



The Consortium for Ecological Law is leading and supporting young professionals to engage in international environmental policymaking at the upcoming IUCN World Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi in October 2025.

From Classroom to Congress: Empowering the Next Generation of Environmental Leaders

The Consortium for Ecological Law is empowering young professionals to take an active role in international environmental law by supporting their participation at the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) World Conservation Congress (WCC), taking place in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, from October 9–15, 2025.

The cohort of young professionals comprises current students and recent graduates of the Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University's Juris Doctor and Master of Laws programs: Harrison Bench, Samuel Carvalho, Séverine Ginot, Francesca Gugino, Maria Lambert, Justyna Maksimiuk, Isabella Mazzei, Morgan Martin, Lara O'Callaghan, Madison Routledge Pettus, Juliette Planes, Victoria Sawchuk, and Nicole Trent.

The students, under the guidance of Professor Achintha Vithanage and as part of the Global Center for Environmental Legal Studies (GCELS), worked on several motions addressing a variety of environmental issues. These motions, which call for specific actions or highlight critical environmental challenges, will be voted on by IUCN members at the upcoming WCC, thereby influencing global environmental priorities and policy frameworks. The student-led motions submitted for consideration addressed:

- Enhancing conservation efforts in preventing the spread of zoonotic diseases
- Strengthening business engagement in climate adaptation to preserve biodiversity and ecosystems
- Improving mechanisms for public participation in environmental policymaking
- Advocating for the implementation and enforcement of port state measures to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing
- Integrating gender-sensitive and intersectional approaches into conservation efforts
- Promoting conservation and restoration of Latin American mangrove ecosystems through the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation mechanism
- Preventing chemical pollution of water bodies from textile industries in South and Southeast Asia
- Advancing the protection of indigenous languages

Some students also worked on research and advocacy on other motions proposed by GCELS, including soil security law and the conservation of temperate native grasslands. The Consortium's leadership contributed to guiding their work.

The Consortium for Ecological Law's grant funding has supported 11 GCELS Staff Interns' registration for the WCC, with 10 attending in-person and 1 participating online. The grant also covered travel expenses for 9 of the in-person delegates.

The Consortium for Ecological Law's support enables students to actively engage in international environmental policymaking, including awareness-building initiatives and potential contributions to negotiations. Additionally, students will manage an informational booth in the WCC Exhibition Hall and present their experiences during a Forum proposed by GCELS, titled "Classroom to Congress: Engaging Youth in International Environmental Policymaking."

Through this unique opportunity, students are not only contributing to the development of international environmental law but are also gaining invaluable experience in global policy processes. The Consortium for Ecological Law's support for youth engagement underscores the importance of fostering the next generation of environmental leaders, ensuring that diverse and insightful voices help shape a sustainable and equitable future at the highest levels of environmental governance.