



WEBINAR

WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL DAY

The Centre for Human Rights, Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria, in collaboration with the Centre for Environmental Justice in Africa, Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria and the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), Rhodes University, South Africa cordially invite you to a webinar to Commemorate World Environment Day 2026 under the theme “Climate Justice, Environmental Protection and the Realisation of Socio-Economic Rights in Africa”.

Webinar Details

Friday, 5 June 2026
13:00 - 14:30 (SAST)
On Zoom
1 hour 30 minutes

REGISTER ON ZOOM

BACKGROUND

World Environment Day provides an important opportunity to reflect on environmental protection not only as an ecological concern, but also as a matter of human dignity, equality, justice and public accountability. World Environment Day 2026 will be observed on 5 June 2026, and the 2026 campaign is being framed around climate change and climate action. The global climate regime, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement, recognises the urgency of mitigation, adaptation and resilience, while also linking climate responses to sustainable development and the protection of vulnerable populations. The Paris Agreement specifically aims to strengthen the global response to climate change, enhance adaptive capacity and resilience, and align development pathways with low-emissions and climate-resilient futures.

In Africa, climate change and environmental degradation are already affecting people's daily lives in profound ways. Rising temperatures, droughts, floods, pollution, biodiversity loss, land degradation and weak environmental governance disrupt access to water, food, health, housing, education, livelihoods and a safe environment. These harms are not equally distributed. Women, children, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, rural communities, informal settlement residents and other marginalised groups often face disproportionate exposure and reduced adaptive capacity. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Commission) has recognised that climate change in Africa is associated with extreme weather, water shortages, biodiversity loss, disease spread, and threats to life, integrity and livelihoods. OHCHR has likewise emphasised that inadequate climate action threatens rights including health, water, sanitation and an adequate standard of living.

A rights-based approach to climate and environmental governance is therefore essential. At the international and regional levels, this approach is grounded in international human rights and regional instruments, standards and norms specifically addressing climate change as human rights challenge in Africa. These norms and standards have reinforced the obligations of states to respond to climate harms in ways that respect, protect and fulfil human rights.

This conversation is also supported by African and global policy frameworks. The African Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022–2032) provides a continental framework for inclusive and sustainable development in the face of climate change. At the global level, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development underscores the interdependence of environmental protection, social inclusion and economic justice. This webinar particularly speaks to these frameworks.

Against this background, the proposed webinar will bring together scholars, students, policymakers, legal practitioners, civil society actors and environmental stakeholders to engage critically with the relationship between climate justice, environmental protection and the realisation of socio-economic rights in Africa. It will provide an interdisciplinary platform to examine legal and policy frameworks, lived realities, accountability gaps, and inclusive responses capable of advancing justice for vulnerable communities.

PURPOSE

The webinar aims to stimulate informed and interdisciplinary dialogue on environmental protection and climate justice as socio-economic rights issues in Africa, and to examine how a rights-based approach can strengthen accountability, inclusion and sustainable responses.

OBJECTIVES

The webinar seeks to:

- explore the relationship between environmental protection, climate justice and socio-economic rights in Africa;
- examine how environmental degradation and climate change affect rights such as water, health, food, housing and livelihood;
- interrogate legal, policy and governance frameworks for environmental accountability and protection;
- highlight the disproportionate effects of environmental harm on vulnerable and marginalised groups; and
- promote dialogue on rights-based, inclusive and sustainable responses to environmental challenges in Africa.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The webinar is intended for academics, students, legal practitioners, policymakers, environmental researchers, civil society organisations, development practitioners, community-based actors and others interested in human rights, environmental justice and socio-economic transformation in Africa.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The webinar is expected to:

- deepen understanding of environmental protection as a socio-economic rights and justice issue in Africa;
- generate critical dialogue on climate justice, accountability and vulnerable groups;
- strengthen engagement among academic, legal, policy and civil society stakeholders; and
- lay a foundation for future work on environmental justice within broader socio-economic rights discourse.

For more information, please contact:

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PROGRAMME

TIME	ACTIVITY
13:00 - 13:05	Moderator Dr Dorcas Basimanyane
13:05 - 13:15	Welcome Remarks <i>Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria</i>
13:15 - 14:10	Panel Presentations Environmental protection and climate governance in Africa <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr Bimbo Olowa <i>Centre for Environmental Justice in Africa, Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria.</i> Environmental protection and climate governance in Africa• Prof Cyril Mbatha <i>Director ISER, Rhodes University</i> Another framework for looking at the environment-society-economy interface in the science-policy nexus• Mr Aryampa Brighton <i>CEO, Youth for Green Communities in Uganda</i> Community realities, environmental harm and accountability• Ms Basani Ndindani <i>Director: Environmental Policy, Planning & Coordination at Gauteng Department of Environment, South Africa</i> Implementing Climate Justice: Policy, Governance and Accountability for Socio-Economic Rights in Africa
14:10 - 14:25	Questions and Answers
14:25 - 14:30	Closing Remarks / Vote of Thanks Dr Olayinka Adeniyi