

# ADVANCING JUSTICE, GOVERNANCE AND LAW FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY



Rio+20 and the World Congress of Chief Justices,  
Attorneys General and Auditors General

"Environmental law is essential for the protection of natural  
resources and ecosystems and reflects our best hope for the future."



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Advancing Justice, Governance and Law for Environmental Sustainability

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# Preface

High level opening of the World Congress on Justice, Governance and Law for Environmental Sustainability, Supreme Court of Justice of the State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 17 – 20 June 2012  
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## Preface

In facing ever increasing complexities regarding our planet, people everywhere view environmental rights, environmental law and jurisprudence and environmental governance as becoming increasingly central to resolving problems of environmental justice. The judiciary is predominantly relied upon to provide this justice and implement the framework of principles and laws that provide its foundation. The auditing community too has a key role in its ability to monitor environmental policies, transparency and accountability through independent processes.

In connection with the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, UNEP organized the World Congress on Justice, Governance and Law for Environmental Sustainability. Through the World Congress, over 250 of the world's Chief Justices, Attorneys General and Auditors General seized a generational opportunity to contribute to the debates on the environment and declare that any diplomatic outcomes related to the environment and sustainable development, including from Rio+20, will remain unimplemented without adherence to the rule of law, without open, just and dependable legal orders. For the first time in history these three key groups of national stakeholders have declared their unified commitment to cooperate to build and support the capacity of courts and tribunals as well as prosecutors, auditors and other related stakeholders at national, sub-regional and regional levels to implement environmental law, and to facilitate exchanges of best practices in order to achieve environmental sustainability.

The World Congress sent important messages to World Leaders on the role of environmental law and adopted a set of guiding principles for the Advancement of Justice, Governance and Law

for Environmental Sustainability, which provide a useful reference for all those committed to environmental sustainability. The Congress also called upon UNEP to lead the establishment of an international institutional network for (a) continued engagement of Chief Justices, Attorneys General, Heads of Jurisdiction, Chief Prosecutors and Auditors General, the institutions they represent and other components of the legal and enforcement chain, including through networks at the international and regional levels; (b) quality information and data exchange and discussion among the legal and auditing communities at large; (c) continued development and implementation of environmental law at all levels, and encouraging the further expansion of environmental jurisprudence; (d) improved education, capacity building, technology transfer and technical assistance, including with the aim of strengthening effective national environmental governance; and (e) adequate engagement by respective national governments for the set objectives.

The World Congress has affirmed and strengthened the role of law as an indispensable tool on the path towards sustainable development and greener economies. Some reviews have even called it the most encouraging and progressive work of Rio+20 from a legal perspective<sup>1</sup>.

In connection with the World Congress, which closed its doors just as the high-level debates at Rio+20 began, also the outcome document of the Rio+20 Conference itself (The Future We Want) states in paragraph 10 that good governance and the rule of law "are essential for sustainable development, including sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development, environmental protection and the eradication of poverty and

1. Transnational Environmental Law / Volume 1 / Issue 02 / October 2012, p. 412



Speakers at the World Congress on Justice, Governance and Law for Environmental Sustainability  
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hunger.” This statement is repeated in paragraph 252 under ‘means of implementation’, highlighting the essential role accorded to law, governance and implicitly the pursuit of just societies in the implementation of the Rio+20 outcomes and the pursuit of sustainable development overall. Therefore, the UNEP World Congress and Rio+20 have together infused new life into debates about environmental justice and the role of law in the pursuit of sustainable development, including greener economies. In the months and years ahead, it is crucial to capitalize on this reaffirmation of the importance of just and dependable legal orders and the rule of law to realize the full potential of the positive transformational changes possible through environmental law and its implementation.

The following pages are comprised of key contributions to the Congress. Speeches, articles, the Rio+20 Declaration on Justice, Governance and Law for Environmental Sustainability and other documents that encase the critical importance behind the World Congress’ themes and paint a vivid picture of the future we *need* to attain sustainable development.

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