

2020 Mid-Year Report

Climate Change Specialist Group

Prepared by Specialist Group Chair Christina Voigt

I. Activity Updates

The IUCN WCEL [Climate Change Specialist Group](#) (CCSG), chaired by [Prof. Christina Voigt](#), has been developing research and providing advice on a wide range of legal and policy issues related to climate change. In 2020, the group activities included a series of regular online meetings with project coordinators and members. Likewise, the group has supported the organization of the webinar “[Climate Change Litigation in the Courts](#),” which brought together a group of legal experts to discuss the status quo of climate change litigation worldwide, including recent successes and lessons learned.

II. Events & Publications

The group’s membership has increased, and its members have been actively contributing to four main projects, as described below:

1. Getting to Zero”: Climate change mitigation and land use - a study of policy options for balancing emissions and removals (2019-2022).

Project Coordinator: [Fabiano de Andrade Correa](#)

This project focuses on studying legal and policy options to support the Paris Agreement’s goal of achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The project kick-started its activities in the second half of 2019 and currently has 15 active members from different countries. The project members held one online thematic session to discuss the topic and define the work plan, as well as developed an outline for the study on climate change mitigation and land use that will be delivered in 2022. Moreover, the project members are currently developing the first project output: a contribution to a special issue of the [Carbon and Climate Law Review](#) (CCLR), a specialized journal on law and climate change. The special issue will be published in the first quarter of 2021, focusing on the “getting to zero” target in the land sector and gathering case studies from nine countries.

2. Legal issues in the implementation of the Paris Agreement (2018-2022)

Project Coordinator: [Jessica Owley](#)

This project aims at providing advice and inputs regarding the main legal issues in the implementation of the Paris Agreement, which include the legal nature of domestic mitigation measures, the link between international guidance and domestic implementation, interlinkages and integration of climate and biodiversity regulations, among others. The project currently has

12 active members (please check their profiles [here](#)), which are divided into teams working on policy briefs about: the (a) Nationally Determined Contributions, (b) compliance mechanisms, (c) global stocktake, and (d) adaptation. These initial outputs outline and discuss the major requirements, accomplishments and concerns related to the Paris Agreement, and are expected to be delivered by early September. The project members have established different communication channels, including a google group and drive, and are discussing different dissemination and promotion methods for the policy briefs (e.g., book, white paper).

[3. Fighting climate change: a best practice guide for judges and courts](#) (2019-2022)

Project Coordinators: [Margaretha Wewerinke-Singh](#) and [Sarah Mead](#)

The “Fighting Climate Change” project aims to deliver a freely available and well-researched guide for judges to assist them in navigating the various complex issues that frequently arise in climate change-related litigation. At present, the project is nearing the completion of its mapping exercise, which will establish an empirical basis for the project (Stage 1). To date, around 40 contributors have prepared almost 100 case reports. While the aim is to have global coverage, there are still some gaps: some jurisdictions (notably in the Global South) still lack reporters, while in others there are not enough contributors due to the large number of cases brought (notably, in Australia and the US). The Project coordinators are working on plugging those gaps now, and discussions about potential partnerships with external parties to assist in this exercise are ongoing. Once Stage 1 is completed (or nearing completion), the project will move onto Stage 2, which will require reviewing all the reports and identifying best practices. For this Stage, potential partnerships with individual experts or organizations are being discussed. Regarding timing, a draft report is expected to be ready for discussion at COP26 in Glasgow.

[4. The transition of energy systems](#) (2019-2022)

Project coordinators: [Raya Salter](#) and [Stuart Bruce](#)

The project has enjoyed significant interest and momentum from WCEL members. Bruce Stuart and Raya Salter expressed interest in coordinating the project’s activities in May 2019, and were joined by Dick Ottinger after the June 2019 kick-off webinar. The project coordinators met in 2019 and 2020 to develop consensus around the project’s purpose, activities, and action program, which were launched on the project’s web page ([available here](#)). Two additional WCEL members, Pian Pian Wang and Temitope Onifade, are engaged to provide the project with additional research and operational support. Plans are underway to refine further and move forward on the action program, including the development of: (a) a series of outreach calls/webinars to all interested members (June), (b) a virtual seminar on phasing out fossil fuels in the context of the global COVID-19 recovery (Summer 2020), and (c) the collection of energy transition country reports and case studies and further scoping of publications.

Lastly, the group was planning to have a first in-person meeting during the 2nd World Environmental Law Congress (in March 2020). Unfortunately, the Congress was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the group is planning to meet instead during the World Conservation Congress (WCC), which will be held in Marseille from 7 to 15 January 2021. It is currently organizing two sessions on climate litigation for the Congress and the Global Symposium on Environmental Law.