



The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has appointed a new council of senior legal figures to advance the role of law, justice and good governance in achieving sustainable development.

The nine-member advisory council includes Chief Justices, senior judges, auditors and legal academics. Led by UNEP, it will provide strategic guidance to the international community in improving the legal foundations for achieving international environmental goals, and overcoming legal barriers to inclusive sustainable development.

The establishment of the International Advisory Council for the Advancement of Justice, Governance and Law for Environmental Sustainability follows a major meeting of Chief Justices, Attorneys General and Chief Prosecutors, Auditors General, government ministers and other members of the global legal community in Brazil in June 2012.

The World Congress on Justice, Governance and Law for Environmental Sustainability saw representatives of over 60 countries calling for the creation of an international network to support efforts to achieve sustainability through stronger legal responses to environmental pressures.

The new council aims to meet that request, and is tasked with engaging the legal and auditing community worldwide, supporting the development and implementation of environmental law at all levels, and encouraging the further expansion of environmental jurisprudence.

The Council will also provide strategic advice on the provision of information, data and technical

assistance to support governments and other bodies.

“Establishing new and strengthened mechanisms and institutional frameworks based on the rule of law is a prerequisite for the transformative change needed to achieve environmental sustainability, sustained and inclusive economic growth and the eradication of poverty”, said Amina Mohamed, UNEP Deputy Executive Director, at the inauguration of the council in Washington D.C.

“Social justice must go hand-in-hand with efforts to improve environmental sustainability. With its expertise and global reach, the new council will be a powerful global advocate for law, justice and good governance. It will give renewed impetus to efforts to secure the solid legal foundations on which an inclusive, low-carbon, resource-efficient green economy can be built,” added Ms. Mohamed.

UNEP’s Global Environment Outlook (GEO-5) report, released in June 2012, found that among 90 of the most important environmental goals agreed to by the international community, significant progress had only been made in four.

Legal barriers to achieving these goals include the spreading of responsibilities for the environment among many different institutions at national and international levels, leading to the fragmentation of environmental governance.

At the completion of the World Congress in June, countries and partners recognized “the importance of rules-based societies?effective governance frameworks, equity and justice, as inextricable aspects of environmental sustainability.”

They also underlined the need to support the auditing community in monitoring the effectiveness of environmental policies, progress towards environmental goals, and ensuring government accountability.

In addition, the overall outcome document of the Rio+20 summit, The Future We Want, acknowledged that democracy, good governance and the rule of law are essential for

sustainable development, inclusive economic growth, social development, environmental protection and the eradication of poverty and hunger.

It highlighted the need for institutions at all levels that are effective, transparent, accountable and democratic.

“Effective governance must be built on sanctioning enforceable laws, disclosure of information by private companies, promoting public participation and engagement by civil society, ensuring adequate incentive and punishment structures, and strong auditing institutions as barriers against illegality and corruption,” said Scott Fulton, General Legal Counsel of the US Environmental Protection Agency, and member of the newly-appointed council.

The Council will work with a range of partners including academia, NGOs, think tanks, governments and others to improve collaboration on environmental law, governance and justice.