Rule of Law: Adjudicating our Future (see Priority f – Achievement i).

- d. Knowledge, capacity building, and technical assistance – WCEL will collaborate with all components of the Union, especially its Members, Regional Offices, the Environmental Law Centre, the Academy of Environmental Law, and other partners, including UNEP, Convention Secretariats and INECE, to develop international agreements and national legislation, and implementation programmes, particularly in less-developed countries and regions affected by armed conflicts. Highest contribution to: Programme Areas 1 and 2.

Achievements

- i. WCEL Lecture Series

In 2018, WCEL partnered with UNEP, OAS, and the Catholic University of Brasília to film nineteen [video lectures](#) featuring high-level speakers from around the world addressing critical topics of interest to the international environmental law community. The lectures featured distinguished members of WCEL and the Global Judicial Institute on the Environment (GJIE), including judges, law professors, scientists, legal professionals, early career leaders, public prosecutors, and representatives of international organisations. The lectures in the first series are filmed in English, French, and Spanish. The lectures have been a key tool to continue to engage WCEL members during the global health pandemic and help WCEL build a long-lasting legacy of lectures from major voices in the field.

- ii. WCEL Environmental Law and Policy Webinars

In 2020 and 2021, WCEL hosted twelve [Environmental Law and Policy Webinars](#) with environmental law experts from around the world. The webinars addressed the role of environmental law to address the global health crisis, critical issues in environmental law including climate change, water resource access, and ocean degradation, and regional issues in Europe, Africa, and the Asia-Pacific regions. The webinars all included live interpretation in French, Spanish, and English. Over 4,000 individuals registered to participate in the webinar events.

iii. IUCN WCEL Environment Week

In June 2021, WCEL organised IUCN WCEL Environment Week, in collaboration with academic institutions and non-profit organisations to host IUCN WCEL Environment Week. IUCN WCEL Environment Week consisted of a series of daily roundtable discussions with leading environmental law experts from around the world. They addressed pressing environmental issues including environmental declarations since the Stockholm Conference, the role of environmental law to address global climate change, protection of biodiversity and oceans, and support for environmental law enforcement. The webinars featured 30 different speakers and moderators from around the world representing the judiciary, academia, government, and the non-profit sectors. Over 2000 participants registered for IUCN WCEL Environment Week.

iv. WCEL News Articles

WCEL members regularly draft [news articles](#) for the WCEL website. During the period 2017–2021, WCEL posted 245 News Articles exploring emerging issues in environmental law, announcing publications and court decisions, and covering conferences and symposia.

v. Global Pact for the Environment

In July 2017, WCEL helped launch, with partners, a framework for the draft [Global Pact for the Environment](#) (Pact) that could serve as a basis for a new United Nations treaty to define fundamental environmental rights. The draft Pact synthesised fundamental and common principles of environmental law, including the 1972 Stockholm Declaration, the 1982 World Charter for Nature, the 1992 Rio Declaration, the 2016 IUCN World Declaration on the Environmental Rule of Law, and other instruments to solidify and achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The draft Pact sets out principles that compel States and other legal persons to protect the environment, promote sustainable development and intergenerational equity, and ensure the right of access to information and environmental justice. Members of WCEL, the Global Judicial Institute on the Environment (GJIE), and the IUCN Academy of Environmental Law were extensively involved in producing the draft, which was prepared by a group of more than 150 experts from 54 countries across all five continents.

In March 2018, WCEL hosted two high-level colloquia on the initiative to reach agreement on a Global Pact for the Environment at the United Nations. In May 2018, WCEL convened a [meeting](#) of high-level environmental law experts to discuss next steps at the UNEP Office in New York. In May 2018, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted resolution 72/277 entitled “[Towards a Global Pact for the Environment](#)”, which established an Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group to consider a technical and evidence-based report to be prepared by the Secretary General. In December, in partnership with the International Council of Environmental Law (ICEL) and the International Group of Experts for the Pact, ICEL-WCEL released an expert Note on the United Nations Secretary General’s Report, “Gaps in international environmental law and environmental-related instruments: towards a global pact for the environment.”

In January 2019, WCEL Chair, Justice Antonio Benjamin participated in the conference “Towards a Global Pact for the Environment” in Nairobi, Kenya. At the conference, UNEP presented the [Global Pact Website](#) to support the process initiated by a [UN General Assembly resolution 72/277](#) to identify gaps in international environmental law, and discuss possible options to address these gaps. In August 2019, the [UN General Assembly adopted resolution 73/333](#) that welcomed the work of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group, as well as its report, and endorsed all its recommendations.

vi. Biodiversity in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction

In September 2018, WCEL Oceans, Coasts and Coral Reefs Specialist Group Chair, Cymie Payne, and WCEL Steering Committee Member, Nilufer Oral, participated in negotiations for an international legally binding instrument on [marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction](#) (BBNJ) at the UN headquarters in New York.

WCEL members participated in several events throughout the year to support the BBNJ negotiations. In January 2019, Professor Cymie Payne presented on “Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment” at the Workshop on Environmental Impact Assessment in the new BBNJ instrument in New York. In March 2019, WCEL Member Abbe Brown, co-organised a side event at IGC2 of the BBNJ process “Mare Geneticum and an EcoSystem Approach: Power, Openness and Sharing”.

In March and August 2019, WCEL Oceans, Coasts and Coral Reefs Specialist Group members, including Cymie Payne, attended the second and third sessions of the [BBNJ Intergovernmental Conference](#) at UN headquarters in New York as part of the IUCN delegation. WCEL members made interventions on area-based management tools including marine protected areas, environmental impact statements, dispute settlement, and compliance. During both sessions, Professor Payne hosted planning meetings with WCEL, the IUCN Environmental Law Centre (ELC), and ICES members participating in the conference. The specialist group, in collaboration with ELC, also prepared a [legal commentary](#) on the first draft text in support of delegations to the BBNJ negotiations.

vii. WCEL Regional and National Reports

WCEL members contribute [Regional and National Reports](#) to the WCEL website. The legal analysis contributes to the development, maintenance, and implementation of environmental law. During the period 2017–2020, WCEL members produced six national reports and six regional reports.

- e. Promote ‘good governance’ and the environmental rule of law – WCEL will work with IUCN Members, UN institutions, governments and other stakeholders to encourage and promote ‘good governance’ and institutions to respect the environmental rule of law. Highest contribution to: Programme Area 2.

Achievements

i. 2016 IUCN World Declaration on the Environmental Rule of Law

WCEL has continued to promote the [IUCN World Declaration on the Environmental Rule of Law](#) at the 1st World Environmental Law Congress. The Declaration emphasises the fundamental role of the environmental rule of law as the legal foundation for promoting environmental ethics and achieving environmental justice, global ecological integrity, and a sustainable future for all at local, national, sub-national, regional, and international levels. It describes the foundations of the environmental rule of law, thirteen general and emerging substantive principles for promoting and achieving environmental justice, and means for implementation. An appeal is made to states, sub-national governments, regional integration organisations and other relevant international organisations, legislators, civil society, and the private sector to contribute to the building, maintenance, and promotion of the environmental rule of law based on the aforementioned principles, as part of their shared responsibility to present as well as future generations.

ii. II Inter-American Congress on the Environmental Rule of Law

In September 2017, WCEL collaborated with the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (GS/OAS) and UNEP to host the [II Inter-American Congress on the Environmental Rule of Law](#) in Santiago, Chile. Participants included judges, legislators, politicians, representatives from international agencies, and NGOs from across the region. They discussed key issues to further contribute to achieving WCEL goals related to the progressive development of legal and institutional frameworks built on the core principles of the environmental rule of law.

- f. Support the Judiciary – WCEL will continue to work with the judiciary and relevant institutions, both international and national, including judicial institutes and associations of judges, to establish a global institute of environmental courts and tribunals, to build capacity in the judiciary to provide access to justice, effectively adjudicate environmental issues, and apply and enforce environmental law, and to provide legal reference services and information databanks, including ECOLEX, the Judicial Environmental Portal and INFORMEA, and promote the development and study of environmental jurisprudence. Highest contribution to: Programme Area 2.

Achievements

i. Global Judicial Institute for the Environment

WCEL continues to support the [Global Judicial Institute for the Environment](#) (GJIE). GJIE is composed of sitting judges from around the world, and led by an elected council directing and overseeing activities. GJIE seeks to develop and carry out judicial capacity building, technical assistance, and education programs and projects; provide platforms and online resources for exchange and knowledge-sharing among judges; and facilitate cooperation and linkages among judges and with the community of stakeholders involved in environmental compliance and enforcement.

In May 2017, GJIE Founding Members met in Brasília, Brazil to formalise the GJIE Statute of Incorporation and appoint an Interim Governing Committee (IGC). In March, WCEL hosted the first meeting of the IGC. In July, WCEL and GJIE collaborated with The Supreme People's Court and ClientEarth to host a week-long training seminar for over 300 Environmental Judges in Beijing, China. Later that month, the IGC met with UNEP leadership and staff in Vienna, Austria to draft plans for the GJIE Judicial Portal, an ambitious project to provide access to environmental jurisprudence from around the world that will enable access to court decisions that are often difficult to locate. In August, the GJIE participated in the 2nd Regional Symposium on Greening the Judiciary in Maputo, Mozambique.

In August 2018, WCEL, GJIE, UNEP, OAS and the Environmental Law Institute (ELI) hosted the 1st Global Symposium on [Judiciary and the Environment: Adjudicating our Future](#) in Washington, DC. Distinguished state supreme court justices from several US States, and international jurists from OAS and UN member States, as well as selected academics, scientists, leading experts, ambassadors and diplomats from across the globe came together for two days to discuss environmental justice and the environmental rule of law. Proceedings have been published by WCEL.

In September 2018, GJIE, UNEP, Global Witness, Ministério Público Federal, and Instituto de Desenvolvimento e Gestão partnered to launch the [Environmental Rights Initiative](#), to protect the rights of environmental defenders.

In February 2020, WCEL, GJIE, UNEP, ELI, the Hawai'i Judiciary, and the William S. Richardson School of Law at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, hosted the [2nd Global Symposium on the Judiciary and the Environmental Rule of Law: Adjudicating our Future](#) in

Honolulu, Hawai'i. Participants included invited judges from the United States and around the world, as well as academics, attorneys, and distinguished experts, to discuss the role of judges in interpreting and developing the environmental rule of law. High level sessions over two days addressed current and future global environmental crises and multi-dimensional security concerns including: (1) Biodiversity, Oceans, and Water Security; (2) Emerging Principles and Trends in Environmental Rule of Law; (3) Judicial Remedies for Climate Vulnerability; and (4) The Role of the Judiciary in Advancing the Environmental Rule of Law. Proceedings are being published by WCEL.

ii. Regional Judicial Colloquium for Latin-America and the Caribbean

In May 2017, WCEL organised and hosted, with partners, the [Judicial Colloquium for Latin America and the Caribbean: Constitutions, Environment, and Human Rights: Practice and Implementation](#) at the Federal Senate of Brazil in Brasília. With nine sessions chaired by representatives in the legislative branch, the Colloquium brought together over 70 judges, academics, and experts from 20 countries to engage in interactive sessions held in formal sessions of the Environment Committee and the Joint Senate and House Permanent Committee on Climate Change of the Federal Senate of Brazil. This was the second in a series of a larger "Environmental Rights Initiative", supported by UNEP and under leadership of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment, to enhance judicial capacity in environmental constitutionalism, identify gaps and opportunities, and support judges worldwide. It also took place within the framework of the OAS Inter-American Program on Sustainable Development. Proceedings of the Colloquium are being published by WCEL.

iii. Symposium on the Role of International Courts in Protecting Environmental Commons

In October 2018, WCEL collaborated with PluriCourts – the Centre of Excellence for the Study of the Legitimacy of the International Judiciary at the University of Oslo – and the William S. Richardson School of Law at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, to organise a two-day international symposium led by Dr. Christina Voigt on the "Role of International Courts in Protecting Environmental Commons". During the symposium participants inquired into the role of international courts and tribunals (ICs) in dealing with issues related to environmental commons, most prominently among them a safe global climate.

g. Promote programmatic synergies among MEAs – WCEL will work with the Secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements in support of more coherent implementation, especially at the national level, governments and stakeholders, and with other conventions, agreements and processes to identify and promote synergies among them and IUCN's mission and Programme. Highest contribution to: Programme Area 2

Achievements

i. United Nations Knowledge Dialogue Series

In May 2020, WCEL partnered with ICEL, the Government of France, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), and the Global Center for Environmental Legal Studies at the Elizabeth Haub School of Law to organise a "[Knowledge Dialogue on International Cooperation to Prevent Next Pandemic](#)" at the United Nations. The United Nations Knowledge Dialogue Series brings together multiple stakeholders – including persons from Government, civil society, the private sector, multilateral and funding organisations and the scientific community – to inform and engage diplomats and policy makers on key sustainable development issues.

- h. Strengthen the legal foundations of Conventions – WCEL will study and undertake efforts to most effectively enhance the implementation and elaboration of multilateral environmental agreements and conventions related to natural resources, and provide expertise and capacity building for strengthening of national focal points, national implementation laws, including, for example, efforts to implement climate change-related commitments under the Paris Agreement. Highest contribution to: Programme Area 2.

Achievements

i. 2nd World Environmental Law Congress

In 2019, in collaboration with UNEP, GJIE, the ICEL, and Brazilian partners, WCEL began extensive planning for the [2nd World Environmental Law Congress](#) originally scheduled to take place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in March 2020. In March 2019, WCEL Steering Committee members met for three days in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil to map out the programme for the Congress. The WCEL Steering Committee determined that the focus on the future, in connection with the Sustainable Development Goals, would be an innovative look forward to – and beyond – the next decade for the legal discipline.

Following the Steering Committee meeting, WCEL conducted multiple regional Zoom calls open to all WCEL members to review the thematic tracks and solicit recommendations for specific panels. In July 2019, WCEL issued a global call for abstracts from WCEL members and others. Over many months, WCEL confirmed global leaders, judges, academics, parliamentarians, and public interest litigators to participate as high-level speakers in the Congress and side events.

In early March 2020, after months of preparations and engagement with partners, the Steering Committee, and Specialist Groups, the Congress organisers made the decision to [postpone the Congress](#) in response to the rapid developments in the global health risks posed by COVID-19 and increasing complications for international travellers.

In May 2021, the WCEL Steering Committee, considering the ongoing COVID-19 global health pandemic, agreed to split the global Congress into a series of converging regional “hybrid” events. The regional events will consider *A Critical Decade for Environmental Law* by expanding upon the original themes of the 2nd World Environmental Law Congress. The focus on the future, in connection with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is an innovative look forward to and beyond the next decade for the legal discipline. In light of emerging global challenges, and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, all regional Congresses will reaffirm, further develop, and advance the 2016 World Declaration on the Environmental Rule of Law and set the stage for the design of its implementation guidelines.

In July 2021, WCEL collaborated with partners to host three [Regional Congresses](#) at the Supreme Court of Justice of Mexico in Mexico City, Mexico, the IUCN Oceania Regional Office in Suva, Fiji, and the Hassan II International Center for Environmental Training in Rabat, Morocco. WCEL may hold an additional three regional events later in the year, with the exact dates and locations to be determined (subject to COVID-19 travel restrictions).

ii. 8th World Water Forum & Conference of Judges and Prosecutors on Water Justice

In March 2018, WCEL was the lead organiser for a major programme stream focused on the environmental rule of law for freshwater conservation during the [8th World Water Forum](#) in Brasilia, Brazil. During the week-long forum, over 10,000 people attended hundreds of interdisciplinary programs and events. At the invitation of the World Water Council, WCEL organised a three-day event: the [Conference of Judges and Prosecutors on Water Justice](#). Over fifty jurists from around the world contributed their legal and technical expertise to address current challenges, and provide innovative legal solutions to problems involving

water and water use. With strong support from the World Water Council and other partners, WCEL's events brought together over 140 distinguished participants from over 60 countries to engage in high-level discussions on the management, use and protection of freshwater resources. WCEL also organised and hosted the first-ever global moot court on water law with distinguished law students and law schools from six different countries, with GJIE judges constituting the International Court of Justice.

The conference focused on the implementation of [Sustainable Development Goal 6](#) to “ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all” and [Sustainable Development Goal 16](#) calling on States to “promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”. The Conference of Judges and Prosecutors included several parallel events focused on launching another WCEL initiative, the Global Institute of Prosecutors for the Environment, led by the Attorney General of Brazil, Raquel Dodge.

- i. Study and advance the conceptual development of Environmental Law – WCEL will research the application of new or emerging international and national legal and governance instruments and principles, including the Draft International Covenant on Environment and Development, the Earth Charter, the World Declaration on Environmental Rule of Law, the principle of non-regression and the principle of resilience. Contribution to **all three** Programme Areas.

Achievements

- i. Brasília Declaration of Judges on Water Justice

After many months of input from judges, academics, and partners, the 2018 [Conference of Judges and Prosecutors on Water Justice](#) (see Priority h – Achievement ii) culminated with approval of the [Brasília Declaration of Judges on Water Justice](#). The Brasília Declaration provides a set of ten principles that aim to familiarise judges with ecosystemic dimensions and ramifications of their function as they adjudicate civil, criminal, or administrative cases. The Declaration reaffirms the values and principles provided in the Stockholm Declaration on the Human Environment (1972), the World Charter for Nature (1982), the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992), the Earth Charter (2002), the Johannesburg Principles on the Role of Law and Sustainable Development adopted at the Global Judges Symposium (2002), the Rio+20 Declaration on Justice, Governance and Law for Environmental Sustainability (2012), the OECD Principles on Water Governance (2015), the Oslo Principles on Global Obligations for Climate Change (2015), the Draft International Covenant on the Human Right to the Environment (2016), the IUCN World Declaration on the Environmental Rule of Law (2016) and the Global Pact for the Environment (2017). The Declaration has been cited in numerous judgments by Supreme Courts around the world.

- ii. 2016 IUCN World Declaration on the Environmental Rule of Law

See Priority e – Achievement i.

- j. Sustainable Development Goals – WCEL will study and undertake efforts with key partners to promote the implementation and strengthen the legal aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Contribution to **all three** Programme Areas.

Achievements

- i. Joint Activities with Environmental Law Centres

See Priority c – Achievement i.

- i. 8th World Water Forum & Conference of Judges and Prosecutors on Water Justice

See Priority h – Achievement ii.

5. Structure and governance

WCEL is led by Chair [Justice Antonio Benjamin](#), and Deputy Chair Professor [Nicholas Bryner](#) (2021). Professor [Denise Antolini](#) served as Deputy Chair from in 2016 through 2020. WCEL has a Steering Committee that governs the activities of WCEL. In accordance with the WCEL by-laws, the Steering Committee is responsible for formulating policy, procedures, and rules of WCEL, and for determining all programmes of the Commission, within the bounds of the mandate and terms of reference as established by the IUCN General Assembly.

The [WCEL Steering Committee](#) is made up of eight Steering Committee members (Denise Antolini, Claudia de Windt, Elizabeth Mrema, Ragnhild Noer, Nilufer Oral, Maria-Goreti Muavesi, Christina Pak, and Sapana Prashan Mala), three Steering Committee Ex Officio Members (Sandrine Friedli Cela, Alejandro Iza, and Rose-Liza Eisma-Osario), and three Chair Emeriti (Sheila Abed, Parvez Hassan, and Nicholas Robinson).

At the time of writing, WCEL had nearly 1,500 members and WCEL’s membership continues to grow every month. Gender balance is an important goal of WCEL’s membership: 47% of the WCEL members are female and 53% are male (see Figure 1). Over the past quadrennial, WCEL has also worked to increase membership among young environmental lawyers, and the number of attorneys under age 45 now represents more than half of WCEL membership (see Figure 2).

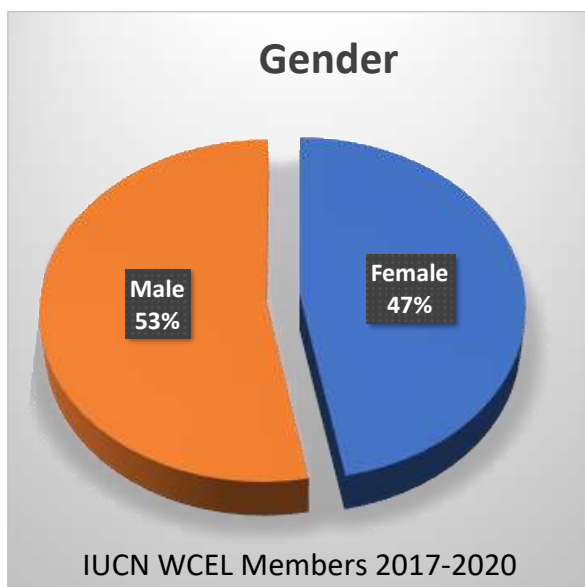


Figure 1. WCEL membership distribution by gender.

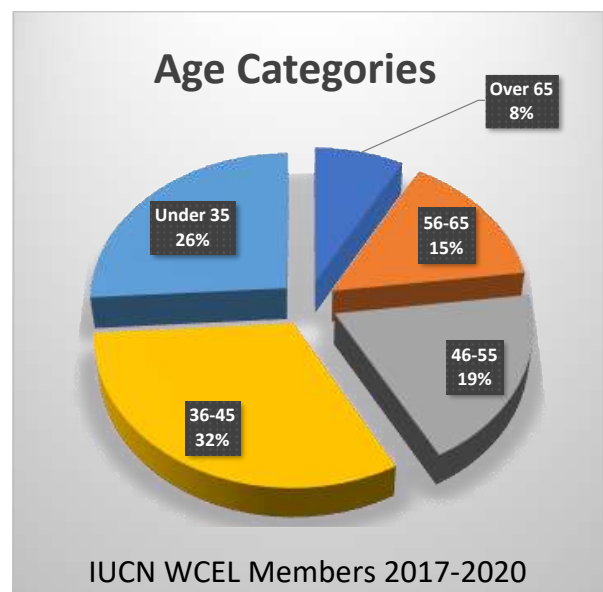


Figure 2. WCEL membership distribution by age.

WCEL has also expanded its [membership](#) to include new members from previously underrepresented regions of the world, particularly Africa and Asia (see Figure 3). Specifically, WCEL has organised events and actively recruited members in China (see [China launches unprecedented judicial training for environmental law](#) and [WCEL participates in Eco Forum Global Annual Conference in China with IUCN President Zhang](#)), Nepal (meetings with the Nepal Ministry of Forests and Environment and the National Judicial Academy of Nepal), India (see [India's National Green Tribunal Looks at the Global Level](#)), Bhutan (see [WCEL Chair's Mission to Bhutan](#)), Fiji (see [Environmental Law 2030 & beyond: Solving a complex global crisis in the Pacific ocean](#)), Mozambique ([Maputo hosts 2nd Regional Symposium on Greening the Judiciaries in Africa](#)), Nairobi (see Priority d – Achievement i), the United Kingdom ([EU Forum of Judges for the Environment 2017 Annual Conference: Climate Change and the Judiciary](#)), and the Vatican, among many other places. WCEL currently has members in approximately 130 countries.

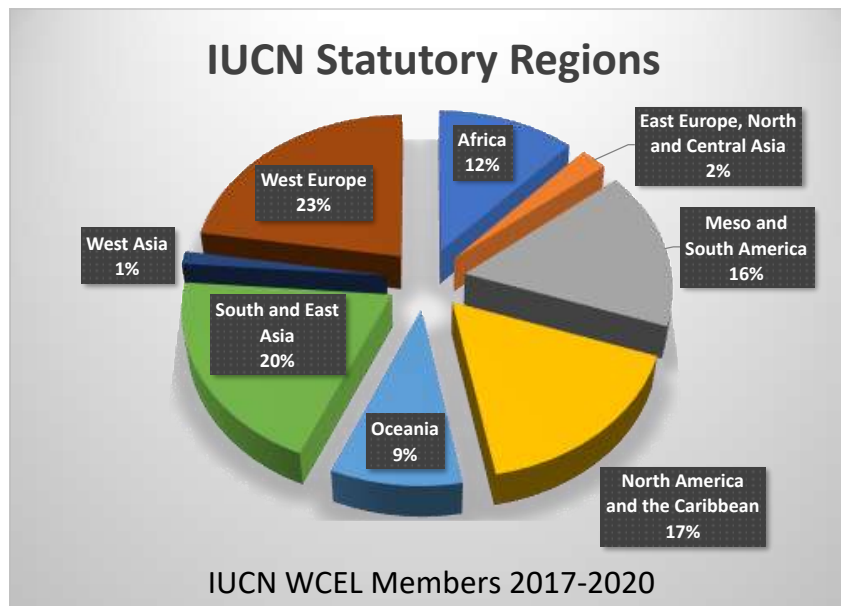


Figure 3. WCEL membership distribution by IUCN Statutory Region.