

Climate Governance Forum: Key takeaways

The second Climate Governance Forum convened 200 stakeholders across policy, business, the law, and academia at One Birdcage Walk during London Climate Action Week 2026.

The Forum examined not only the key barriers we are facing to strengthening climate governance around the world, but also the opportunities and innovations governments can leverage to mainstream science into climate policy, enhance democratic participation, achieve social buy-in for the transition, and build a world which future generations can safely inherit. Above all, the discussion focused on how good governance can support the rapid and fair **implementation** of climate policies at both the national and subnational levels.

Our key takeaways:

- **Citizens are in favour of the transition, and it is underway:** Where federal government in the U.S. has abandoned climate action, state and local leaders have stepped up, creating continuity with the international community. Around the world, we observe positive signs that citizens support climate policies and that transition is happening in the real economy.
- **“Governance is only good when it’s rooted”:** Climate framework laws play a critical part in closing that gap between the international commitment and ambition and real-world delivery. In countries such as Brazil where there is a need to embed climate governance in a politically durable way, connecting MPs and policy decisions better with citizens and CSOs is essential.
- **Innovative initiatives can elevate the voices of climate scientists in government:** The Planetary Guardians announced Luc Bas’ appointment as the world’s first Chief Planetary Scientist by the government of Belgium, working across government to harmonize and influence policies to take a whole earth approach with the planetary boundaries as a guiding framework.
- **Good governance and inclusion can help policymakers think beyond short political and economic cycles:** As shown in International IDEA’s report on ‘[Institutional Innovations for Future Generations](#)’, constitutional provisions, parliamentary innovations, and dedicated future-regrading advisory or oversight institutions encourage long-term thinking and strengthen governments’ ability to promote climate action. We can also draw inspiration and knowledge from Indigenous communities, which use a “seven generation” framework to make decisions with consideration for the seven generations past and future.
- **Climate Councils around the world are having a positive impact on climate action:** We heard examples from across the International Climate Councils Network, including how the Ukrainian council has influenced government to incorporate decarbonisation into its national strategy and practices whilst under attack by Russia. In a breakout session with Chapter Zero, we also learned about the concrete role climate councils can play to bridge the real economy with policymaking.
- **Governance can help close the implementation gap on adaptation:** Significant challenges exist relating to finance, coordination, and accountability, and strengthening adaptation governance will be essential to closing the implementation gap.

Full Readout

Welcome and Introduction from Karla Hill, Chief Programme Officer, E3G

Karla Hill opened the Governance Forum by referencing the UN Secretary-General's remarks at the start of London Climate Action Week: "London isn't just calling, it's cooking." Amidst the historic heatwave, the Secretary-General highlighted the twin energy and climate crises and noted the need to manage energy transition in a way that is fair and well-managed.

Karla emphasized that international cooperation and strong national and subnational climate governance frameworks will be essential to manage the transition equitably and inclusively. Karla left the audience with two key questions to explore with fellow attendees: how do we ensure that governance is politically resilient in fractured times? How can we use existing governance frameworks to respond creatively to new challenges and evidence?

'Protecting climate progress through the power of law': Keynote Address from Gina McCarthy, Chair, America Is All In, former White House National Climate Advisor and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator

Gina McCarthy offered candid remarks on the state of U.S. climate politics, noting that while her federal government was not present at London Climate Action Week, a coalition of Mayors and Governors was out in force. State and local leaders have stepped up, taking it upon themselves to create continuity with the international community and keep doors open.

Gina reflected on her experience working on passing the Clean Power Plan as E.P.A. Administrator over the course of two years, which the Supreme Court killed "in minutes". While the legislation did not survive, industry responded nonetheless: "they understood that the time was now to reduce emissions in the power sector". This is the soft power that governance and regulation can have in shaping transition. Gina closed with a call to inspire and excite young people to take action on climate change and create the future they deserve: "This is personal, not political, and it's lifesaving."

'Multilateralism, Governance and the Rule of Law: Challenges and opportunities': Panel Discussion

This session, moderated by Dr. Halldór Thorgeirsson, Chair of the Icelandic Climate Council, focused on the connectivity between the international multilateral system with policy implementation at the national level:

- Laura Clarke, CEO of ClientEarth, shared insights from [her organisation's work on national climate governance frameworks](#): "A climate framework law is a really critical part in closing that gap between the international commitment and ambition and real-world delivery."
- Australia and its Pacific neighbours have an opportunity to "bolster the foundations of international climate action" through their shared Presidency of COP31 with Türkiye, said Kath Rowley, CEO of the Australian Climate Change Authority. One of Australia's core priorities through the COP is to scale up international partnerships that drive decarbonisation, with a view to enhance domestic energy security and accelerate electrification, grid deployment and energy storage scale up.
- Energy access is still a widespread issue in Africa and must be addressed by the incoming COP31 Presidencies, said Ambassador Ali Mohamed, Kenya's Special Envoy for Climate. He

also emphasized the importance of creatively securing new sources of climate finance, particularly for African countries.

‘Climate governance and citizens: strengthening participation in policymaking’: Panel discussion

Dumisani Nxumalo, COO of the South African Presidential Climate Commission and Co-Chair of the ICCN, chaired this conversation on how good governance can elevate the voices of citizens into climate policy conversations:

- Even in an age of short attention spans and rampant mis- and disinformation, people still care about facts. Emma Pinchbeck, CEO of the UK’s Climate Change Committee, shared powerful reflections from engaging with the public about the Committee’s work, and [key findings from a Citizen Panel they ran in 2024](#): the British public understands that climate change is happening; they are worried about costs; and they want the vulnerable to be protected, not only from the impacts of climate change but from its costs.
- “Governance is only good when it’s rooted”: Climate governance is being rebuilt in Brazil after a period of destruction, stated Karen Silverwood-Cope, WRI Brasil’s Climate and Environment Director. However, this progress is fragile, because it is embedded not in a climate law but by Ministerial Decree. Brazil is experiencing a “judicialization” of environmental decisions, pointing to a need to connect better with citizens and CSOs and create a more politically durable situation.
- Parliaments have played a critical role in building climate legislation, said Malini Mehra, CEO of GLOBE Legislators, a bipartisan organisation which has supported parliamentarians to collaborate on climate and sustainable development since 1991. Malini reflected on the need to reduce the distance between citizens and parliamentarians to build public trust and support for climate action, and for courts, executives and legislatures to work more closely together.

First Chief Planetary Scientist Luc Bas appointed in Belgium: Announcement

Mary Robinson, Planetary Guardian and Ireland’s first woman President, and Jean Oelwang, CEO of Virgin Unite announced Luc Bas’ appointment as the world’s first Chief Planetary Scientist by the government of Belgium. Luc will continue to serve as Director of Belgium’s Climate Risk Assessment Center (CeRAC), while also stepping into his new, elevated role as a science advisor working across government to harmonize and influence policies to take a whole earth approach with the planetary boundaries as a guiding framework. Luc reflected on the need to examine complex, cross-boundary issues relating to trade, food systems, and water through a wholistic, Earth-science lens.

‘Institutional Innovations for future generations’, with International IDEA: Panel discussion

Michele Poletto, Adviser on Climate Change and Democracy to International IDEA, chaired this session, exploring opportunities for governance frameworks to be strengthened with the interests of future generations in mind. The session also served as the [launch of International IDEA’s report on the same topic](#):

- “We don’t inherit the land from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.” Xiye Bastida, a Mexican climate justice activist and Planetary Guardian shared that many indigenous communities use a “seven generation” framework, where decisions are made with consideration for the seven generations past and future. This contrasts with the short-term

political and economic cycles we observe today, which results in the rights of future generations and of nature being violated.

- “To represent the interests of future generations, we don’t necessarily need someone from the future. Any of us can do that credibly, if we have the right tools.” Report author and Distinguished Policy Fellow at the LSE Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, Dr. Alina Averchenkova, spoke about some of the governance innovations and experiments around the world that are covered in the report, focusing on dedicated institutions, such as Future Generations Commissions and climate councils. She noted that speaking about “future generations” does not resonate with people, but that asking them about the future they want for their own child or grandchild is much more powerful.
- Dr. Chang Hoon Lee, Chair of the Republic of Korea’s Presidential Commission on Climate Crisis Response, shared how independent and diverse governance can support future-oriented thinking, by representing “communities and sectors whose futures depend on long-term climate resilience and competitiveness” rather than partisan political interests. Meaningful citizen participation, through initiatives such as the recently established Climate Citizens’ Assembly, can also ensure that climate policy reflects long-term societal interests rather than the priorities of a single electoral cycle.

The Climate Council Dispatches: Impact stories from around the world

Dr. Rick Smith, President of the Canadian Climate Institute and Co-Chair of the ICCN, shared how his organisation, chipped away over the course of years at the Canadian government’s scepticism towards pursuing electrification with data and consistent messaging around affordability.

Rick was joined by fellow climate council leaders: Ing. Abigail Cutajar and Perit. David Xuereb from the Maltese Climate Action Authority and National Climate Action Council highlighted their work to pursue innovative adaptation and finance policies as a small island nation; Dr. Andriy Kitura from Ukraine’s Green Transition Office shared how his country was able to incorporate decarbonisation into its national strategy and practices whilst under attack by Russia; and Dr. Sandra Cortés showcased the Chilean Scientific Advisory Committee on Climate Change’s work to advise the government on its NDC.

‘Policy Engagement for Real Economy Progress’ with Chapter Zero: Roundtable discussion

Climate councils can play a key role in bridging the real economy with policymaking.

In this Roundtable with [Chapter Zero](#), Jo Hallas, non-executive director of global industrial technology/consumer business, spoke of the strategic incentive in engaging with policy to unlock incentives for more sustainable business. Jacob Sobygaard, the Head of the Danish Climate Council Secretariat, commented on the role that climate councils can play to engage businesses, exemplified by the council’s forums with businesses and civil society actors on climate policy advice. Finally, Aloisio Lopes Pereira Melo, National Secretary for Climate Change, Ministry of the Environment & Climate Change, Brazil shared many examples of the Brazilian government testing climate policy with business. He said that proactive business engagement is most helpful to governments i.e., as policy is being developed, rather than negative reactive responses.

The roundtable discussions explored what businesses need from governments e.g., predictable and clear policy pathways - and what governments need from businesses e.g., implementation vehicles and clear asks. Solutions will be coming from businesses and governments and it is important that

engagement is bi-directional. Other areas such as public procurement, green finance, and better business legislative frameworks can play a role in unlocking climate collaboration between business and the public sector. Climate policy is a new area for many business leaders and more work is needed on making it clear where responsibilities lie.

‘Adaptation in the Implementation Era’: Roundtable discussion

Anne Hammill, Associate Vice-President, Resilience at IISD, argued that National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) are the foundation of adaptation governance, providing strategic direction, coordination and accountability, particularly in light of the 2026 ICJ Advisory Opinion. Though 88 countries have now submitted a NAP, significant gaps for implementation remain. Closing the gap will require stronger governance systems, financing mechanisms, cross-sector coordination, and embedding adaptation into everyday government decision-making.

A panel discussion brought together Malango Moghohgo (Managing Director, ZeniZeni Sustainable Finance), Dr. Emilie Beauchamp (MEL for Adaption Lead, IISD), Prof. Dr. Suraje Dessai (Vice Chair, European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change), Johanna Gusman (Senior Attorney, Center for International Environmental Law), and Sasha Abraham (Senior Analyst, Climate Policy Initiative) to discuss practical pathways for implementation.

Thank you!

To watch a recording of the Climate Governance Forum, click [here](#), or for a two-minute highlights video, click [here](#). To see photos from the event, click [here](#) (Pin: 7951).

To keep in touch with the ICCN, subscribe to our newsletter [here](#) and follow us on LinkedIn [here](#).

With support from:

