

SDGS+10: A GLOBAL LEGAL STOCKTAKE OF ACHIEVEMENTS, OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

**Venue: University of Southampton,
Southampton, UK (Hybrid)**

Date: 17th-18th September 2025

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was adopted at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in New York in September 2015. The Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDG) is now preparing for a second review, which will be submitted to the 56th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission. This will be the last opportunity for a comprehensive review of the global indicator framework before the target year of 2030. Agenda 2030 embodies an array of inter-related, mutually dependent goals related to the three pillars of sustainable development. For example, SDG 13 calls for urgent action to combat climate change and its implications. SDG 13 is intrinsically linked to the other 16 Goals dealing with inter alia trade, biological diversity, energy and technology. 2030 is a focal year in other related regimes. Under the Paris Agreement to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, greenhouse gas emission reductions of 43% relative to 2019 are required to be achieved by 2030 to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5°C. Under the Convention on Biological Diversity, 23 global targets for 2030 have been set out in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (which is intended to contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development).

The first annual Critical Perspectives on Sustainable Development and Global Law Conference of the Centre for International Law and Globalisation, Southampton Law School will facilitate an opportunity to critically engage with the challenges and opportunities of achieving the SDGs, especially in the context of climate change and interlinked global crises.



We cordially invite you to submit your abstract (not exceeding 300 words) to kl1n18@soton.ac.uk (RA Hwon Lee) before the 28th of February 2025. We welcome submissions for one of the following panels:

Panel 1: Goals 13 and 7, non-proliferation of fossil fuels and energy resilience

The second review of the SDGs will coincide with the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the Paris Agreement and the Global Stocktake of the Paris Agreement concluded at COP 28, which calls for bold climate action and offers a roadmap outlining how countries can achieve a zero-carbon future. The Global Stocktake called on governments to speed up the transition away from fossil fuels towards renewable energy. In accordance with the Global Stocktake, governments must submit updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) in 2025 to make progress on the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Panel 1 will assess the relationship between the Paris Agreement Global Stocktake and Goals 13 and 7.

Panel 2: Harnessing AI for SDGs

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly perceived as a powerful tool that can accelerate global efforts towards SDGs. The rapid deployment of innovative AI systems across sectors promises, inter alia, more informative and efficient decision-making in tackling complex challenges ranging from climate change to poverty and inequalities. At the same time, there appears to be a consensus that AI generates new risks and, if left unchecked, could bring about significant, unintended transformations to our societies. In response to this threat, new AI regulatory blueprints seek to introduce frameworks within which AI technology can be used in a transparent and accountable manner to advance SDGs whilst mitigating related harms. Panel 2 will attempt to map the interaction and inter-relationship between AI and SDGs.

Panel 3: Trade, Investment and Sustainable Development: securing a positive relationship

This panel explores the interplay between international trade and investment systems and the SDGs. While SDG 17 explicitly recognizes the role of the international trade and investment bodies, including the WTO, in the achievement of the goals, the potential for trade and investment regimes to undermine the achievement of the goals is clear. On the trade front, there is increasing focus upon sustainable development at multilateral, plurilateral and bilateral levels. Ongoing questions however concern the extent to which, and how to ensure, the results of this focus of attention facilitate a meaningful positive contribution to the goals. Similar questions arise in the context of international investment law (both in relation to international investment agreements as well as investment contracts between foreign investors and States and State entities), although the focus shifts from trade to foreign investment protection and private entities become the protagonists of international arbitration proceedings. This panel seeks to evaluate the extent to which current developments in trade and investment systems, rules, and agreements do, or how they can, make a positive contribution to the achievement of the goals.

Panel 4: Goal 15: Biodiversity loss: Innovative approaches to conservation and use

The Global Assessment Report of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services issued by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), and many other scientific documents provide compelling evidence that biodiversity is deteriorating at unprecedented rates. This panel explores innovative responses to halting the loss of biodiversity. The panel focuses on the role of emerging trends, such as the Rights of Nature, Living in Harmony with Nature as well as wild animal welfare approaches.

Panel 5: Housing and SDG 11: making ‘cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable’

This panel explores the role of housing and property in meeting United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 11 and making ‘cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable’. Housing is widely recognised as being fundamental to climate adaptation and sustainable development. Existing residential buildings and the construction of new housing are highly carbon intensive. The UK Climate Change Committee have made clear that the UK will not meet its emissions targets “without near complete decarbonisation of the housing stock”. While housing may be thought of as physical infrastructure, the production of housing is also an economic engine of capital formation. Thus, housing may be thought of as a material thing ‘wrapped in a web of legal constructs’ implicating planning, environment, tax and property (Hohmann, 2022). In this nexus, property has a powerful role of controlling access to land and housing and thereby limiting, or enhancing, the abilities of others to access housing and realise decarbonisation goals. This panel will examine these issues on a local, national and global scale exploring housing and property as sites of enduring tensions and contradictions between long-term climate objectives and short-term commercial and political priorities.

Panel 6: Shipping and Sustainability

Ninety per cent of the goods traded worldwide are carried by sea, and there are approximately 50,000 merchant navy vessels operating in routes across the oceans. Although transporting goods by sea is less environmentally detrimental per quantum of goods than the equivalent journey by road or air, global shipping has a significant environmental footprint and produces a significant amount of greenhouse gases and other forms of pollution.

It is estimated that approximately 940 million tonnes of CO₂ are produced every year by the shipping industry. The industry is deemed to be responsible for approximately 2.5% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and is considered one of the most vexing sectors for carbon emissions reduction.

Based on the IML research and initiatives on sustainability in the maritime sector, this panel will focus on the recent regulatory initiatives introduced in order to achieve sustainability in the maritime/shipping industry, with the view of identifying challenges and proposing possible solutions for the way forward.

Panel 7: Developing the private law framework to support sustainable development – SDG 17

Commercial law, private law and private actors have conventionally been regarded as insulated from the need to protect or advance broader societal or public interests, including sustainability and net zero governance; instead, this has been left to public (international) law, stemming from the so-called public/private divide. It is increasingly acknowledged however that both private actors and private law itself must address challenges that arise beyond its traditional scope and within the commercial legal sphere, examine the rules that govern (and may incentivise) stakeholders' conduct, that is, create rights and obligations on private actors, including their enforcement, across fields of private law including competition law, corporate, consumer law and maritime law. Within these areas, we can identify substantive and procedural legal rules that aim to support, or may even undermine, sustainability endeavours or net zero targets. Hence, the importance of examining the rights and obligations attributed to private actors and – in the case of violations of these rules – the mechanisms for their enforcement (to the ends of establishing accountability) as regards the objectives of sustainability.