

Thank you, Mr Chair.

Distinguished delegates, I wanted to draw your attention to several recent or ongoing initiatives of relevance to the work of this Task Force.

At UNEP, we recently worked on two publications that may be of interest.

The UNEP's 2020 **Climate Litigation Report** was recently finalized. It is available online at <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/global-climate-litigation-report-2020-status-review> . And it provides an overview of the current state of and assessment of trends in climate change litigation globally.

Some of its findings include:

- There is an increasing evidence that climate litigation is compelling governments and corporate actors to pursue more ambitious climate change mitigation and adaptation goals, and for individuals to seek climate justice through litigation.
- There is a rapid increase in climate litigation around the world. The previous such report, in 2017, identified 884 cases in 24 countries. As of 1 July 2020, the number of cases has nearly doubled with over 1,550 climate change cases filed in 38 countries and in the European Union courts.
- The role of fundamental human rights connected to a safe climate as a key emerging trend.

The second publication is just about to be released by UNEP is the **Global Assessment of Air Pollution Legislation**. The study assesses national air quality legislation in 194 States and the European Union. Among other things, it assesses how participatory rights, including access to justice are addressed in national air quality legislation.

In particular, the assessment highlights that provisions on access to justice are inserted directly into air quality legislative frameworks in about a fifth of the countries examined. This does not mean there is otherwise no access to justice regarding air quality. But it shows a trend toward more explicit and specific rights of access to environmental justice. Access to justice in environmental matters, the study finds, has improved globally in the last decade, particularly in Aarhus countries. And this has impacted the way that air quality laws are interpreted and understood today. Environmental NGOs have become focused and strategic in using litigation to pursue improved air quality. This type of litigation often demands, first, consistency and clarity in interpretation of air quality regimes (often resulting in appeals to supreme courts) and, second, the appropriate implementation of air quality legal frameworks. As a result of this trend, a correlating improvement in the development of air quality policies can be observed across the world.

The report also examines challenges related to enforcement of air quality legislation. Enforcement capacity continues to be the key reason for the poor implementation of air quality law. Among other things, the report presents some of the more effective models of air quality enforcement.

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During the special event on access to justice at the last Working group meeting, UNEP already presented the outcomes of UNEP's 2019 report on **Environmental Rule of Law**. The update to the report is planned to be carried out in 2021. And it includes a chapter on access to justice with some dedicated indicators.

In November we also provided information on the work carried out under the **UN Secretary General's Call for Action on Human Rights**, and in particular with regard to the rights of future generations and climate justice. This work is ongoing in close collaboration with fellow UN agencies to advance the key initiatives.

With regard to our work in **support of environmental defenders**, UNEP is pleased to announce that in the coming weeks it will roll out a new workstream on **good practices regarding legal and institutional frameworks to support environmental human rights defenders and their communities**. This will be a global effort undertaken with, amongst others, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The outputs of this work will be published in a report and an interactive digital tool that will be made available by the end of this year.

In parts of our region, we also plan a **more in-depth assessment of the situation of environmental defenders**, including looking at the pandemic-related challenges. We have already discussed with the secretariat how we would like to develop this in close collaboration, building on synergies with the work under the Aarhus Convention.

As part of the UNEP-operated **InforMEA platform** (<https://www.informea.org>), we run a number of courses, including the **SDG16 course** that was launched in June 2020. As of now, over 1200 learners have enrolled in the English and Spanish version of the course and we expect to have the French version online very soon.

In addition, during the Asia Pacific Judicial Conference on Climate Change Litigation at the times of Covid-19, in November 2020, we launched the **Judicial Portal**. It is accessible online at <https://judicialportal.informea.org/>. It is envisaged that the Portal will be a place for judicial decisions to be collected and shared with other knowledge tools such as ECOLEX and InforMEA. We encourage the judiciary to explore this platform and consider becoming part of the contributing network.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. Chair, UNEP looks forward to continuing the very productive collaboration with the Convention and supporting the work under this Task Force. Thank you.