United Nations Forum on
HUMAN RIGHTS, DEMOCRACY
and the RULE OF LAW

UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER



PROGRAMME OF WORK

UN Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law

Fifth Session

"Democracy and climate change: focusing on solutions"

13-14 October 2025

Tempus building, Palais des Nations, Geneva

(in-person only, Webcast on UN TV)

Illustration by **Katia De Conti** in collaboration with AwareNearth, https://www.awarenearth.org/

PROGRAMME OF WORK

Monday, 13 October 2025

10:00 – 11:00, OPENING of the fifth session

- **H.E. Ioannis Ghikas,** Chairperson of the Forum, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva
- **H.E. Jürg Lauber,** President of the Human Rights Council**,** Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva
- **Volker Türk**, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- **Ana Toni,** Chief Executive Officer of the 30th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP30), *video statement*
- **Denise Dora**, Special Envoy for Human Rights and Just Transition, COP30, *video statement*
- **Prof. Elisa Morgera,** United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change
- **Sheryl Lightfoot**, Vice-Chair of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- **Nicole Ponce**, Global Advocacy lead, World's Youth for Climate Justice

11:00 – 13:00, PANEL 1: *Climate change in a rule of law(less) context: a foresight exercise*

In this foresight exercise, a multidisciplinary panel of experts will make presentations on anticipated possible futures focusing on the interplay of climate change, their expert areas, human rights, rule of law and democracy.

Moderator: Prof. Elisa Morgera, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change

- **Dr. Manjana Milkoreit,** Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Oslo's Department of Sociology and Human Geography, C*limate tipping points*
- **H.E. Doreen deBrum,** Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, *Impact on Small Island Developing States*
- **Anna Brach,** Head of Human Security at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, *Climate, peace and security*
- **Prof. Rebecca Willis,** Professor in Energy & Climate Governance at Lancaster Environment Centre, *Challenges to democracy*
- **Dr. Sebastián Lehuedé**, Lecturer, Kings College, *Technology, including AI*
- **Esther & Oisín**, Members of Ireland's Children and Young People's Assembly, *Children's perspective*

13:00 – 15:00, Lunch break/ side events

15:00 – 16:30, PANEL 2: *Participation, accountability, and fundamental freedoms – key enablers of a climate-just world*

Panellists will examine the right to participation and the role of key fundamental freedoms in the context of the climate crisis, particularly with respect to environmental human rights defenders. Panellists will discuss whether and how such protection of rights is an enabler for effective climate policy.

Moderator: Mr. Michael Camilleri, Chief of Branch, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

- **Michele Poletto**, Advisor, Climate Change and Democracy, International IDEA, *How democracies deliver better on climate change.*
- **Ignacio F. Lara**, Head Environmental Democracy and Global South unit at Asuntos del Sur, *Democratic, inclusive and just governance of the energy transition*
- **Agi Veres**, Director of United Nations Development Programme, Geneva, *Democratic ecosystems and climate action*
- **Michel Forst,** UNECE Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders*, the right to peaceful protest and civil disobedience*
- **Ulises Quero,** Programme Manager, Business, Land & Environment, International Service for Human Rights, *Environmental human rights defenders' challenges, barriers to have their voices heard*
- **Rodica Iordanca Iordanov,** Executive Director of EcoConnect and former Environment Minister of Moldova, *environmental protection and participation of civil society*
- **Dr. Bethanie Carney Almroth,** Professor, Department of Biological & Environmental Sciences, University of Gothenberg, *Attacks on science*

16:30 – 16:45, EXERCISE: Ms. Sandra Ata, Climate Action against Disinformation, *Countering disinformation on climate action*

16:45 – 18:00, PANEL 3: Reimagining climate governance: how current governance fits (or does not)

Experts will interrogate the effectiveness, inclusivity, and adaptability of existing governance mechanisms, assess how they fit the scale, urgency, and complexity of the climate crisis, and where they fall short, including in protection of human rights.

Moderator: Dr. Adam Day, Head of the Geneva Office of United Nations University Centre for Policy Research

- **Elise Buckle**, Chief Executive Officer of Climate Bridges, *Multilateralism including the role of consensus in multilateral environmental governance*

- **Dr. Mitchell Lennan**, lecturer, Law School, University of Aberdeen, *Interlinkages between Multilateral Environmental Agreements, the law of the sea, and human rights in the context of climate change*
- **Sepasitiano Patelisio**, Vice -President, Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change, *Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice and how this should inform UNFCCC COP decisions and implementation*
- **Prof. Elisa Morgera,** United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change, *Reform of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*
- **Dr. Amiera Sawas,** Head of Research and Policy Head of Research and Policy, Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative, *Fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty*
- **Ghazali Ohorella,** Legal Counsel, International Indian Treaty Council, *Indigenous Peoples' participation in climate governance*

Tuesday, 14 October 2025

10:00 – 11:30, PANEL 4: Legal clarity, democratic defence, and creativity

This panel will explore how courts and regional mechanisms are addressing the challenges of climate change through policy and legal instruments, jurisprudence, and democratic processes.

Moderator: Mr. Clément Nyaletsossi Voule, former UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association.

- **H.E. Sumbue Antas**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Vanuatu to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, *What next following the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on the Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change?*
- **Liliana Ávila**, Director, Human Rights and Environment Program, Interamerican Association for Environmental Defense, *The Inter-American Court of Human Rights Advisory Opinion on Climate Emergency and Human Rights.*
- **Suraya Ahmad Pauzi**, Deputy Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, *ASEAN Declaration on the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment*
- **Chris Mburu**, Chief of Africa Branch, a.i, OHCHR, *An Advisory Opinion of the African Court of Human and Peoples Rights on the human rights obligations of states in addressing the climate crisis*
- **Maria Diamantopoulou**, Chair of the ad hoc Multidisciplinary Group on the Environment, Council of Europe, *Council of Europe strategy on the environment and its new Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law*
- **Danilo B. Garrido Alves**, Legal Counsel Campaigns, Greenpeace, *Strategic litigation for climate action.*

11:30 – 13:00, PANEL 5: Harmony with nature: prioritizing solutions that advance human rights, including the right to a healthy environment

As countries advance climate commitments and transition pathways, ensuring that these transformations are grounded in human rights principles is important. Panellists will critically assess initiatives that may delay urgently needed climate action or be harmful to people and the planet, in the short or longer term. Panellists will also reflect on how human rights-based and inclusive approaches can maximize transition benefits.

Moderator: Dr. Amiera Sawas, Head of Research and Policy Head of Research and Policy, Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative

- **Prof. Jorge E. Viñuales**, Professor of Law and Environmental Policy, Clare College, University of Cambridge, *Overconsumption and overproduction, growing withing planetary limits, and sacrifice zones*
- **Shweta Narayan,** Campaign Lead, Global Climate and Health Alliance, *Just transition and democracy*
- **H.E. José Francisco Calí Tzay**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Guatemala to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, *Carbon and nature offsetting*
- **Peninnah Mbabazi,** Programme Associate, Climate Justice, Center for Economic and Social Rights, *Climate financing, investor-state dispute settlement*
- **Sheryl Lightfoot,** Vice-Chair of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, *Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the context of just transition*
- **Francesca Mingrone**, Senior Attorney, Center for International Environmental Law's Climate & Energy Program, *Geoengineering*

13:00 – 15:00, Lunch break/ side events

15:00 – 17:30, PANEL 6: Interconnected solutions for interconnected problems

As global challenges, including the climate crisis, have become more connected, the responses cannot remain fragmented. Panellists will focus on integrated, cross-sectoral solutions that recognize the systemic nature of the crisis and avoid siloed approaches, also examining whether democracies are better equipped to identify and provide such solutions.

Moderator: Ms. Shweta Narayan, Campaign Lead, Global Climate and Health Alliance

Segment 1: Systemic transformation

- **Benjamin Schachter,** Coordinator, Environment and Climate Change Unit, OHCHR, *Multiple planetary crisis*
- **Malcolm Noonan**, Ireland Senator, Green Party, *Rights of nature*
- **Dr. Arnold Kreilhuber**, Regional Director of the UN Environment Programme, Geneva, *Nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches*
- **Colette Pichon Battle**, Co-founder and Vision & Initiative Partner at Taproot Earth, *Climate reparations*

- **Daniel Uribe**, Lead Programme Officer, Sustainable Development and Climate Change Programme, South Centre, *Synergies between the right to development and the right to a healthy environment*
- **Jazmin Burgess,** Director for Inclusive Climate Action, C40 Cities, *Cities*
- **Mauricio Lazala,** Chief, Business and Human Rights Section, OHCHR, *Business and Human Rights*

Segment 2: Rights-holders

- **Esther and Oisín**, Members of Ireland's Children and Young People's Assembly, *Children*
- **Marie-Claire Graf**, Co-Founder Youth Negotiators Academy, *Youth*
- **Ms. Camilla Pollera**, Programme Associate at Center for International Environmental Law, *Gender*
- **Jo Banner**, Co-Founder & Co-Director, The Descendants Project, *People of African descent*
- **Dr. Johnson Jament**, Founding Director of Blue Green Coastal Resources, member of the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact Foundation, *Indigenous Peoples*
- **Juan Ignacio Pérez Bello**, Human Rights Senior Adviser, International Disability Alliance, *Persons with disabilities*

Segment 3: Rights-based solutions

- **Lindsey Fielder Cook**, Interim Deputy Director and Representative for Climate Change, Quaker United Nations Office, *Energy*
- **Dr. Ana Maria Suarez Franco**, Secretary General FIAN International, *Food*
- **Elena Villalobos Prats**, Technical Officer, Climate Change and Health at World Health Organization, *Health*
- **Tina Hočevar,** Counsellor-Environmental Affairs, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Slovenia, *Water*
- **Dr. Christina Behrendt,** Head of Social Policy Unit, International Labour Organization, *Social Protection*
- **Sandra Ata**, Climate Action against Disinformation, *Education*
- **Dina Ionesco,** Senior Expert on policy, protection and climate change, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

17:30 - 18:00, CLOSING of the fifth session

- Presentation by **AwareNearth** of a Globe sculpture of **Clément Covizzi**
- Concluding remarks by the Chairperson of the Forum, **H.E Ioannis Ghikas**