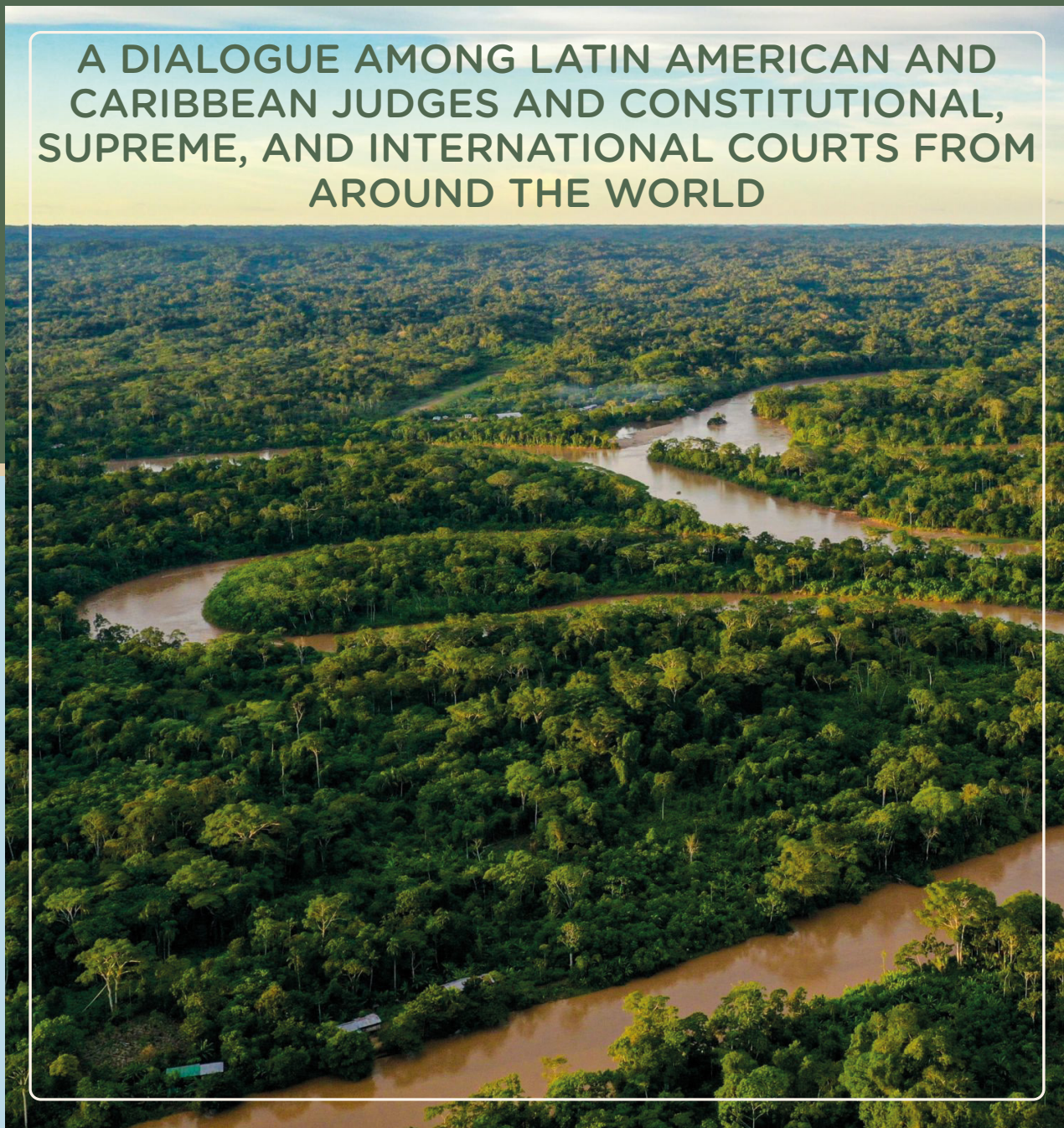


JUDGES, CLIMATE LITIGATION, AND HUMAN RIGHTS

A DIALOGUE AMONG LATIN AMERICAN AND
CARIBBEAN JUDGES AND CONSTITUTIONAL,
SUPREME, AND INTERNATIONAL COURTS FROM
AROUND THE WORLD



VATICAN CITY - OCTOBER 2026

FRAY BARTOLOMÉ DE LAS CASAS
INSTITUTE OF LEGAL RESEARCH



About the Fray Bartolomé de las Casas Institute

The Fray Bartolomé de las Casas Institute of Legal Research (IFBC) aims to generate critical knowledge that supports the enforceability and applicability of economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights (ESCER), recognizing their interdependence with civil and political rights, and promoting the effectiveness of international human rights norms that safeguard the progressive development of communities.

Through research and training activities, the IFBC seeks to contribute to the recognition and application of ESCER across all spheres, especially in migratory and colonial contexts, advocating for equality and respect for human dignity. In this endeavor, it collaborates with various stakeholders to influence public policies that ensure sustainable development and the protection of human rights.

THE FIGURE OF FRAY BARTOLOMÉ

A prominent sixteenth-century theologian, Fray Bartolomé de las Casas was known for his defense of indigenous peoples against the brutality of the conquistadors. He advocated for respect and equality toward others and laid the foundations of the human rights framework more than four centuries before its universal declaration. Like Fray Bartolomé, the Institute that bears his name upholds the central importance of these rights in guaranteeing a dignified life.

WHAT DO WE DO?

The IFBC focuses on training professionals, researchers, and judicial officers in ESCER through research groups, courses, and seminars that provide tools for addressing these rights in different contexts.

— **RESEARCH:** generating original knowledge, promoting interdisciplinary study to address specific issues and propose innovative, evidence-based solutions, centered on 4 major themes: judicial structures, colonialism, migration, and the climate emergency.

— **TRAINING:** a specialized academic offer aligned with the Institute's research areas, aimed at strengthening the capacities of judges and other judicial practitioners, as well as professionals in academia and research, through specialized training, interdisciplinary dialogue, and the production of socially impactful knowledge.



The IFBC was established by **Pope Francis** on August 15, 2023, within the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, through Chirograph No. 0570, under the functional authority of the Pan-American Committee of Judges for Social Rights and Franciscan Doctrine (COPAJU).

MISSION

The defense and promotion of economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights (ESCER).

INSPIRATION

Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, defender of indigenous peoples and precursor of human rights.



STRATEGY

Raising awareness among the academic community and the general public, and producing knowledge to inform government decision-making.



Alberto Filippi (IFBC Director), Roberto Andrés Gallardo (COPAJU President), Lucas Ciarniello Ibáñez (IFBC Executive Director), and Eugenio Raúl Zaffaroni (IFBC Director).

Judges, Climate Litigation, and human Rights

A DIALOGUE AMONG LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN JUDGES AND CONSTITUTIONAL, SUPREME, AND INTERNATIONAL COURTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

CONTEXT:

A DEEP SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

The encyclical *Laudato Si'* calls us to recognize that the climate emergency is not only an environmental crisis but also a profound social crisis that deepens pre-existing inequalities and puts fundamental human rights at risk.

Its impacts are unequal and fall most heavily on communities in situations of greater vulnerability: women, girls, boys and adolescents, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendant communities, and rural and coastal populations whose livelihoods depend directly on at-risk ecosystems.

Phenomena such as droughts, floods, and rising sea levels do not only degrade ecosystems — they collapse socioeconomic systems that sustain millions of people, compromising access to water, food, housing, and health, and making climate change a multiplier of structural inequalities.

In this context, Advisory Opinion OC-32/2025 of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights on the Climate Emergency and Human Rights — adopted on May 29, 2025, at the request of Colombia and Chile — represents a historic milestone for the region's judicial systems.

By recognizing the right to a healthy climate as an autonomous human right, establishing binding obligations of mitigation, adaptation, and reparation for States, and enshrining the duty to protect those who defend the environment, OC-32/2025 speaks directly to the highest courts of Latin America in their role as guarantors of the constitutional order and the fundamental rights of citizens.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE PONTIFICAL ACADEMY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

The Fray Bartolomé de las Casas Institute convenes this event together with the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences (PASS), a privileged space for academic and interdisciplinary reflection within the Vatican on the great challenges of contemporary social life, committed to the common good, human dignity, and justice as pillars of coexistence among peoples.



THE PONTIFICAL
ACADEMY OF SOCIAL
SCIENCES



Marcelo Suárez Orozco (front row, holding a sign), IFBC Director and PASS Academician, alongside COPAJU authorities and participants of the Vatican meeting "Artificial Intelligence, Justice and Democracy" (March 2025).

Judges, Climate Litigation, and human Rights

A DIALOGUE AMONG LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN JUDGES AND CONSTITUTIONAL, SUPREME, AND INTERNATIONAL COURTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD



MISSION AND RELEVANCE

In this context, the **Fray Bartolomé de las Casas Institute** proposes organizing a meeting at the **Vatican** to bring together judges from Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as members of Constitutional, Supreme, and International Courts, together with representatives of **COPAJU** and the **IFBC**.

In this way, the event will seek to strengthen a shared regional judicial agenda, oriented toward the practical application of international standards in climate litigation, with particular attention to its implementation possibilities, opportunities, and limitations, promoting the development of institutional capacities and common criteria among the highest courts.

The Standards Document that will serve as the basis for discussion was prepared by the **IFBC** drawing on the work it has been developing since its establishment in the field of climate litigation and human rights.

As an outcome of the meeting, the production of a Conclusions and Recommendations document is envisaged, aimed at the effective implementation of standards in each country and at systematizing the main contributions and commitments made — serving simultaneously as a practical guide for future judicial cooperation and institutional strengthening efforts.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- **Discuss and technically validate the Document of Standards and Guidelines.**
- **Identify challenges and good practices in the judicial implementation of climate litigation.**
- **Build consensus on common criteria for the application of international standards.**
- **Develop a regional roadmap with recommendations, commitments, and next steps.**
- **Strengthen international judicial cooperation in the face of the climate emergency.**

EVENT AT A GLANCE

- **Format:** The meeting will take place over two full days of in-person work, centered on technical discussion and peer exchange.
- **Date:** Tuesday, October 6 and Wednesday, October 7, 2026.
- **Venue:** Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, Vatican City.
- **Participants:** The meeting will bring together approximately 60 participants, including judges from Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as members of Supreme, Constitutional, and International Courts, representatives of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, and leading figures from academia and the judiciary.
- **Working documents and the full program** will be sent in advance to all confirmed participants.

TENTATIVE PROGRAM

DAY 1: Tuesday, October 6, 2026

TECHNICAL DISCUSSION OF THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES DOCUMENT

09:00 - 10:00

Welcome Coffee and Institutional Opening Session

10:00 - 13:00

First Plenary Session - Contributions to the Standards and Guidelines Document

- Identification of preliminary areas of consensus
- Observations on aspects to be clarified, amended, or strengthened

12:30 - 14:30 Lunch

14:30 - 16:00

Second Plenary Session (continuation of the morning session)

- Continuation of morning speakers
- Technical comments

16:30 - 18:30

Session on Specific Contributions and Proposed Amendments

- Proposed modifications and terminological or methodological adjustments
- Preliminary consolidation of agreed minimum regional standards to be reflected in the final document

19:00 - 20:30

Summary of Day 1



“We are facing a climate emergency caused by the accelerated rise in global temperature resulting from human activities. This emergency can only be adequately addressed through urgent and effective actions, coordinated with a human rights perspective and under the prism of resilience.”

Inter-American Court of Human Rights,
Advisory Opinion OC-32/25 (unanimous
recognition by the Court)

TENTATIVE PROGRAM

DAY 2: Wednesday, October 7, 2026

DAY OF CONSENSUS, APPROVAL, AND INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT

09:00 – 10:30

Third Plenary Session – Presentation of the Consolidated Document

- Technical reading of the latest version of the document, incorporating amendments from the previous day
- Identification of open points for plenary debate
- Final adjustments in plenary

10:30 – 12:00

Formal Approval by Consensus

- Reading of the Final Document of Conclusions and Recommendations
- Expression of formal agreement
- Definition of the regional roadmap for implementation, monitoring mechanisms, and judicial cooperation

12:00

Institutional Signing of the Final Document and Closing

- Signatures of the judges present
- Signatures of organizing authorities: IFBC, COPAJU, PASS Vatican
- Public commitment to regional cooperation
- Final Declaration of the Meeting – closing

12:30 CLOSING LUNCH



“States must provide their judicial systems with the necessary means to adequately address environmental and climate litigation. This implies the continuous training of judges and judicial operators in the field, access to the best available science, consideration of interdisciplinary and intercultural approaches, the provision of sufficient technical and budgetary resources, and, where appropriate, the creation of specialized bodies.”

IACtHR, OC-32/25, para. 230

Climate Change Through the Eyes of Popes Francis and Leo XIV



"TODAY WE CANNOT FAIL TO RECOGNIZE THAT A TRUE ECOLOGICAL APPROACH ALWAYS BECOMES A SOCIAL APPROACH, WHICH MUST INTEGRATE JUSTICE INTO DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT, IN ORDER TO HEAR BOTH THE CRY OF THE EARTH AND THE CRY OF THE POOR."

"Many of those who possess more resources and economic or political power seem to focus mainly on masking the problems or concealing their symptoms, merely attempting to reduce some of the negative impacts of climate change. But many signs indicate that such effects will continue to worsen if we persist with current models of production and consumption."

Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, on care for our common home (May 24, 2015).

"TRAGICALLY, THOSE IN THE MOST VULNERABLE SITUATIONS ARE THE FIRST TO SUFFER THE DEVASTATING EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE, DEFORESTATION, AND POLLUTION. THEREFORE, CARE FOR CREATION BECOMES AN EXPRESSION OF HUMANITY AND SOLIDARITY."

"Due to their global nature, these challenges endanger the lives of all inhabitants of the planet and therefore require international cooperation and a cohesive, forward-looking multilateralism that prioritizes the sanctity of life, the inherent dignity of every human being, and the common good. Regrettably, we observe political approaches and human behaviors moving in the opposite direction, characterized by collective selfishness, disregard for others, and short-sightedness."

Message to the 30th UN Conference on Climate Change (November 7, 2025).

AUTHORITIES

FRAY BARTOLOMÉ DE LAS CASAS INSTITUTE OF LEGAL RESEARCH (IFBC)

Established by Pope Francis on August 15, 2023, within the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, under the functional authority of the Pan-American Committee of Judges for Social Rights and Franciscan Doctrine (COPAJU).

DIRECTORS

- EUGENIO RAÚL ZAFFARONI
- ALBERTO FILIPPI
- MARCELO SUÁREZ OROZCO

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

- LUCAS CIARNIELLO IBÁÑEZ

PAN-AMERICAN COMMITTEE OF JUDGES FOR SOCIAL RIGHTS AND FRANCISCAN DOCTRINE (COPAJU)

Constituted by Founding Act of June 4, 2019, in Vatican City and under the inspiration of Pope Francis. Established as an international Private Association of the Faithful and as a legal entity within canonical law through Papal Chirograph of August 15, 2023.

PRESIDENT

- ROBERTO ANDRÉS GALLARDO

VICE PRESIDENT

- ANA INÉS ALGORTA LATORRE

SECRETARY

- GUSTAVO DANIEL MORENO

BOARD MEMBERS

- MARÍA JULIA FIGUEREDO VIVAS
- DANIEL DAVID URRUTIA LAUBREAUX
- JANET OFELIA LOURDES TELLO GILARDI

PONTIFICAL ACADEMY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

PRESIDENT

- HELEN ALFORD

CHANCELLOR

- PETER KODWO APPIAH TURKSON

VICE-CHANCELLOR

- DARIO EDOARDO VIGANÒ



WWW.INSTITUTOFBC.ORG
INFO@INSTITUTODELASCASAS.ORG



WWW.PASS.VA/EN.HTML

