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COMMITTEE ON THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW TO THE GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND THE POST-2030 AGENDA

Members of the Committee:

Professor Marie-Claire Cordonier Segger (Canada): *co-Chair*
Professor Damilola S Olawuyi (Nigeria): *co-Chair*
Professor Ilaria Espa (Switzerland): *co-Rapporteur*
Professor Tenia Kyriazi (United Arab Emirates): *co-Rapporteur*
Professor Markus Gehring (Germany): *designated co-Rapporteur*
Professor Emmanuella Doussis (Greece): *designated co-Rapporteur*

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<i>Alternate:</i> Professor Elisa Baroncini	<i>Alternate:</i> Dr Hadley Rose Staley
Dr Bruno Arpi (Australia)	Professor Barbara Janusz-Pawletta (Poland)
Professor Yongmin Bian (Headquarters)	Professor Ingrid Kiessling (Chile)
Professor Christina Binder (Austria)	Dr Jennifer Maaß (Germany)
Professor Daniëlla Dam-De Jong (Netherlands)	Professor Lorenza Mola (Italy)
Professor Tiago de Melo Cartaxo (Portugal)	<i>Alternate:</i> Ms Ilaria Colombo
Ms Yvonne Vera Diaz (Australia)	Professor Tomoaki Nishimura (Japan)
Dr Umair Dogar (GCC)	Dr Anna Panarella (Switzerland)
<i>Alternate:</i> Ms Elena Athwal (GCC)	Dr Ekaterina Pannebakker (Netherlands)
Dr Freya Doughty Wagner (America)	Dr Tejas Rao (United Arab Emirates)
<i>Alternate:</i> Professor Rumu Sarkar	Ms Cairo Robb (Britain)
Professor Emmanuella Doussis (Greece)	Professor Nico Schrijver (Netherlands)
<i>Alternate:</i> Dr Ilias Plakokefalos	Ms Micha Schwartzshtein (British)
Dr Eghosa Ekhatior (Nigeria)	Ms Huay Tan Siew (Singapore)
Professor Isabel Feichtner (Germany)	Dr Judi Storer (Australia)
Professor Markus Gehring (Germany)	Dr Aïda Tamer Chammas (Britain)

FIRST INTERIM REPORT

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Current economic, social and ecological challenges call for a re-evaluation of how international law can support current efforts in treaty regimes, international tribunals and other fora to address global sustainability challenges. The ILA Committee on “The Contribution of International Law to the Global Sustainable Development Goals and the Post-2030 Agenda” was established by the ILA Executive Council in November 2024 in response to a proposal submitted by the co-Chairs in June 2024.

2. The Committee builds upon a distinguished history of ILA inquiry into international law related to sustainable development. After a first, foundational ILA Committee on Legal Aspects of a New International Economic Order (NIEO) delivered the Seoul Declaration on Progressive Development of Principles of Public International Law relating to a New International Economic Order (1986),¹ a second Committee on Legal Aspects of Sustainable Development was formed with the task of identifying and elucidating principles, norms and rules of international law, both existing and emerging ones, which could constitute the normative framework for sustainable development. The work of this second Committee culminated in the adoption of the 2002 New Delhi Declaration of Principles of International Law relating to Sustainable Development (New Delhi Principles).² A follow-up Committee on International Law on Sustainable Development further investigated the legal status of the seven New Delhi Principles, leading to the adoption of the 2012 Sofia Guiding Statements on the Judicial Elaboration of the 2002 New Delhi Declaration (Sofia Guiding Statements).³ In Sofia, pressing questions on sustainable natural resource management for development were emphasized, and it was agreed that a new Committee on the Role of International Law in Sustainable Management of Natural Resources for Development would study and analyse the contents, legal status and application of the principles and rules of international law related to the sustainable management of natural resources, and to examine the relationship between the evolving international law in the field of sustainable development, as defined in the 2002 New Delhi Declaration and the 2012 Sofia Guiding Statements, and the principle of the sustainable use of natural resource. This work led to adoption of the ILA Guidelines on the Role of International Law in Sustainable Management of Natural Resources for Development at the 79th Biennial Conference in Kyoto (Kyoto Guidelines).⁴ The Kyoto Guidelines find that “international law both reflects and also serves as a critical catalyst for the design, adoption, and implementation of sustainable natural resource management and resolution of disputes in relation to the use of natural resources”⁵ and crucially recognize that “natural resources are also essential to advance nearly all 17 Sustainable Development Goals, and many of their 169 targets, from poverty elimination, to ending hunger, to access to water and energy, to combating climate change and promoting peace, justice and security.”⁶

3. Building on this legacy, this new Committee aims to advance understanding of the role and status of principles and rules of international law to deliver on the SDGs, their implications in the practice of States and international organizations, their reflection in the decisions of international courts and tribunals, and the relevance of international law to the post-2030 agenda. Over the course of eight years, the Committee seeks to fulfil its mandate in three phases. During the first phase, the Committee has conducted an extensive analysis of treaty regimes and case law related to the 17 SDGs and their 169 targets and identified references to international law in the SDGs framework and relevant gaps (see section III). This mapping exercise will provide the foundation for analyzing emerging trends in the operationalization of

¹ International Law Association, *Report of the Sixty-Second Conference* (Seoul, 1986) (ILA 1987) 1–11.

² International Law Association, ‘New Delhi Declaration of Principles of International Law Relating to Sustainable Development’ (Resolution 3/2002, 70th Conference, New Delhi, 2–6 April 2002)

³ International Law Association, ‘2012 Sofia Guiding Statements on the Judicial Elaboration of the 2002 New Delhi Declaration of Principles of International Law Relating to Sustainable Development’ ILA Resolution 7/2012.

⁴ International Law Association, *Guidelines on the Role of International Law in Sustainable Natural Resources Management for Development* ILA Resolution 4/2020; Marie-Claire Cordonier Segger and Nico J Schrijver, ‘ILA Guidelines for Sustainable Natural Resources Management for Development’ (2021) 68 *Netherlands International Law Review* 315, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40802-021-00190-x>.

⁵ International Law Association, *Kyoto Guidelines on the Role of International Law in Sustainable Natural Resources Management for Development* (ILA Resolution 4/2020, adopted 13 December 2020, Kyoto Conference).

⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 4.3.

the principle of integration of human rights, economic and environmental considerations into development decision-making in international law on sustainable development, as defined in the 2002 New Delhi Declaration and the 2012 Sofia Guiding, during the second phase, also in light of relevant decisions of international courts and tribunals on matters related to the SDGs (2027-2030). This analysis will result in the development of recommendations to the United Nations and relevant international bodies in efforts to advance the SDGs, and in the elaboration of proposals for the integration of legal indicators to monitor and measure the effectiveness of international law for achieving the SDGs, with a view to inform the negotiation of the post-2030 agenda during the third and final phase (2031-2032).⁷

4. The newly established Committee addresses a crucial issue of our time, that is, how international law can (better) support efforts to address complex and multi-faceted global sustainable development challenges, while also contributing to an adequate quality of life and the realization of human rights for all.⁸ At the same time, the task of the Committee is to be performed against the backdrop of the escalation of geopolitical tensions and conflict across multiple fronts, which make international law (for sustainable development) even more needed but, at the same time, under unprecedented strain. While the risk that these worrisome developments will inevitably condition the contribution that international law can deliver to achieve on the SDGs is tangible, the establishment of this Committee could not be more timely to maintain momentum towards the pressing sustainable development challenges that will continue to magnify at this critical juncture and to reinforce the centrality of international law in addressing global sustainability imperatives.

II. THE SDGS AND THEIR LEGAL STATUS⁹

5. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by acclamation at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in New York on 25 September 2015 and endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in Resolution 70/1.¹⁰ Building upon the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted under the Millennium Declaration of 2000¹¹ and drawing on the outcome of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) — *The Future We Want* —¹² the 2030 Agenda establishes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 associated targets, universally applicable to all States and intended to be achieved by 2030. The SDGs reflect a comprehensive, integrated, and indivisible vision of sustainable development structured around five overarching dimensions — People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership — and grounded in an explicit commitment to 'leave no one behind'. The 2030 Agenda acknowledges, as guiding principles, the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, 'including full respect for international law',¹³ and makes explicit reference to a broad range of prior international commitments in the fields of human rights, environmental protection, and economic governance.

⁷ International Law Association, *Proposed Programme of Work of an ILA Committee on the Contributions of International Law to the Global Sustainable Development Law and the Post-2030 Agenda* (2024) 6

⁸ Ibid, p. 4.

⁹ Drafted by Elisa Baroncini (Italian), Markus Gehring (German) and Tejas Rao (UAE).

¹⁰ UNGA Res 70/1 (25 September 2015) UN Doc [A/RES/70/1](#) ('2030 Agenda').

¹¹ UNGA Res 55/2 (8 September 2000) UN Doc [A/RES/55/2](#) ('Millennium Declaration').

¹² UNGA Res 66/288 (27 July 2012) UN Doc [A/RES/66/288](#) ('The Future We Want').

¹³ 2030 Agenda (n 10) para 10.

6. The international institutional architecture for SDG implementation and review is voluntary in character. The principal intergovernmental forum for SDG follow-up and review is the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), established by UNGA Resolution 67/290 of 2013,¹⁴ which meets annually under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and convenes quadrennially at the level of Heads of State and Government under the auspices of UNGA. The primary instrument for national-level accountability is the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process, through which States report on progress in implementing the SDGs and their targets. A Global Indicator Framework — comprising 232 unique indicators — was developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators and formally endorsed by UNGA in 2017.¹⁵ While these mechanisms have generated significant normative and institutional momentum, their fundamentally non-binding and voluntary character has direct implications for the legal status of the SDGs, examined in the following paragraphs.

7. As a UNGA resolution, the 2030 Agenda does not, in itself, constitute a legally binding source of international obligation under Article 38(1) of the Statute of the International Court of Justice.¹⁶ UNGA resolutions are declaratory in character and are not, as a category, legally binding on member States, though they may contribute to the formation of customary international law where they reflect or generate *opinio juris* coupled with a consistent State practice. The SDGs and their 169 targets are accordingly best characterised as instruments of soft law: they generate normative expectations and create political and institutional frameworks for accountability and review, but do not of themselves impose enforceable legal obligations on States or international organisations. This characterisation is confirmed by the text of the 2030 Agenda itself, which frames the SDGs as a 'plan of action' and employs aspirational rather than obligatory language throughout. Notwithstanding their non-binding character, the normative significance of the SDGs within the international legal system should not be understated. Consistent with the principle of systemic integration under Article 31(3)(c) of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (VCLT),¹⁷ international courts and tribunals have increasingly invoked the SDGs as interpretive aids, as evidence of State consensus regarding the objectives of sustainable development, and as context within which existing treaty obligations may appropriately be understood and applied.

8. The Pact for the Future, adopted by acclamation as an annex to UNGA Resolution 79/1 of 22 September 2024 at the conclusion of the UN Summit for the Future, constitutes a significant reaffirmation of the international community's commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs at a moment of acute geopolitical strain.¹⁸ The Pact reiterates the centrality of the 2030 Agenda in the global sustainable development framework and sets out a broad range of political commitments — spanning international peace and security, sustainable development, climate action, digital cooperation, and reform of international governance — aimed at accelerating SDG implementation in the years remaining before 2030 and at shaping the post-2030 agenda. The Pact for the Future adopts, as integral annexes, the Global Digital Compact and the

¹⁴UNGA Res 67/290 (9 July 2013) UN Doc [A/RES/67/290](#).

¹⁵UNGA Res 71/313 (6 July 2017) UN Doc [A/RES/71/313](#). The Global Indicator Framework was subsequently refined in 2020 and 2025 through technical review processes led by the Statistical Commission: see UNGA Res 75/212 (21 December 2020) UN Doc [A/RES/75/212](#).

¹⁶Statute of the International Court of Justice (adopted 26 June 1945, entered into force 24 October 1945) 33 UNTS 993 art 38(1); *Legal Consequences for States of the Continued Presence of South Africa in Namibia (South West Africa) notwithstanding Security Council Resolution 276 (1970)* (Advisory Opinion) ICJ Rep 16.

¹⁷Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (adopted 23 May 1969, entered into force 27 January 1980) 1155 UNTS 331 art 31(3)(c) ('VCLT'); ILA, 'New Delhi Declaration of Principles of International Law Relating to Sustainable Development' (ILA Resolution 3/2002, 6 April 2002) Principle 7.

¹⁸ UNGA Res 79/1 (22 September 2024) UN Doc A/RES/79/1 ('Pact for the Future').

Declaration on Future Generations, signalling an intent to extend both the temporal and thematic scope of sustainable development commitments. While the Pact shares the non-binding character of the 2030 Agenda, its consensual adoption by Heads of State and Government represents a meaningful reaffirmation of multilateral commitment to sustainable development and international cooperation at a time of heightened contestation of the multilateral order. As with the 2030 Agenda, its legal relevance lies less in its direct enforceability than in its capacity to inform the interpretation of binding treaty obligations, contribute to the crystallisation of emerging norms of customary international law, and guide the conduct of international organisations and financial institutions in the discharge of their sustainable development mandates.

III. INTERNATIONAL LAW IN THE SDGS

9. During its first phase, the Committee has focused on examining the contents, legal status and application of the principles and rules of international law related to the SDGs and their targets. Accordingly, the Committee's work has been structured into four key 'clusters' of SDGs – namely, Society, Biosphere, Economy and Governance– to facilitate a systematic mapping of existing references to international law within the SDG framework, as well as to identify relevant gaps. The clusters were conceived to capture the interplay between human rights (Society cluster), economic development (Economy cluster) and environmental protection (Biosphere cluster) efforts through the notion of sustainable development, and to understand how this interplay has shaped internal and global governance practices (Governance cluster). The objective was, in other words, to dissect each of the components of the comprehensive and integrated approach that informs the very definitional objective of sustainable development, as defined in the ILA New Delhi Declaration,¹⁹ and to understand how the integration of human rights, economic and environmental considerations has been recognized and implemented in practice. The result of the work undertaken by each cluster is presented in the sections below.

1. Society Cluster – International Human Rights Law for the SDGs

10. The Society Cluster examined Sustainable Development Goals 2 (Hunger, Food Security, and Sustainable Agriculture), 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality) and 11 (Sustainable Cities). The targets of these SDGs are mapped in the major universal and regional instruments, and in the practice of relevant monitoring mechanisms.²⁰

1.1 General Trends and Patterns related to SDGS 2, 3, 4, 5 and 11

11. Most of the targets of SDGs 2, 3, 4, 5, 11 are normatively supported in international human rights treaties. Compliance to them is reinforced by human rights monitoring and judicial bodies informing practical implementation of these treaties by States. Accordingly, such bodies guide the latter on how to discharge their obligations. Some explicitly connect treaty obligations to the achievement of SDGs. In addition, several targets, especially from SDGs 2 and 11, are embedded in international law across various fields.

¹⁹ 2002 ILA Delhi Declaration, recital 13.

²⁰ The Society Cluster, led by Lorenza Mola (Italian), included the following Members: Manjida Ahamed, Freya Doughty Wagner (American), Tenia Kyriazi (UAE) and Judi Storer (Australian).

12. SDG 2 aims at ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture. SDG2 targets have been addressed by the United Nations over decades and are encompassed by a wide range of international and regional legal instruments across different fields of international law, either singly or together.²¹ International human rights law recognizes the right to food as part of the right to an adequate standard of living, implicitly in other rights, and by vulnerable categories (cf. Targets 2.1, 2.2, 2.3).²² Food security is a pre-condition for the full enjoyment of the right to food. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), sustainable food and agriculture contribute to food security and the dimensions of sustainability (environmental, social and economic).²³ International trade and investment law play a central role in the legal framing and actual realization of SDG 2 Targets, including 2.3, 2.a and 2.b, while environmental treaties also provide legal obligations of particular relevance to 2.4 and 2.5.

13. A recurring pattern concerns the complex character and interrelation of the three dimensions covered under SDG 2. It is important to note that this entails ‘the need for coherence and collaboration between international institutions at the global level’.²⁴ A notable trend is that, in conflict zones, freedom from hunger within the right to food is addressed in relation to recourse to starvation of civilians, as a breach of international humanitarian law.²⁵

14. SDG 3 seeks to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all. The right to health is articulated through diverse but mutually reinforcing perspectives across global and regional human rights instruments, with article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) being the cornerstone of the right in international human rights law.

15. The UN Committee on International Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (‘ESCR Committee’) elaborated a broad and inclusive conception of the content of the right to health, which contains both freedoms and entitlements, as well as a wide range of “underlying determinants of health”, which are mostly aligned with the targets of SDG 3.²⁶ Notably, the principle of non-discrimination and equality implies that States must address differences and specific needs of those who face particular health challenges, such as higher mortality rates and vulnerability to certain diseases, as well as to ensure that specific health standards are applied to particular population groups, such as women, children and persons with disabilities. The mutually reinforcing complementarities between the Goals and the right to health (achieving Targets 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, and 5.6 contributes to the realization of the right to health), and critical gaps within the SDG framework (particularly, non-discrimination, accountability, universal health coverage and violence) have been identified. Hence, States are encouraged to strengthen accountability and to integrate human-rights principles into national SDG strategies.²⁷

16. SDG 4 aspires to ensure inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all. This goal can be linked to a long-standing body of treaty-based commitments that define the normative content of the right to education, both globally and at regional levels. Article 13(2) of the ICESCR and

²¹ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Fact Sheet No. 34.

²² CESCR, GC No. 11, para. 6; UNGA RES/74/149 (2020).

²³ Cf. IPCC, *Climate Change and Land: An IPCC Special Report on Climate Change, Desertification, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Food Security, and Greenhouse Gas Fluxes in Terrestrial Ecosystems* (2019).

²⁴ UNGA RES/74/149 (2020).

²⁵ UNHRC, ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Michael Fakhri’ UN Doc A/79/171 (2024).

²⁶ CESCR, General Comment No 14, UN Doc E/C.12/2000/4; Eleanor D Kinney, ‘The International Human Right to Health: What Does This Mean for Our Nation and the World?’ (2001) 34 *Indiana Law Review* 1457, 1468.

²⁷ UNHRC Res 35/23 (22 June 2017); UNGA, ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association’ UN Doc A/71/304 (2016) paras 8–10.

articles 28 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) are the most comprehensive provisions guaranteeing the right to education in international law.

17. The ESCR Committee has recognized that education is both a right in itself and an indispensable means of realizing other rights and adopted the 4-A framework (availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability).²⁸ The addition of accountability has been advocated to facilitate monitoring of States' compliance and the adoption and implementation of solid legal and policy frameworks.²⁹ Crucially, the right to education has been explicitly linked to SDG 4 targets with 4.1 and 4.5 being identified as "critical", and a tripartite human rights framework for education has been introduced centred on the right of access to education, rights within education and the instrumentalization of education for the enjoyment of all human rights through education.³⁰ Also, States' implementation of the right to inclusive education is considered to facilitate the operationalization of SDG 4 targets.³¹ Furthermore, article 29 CRC imposes the obligation to rework and systematically revise and update domestic school curricula and education resources to reflect the values enshrined in it,³² which clearly aligns with Target 4.7.

18. Gender equality, the primary focus of SDG 5, is consistently enshrined across international human rights instruments mostly through the principle of non-discrimination, but also through mandating women's effective participation in public life and decision-making processes. Article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women operationalises gender equality as a legally binding obligation.

19. The CEDAW Committee's General Recommendations fully align with Targets 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5c, 4.1, 4.5, 4.7, 3.1, 3.7, 3.8, 11.2, 11.7 despite the rarity of explicit references to the SDGs.³³ Authoritative interpretations of the Convention emphasise the significance of ending violence against women and girls, including harmful practices such as child marriage (5.3) and trafficking (5.2) and increasingly adopt an intersectional lens when addressing the overlapping barriers to the realisation of gender equality.³⁴ Remarkably, although the growth of AI technologies and social media platforms provides critical tools for achieving this and other SDG targets, it also enables new human rights challenges that undermine their achievement - notably, in relation to gender-based violence. Despite the absence of references to the impact of digital technologies in core human rights instruments, monitoring bodies have begun to engage with this issue, which warrants thorough consideration.

20. To make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, SDG 11 targets span a variety of aspects which are linked to positive human rights obligations of States under different instruments (cf 11.1 and art. 11 ICESCR; 11.2 and 12 ICCPR; 11.4 and art. 15 ICESCR; 11.5 and art. 6 ICCPR; 11.6 and art. 12 ICESCR). Systemic integration of treaty commitments is needed to ensure achievement of SDG 11, which itself requires systemic and

²⁸ CESCR, General Comment No 13, UN Doc E/C.12/1999/10; UN Commission on Human Rights, 'Preliminary Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Katarina Tomasevski' UN Doc E/CN.4/1999/49; Katarina Tomasevski, *Human Rights Obligations in Education: The 4-A Scheme* (Wolf Legal Publishers 2006).

²⁹ UNHRC, 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education' UN Doc A/HRC/53/27 (2023) para 85; UNESCO, *Guidelines to Strengthen the Right to Education in National Frameworks* (2021) <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000375352>.

³⁰ CEDAW Committee, General Recommendation No 36, UN Doc CEDAW/C/GC/36 (2017) paras 3, 14–17.

³¹ Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, General Comment No 4, UN Doc CRPD/C/GC/4 (2016) paras 2, 9, 41, 65, 73.

³² Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No 1, UN Doc CRC/GC/2001/1 para 18.

³³ UN Doc A/45/38 (1990); UN Doc A/47/38 (1992); UN Doc A/52/38 (1997); UN Doc A/54/38/Rev.1 (1999); UN Doc HRI/GEN/1/Rev.7 (2004); UN Doc CEDAW/C/GC/33 (2015); UN Doc CEDAW/C/GC/34 (2016); UN Doc CEDAW/C/GC/36 (2017); UN Doc CEDAW/C/GC/38 (2020); UN Doc CEDAW/C/GC/31–CRC/C/GC/18 (2014); UN Doc CEDAW/C/GC/37 (2018). The latter makes explicit reference to SDGs 3–6, 10, 11 and 13 (para 22).

³⁴ UN Doc A/45/38 (1990); UN Doc A/47/38 (1992); UN Doc CEDAW/C/GC/31–CRC/C/GC/18 (2014); UN Doc CEDAW/C/GC/37 (2018); UN Doc CEDAW/C/GC/38 (2020); UN Doc A/HRC/59/47 (2022); UN Doc A/HRC/53/28 (2023); UN Doc A/HRC/52/33 (2023).

integrated design and implementation of public policies (11.A and 11.B) and implies procedural obligations grounded in participation (11.3). Treaties addressing vulnerable categories such as minorities and migrant workers spell out some specific obligations corresponding to Targets 11.3, 11.5, 11.A and 11.B.

21. The ESCR Committee explicitly refers to SDG 11 in the context of the right to an adequate standard of living (art. 11 of the ICESCR) and emphasizes the importance of urban planning in addressing climate change risks. It also investigates the role of land in impinging on human rights, ensuring the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, and promoting the right to development, among other rights.³⁵ The Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment notes, inter alia, the relevance of this right and biodiversity for vulnerable and specific categories, such as women and girls, and Indigenous peoples, peasants and other rural communities.³⁶

1.2 Reflections on Coverage, Gaps and Explanatory Factors

22. Overall, a human-rights-based approach to development can lead to better, more equitable, and more sustainable development outcomes.³⁷ Linking human rights obligations to SDG delivery increases accountability and effectiveness and provides a framework for measuring progress and rectifying inequalities. Significant challenges in bridging the gap between human rights obligations and SDGs include limited fiscal space, uneven resource allocation, weak accountability mechanisms and insufficient integration of human rights standards in economic planning.³⁸ Furthermore, implementation of the SDGs has been hindered by conflicts, geopolitical tensions, climate change, health emergencies and rampant inequalities.³⁹ To accelerate progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and beyond, States are encouraged to embed human rights standards in policy design, national planning and global governance reforms, as well as adequately resource rights-based development efforts, adopt rights-informed economic frameworks to address inequalities and strengthen monitoring mechanisms.

2. Biosphere Cluster – International Environmental Law for the SDGs

23. The Biosphere cluster focused on targets for SDGs 6 (availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all), 7 (access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all), 13 (urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts), 14 (conservation and sustainability of oceans, seas, and marine resources) and 15 (protection, restoration and promotion of sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and forests, and cessation of land degradation, desertification and biodiversity loss).⁴⁰

³⁵ CESCR, General Comment No 27, UN Doc E/C.12/GC/27 (2025) para 66; CESCR, General Comment No 26, UN Doc E/C.12/GC/26 (2022) para 2.

³⁶ UNHRC, 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment' UN Doc A/HRC/52/33 (2023); UNGA, 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Context of Climate Change' UN Doc A/79/270 (2024).

³⁷ Danish Institute for Human Rights, *Integrated Review and Reporting on SDGs and Human Rights: A Key to Effective, Efficient and Accountable Implementation* (Danish Institute for Human Rights 2019) https://www.humanrights.dk/files/media/migrated/integrated_review.pdf accessed 10 February 2026.

³⁸ UNHRC, 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Context of Climate Change' UN Doc A/HRC/61/13 (2026).

³⁹ UNGA, 'Report of the Secretary-General on Follow-up and Review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the Global Level' UN Doc A/80/81-E/2025/62 para 14

⁴⁰ The Biosphere Cluster, led by Jorge Cabrera Medaglia, Cairo Robb (British) and Judi Storer (Australian), included the following Members: Bruno Arpi (Australian), Yongmin Bian (HQ), Tiago De Melo (Portuguese), Yvonne Vera Diaz (Australian), Anita Halvorsen (American), Barbara Janusz-Pawletta (Poland), Tomoaki Nishimura (Japanese), Tejas Rao (UAE) and Aida Tamer Chammas (British).

2.1 General Trends and Patterns related to SDGs 6, 7, 13, 14 and 15

24. All SDG 6 targets are strongly supported by international agreements, mainly through numerous regional and basin water agreements, although global water conventions are not universally ratified.⁴¹ International human rights law is also relevant for SDGs 6.1 (access to drinking water) and 6.2 (water, sanitation and hygiene), whilst international environmental law supports SDGs 6.3 (water quality), 6.4 (water quantity), 6.5 (Integrated Water Resources Management and transboundary cooperation), and 6.6 (ecosystems). However, international law treaty provisions are weak, fragmented, or non-existent regarding: water service provision, financing, infrastructure standards, and operational mechanisms; sanitation, wastewater and hygiene; reuse, emerging pollutants, and microplastics; and water-specific participation, protection of community rights, and access to justice (SDGs 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 & 6.7.b). The IACtHR and ECtHR recognise that the right to a healthy environment includes access to water and sanitation, and that pollution impacts those rights.⁴² States failing to provide adequate access to water may violate international human rights law.⁴³

25. The *Paris Agreement* supports SDG 7 by promoting renewable energy expansion to meet the Agreement's temperature goals. The *Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women* recognises the right to electricity for rural women (art.14(2)(h)), which includes low-cost sustainable and renewable energy sources.⁴⁴ The *Azerbaijan 2016* (Preamble), and *Belgium–Luxembourg Economic Union 2019* (Preamble, arts. 1 & 3), *Model Bilateral Investment Treaties* explicitly mention SDG 7. The 2018 *Bucharest Energy Charter Declaration* also refers to SDG 7 regarding investment risks and the creation of an investment-friendly environment and mobilisation of finance (p 2-3). SDG 7 lacks a unified binding treaty, and international law does not yet recognise a universal right to affordable and clean energy. To strengthen the achievement of SDG 7, international institutions should more systematically integrate targets into existing binding legal frameworks, particularly the *Paris Agreement*, and international trade and investment law. A universal right to affordable and clean energy should be established in international law.

26. The key treaties explicitly addressing SDG 13 targets are the 1992 *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC), the 2015 *Paris Agreement*, and the 1997 *Kyoto Protocol*, which is still in force. While *Kyoto* focuses on GHG emission reductions which supports SDG 13.2 (integrate climate change measures into policies and planning), the UNFCCC and *Paris* promote both GHG emissions reductions and adaptation, supporting all SDG 13 targets. The 1992 *Convention on Biological Diversity* (CBD) (arts. 8, 10, 12, 13, 17, 18, 20 & 21) and the 1994 *Convention to Combat Desertification* (CCD) (arts. 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 & 8) also support all SDG 13 targets. The 'soft law' Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030) is highly relevant to SDG 13.1 (climate-related disasters). An exponential increase in climate change impacts is hampering achievement of most Biosphere SDGs and many targets.⁴⁵ Yet, no targets explicitly seek to address global warming or climate change impacts. The ICJ, ECtHR, IACtHR and UNHRC, have clarified that States' failures to act to mitigate

⁴¹ See eg, *Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes* (adopted 17 March 1992, entered into force 6 October 1996) 1936 UNTS 269; *Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses* (adopted 21 May 1997, entered into force 17 August 2014) 2999 UNTS 77

⁴² *Advisory Opinion OC-23/17 Requested by the Republic of Colombia (Advisory Opinion)* (IACtHR Series A No 23, 15 November 2017) [54], [60], [66], [109]-[111], [117], [121]; *Hudorovič v Slovenia (Judgment)* (2020) Applications Nos 24816/14 and 15140/14 ECHR [116]

⁴³ *Case of the Indigenous Communities of Lhaka Honhat (Our Land) Association v Argentina (Judgment)* (IACtHR Series C No 400, 6 February 2020) [223]

⁴⁴ UN Doc CEDAW/C/GC/34 (7 March 2016) [85(c)]

⁴⁵ See, eg, 6.1, 6.4, 6.6, 6.7, 7.1, 14.1, 14.2, 14.3, 14.5, 14.8, 14.A, 15.1, 15.2, 15.3, 15.4, and 15.5

and adapt to climate change constitute contraventions of international law.⁴⁶ The ITLOS clarifies that under the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea* (UNCLOS) (art. 1.1.4), GHG emissions constitute pollution.⁴⁷ SDG targets should acknowledge and identify climate change impacts that will impede their achievement. Where measures to address global warming and climate change converge with measures to address other SDGs, targets should acknowledge and embrace this.

27. The UNCLOS provides an overarching legal framework for SDG 14, complemented by a dense body of sectoral marine pollution treaties (SDG 14.1),⁴⁸ fisheries management organisations (SDGs 14.4),⁴⁹ and marine research, technology transfer and capacity building (SDG 14.8). Together, they support SDG targets on ecosystem protection and restoration (14.2), marine conservation (14.5), and implementation of international law (14.A), with regional seas agreements supporting small scale fishers (SDG 14.9). The 2023 *Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity on Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction* (BBNJ) addresses historic governance gaps regarding high-seas biodiversity, environmental impact assessment, and benefit-sharing from marine genetic resources. The binding WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (2022) aims to reduce overcapacity, overfishing, and illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (SDGs 14.4, 14.6). ICJ, IACtHR and ITLOS advisory opinions clarify states' obligations to protect marine environments. Yet, international law remains fragmented in addressing ocean acidification primarily through climate change instruments (SDG 14.3), and in ensuring equitable economic benefits from marine resource use for Small Island Developing States and least developed countries (SDG 14.7). Capacity-building, technology transfer, and access to marine scientific research, remain insufficiently operationalised. Strengthening integration of ocean governance, climate law, land and biodiversity protection, fisheries regulation, and support for developing states and small-scale fishers, is essential.

28. The CBD and Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework⁵⁰ are supported by the *Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species and Wild Animals*, *Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat*, *International Tropical Timber Agreement*, and CCD, in addressing targets for terrestrial, freshwater, and mountain, ecosystems (SDGs 15.1, 15.4), forest management (SDGs 15.2, 15.B), restoring degraded land and soil, and reducing desertification, invasive species, and species extinction (SDGs 15.3, 15.5, 15.8). These, together with the *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna* (SDGs 15.7, 15.C), *Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization* to the *Convention on Biological Diversity*, *International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (SDG 15.6), pollution, waste, water and climate treaties, provide a comprehensive legal framework for protecting life on land. However, weak instruments, legal fragmentation, enforcement deficiencies, funding gaps, ambiguity of principles, marginalisation of Indigenous Peoples' rights, and lack of explicit treaty and implementation focus on soils and soil

⁴⁶ *Obligations on States in Respect of Climate Change (Advisory Opinion)* [2025] ICJ Rep 1, [457]; *Verein Klimaseniorinnen Schweiz v Switzerland* (2024) ECHR 1, 11; *Advisory Opinion OC-32/25 on Climate Emergency and Human Rights* (IACtHR, 29 May 2025), *Billy v Australia (Decision on Merits)* (2019) Human Rights Committee No. 3624/2019, UN Doc CCPR/C/135/D/3624/2019, [8.12], [8.14]

⁴⁷ *Request for an Advisory Opinion submitted by the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law (Advisory Opinion)* (2023) No 31 ITLOS 1, [173]

⁴⁸ Eg, *Protocol of 1978 relating to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships* (adopted 17 February 1978, entered into force 2 October 1983) 1340 UNTS 61; *Convention on the Prevention of Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and other Matter* (adopted 29 December 1972, entered into force 30 August 1975) 1046 UNTS 120; (*Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal* (adopted 22 March 1989, entered into force 5 May 1992) 1673 UNTS 57

⁴⁹ *Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks, and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks* (adopted 4 August 1995, entered into force 11 December 2001) 2167 UNTS 3; Regional Fisheries Management Organisation treaties

⁵⁰ UN Doc CBD/COP/DEC/15/4 (19 December 2022)

biodiversity, hinder effective action. Key recommendations include enhancing legal coherence, strengthening implementation, capacity building, and financing, and integrating human rights, including Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' participation, to achieve sustainable governance and fair and equitable benefit sharing.

2.2 Reflections on Coverage, Gaps and Explanatory Factors

29. A wealth of international law supports the achievement of SDGs 6, 7, 13, 14, and 15. SDGs 2, 3, 11 and 12 also have key relevance for the biosphere cluster. Evolving international jurisprudence promotes more coherent applications of treaty law by declaring and clarifying legal principles and States' obligations to address intersecting drivers and consequences of the climate, biodiversity, and pollution, crises. However, despite a rich tapestry of international hard and soft law, serious challenges persist and gaps remain.

3. Economy Cluster – International Economic Law for the SDGs

30. The Economy cluster focused on targets for SDGs 1 (no poverty), 8 (decent work and economic growth), 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), 10 (reduced inequalities), and 12 (responsible consumption and production), further complemented by SDG 5 (gender equality).⁵¹ To identify trends, patterns, and gaps, the cluster mapped relevant treaty law at both multilateral and bilateral levels and related case law to assess international legal frameworks functional to these targets.⁵²

3.1 General Trends and Patterns in International Law related to SDGs 1, 5 8, 9, 10 and 12

31. SDG 1 targets are anchored in a robust international law framework ranging from the World Trade Organization (WTO) Preamble's objective of raising standards of living to the granular obligations for an adequate standard of living and social security found in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (Arts. 9, 11), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 102. Recent case law has consolidated the view that State resources should be managed to ensure accessibility and inclusiveness to effectively dismantle the legally embedded patterns of exclusion that sustain poverty.⁵³ We note that the four Financing for Development Conferences also have committed States in soft law to collaborate on ending poverty and to restructure debt.⁵⁴

32. SDG 8 and 9 targets are supported by a diverse but fragmented array of multilateral instruments,⁵⁵ including WTO Agreements, ILO Conventions, and intellectual property frameworks such as Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), while

⁵¹ See MC Cordonier Segger and DS Olawuyi, *Sustainable Development Law: Principles, Practices and Prospects* (2nd edn, OUP); I Bantekas and F Seatzu, *The UN Sustainable Development Goals: A Commentary* (OUP 2023); J Ebbesson and E Hey (eds), *The Cambridge Handbook on the Sustainable Development Goals and International Law* (CUP 2022).

⁵² The Economic Cluster, led by Markus Gehring (German), Anita Halvorssen (American) and Anna Panarella (Swiss), included the following Members: Giovanna Adinolfi (Italian), Elena Athwal (GCC), Elisa Baroncini (Italian), Yongmin Bian (Chinese), Ilaria Colombo (Italian), Adelay Diaz (Australian), Ilaria Espa (Swiss), Isabel Feichtner (German), Jennifer Maaß (German), Lorenza Mola (Italian), Ekaterina Pannebakker (Dutch), Rumu Sarkar (American) and Micha Schwartzstein (British).

⁵³ *Indigenous Communities of the Lhaka Honhat (Our Land) Association v Argentina* (Merits, Reparations and Costs) Inter-American Court of Human Rights Series C No 400 (6 February 2020), paras. 201-209, 231-236, 356-357; *African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights v Kenya* (Ogiek case) (Merits), African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (26 May 2017), paras. 122-131, 208-210.

⁵⁴ See the Sevilla Commitment 2025, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/CONF.227/2025/L.1>.

⁵⁵ Arguably, this pattern is inextricably linked to the broad scope of the targets themselves, conceived to cover interconnected but distinct dimensions. SDG 8 is supported by WTO Agreements and ILO Conventions. SDG 9 is supported by legal frameworks on intellectual property and technology transfer (e.g. General Agreement on Trade Services (GATS) Art IV, TRIPS).

bilateral agreements often fail to substantially advance multilateral frameworks.⁵⁶ Effective advancement is further hindered by ‘soft’ operational content, where provisions are framed as best endeavor clauses,⁵⁷ or lack specific enforcement obligations.⁵⁸ In addition, domestic factors, including weak institutional capacity and corruption, contribute to hinder the implementation of these obligations at national level.⁵⁹ At the same time, multilateral efforts for infrastructure (SDG 9) are limited, but regional and bilateral treaties—such as the Treaty Establishing the Transport Community, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and other regional initiatives—explicitly target industrialisation and structural transformation.⁶⁰

33. Regarding the human rights dimension of SDGs 8 and 9, the coverage of international law remains limited, either because key definitions derive primarily from policy frameworks⁶¹ such as ‘modern slavery’⁶², or because no explicit reference to this dimension could be found.

34. SDG 10 targets regarding the relationship between developed and developing economies are supported by the foundational principle of sovereign equality.⁶³ However, institutional gaps persist as international financial institutions (IFIs) and international economic organizations (IEOs) often lack equal representation and voting rights for all members.⁶⁴ To address this persistent structural inequality, recent frameworks such as the 2024 United Nations (UN) Pact for the Future emphasize the need for enhanced participation of developing economies in decision-making. Substantive support for SDG 10 is further found in mobilisation mechanisms for financial resources,⁶⁵ technology transfer,⁶⁶ and knowledge sharing,⁶⁷ as well as trade-specific derogations and transition periods for developing countries.⁶⁸ Relevant case law focuses on the need for international trade preferences to be designed in a way that addresses

⁵⁶ Examples emerge from Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), the EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), Japan European Free Trade Agreement (JEFTA), and Korea Free Trade Agreement (KORUS) where bilateral agreements do not substantially advance the GATS framework on financial services. See Carlo M Cantore, *The Prudential Carve-Out for Financial Services: Rationale and Practice in the GATS and Preferential Trade Agreements* (CUP 2018).

⁵⁷ For instance, expressions used refer to the acknowledgement by the Parties of the need to “take steps” to carry out a certain action, such as fossil fuels elimination, without providing further specification (Article 22.8(1) New Zealand-UK FTA).

⁵⁸ For instance, see the discipline of environmental criteria under government procurement procedures (SDG 12.7). See: Article 15.12(6) CPTPP; USCMA, Article 13.3 and 13.11; European Free Trade Association (EFTA)-Moldova Agreement, Article 7.3.

⁵⁹ Gazmend Amxhehaj et al, ‘The Role of Institutions in Energy Transition and Economic Growth in West Balkan Countries’ (2024) 33(3) *Economic Studies Journal* 18, 24.

⁶⁰ See for example, Treaty Establishing The Transport Community (OJ L 278, 27.10.2017); Agreement On International Roads In The Arab Mashreq (2001); Intergovernmental Agreement On The Asian Highway Network (2003); AfCFTA (2018).

⁶¹ As a consequence, elements that are key for effectively advancing SDGs are left undefined or untackled. For instance, under the multilateral framework of WTO Agreements, sustainability issues under SDG 8, 9 and 12 are often tackled under the broader framework of Article XX GATT. Considering social dimensions more specifically, the term “modern slavery”, widely used in the policy space relevant to SDG 8.7, is not specifically defined in international law. Rather, it is often employed as an umbrella concept encompassing a wide range of severe exploitation and abusive practices, including forced and child labour, slavery, human trafficking, and forced or child marriage.

⁶² We note that EU - Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific (OACP) States Partnership Agreement (2023); New Zealand - United Kingdom FTA (2022) and the Australia - United Kingdom FTA (2021) contain provisions committing parties to combat modern slavery.

⁶³ Art 2(1) UN Charter; 1970 UNGA Declaration on Friendly Relations; 1974 Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States.

⁶⁴ Art V Articles of Agreement; Para 30 Nairobi Ministerial Declaration, WTO doc. WT/MIN(15)/DEC (2015).

⁶⁵ See Articles 31bis; 66 and 67 TRIPS; Articles 12, 16 and 18 Convention on Biological Diversity.

⁶⁶ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (1992) Arts 4(1)(c), 4(5); Art 10 Paris Agreement; Art 10 Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal.

⁶⁷ UNFCCC Arts 4, 5; Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Art 12; Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity Agreement Art 4; Art 13.3 New Zealand-EU Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA).

⁶⁸ Art 27(2)(a) Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (ASCM); Art 12(3) Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement; Art 65(2) TRIPS; Art 27(2) and (3) ASCM; Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) horizontal approach.

objective development needs of developing countries.⁶⁹ Investment case law examines whether foreign projects must contribute to a host State's development to receive protection.⁷⁰

35. SDG 12 targets on responsible consumption and production are primarily addressed through natural resource management and prohibitions on harmful materials. Binding instruments such as the Minamata Convention and the Basel Convention regulate respectively mercury value chains and transboundary movement of hazardous wastes, with a comprehensive approach.⁷¹ Recent developments, for example, the Agreement on Climate Change, Trade and Sustainability (ACCTS) targeting fossil fuel subsidies⁷² and the inclusion of technical methodologies (e.g., the life-cycle assessment in government procurement)⁷³ show an evolving trade-sustainability nexus, with a more balanced consideration between economic and non-economic components of such relationship. Nevertheless, these initiatives remain relatively limited in scope and often exclude major global players, while the social dimension of sustainability (SDG 8) remains largely overlooked in trade and investment agreements. Although an increasing number of such agreements include provisions on labour standards (SDG 8) and gender equality (SDG 5), their implementation and enforcement remain significantly constrained.⁷⁴

3.2 Reflections on Coverage, Gaps, and Explanatory Factors

36. SDGs 1, 8, 9, 10, and 12, further complemented by SDG 5, are supported by a range of instruments of international law. While newer treaties expressly reaffirm a States' right to regulate in pursuit of social, labour, and environmental objectives,⁷⁵ legal fragmentation and the use of 'soft' language in binding instruments risk creating implementation and interpretative gaps.

4. Governance Cluster – Peace, Justice, Strong Institutions and Partnerships for the SDGs

37. The Governance Cluster examined Sustainable Development Goals 16 and 17, with a focus on governance, participation and the international legal frameworks that support their implementation. SDG 16 articulates core requirements relating to peace, accountability and inclusive decision-making, while SDG 17 addresses the means through which several SDGs are to be realised, notably through international cooperation, policy coherence, trade, investment, finance and capacity-building.⁷⁶

⁶⁹ *European Communities – Conditions for the Granting of Tariff Preferences to Developing Countries* (7 April 2004) WT/DS246/AB/R (Appellate Body Report) paras 154 seq.

⁷⁰ *Joy Mining Machinery Ltd v Arab Republic of Egypt* (Award on Jurisdiction, 6 August 2004) International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) Case No ARB/03/11; *Quiborax SA, Non Metallic Minerals SA and Allan Fosk Kaplún v Plurinational State of Bolivia* (Decision on Jurisdiction, 27 September 2012) ICSID Case No ARB/06/2.

⁷¹ Arts 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 Minamata Convention addressing the entire mercury value chain, seeking to reduce mercury production and use through a combination of bans and phase-outs of new mercury mining, restrictions on mercury-added products and manufacturing processes; Art 4.2 Basel Convention; Arts I, II, IV London Convention (Dumping).

⁷² ACCTS, Chapter 4.

⁷³ Directive 2014/24/EU, Art 68 regarding life-cycle costing.

⁷⁴ See for instance, EU - Singapore Free Trade Agreement (FTA), Chapter 12; EU - Viet Nam FTA, Chapter 13; US- KOREA FTA, Chapter 19.

⁷⁵ CETA Arts 8.9, 23.2, and 24.3.

⁷⁶ The Governance Cluster, led by Daniella Dam De Jong (Dutch), Elisa Baroncini (Italian) and Jennifer Maaß (German), included the following Members: Giovanna Adinolfi (Italian), Bruno Arpi (Australian), Christina Binder (Austrian), Ilaria Colombo (Italian), Emmanuella Doussis (Hellenic), Eghosa Ekhatior (Nigerian), Ilaria Espa (Swiss), Anita Halvorsen (American), Ingrid Kiessling (Chilean), Anna Panarella (Swiss), Tejas Rao (UAE), Cairo Robb (British), Rumu Sarkar (American), Nico Schrijver (Dutch), Micha Schwartzstein (British) and Siew Huay Tan (Singaporean).

38. The contribution adopts a mapping approach that situates individual SDG targets within existing regimes of international law. This allows for an assessment of how treaty obligations and case-law developments interact with the objectives of Agenda 2030. Particular attention is paid to the varying degrees to which different SDG targets are embedded in binding legal frameworks, but this Report also highlights how recent developments, including increasing contestation, put under stress the capacity of international legal instruments to support the advancement of several targets.

4.1 General Trends and Patterns in International Law related to SDGs 16 and 17

39. An important objective of SDG 16 is to promote peaceful societies and to hold decision-makers accountable. Relevant targets include 16.1 on reducing violence and related death rates, 16.2 on ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children, 16.4 on reducing illicit financial and arms flows, strengthening the recovery and return of stolen assets and combating all forms of organized crime, 16.6 on developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions and 16.a on strengthening relevant national institutions for building capacity to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime.

40. These targets are supported by a dense web of international and regional agreements across multiple fields of international law, most notably international human rights law, international humanitarian law, international criminal law and transnational criminal law. A first notable trend is that – even though most of the relevant agreements have been widely ratified – violations have become more frequent. For instance, civilians and civilian infrastructure have been routinely targeted in recent armed conflicts, despite the restraints imposed on belligerents by the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their 1977 protocols. A second notable trend is that international and regional courts and tribunals are increasingly seized to prevent violations and ensure accountability (see the table for case law), yet they have also come under attack. The sanctions imposed by the US on the International Criminal Court provide a relevant example.⁷⁷ Therefore, notwithstanding the existence of a solid normative and institutional framework, achieving the relevant targets will be challenging in the current political climate. The most promising prospects are for targets 16.4 and 16.a, with United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and the terrorism conventions being more successful.

41. Participation constitutes another core dimension of SDG 16. Target 16.7 addresses inclusive and representative decision-making, while 16.10 secures the information- and freedom-related conditions without which participation risks becoming nominal. Targets 16.6 and 16.5 further foreground the conditions for participation to be effective rather than merely formal, by requiring institutional transparency, accountability and integrity.

42. The principal embedding in international law of the participatory dimension of SDG 16 lies in international human rights law, most prominently the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) guarantees on participation in public affairs, freedom of expression including access to information, and peaceful assembly, as further specified through regional human rights treaties.⁷⁸ One recurring pattern is that international treaty law typically establishes minimum procedural guarantees while leaving institutional form largely to domestic orders. This duality is increasingly exposed where participation is affirmed in principle but

⁷⁷ The White House, ‘Imposing Sanctions on the International Criminal Court’ (6 February 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/imposing-sanctions-on-the-international-criminal-court/> accessed 29 January 2026.

⁷⁸ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (adopted 16 December 1966, entered into force 23 March 1976) 999 UNTS 171, arts 19, 21, 25 (ICCPR).

constrained in practice through the use of emergency powers, or restrictions on civil society and media.⁷⁹ A second trend concerns the growing role of international and regional courts in operationalizing participatory guarantees without imposing a single participatory model and in confirming the relevance of participation beyond a strictly human rights framework. For instance, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in *Claude Reyes v Chile* characterised access to information held by public authorities as a prerequisite for democratic oversight,⁸⁰ and in *Yatama v Nicaragua* found exclusionary electoral rules incompatible with meaningful participation for marginalised groups.⁸¹ Moreover, the International Court of Justice, in its Advisory Opinion on *Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change*, explicitly re-affirms public participation and public access to information as elements of treaty-based (and due-diligence-inflected) international cooperation under the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.⁸²

43. Another trend concerns the extension of participation into the sphere of implementation through public, private and civil-society partnerships, as encouraged in target 17.17. In this setting, participation is characterised as voluntary, practice-driven and frequently structured through procurement regimes, contractual arrangements and institutional policies. The result is a layered architecture of participation in which rights-based participation under SDG 16 coexists with partnership-based participation under SDG 17. This coexistence raises questions regarding the asymmetries in accountability, representativeness and legal enforceability, especially when treaty-based participatory guarantees are mediated through hybrid public-private delivery arrangements.

44. With regard to SDG 17, international trade and investment law play a central role in shaping the implementation of its economic objectives. Targets 17.5 and 17.10 outline how promoting foreign investment and multilateral trade are key engines for implementing the UN 2030 Agenda. The World Trade Organization (WTO), considered a “custodian” of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, has since its inception promoted a model of sustainable economic development; its case law, with the 1998 Appellate Body report in the *US–Shrimp* dispute, transformed sustainable development from a political aspiration into a normative interpretative tool within WTO law.⁸³ However, the multilateral trading system has not been able to conclude the Doha Development Agenda, because of an inappropriate use of the advantage of the special and differential treatment principle, a too wide lack of respect for fundamental WTO rules by the new emerging powers, a significant difficulty of the traditional authoritative actors to renovate and reposition themselves, and, more generally, a weak posture of States to protect minimum environmental and social standards. Yet the WTO membership as a whole recognizes the relevance of the rules-based multilateral trade system for an open and equitable global trade. There is currently a transversal effort to promote a substantial transformation of the WTO to provide effective fairness and equity for all its Members and to advance the sustainability agenda in Geneva, also through plurilaterals and variable geometry.

45. Another relevant trend complementing the multilateral level is the proliferation of regional and bilateral trade agreements (see the table). While multilateral rules continue to provide the baseline for the integration of developing and least developed countries into international trade, more concrete market access commitments are increasingly negotiated on a preferential basis,

⁷⁹ United Nations, ‘Our Common Agenda’, Report of the Secretary-General, A/75/982 (2021) para. 19, 23, 28. See also Human Rights Council, ‘Rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association’, Rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, A/HRC/41/41 (2019).

⁸⁰ *Claude Reyes et al v Chile* Inter-American Court of Human Rights Series C No 151 (19 September 2006).

⁸¹ *Yatama v Nicaragua* Inter-American Court of Human Rights Series C No 127 (23 May 2005)

⁸² *Obligations on States in Respect of Climate Change (Advisory Opinion)* [2025] ICJ Rep 1.

⁸³ Appellate Body Report, *United States—Import Prohibition of Certain Shrimp and Shrimp Products*, WT/DS58/AB/R (12 October 1998) (‘US—Shrimp’).

advancing the objectives of targets 17.11 and 17.12 concerning the inclusion of developing and least-developed countries in international trade. On the investment side, International Investment Law (IIL) is now accompanied by sustainable development provisions and interpretation, requiring economic operators to respect the environment, core labour standards, local communities and fundamental rights, and protecting States that adopt sustainable domestic legislation. Important results include the Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement (IFDA) finalized at the WTO in 2024, and at bilateral level the Sustainability Investment Facilitation Agreements (SIFAs) reached by the EU with Angola and Ecuador.

46. Another area characterised by a high degree of normative density relates to target 17.9, which concerns capacity-building support for developing countries. In fact, there is the successful inclusion of provisions on capacity-building that foster sustainability outcomes across several treaties in different fields of international law, such as in Article 11 of the Paris Agreement explicitly calling developed states to enhance support for capacity-building actions for adaptation and mitigation for developing countries, as recently confirmed by the ICJ Advisory Opinion on climate change. Similar provisions on cooperation can be found across a range of international instruments addressing technology transfer, innovation and access to technology, reflecting the shared logic underlying targets 17.6, 17.7, 17.8 and 17.9.

47. By contrast, targets 17.2, 17.3 and 17.4 which concern the mobilization of official development assistance (ODA), other financial flows and debt relief initiatives for developing countries, lack comparable treaty-based obligations and continue to rely primarily on the political willingness and fiscal capacity of developed countries rather than on legally enforceable commitments (see table).⁸⁴

4.2 Reflections on Coverage, Gaps, and Explanatory Factors

48. The mapping exercise revealed that SDGs 16 and 17 rely in many respects on international law and the institutional mechanisms that it has created. The contribution of case law differs across targets, which can partly be explained by the variety of subject matters that these address, while recent Advisory Opinions encourage policy coherence, which aligns with SDG Target 17.14 that seeks to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development. Several of the examined SDGs targets are challenged by the new difficult geopolitical situation and the need to reconsider the current schemes of multilateralism to promote equilibrium, fairness and new rules. The emerging networked system may however also open new avenues for a juster and more sustainable collaboration, based on partnership between like-minded countries.

IV. SYNERGIES AMONG SDG CLUSTERS

49. As outlined in the previous sections, each SDG and its associated targets are aligned with one or more international agreements. Consequently, the role of international law is pivotal. The implementation of the relevant treaties has the potential to facilitate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Alternatively, existing international legal regimes may necessitate refinement to enhance their contribution to these goals.

⁸⁴ SDG 17.2 aims to mobilise sufficient resources to help them implement sustainable development programmes and policies. It reflects long-standing standards in official development assistance (ODA), most notably the 0.7 per cent ODA/GNI (gross national income) target, first affirmed in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2626 (XXV) (1970), and the 0.15–0.20 per cent ODA/GNI allocation for least developed countries, articulated in the Report of the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (1981) and subsequently reaffirmed through successive soft-law instruments. These standards, however, have never been transposed into binding treaty provisions accompanied by enforcement mechanisms.

50. This observation suggests that the possible synergies and complementarities among the SDGs and, therefore, among the relevant legal instruments for each of them, should be given due consideration. As stated in Article 31, para. 3(c) of the 1969 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, international agreements are to be interpreted on the basis of, *inter alia*, “any relevant rules of international law applicable in the relations between the parties”.⁸⁵ Consequently, in the interpretative process of any conventional legal regime, other international agreements must be considered to determine the scope of obligations arising for States. In consideration of the aforementioned context, it is possible to identify particular synergies between the SDGs and their respective targets. Conversely, the presence of inconsistencies cannot be ruled out *a priori*. In the event that relevant international regimes set forth clashing obligations and traditional means of interpretation do not resolve the conflict, States could be found responsible for an internationally wrongful act for breaching one of the pertinent treaties. The following paragraphs illustrate some examples.

51. SDG 3 on good health and well-being is closely linked to the right to health, as articulated in various international human rights instruments, and to SDG 2 and the right to food (Social cluster). Concurrently, the enjoyment of these rights is also contingent upon States’ full implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and the principles of international environmental law (Biosphere cluster) and the sustainable consumption and production in SDG 12 (Economy cluster).

52. In considering the interactions among SDGs within the Social and Governance clusters, it is worth noting the complementarity between SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 16 on inclusive societies for sustainable development, particularly target 16.7 on “responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels”. Non-discrimination provisions included in international human rights instruments or mandating women’s effective participation in public life, as well as environmental agreements on public participation to decision-making process, such as the 1998 Aarhus Convention and the 2018 Escazu Convention, can be mutually supportive in designing a new governance model where women take full part in the environmental decision-making process at the national level.

53. The economic and environmental dimensions of SDGs can also be considered from this perspective. The fulfilment of target 10.a on the special and differential treatment for developing countries (Economy cluster) immediately recalls, on trade matters, the relevant rules established under the WTO agreements, which give special consideration to the needs of developing countries. In instances where commercial instruments are employed to implement international environmental obligations (Biosphere cluster), their potential adverse impact on the trade interests of developing countries could be given due consideration, in accordance with both the special and differential treatment approach endorsed by the WTO agreements and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities enshrined in MEAs.

54. As previously stated, the realisation of SDG 1 on poverty reduction (Economy cluster) is inherently linked to various international instruments pertaining to human rights and labour rights (Social cluster). Nevertheless, in the context of international trade and financial agreements, references to the social dimension of economic development, if present, are typically found in the preambles and mostly expressed in an exhortative language. They ultimately lack the capacity to provide adequate guidance for considering the impact on the effective enjoyment of human and labour rights in the design and implementation of trade

⁸⁵ Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (adopted 23 May 1969, entered into force 27 January 1980) 1155 UNTS 331, art 31(3)(c).

policies or of adjustment programs linked to the disbursement of financial assistance by international financial institutions.

55. A closer examination of the SDGs in the Governance and Economic clusters reveals notable interactions. For instance, targets 17.11 and 17.12, respectively, on increasing developing countries' exports and on implementing duty-free, quota-free market access for less developed countries (under the Governance cluster) are fully consistent with target 10.a in the Economic cluster concerning the special and differential treatment in favour of developing countries. Adopting suitable measures in one of these areas directly impacts the realisation of the others.

56. Finally, the deployment of official financial resources for developing countries is addressed in general terms in targets 17.2 and 17.3 (Governance cluster) and in target 13.a (Biosphere cluster), which specifically concerns the implementation by developed countries of the commitment they have undertaken under the UNFCCC to mobilize sources to address the needs of developing countries. However, even if an increased availability of financial resources is pivotal to the achievement of the SDGs, efforts in this direction still rely primarily on political willingness of developed countries rather than on legal commitments under treaty regimes. Even when existing (as under Article 9(1) of the 2015 Paris Agreement), these commitments have not led to the desired results.

V. CONCLUSIONS

57. Through this extensive mapping and assessment, the Committee has identified relevant developments in treaty law and case law in relation to the four key clusters of SDGs, highlighting relevant trends and illustrative examples, as well as synergies and persisting gaps. Based on this stocktaking, ILA Committee members have already begun populating a platform that would serve as the main repository for the Committee. This platform is currently being developed and is meant to be made publicly accessible online in due course with a view to increase engagement with international law scholars and practitioners and encouraging communication and consultation with a broader audience, including international bodies engaged in defining the post-2030 agenda.⁸⁶ In this perspective, the work will not only focus on the mapping, but also on identifying existing synergies and complementary approaches between the different clusters, which will be crucial to inform the analysis on the operationalization of the integration principle in the second phase. This will be instrumental for identifying and addressing most critical gaps through initial recommendations for the post-2030 agenda. Such recommendations will be developed in consultation with the broad ILA network and advanced interactively to inform UN deliberations.

⁸⁶ Excerpts of the work undertaken are provided in the form of Tables annexed to this Report.

ANNEXES – CLUSTERS TABLES

Biosphere Cluster

SDG	Illustrative Relevant Treaties	Illustrative Relevant Case-Law
6	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006, Art. 28(2); United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes 1992, Arts. 2(2)(c), 2(2), 9(2)(d), 9(2)(b), 2(2)(d); United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses 1997, Arts. 8(1), 5(2), 20; Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal 1989, Arts. 4(2)(a), 4(2)(d); Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants 2001; Convention on Biological Diversity 1992, Arts. 8(d), 8(f), 8(j); Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat 1971, Arts. 2, 3, 5; International Labour Organization Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples 1989; United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2007, Arts. 18, 19, 32; Convention on Access to	Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion OC-23/17 (2017), paras. 59, 62, 117, 111; Lhaka Honhat v. Argentina (2020), para. 289; Lopez-Alvarez v. Honduras; European Court of Human Rights, Hudorovi and Others v. Slovenia (2020), para. 144; Cordella and Others v. Italy (2019); Human Rights Committee, Portillo Cáceres et al. v. Paraguay (2019), paras. 7.3, 7.7, 7.8; Permanent Court of Arbitration, Indus Waters Kishenganga Arbitration (Partial Award 2013, Final Award 2017)

	Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters 1998, Arts. 4, 6, 9	
7	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women 1979, Art. 14(2)(h); International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, Arts. 11, 12; Paris Agreement 2015, Arts. 2(1)(a), 4(1), 9(1), 10, 11; Energy Charter Treaty, Bucharest Energy Charter Declaration 2018; World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement 1995, Arts. 2(2), 2.4; World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights 1995, Art. 7; World Trade Organization Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reform Initiative 2021	Eiser Infrastructure Limited and Energia Solar Luxembourg Sàrl v. Kingdom of Spain (ICSID Case No. ARB/13/36, Award 4 December 2017, paras. 357-358, 389-392); NextEra Energy Spain Holdings B.V. v. Kingdom of Spain (ICSID Case No. ARB/14/11).
13	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 1992, Arts. 2, 4(1)(b), 4(1)(e); Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 1997, Arts. 10(b), 3; United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982, Art. 194; Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer 1985, Arts. 2(1)-(2); Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer 1987; Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol 2016;	International Court of Justice, Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons (1996), pp. 241-242, para. 29; Pulp Mills on the River Uruguay (Argentina v. Uruguay, 2010), pp. 56, 101, 79, 179; Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros Project (Hungary v. Slovakia, 1997), p. 77, para. 140; Corfu Channel (United Kingdom v. Albania, 1949), p. 22; Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia

	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification 1994, Preamble, Arts. 4(2)(a), 8; United Nations Charter 1945, Arts. 1, 2; Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, Arts. 3, 25; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966, Art. 6; Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, Arts. 6, 24(1)	and Montenegro, 2007), p. 221, para. 430; International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, Responsibilities and Obligations of States with respect to Activities in the Area (2011), p. 91, para. 239; ITLOS Advisory Opinion on Climate Change (21 May 2024); Inter-American Court of Human Rights Advisory Opinion on the Climate Emergency and Human Rights (29 May 2025); ICJ Advisory Opinion on Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change (23 July 2025); European Court of Human Rights, Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz v. Switzerland; Human Rights Committee, Daniel Billy and Others v. Australia; Mox Plant (Ireland v. United Kingdom, 2001), para. 82
14	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982, Parts XII, Arts. 192-207, 194, 212, 61-62, 117-119, 62; Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter 1972 and 1996 Protocol; International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships 1973/1978 (MARPOL); Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal 1989; Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic	International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea Advisory Opinion on Climate Change (21 May 2024); Inter-American Court of Human Rights Advisory Opinion on the Climate Emergency and Human Rights (29 May 2025); International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change (23 July 2025); ITLOS Provisional Measures, MOX Plant (Ireland v. United Kingdom, 3 December 2001); ITLOS Provisional Measures, Land Reclamation by Singapore in and around the

	Pollutants 2001; Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade 1998; Minamata Convention on Mercury 2013; International Convention Relating to Intervention on the High Seas in Cases of Oil Pollution Casualties 1969; Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships 2009; Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction 2023; Convention on Biological Diversity 1992; Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals 1979; Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats 1979; Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat 1971; Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972; Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora 1973; United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement; Food and Agriculture	Straits of Johor (Malaysia v. Singapore, 8 October 2003); Permanent Court of Arbitration, South China Sea Arbitration (Philippines v. China, 12 July 2016); ITLOS Advisory Opinion Request submitted by the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (2 April 2015); ITLOS Advisory Opinion, Responsibilities and Obligations of States Sponsoring Persons and Entities with Respect to Activities in the Area (1 February 2011)
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	Organization Port State Measures Agreement 2009; World Trade Organization Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies 2022; United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea Part XI 1994 Implementing Agreement; International Labour Organization Work in Fishing Convention C188 2007; Paris Agreement 2015	
15	Convention on Biological Diversity 1992, Arts. 8, II, 1, 15(1), 8(h), 6, 10, 8(d), 8(f), 8(j); United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification 1994, Art. 2(1); Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat 1971; Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972; United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2007; Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals 1979, Arts. II, V(5); International Tropical Timber Agreement 2006; Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity 2010, Art. 1; International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and	Permanent Court of Arbitration, Chagos Marine Protected Area Arbitration (Mauritius v. United Kingdom, 18 March 2015); PCA, South China Sea Arbitration (Philippines v. China, 12 July 2016).

	Agriculture 2001; Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora 1973; Paris Agreement 2015; Global Environment Facility funding mechanisms	
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Economy Cluster

SDG	Illustrative Relevant Treaties	Illustrative Relevant Case-Law
1	Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization 1994, Preamble; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, Arts. 2(1), 6, 7, 9, 11, 11(1)-(2), 12; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women 1979, Arts. 13(b), 14(2)(g), 15, 16(h); Free Trade Agreement between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and New Zealand 2023, Arts. 9.13(1), 15.20(4), 27.11, 27.14; Advanced Framework Agreement European Union and its Member States- Republic of Chile 2023, Arts. 4.4(1), 4.4(4)(h)-(j), 4.7(2), 14.4(1), 14.4(3)(e), 33.10(2)(b), 33.10(4)(a)	Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Mayagna (Sumo) Awas Tingni Community v. Nicaragua (Merits, 2001), paras. 148-153, 164-167; European Court of Human Rights, Stec and Others v. United Kingdom (2006)
8	United Nations Charter 1945, Art. 55; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, Arts.	European Court of Human Rights, Sidabras and Džiautas v. Lithuania (2004); Leyla Şahin v. Turkey (2005); Inter-American Court of

	2(1), 6, 7; International Labour Organization Convention No. 122 concerning Employment Policy 1964; International Labour Organization Convention No. 183 Maternity Protection Convention (Revised) 2000, Arts. 4, 6, 8, 9; International Labour Organization Convention No. 190 Violence and Harassment Convention 2019, Arts. 1, 4, 7, 9, 10; International Labour Organization Convention No. 29 concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour 1930, Arts. 1, 2(1), 25; International Labour Organization Convention No. 105 concerning the Abolition of Forced Labour 1957, Art. 1; International Labour Organization Convention No. 87 concerning Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise 1948; Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006	Human Rights, Hacienda Brasil Verde Workers v. Brazil (Merits, Reparations and Costs, 2016); African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Social and Economic Rights Action Centre (SERAC) and Centre for Economic and Social Rights (CESR) v. Nigeria (Ogoni case, 2001); Yukos Universal Limited (Isle of Man) v. Russian Federation (SCC Case No. AA 227, Final Award 2014)
9	General Agreement on Trade in Services 1994; Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures 1994; United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 1992, Arts. 2, 3(4), 4(1); Paris Agreement 2015, Arts. 10(1), 10(5); Agreement on Trade-Related	World Trade Organization, Brazil – Export Financing Programme for Aircraft (Panel Report, 1999); China – Certain Measures Affecting Electronic Payment Services (Panel Report, 2012); Canada – Measures Affecting the Renewable Energy Generation Sector (Appellate Body Report, 2013); Canada –

	Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights 1994 (as amended 2005), Arts. 31bis, 66, 67; Agreement on Trade Facilitation 2013; Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works 1886; ASEAN Framework Agreement on Intellectual Property Cooperation 1995; Australia-United Arab Emirates Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement 2023; Chile-United Arab Emirates Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement 2024; Digital Economy Partnership Agreement 2020, Module 4 Art. 4.3, Module 9 Arts. 9.2-9.5	Patent Protection of Pharmaceutical Products (Panel Report, 2000); Mexico – Measures Affecting Telecommunications Services (Panel Report, 2004); Eco Oro Minerals Corp. v. Republic of Colombia (ICSID Case No. ARB/16/41, Award 2021), paras. 829-834; Eiser Infrastructure Limited and Energia Solar Luxembourg Sàrl v. Kingdom of Spain (ICSID Case No. ARB/13/36, Award 2017), paras. 357-358, 389-392; India – Certain Measures Relating to Solar Cells and Solar Modules (Appellate Body Report, 2016), paras. 5.152-5.158
10	United Nations Charter 1945, Arts. 1(2), 2(1), 55(a); International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966, Arts. 2(1), 3, 26; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, Arts. 2(1), 3, 7, 9, 11, 13; International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families 1990, Arts. 7, 25, 47(12), 64, 65; Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention 1952 (ILO No. 102); Equality of Treatment (Social Security) Convention 1962 (ILO No. 118); Articles	European Court of Human Rights, Stec v. United Kingdom (2006); Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA) v. Angola (African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 2008); Salini Costruttori S.p.A. and Italstrade S.p.A. v. Kingdom of Morocco (ICSID Case No. ARB/00/4, Decision on Jurisdiction 2001), para. 52; Ledra Advertising Ltd v. European Commission and European Central Bank (Joined Cases C-8/15 P, C-9/15 P and C-10/15 P, 2016); Albany International BV v. Stichting Bedrijfspensioenfonds Textielindustrie (Case C-67/96, 1999); World Trade Organization,

	of Agreement of the International Monetary Fund 1944, Arts. I, IV, V-VI, VIII, XII(5)	European Communities – Conditions for the Granting of Tariff Preferences to Developing Countries (Appellate Body Report, 2004), paras. 154-155, 162-163; Argentina – Measures Relating to Trade in Goods and Services (Appellate Body Report, 2016), paras. 6.234-6.240
12	Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants 2001; General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994, Art. XX; Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade 1994; Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal 1989, Arts. 4(2)(a), 4(2)(b), 4(2)(d); Paris Agreement 2015, Art. 4(1); ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (Second Protocol) 2014, Ch. 17 Art. 3; Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement 2016, Art. 11.2; Free Trade Agreement between the Republics of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, and the Republic of Korea 2018, Art. 8.3; Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership 2018, Arts. 15.3, 15.12(6); United Nations Framework	World Trade Organization, United States – Import Prohibition of Certain Shrimp and Shrimp Products (Appellate Body Report, 1998); China – Measures Related to the Exportation of Rare Earths, Tungsten, and Molybdenum (Appellate Body Report, 2014); India – Measures Concerning the Importation of Certain Agricultural Products (Appellate Body Report, 2015); Brazil – Measures Affecting Imports of Retreaded Tyres (Appellate Body Report, 2007); Bernhard von Pezold and Others v. Republic of Zimbabwe (ICSID Case No. ARB/10/15, Award 2015); Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros Project (Hungary v. Slovakia, International Court of Justice, 1997), paras. 140-142; Pulp Mills on the River Uruguay (Argentina v. Uruguay, International Court of Justice, 2010), paras. 204-205

	Convention on Climate Change 1992, Art. 6; Convention on Biological Diversity 1992, Art. 13; Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics 2021, Art. 1; Optional Protocol to the Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics 2021	
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Society Cluster

SDG	Illustrative Relevant Treaties	Illustrative Relevant Case-Law
2	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, Arts. 11(1)-(2)(a), 12; Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, Arts. 24(2)(c), 27; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women 1979, Arts. 12(2), 14(2)(g); Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006, Art. 28(1); African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child 1990, Arts. 5(2), 14(2)(c)-(d), 20(2)(a); Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Protocol of San Salvador) 1988, Arts. 12(1)-(2), 15(3)(b), 17(a); Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) 2003, Arts. 15(a)-(b);	Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Yakey Axa Indigenous Community v. Paraguay (2005); Sawhoyamaya Indigenous Community v. Paraguay (2006); Xákmok Kásek Indigenous Community v. Paraguay (2010); Kaliña and Lokono Peoples v. Suriname (2015); Lhaka Honhat (Lhaka Honhat Isokñe Community) v. Argentina (2020); African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Centre for Minority Rights Development (Kenya) and Minority Rights Group International on behalf of Endorois Welfare Council v. Kenya (Endorois case, 2010)

	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 1992, Art. 2; United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification 1994, Arts. 5(b), 10(3)(c), 10(4); United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2007, Arts. 5, 17, 18; International Labour Organization Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries 1989, Arts. 13-19; Convention on Biological Diversity 1992, Arts. 8(d), (f), (j), 10(c)-(d), (e), 11, 13(a)-(b), 20(1); African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights 1981, Arts. 16, 24; United Nations Charter 1945, Arts. 55, 56	
3	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, Arts. 12(1)-(2)(a)-(d); International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966, Arts. 6(1), 24; Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, Arts. 24(1)-(2)(a)-(f), 24(3); Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006, Arts. 10, 25(a)-(b), (d); Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families 1990, Arts. 9, 28, 43(1); World Health Organization Constitution, Preamble para. 2(i); African Charter on Human and	Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Poblete Vilches et al. v. Chile (2018); Community of La Oroya v. Peru (2023); Cuscul Pivaral and Others v. Guatemala (2018); González Lluy v. Ecuador (2015); Ximenes-Lopes v. Brazil (2006); Albán Cornejo v. Ecuador (2008); Suárez Peralta v. Ecuador (2013); Hernández v. Argentina (2019)

	Peoples' Rights 1981, Arts. 4, 16(1)-(2), 18(3); American Convention on Human Rights 1969, Arts. 4(1), 6(1); Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Protocol of San Salvador) 1988, Arts. 10(1)-(2)(a)-(c), (e)-(f), 15(3)(b); African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child 1990, Arts. 14(1)-(2)(a), (e); Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) 2003, Arts. 14(1)(a)-(f), 14(2)(a)-(c)	
4	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, Arts. 13(1)-(2)(a)-(e), 14; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women 1979, Art. 10(a)-(h); Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006, Arts. 24(1)(a)-(b), 24(2)(a)-(e), 24(3); Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families 1990, Arts. 30, 43(1)(a)-(c), 45(1)(b); Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, Arts. 28(1)(a)-(e), 28(2)-(3), 29(1)(a)-(e); Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in	Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion OC-17/02; African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Centre for Minority Rights Development (Kenya) and Minority Rights Group International on behalf of Endorois Welfare Council v. Kenya (Endorois case, 2010); Ogiek v. Kenya (2017)

	the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Protocol of San Salvador) 1988, Arts. 13(1)-(3), 16; African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child 1990, Arts. 11(3), 13(2)-(3); Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) 2003, Arts. 12(1)(a)-(e), 12(2)(a)-(c); African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights 1981, Arts. 17(1), 18(3)-(4); American Convention on Human Rights 1969, Art. 26; International Labour Organization Convention No. 142 Human Resources Development Convention 1975; International Labour Organization Convention No. 159 Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention 1983; International Labour Organization Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries 1989, Arts. 6(1)(a)-(c), 6(2); European Charter on Regional or Minority Languages 1992, Arts. 12(3), 13(1)-(2), 14(1)-(3); Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, Art. 30	
5	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion AO-32/25 (2025);

	1979, Arts. 1-3, 6, 15, 16; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966, Arts. 2(1), 3, 26; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, Arts. 2(2), 3; European Convention on Human Rights 1950, Art. 14; Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) 2011, Arts. 3-5, 12, 18-28; Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará) 1994, Arts. 1(2), 3(4), 7(9); Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, Arts. 19(1), 24(3); Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) 2003, Arts. 2(1)(b), 2(2), 3(1)-(4), 4(1)-(2)(a)-(g), (i), 13(g); African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights 1981, Arts. 2, 4, 5, 18(3); American Convention on Human Rights 1969, Arts. 1(1), 2; Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Protocol of San Salvador) 1988, Arts. 6(1), 7(f), 10(1)	European Court of Human Rights, <i>Opuz v. Turkey</i> (2009), paras. 84, 170, 198; <i>Rantsev v. Cyprus and Russia</i> (2010); <i>C.N. v. United Kingdom</i> (2012); <i>C.N. and V. v. France</i> (2012); <i>B.B. v. Slovakia</i> (2024); <i>M.D. v. Romania</i> (2024)
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11	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, Arts. 11(1), 15(1)(a); International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966, Arts. 17, 27; Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, Arts. 16, 27(3); Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women 1979, Arts. 14(2)(h), 15(2), 16(1)(h); Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006, Arts. 9, 19, 28(1); Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination 1965, Art. 5(e)(iii); European Convention on Human Rights 1950, Art. 8; American Convention on Human Rights 1969, Arts. 11, 21, 26; African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights 1981, Arts. 14, 16, 18(1); Revised European Social Charter 1996, Arts. 16, 30, 31; Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) 2003, Arts. 6, 16; United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 1992, Arts. 2, 4; Paris Agreement 2015, Arts. 7, 11, 13; Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, paras. 19, 27, 33; Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of	European Court of Human Rights, López Ostra v. Spain (1994); Buckley v. United Kingdom (1996); Yordanova and Others v. Bulgaria (2012); Winterstein and Others v. France (2013); Ivanova and Cherkezov v. Bulgaria (2016); Hudorovi and Others v. Slovenia (2020); Budayeva and Others v. Russia (2008); Cordella and Others v. Italy (2019); Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz and Others v. Switzerland (2024); Önerlyıldız v. Turkey (2004); Kolyadenko and Others v. Russia (2012); Chapman v. United Kingdom (2001); Beyeler v. Italy (2000); Kozacioğlu v. Turkey (2009); Sargsyan v. Azerbaijan (First Section, 2015); Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Yakye Axa Indigenous Community v. Paraguay (2005); Sawhoyamaya Indigenous Community v. Paraguay (2006); Xákmok Kásek Indigenous Community v. Paraguay (2010); Kaliña and Lokono Peoples v. Suriname (2015); Lhaka Honhat (Lhaka Honhbat Isokñe Community) v. Argentina (2020); Case of the Street Children (Villagrán-Morales et al.) v. Guatemala (1999); Poblete Vilches et al. v. Chile (2018); Community of La Oroya v. Peru (2023); Cuscul Pivaral and Others v. Guatemala (2018); González Lluy v. Ecuador (2015); Ximenes-Lopes v. Brazil (2006);
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	Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal 1989, Arts. 4, 10; Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants 2001, Arts. 3, 5; United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982, Art. 194; Escazú Agreement 2018, Arts. 10(2)(a)-(g); Convention on Biological Diversity 1992, Art. 13(a)-(b); United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization World Heritage Convention 1972, Arts. 4, 5; Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage 2003, Arts. 11, 13	Albán Cornejo v. Ecuador (2008); Suárez Peralta v. Ecuador (2013); Hernández v. Argentina (2019); Claude Reyes et al. v. Chile (2006); Kichwa Indigenous People of Sarayaku v. Ecuador (2012); Girls Yean and Bosico v. Dominican Republic (2005); African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Social and Economic Rights Action Centre (SERAC) and Centre for Economic and Social Rights (CESR) v. Nigeria (Ogoni case, 2001); Centre for Minority Rights Development (Kenya) and Minority Rights Group International on behalf of Endorois Welfare Council v. Kenya (Endorois case, 2010); African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights v. Republic of Kenya (2017); Human Rights Committee, Ioane Teitiota v. New Zealand (2020); Daniel Billy and Others v. Australia (2019)
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Governance Cluster

SDG	Illustrative Relevant Treaties	Illustrative Relevant Case-Law
16	Geneva Conventions 1949 and Additional Protocols 1977; Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women (Belém do Pará Convention) 1994;	European Court of Human Rights, Opuz v. Turkey (2009), paras. 84, 170, 198; Salduz v. Turkey (2008), para. 50; Special Court for Sierra Leone, Prosecutor v. Sesay (RUF Case, 2009); International Court of Justice,

	International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism 1999; United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, Arts. 19, 37, 38; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966, Arts. 2(3), 9, 14; Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment 1984, Arts. 12-14; International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination 1965, Arts. 5(a), 6; International Labour Organization Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention C182 1999, Arts. 5, 6, 7; Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (IV) 1949, Art. 50(2); United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime 2000, Arts. 3-4, 5-11, 13-20; United Nations Convention against Corruption 2003, Arts. 14, 23-25, 51-59; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, Arts. 1, 15(1)(a); American Convention on Human Rights 1969, Art. 23; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women 1979, Art. 7; African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights 1981, Art. 13; Convention on the Status of Refugees 1951, Arts. 25, 27; Convention relating to the Status of Stateless	Armed Activities on the Territory of the Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo v. Uganda, 2005), paras. 210, 211, 219, 246-247; Obligations of Israel in relation to the Presence and Activities of the United Nations, Other International Organizations and Third States in and in relation to the Occupied Palestinian Territory (2025); Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Case of the Street Children (Villagrán-Morales et al.) v. Guatemala (1999), paras. 178-198 esp. 191; Advisory Opinion AO-32/25 Climate Emergency and Human Rights (2025), paras. 540-541, 613; Case of the Uwa Indigenous People and their Members v. Colombia (2024); Girls Yean and Bosico v. Dominican Republic (2005), paras. 237-243; Inhabitants of La Oroya v. Peru (2003), paras. 144-149; African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights v. Republic of Kenya (2017), paras. 207-211
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	Persons 1954, Arts. 25, 27; Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness 1961, Art. 1(4); European Convention on Human Rights 1950, Art. 10; American Convention on Human Rights 1969, Art. 13; African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights 1981, Art. 9; Aarhus Convention 1998, Arts. 3, 4, 5; International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings 1997; International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism 2005; United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances 1988; International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination 1965; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women 1979	
17	Multilateral Convention to Implement Tax Treaty Related Measures to Prevent Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (MLI) 2016; Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters 1988; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, Arts. 2(1), 11; United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 1992, Arts. 4(1)(c), 4(5), 4(7), 5; Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) 1994, Arts. 7, 8(2), 66(2); Paris	International Court of Justice, Whaling in the Antarctic (Australia v. Japan, 2014); Advisory Opinion on the Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change (2025); International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, Advisory Opinion on Climate Change and International Law (2024); Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion AO-32/25 Climate Emergency and Human Rights (2025); Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros Project (Hungary v. Slovakia, 1997), paras. 140-142; Pulp Mills

	Agreement 2015, Arts. 10.1-10.6, 11, 12; Convention on Biological Diversity 1992, Arts. 12, 16, 17, 18; Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization 2010, Preamble, Arts. 1, 22(5)(g), 23; International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA); Articles of Agreement of the International Monetary Fund 1944-1945, Arts. I, IV, V, VIII; United Nations Charter 1945, Arts. 13, 55, 56; Agreement of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development 1944, Arts. I, III, IV; Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006, Art. 32; United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification 1994, Arts. 6, 19, 20; United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982, Arts. 202, 203, 266; Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement) 2023, Part V; World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade Facilitation 2014, Arts. 21-22; World Trade Organization Marrakesh Agreement 1994; General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994, Arts. XVIII,	on the River Uruguay (Argentina v. Uruguay, 2010), paras. 204-205; World Trade Organization, EC – Tariff Preferences (Appellate Body Report, 2004), paras. 173-174
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	XXXVI, XXXVII, XXXVIII; EU-Angola Sustainable Investment Facilitation Agreement; World Trade Organization Agreement on Investment Facilitation for Development (adopted, not yet in force); EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement 2019; Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership 2018; World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, Art. 4(4); UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions 2005, Art. 14; World Trade Organization Information Technology Agreement (ITA) 1996	
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