



# Ecological Law Consortium

## THE NEWSLETTER - Vol. 1 Issue 1: Spring 2026

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### **§ Welcome Note: *Sorrowing time! The passing of co-founder Richard L. Ottinger***

The Consortium for Ecological Law inaugurates its first newsletter with tribute to Prof. Richard L. Ottinger, who founded the Consortium and served as its Vice President until his death in his 97<sup>th</sup> year, on 16 February 2026. We invite you to visit Pace University as it celebrates his life at this website: <https://www.pace.edu/law/dean-emeritus-richard-l-ottinger-1929-2026>.

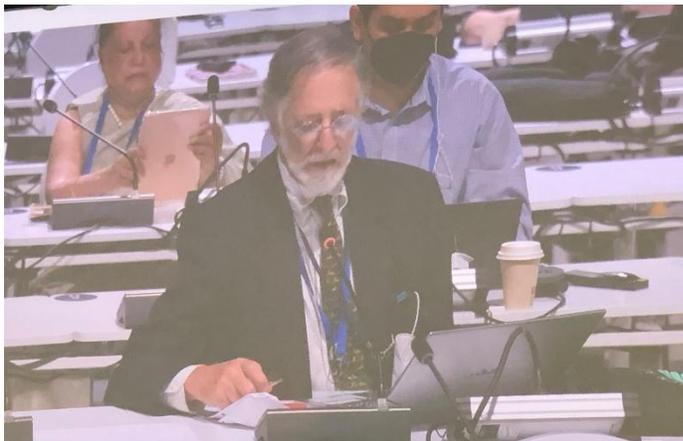
The Consortium organized a conference in Belem for the UN Climate Summit, COP30, last October. There, on line, Dick Ottinger delivered a spirited call for energy law reform and climate sanity. This Pace website provides the link to his message. His years at Pace

University's Haub Law School followed his election to serve in the US House of Representatives, repeatedly for 16 years. His legislation helped provide the foundations for Ecological Law. The Consortium rededicates itself to carrying on his mission. We extend our condolences to the Ottinger family. We are inspired by his exemplary lifetime, of care and concern, for our shared future.

### § "Nick's Letter" - *Consortium for Ecological Law: Catalysts toward Sustainability*

It is clear that Humans and the Earth have been changing each other since George Perkins Marsh wrote *Man and Nature* in 1864. The pace and scale of change have accelerated, as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate change has documented. The disruptions of climate change have outpaced the measures nations have adopted for environmental law or sustainable development. Ecological relationships can be integrated into legal systems, to induce symbiotic socio-economic adaptations. "Business as usual" is too brittle to withstand impactful climate change.

Societies are adapting of necessity. To guide a "just transition" beyond the developments that fuel disruptive change, law reforms can serve as catalyst to induce sustainable change. The Consortium for Ecological Law (CEL) identifies ways that law leverages societies to care for themselves by caring for the Earth.



Alumni, "retired" faculty and friends of the Environmental Law Program in the Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University established CEL to support law students' engagement with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). "Soft Law" decisions by IUCN World Conservation Congresses lay the foundations for innovation in local, national and international law. These decisions reflect study and refinement of new concepts and practices. IUCN's innovations in "Conceptual Law Development" have produced the new systems such as the Convention for Biological Diversity. Conceptual Law Development works!

CEL is advancing development of catalytic legal concepts in four areas: a) A decade of engagements with the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) for rapid deployment of nature-based energy systems; b) Realizing gains by recognizing "rights of nature" in legal systems; c) Collaboration with Universities in Brazil and India on effective ecological law; and d) Policy research and support for national Missions to the United Nations in New York in ecological sustainability. CEL collaborates through, and supports, Haub Law School's Pace Energy & Climate Center, Brazil-American Institute for Law and Environment, Jindal University partnership, UN Diplomacy Program, and Global Center for Environmental Legal studies (an active Member of IUCN since 1983).

We invite active participation in CEL's on-going endeavors to innovate for a dynamic, adaptive, humane and sustainable relationship with Earth. - Nick Robinson

--Note: After the submission of "Nick's Letter" for this inaugural Newsletter, a Presidential Memorandum on January 7, 2026, announced that the United States is Withdrawing from International Organizations, including IUCN, Conventions, and Treaties.

Below is Nick's brief commentary in reaction to this announcement:

The USA has withdrawn from IUCN and many other international organizations, including the International Law Commission and the IPCC. See the Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, January 7, 2026: Withdrawing the United States from International Organizations, Conventions, and Treaties that Are Contrary to the Interests of the United States.

This withdrawal from IUCN is an unprecedented development, which will weaken US stewardship of nature across North America and world-wide, to our ecological and socio-economic detriment. It disrespects the leadership that the USA, and the National Park Service, and many nature conservation groups have provided for founding IUCN in 1948 and in the decades that followed. The USA became a State Member of IUCN under President Reagan. The Memorandum has tarnished the leadership of President Reagan and all prior Presidents that supported IUCN in so many ways.

The withdrawal of the USA as a State Member of IUCN does not affect IUCN's core purpose. IUCN will continue to foster international cooperation for sustaining biodiversity, wildlife, and a healthy planet. IUCN is a part of many international institutions that continue, such as IUCN's service through IUCN's Permanent Observer status in the UN General Assembly.



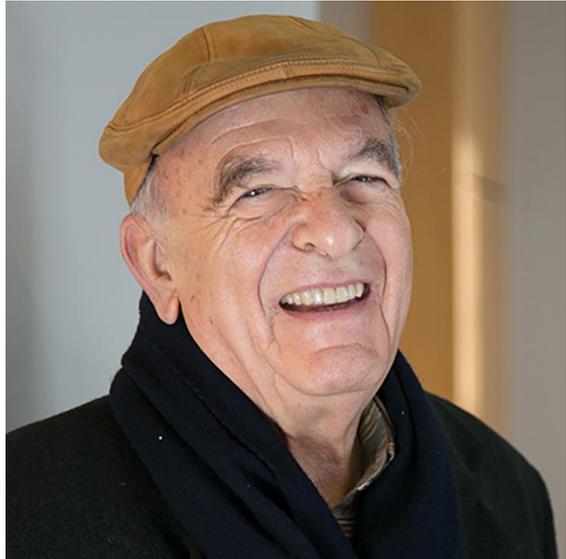
In the hiatus, and until the US rejoins IUCN and rebuilds international cooperation in a future day, it is important for all IUCN Members, especially those within the USA, to redouble their commitment to IUCN and caring for the Earth. Avenues for cooperation on environmental stewardship, in partnership with IUCN, are many and will persevere. With best wishes for nature conservation everywhere,

### **§ Honoring the late Richard L. Ottinger, CEL's Founder and Vice-President**

Environmental champion. Co-founder of the Peace Corps. Strong opponent of the Vietnam War. Principled, liberal Congressional leader for 16 years and post-Watergate reformer. Founder and Board Chair Emeritus of the Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI). Dean of Pace Law School and Founder of Pace Energy and Climate Center.

1. Helped to start the Peace Corps with Founding Director Sargent Shriver, second staff member, served as Director of Latin American programs from 1961-64.
2. In 1964, Ottinger became the first Democrat elected to Congress in Westchester County, serving in Congress for 16 years from 1965 to 1971 and then again from 1975 to 1985 playing a leadership role in reforming Congressional rules as part of the post-Watergate class of 1975. He was inspired to run for Congress in 1964 because of the harms caused by pollution in the Hudson River, teaming up with fishermen and concerned citizens to sound the alarm and push to clean it up. In his first year in Congress, he wrote and passed the Hudson River Compact Act that established an interstate commission to clean up the river.
3. One of the first environmentalists in Congress, starting in the 1960s, Ottinger strongly advocated for solar and other renewable energy sources and energy efficiency. He was the moving force behind several pieces of landmark environmental legislation, including the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, and Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act (PURPA).

4. In 1975, alongside fellow Representatives John Heinz (R-Pa.), Gilbert Gude (R-Md.), John Seiberling (D-Ohio), and Morris Udall (D-Ariz.), Ottinger was instrumental in founding the Environmental and Energy Study Conference, a bipartisan and bicameral Congressional caucus to educate members of Congress about environmental issues and innovative policy solutions. The Study Conference, which included a majority of senators and representatives, played an important role in the passage of major environmental laws such as the Clean Air Act amendments of 1977 and the Clean Water Act of 1977.



5. In 1984, due to Congressional regulations, the Study Conference transitioned out of Congress to an independent, nonpartisan nonprofit called the Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI). Ottinger was the first chair of EESI's board of directors and in 1988 he led the EESI board to adopt a policy declaring that addressing climate change was a moral imperative and should guide all of EESI's work. In 2024, EESI honored Ottinger at its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary and he continued to serve as Chair Emeritus, guiding EESI as it advanced climate solutions that benefit our nation's economy, security, environment, and health.
6. Ottinger also was one of the earliest and most vocal opponents of the Vietnam War in Congress. In 1969, he introduced the Vietnam Disengagement Act and in 1970 co-authored an amendment to end the war. Ottinger would often tell the story of LBJ calling him into his office and picking him up by his collar to intimidate him

into stopping his advocacy against the war. LBJ picked the wrong person. Ottinger never feared or backed down from powerful political and industry players in doing what he felt was right. As with LBJ on the war, Ottinger stood up to both Con Edison and Governor Nelson Rockefeller in successfully pushing to clean up the Hudson River.

7. Ottinger believed in and practiced bipartisanship, reaching across the aisle regularly to solve problems. Robert Litt, a former Ottinger staff member and former Director of National Intelligence, noted, "Dick was a model of a type of politics that is long gone, but I hope will return someday." At a 30<sup>th</sup> reunion of his Congressional staff in 1994, a Westchester reporter described the outpouring of praise that captured Ottinger's character as a political leader and person. "He's one of the most principled men I've ever met." "He had the courage to tell the truth." "He stood for something when he ran for office." "Dick had a set of values and beliefs." "He instilled in all of us...a sense of idealism, a sense of values." See article by Nancy Q. Keefe dated September 13, 1994 for the Gannett Suburban Newspapers. (Go, Go, Go with RLO and Ottinger Delivers were two of his campaign slogans and ongoing refrains that described his passion and doer character.) He was beloved and helped immensely by the scores of talented and passionate staff, interns and volunteers, ushering in a new generation of public, nonprofit and private sector leaders. He and his remarkable staff also excelled and innovated in constituent service. His "mobile office" van went from town to town helping residents with their problems and working with them on their concerns and aspirations. In his congressional districts he worked with dozens of cities, towns, villages, school districts and community institutions on good works that can be viewed today all across the county.
8. In 1984, Ottinger left Congress because of the partisan dysfunction and gridlock that started to take over at that time and with a determination that he could do more good on the outside. He came "home" that year to join the Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University in White Plains, New York, first as an environmental law professor and then as Dean of Pace Law School from 1994-99. In 1987, he founded the Pace Energy and Climate Center (PECC), which has pioneered research on the social and environmental costs of energy production and has led collaborative efforts to increase the use of energy efficiency and renewables at the state and national levels. Ottinger's work as Dean, PECC and as Co-Director of the Pace Global Center for Environmental Legal Studies, brought national acclaim to Pace University School of Law's environmental law program, which is currently ranked number one in the country by *US News & World Report*. Professor Ottinger loved teaching and his law students loved him and his inclusive, down to earth approach. See "A Tribute to Dean Richard L. Ottinger" by Alicia Mendez in the 1999 Pace Environmental Law Review. In 2013, Pace Law School named its new student classroom building the Richard Ottinger Hall.

9. In the past decade, Ottinger has been increasingly active on the global stage to address the climate crisis. He has worked closely with leadership of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which represents governments and civil society organizations totaling more than 1400 members in 160 countries. Culminating a years-long effort by Ottinger, with some close colleagues, IUCN adopted a motion at its 25<sup>th</sup> World Conservation Conference this past October “to expressly address dependence on fossil fuels as a threat to nature.” Ottinger described this important progress in a Zoom presentation he gave in conjunction with the international COP30 convening in Belem, Brazil, just a few months ago [Note: Read the text below]. Over the past year, Ottinger has championed and advised on work by environmental leader and friend, Hunter Lovins, on a global project called COPx. COPx – which stands for Conferences of People, Independently Organized – is a global citizen’s movement to solve the climate crisis by empowering and connecting people everywhere to implement climate solutions in their own communities and to pressure their countries to implement their commitments as a complement to the UN Conference of Parties that has failed to secure climate safety by using only a top-down approach. Ottinger worked with COPx and PECC to organize the important grassroots session at the recent COP30 in Belem.
  
10. Ottinger also turned the Ottinger Foundation, started by his father, into an influential force for social, economic and environmental justice during the 1960s to 1990s. He brought in David Hunter to serve as Executive Director of the Ottinger Foundation, sharing Hunter with The Stern Fund. Described as the “Father of Progressive Philanthropy,” Hunter led the Ottinger Foundation as part of a network of donors to promote community organizing and advocacy in order to tackle the root causes of economic and social problems.

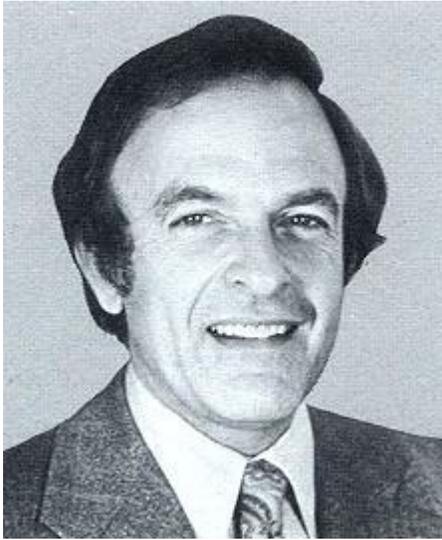
Richard L. Ottinger grew up in Scarsdale. His father, Lawrence Ottinger, founded and led the US Plywood Corporation and his mother, Louise Ottinger, was a NY philanthropist who supported the arts, community development and family planning.

See Pace University’s Tribute Website:

[Dean Emeritus Richard L. Ottinger \(1929–2026\) | Pace University New York](#)

**§ The late Hon. Richard L. Ottinger’s Address to COP 30 at the Conference “A Mandate for All - The Legal and Civic Imperative to Confront the Climate Emergency, 12-13 November 2025**

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), at its 2025 world Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi last month, adopted a motion to explicitly address dependence on fossil fuels as a threat to nature.



The decision, coming at the wake of a recent International Court of Justice decision holding countries responsible for climate crises, has encouraged the climate activists who expressed hope that these recent developments would have positive fallout on our COP 30 deliberations at Belem.

While many vulnerable countries and environmental platforms hailed the International Court declaration as “historical”, so far, the developed countries’ governments such as the United States as well as developmental economies like India, China and others have been mum on the Court’s resolution. Although the US government is not expected to support it many of the U.S. State governments may do so.

The COP 28 issued a unanimous decision to do away with all forms of fossil fuel from 2050 onward. The science community stated the decision was too generalized, particularly since it was linked to a host of conditions. It was also pointed out in a recent United Nations report that until now the track record of developed countries to honor their transformation commitments under the Paris climate treaty has been generally abysmally poor.

IUCN 2025 calls on governments and civil society to confront a principal root cause of the combined climate and biodiversity crises through supply-side measures. This represents the strongest language ever adopted in a multilateral forum calling on limiting their reliance on oil, gas and coal.

IUCN Motion 042 acknowledges the urgent gap in international governance of fossil fuel production and pushes states to explore a variety of instruments, including explicitly by a potential Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty to phase out coal, oil, and gas, stop new extraction, and ensure a just transition for workers and communities.

Motion 042 also reaffirmed the IUCN’s role in conservation by calling for the protection of ecosystems as the source of extraction being principal measure for stopping new fossil fuel expansion and promoting real conservation measures.

Building on the climate decision of the IUCN Congress, this historic development comes in the wake of the recent International Court of Justice (ICJ) advisory opinion, which was earlier welcomed by IUCN Motion 141. The ICJ ruling affirmed the obligation to prevent climate harm and protect the rights of present and future generations.

Recently COP 30 president Ambassador André Corrêa do Lago asserted that the ICJ ruling would play an important role in the negotiations here during the ensuing COP30 negotiations.

The IUCN 2025 decision also adopted Motion 038 that calls for creation of a treaty providing for the promotion of the implementation of the goals agreed upon under the Paris Agreement, including transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems in a just, orderly and equitable manner. However, the International Court of Justice in its historic Opinion ruled that all states must begin phasing out uses of fossil fuels at once. The Court made it clearly unlawful to defer steps to phase out dependence on fossil fuels stating that states cannot wait to phase out fossil fuel dependence until such a new agreement is enacted as some have done in the past.

These hopeful measures should also be of help to the exciting climate change measures initiated by distinguished environmentalist Hunter Lovins in her “COPx” program to enlist worldwide climate change mitigation advocates and organizations in efforts to influence their members to take accelerated action to promote climate change mitigation actions. In just her first year of operations, she has enlisted more than 1,100 participants. The Haub Law School at Pace University’s Center for Energy and Climate is undertaking collaboration with Hunter’s COPx program. Hunter will be presenting her program shortly in panel 5 of our side event at 3:30. She deserves our support.



Hunter Lovins with Shakeel Kazmi and Victor M. Tafur – CEL’s Treasurer and Executive Director, respectively – during New York Climate Week 2025.

## § Highlight of CEL’s Impact and Events in 2025: *Advancing Youth Engagement in Global Environmental Governance at the IUCN World Conservation Congress*

-By Victoria Sawchuk - J.D. Candidate, Class of 2026, Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University, Global Center for Environmental Legal Studies (GCELS), Promotions Editor, Pace Environmental Law Review

Between October 8-16, 2025, the Consortium for Ecological Law’s (CEL) Board Members attended the International Union for the Conservation of Nature’s (IUCN) World Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. The Congress is one of the most influential global forums for advancing international environmental policy, bringing together local and national governments, institutions, scientists, Indigenous leaders, and civil society.

As members of the GCELS of the Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University, online

participants included Professor Nicholas A. Robinson (the Consortium’s President) and the late Professor Richard L. Ottinger (the Consortium’s Vice President), while Professors Dr. Shakeel Kazmi (Member of the Consortium’s Board of Directors and Treasurer) and Dr. Victor M. Tafur (CEL’s Executive Director) both attended in person.



As part of its commitment to advancing ecological law and fostering the next generation of environmental leaders, CEL sponsored a cohort of young professionals comprised of students and alumni of the Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University’s Juris Doctor and Master of Laws programs. Working under the guidance of Professor Achintha Vithanage and Pace’s Global Center for Environmental Legal Studies, this cohort worked on researching, drafting, and advocating for policy motions addressing critical environmental challenges.

Antonio Oposa Jr. also attended the WCC with the CEL delegation (in the photo above with Pace Haub JD ’25 Madison Routledge Pettus).



Through the support of CEL, the cohort attended the World Conservation Congress in-person, enabling these young professionals to meaningfully participate in global environmental governance and partake in key negotiations surrounding their motions.

The cohort also hosted a deep dive session at Congress entitled “From Classroom to Congress: Engaging Youth in the Making of International Environmental Policy,” where they discussed their experience in the motions development process and encouraged IUCN members to foster youth engagement in policymaking.

CEL is pleased to share that ten motions proposed by CEL and/or the Pace cohort were adopted by IUCN:

- Motion 005: Protection and restoration of diverse native grasslands
- Motion 007: Soil Security Law
- Motion 033: Port State Measures for IUU Fishing
- Motion 051: Mainstreaming gender equality in biodiversity policies, programmes, actions, and funding
- Motion 061: Recognizing the Crime of Ecocide to Protect Nature
- Motion 094: Recognizing the importance of Indigenous and local languages, knowledge and cultural heritage in biodiversity conservation
- Motion 098: Advancing the One Health approach for biodiversity, health, and global cooperation
- Motion 099: Implementation of the One Health approach, from global to local
- Motion 132: Strengthening business engagement in climate adaptation for preservation of biodiversity and ecosystems
- New and Urgent Motion 141: Welcoming the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on climate change

The success of each of these motions reflect months of sustained research, coalition-building, and negotiations. It also demonstrates the meaningful role that emerging environmental law professionals can play in shaping conservation priorities on local and global levels. CEL's engagement at the 2025 World Conservation Congress underscores its commitment to advancing ecological law through inclusive, youth-led approaches that translate legal scholarship into tangible international impact.

#### **Related Additional Updates/links:**

- [GCELS students and alums presented a Deep Dive Learning Zone Session on "Classroom to Congress: Engaging Youth in International Environmental Policy-Making."](#)
- [Post-IUCN WCC Press Release](#)
- [GCELS IUCN Motion Tracker](#)
- [PECC R.E.A.C.T Newsletter feature on IUCN WCC](#)
- [GreenLawBlog Series on the GCELS Motions and GCELS at IUCN WCC](#)
- [ABA SEER Article on GCELS students at IUCN WCC](#)
- [AALS \(Association of American Legal Schools\) featured the students' work on their LinkedIn page](#)

#### **Key Takeaways from the IUCN 2025 World Conservation Congress**

*-By Victoria Sawchuk - J.D. Candidate, Class of 2026, Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University, Global Center for Environmental Legal Studies (GCELS), Promotions Editor, Pace Environmental Law Review*

At a time marked by geopolitical fragmentation and rising nationalism, the IUCN 2025 World Conservation Congress offered a powerful reaffirmation of multilateral environmental governance. During the Members' Assembly, IUCN adopted a new [20-year strategic vision](#) and the [IUCN Programme 2026-2029](#), which outline the overarching direction for conservation efforts among IUCN and its members.

The newly adopted frameworks focus on four key areas:

- (1) Scaling inclusive conservation across ecosystems,
- (2) Mainstreaming nature within transformative sectors,
- (3) Embedding equity and rights-based approaches, and
- (4) Linking ecological outcomes with social justice and human wellbeing.

Together, these priorities signal a shift away from siloed environmental protection and towards an intersectional, rights-based approach, recognizing the interconnectedness of biodiversity, climate resilience, and human rights.

IUCN Members also adopted 144 Resolutions and Recommendations, addressing a wide range of critical environmental issues, including biodiversity protection, ecosystem restoration, recognition of Indigenous rights, the spread of zoonoses, the first IUCN policy on synthetic biology in relation to nature conservation, the recognition of ecocide as a crime, and new measures to strengthen governance and inclusion across the Union

One of the key motions adopted by the Members Assembly was Motion 141: Welcoming the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on climate change. Through this motion, IUCN members recognized States' obligations in respect to climate change, requested IUCN's Director General and the World Commission on Environmental Law to study the implementation of the ICJ's findings, and urged IUCN members to take appropriate actions to implement such measures.

The motions adopted at the IUCN 2025 World Conservation Congress underscore the importance of collective action to address environmental challenges. However, the success of the Congress hinges on the actual implementation of these motions. As the international community confronts accelerating biodiversity loss and climate impacts, the IUCN Congress framed that the future of conservation lies in equity-driven, cross-sectoral, and globally coordinated action. This Congress was the largest gathering in IUCN history bringing together around 10,000 participants on-site and online, 140 booths and pavilions and 1,000 events.

***CEL's Engagement and Support of the [Pace Energy and Climate Center](#) at IUCN WCC in Abu Dhabi and COP30 in Brazil***

*-By Michael Hamersky, Executive Director, [Pace Energy and Climate Center](#) Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University*

With CEL's support, I was able to advance the Pace Energy and Climate Center's core mission of phasing out fossil fuels by engaging with numerous other professionals and organizations that have similar goals at the IUCN World Congress. Importantly, with CEL members, I participated in meetings with International Renewable Energy Agency representatives at their headquarters in Abu Dhabi to discuss working together towards ensuring that conservation and biodiversity is prioritized as renewable energy development continues to expand globally as part of a just energy transition.

I was honored to support CEL's priorities by hosting a two-day side event in Belem, Brazil at COP30, A Mandate for All: The Legal and Civic Imperative to Confront the Climate Emergency. We were able to engage multidisciplinary international thought leaders to discuss possible solutions and strategies to address the climate crisis. Additionally, thanks to CEL's support, we were able to identify several local partners in the Amazonia region to begin discussing how we can assist with issues unique to this crucial region.

See below, photo of CEL's delegation to IRENA, left to right: Michael Hamersky, Victor M. Tafur, Antonio Oposa Jr., Shakeel Kazmi and Jinlei Feng, our host at IRENA.



### ***CEL Supported the Brazil & American Institute for Law Environment at COP30***

*-By David Cassuto Professor of Law Director, Brazil & American Institute for Law Environment (BAILE)*

Thanks to the grant provided by the CEL, the Brazil American Institute for Law & Environment (BAILE) was able to send me, Professor David Cassuto (Director of BAILE), to Rio de Janeiro as part of the COP 30 Side Event: “A Mandate for All – The Legal and Civic Imperative to Combat the Climate Emergency.” As you know, the event was co-sponsored by Pace’s Elisabeth Haub School of Law and FGV DIREITO RIO. CEL’s support enabled me to represent Pace at FGV in Rio.

The event was a resounding success – well-attended in person at all three locales (Belem, Rio, & White Plains) and live streamed by hundreds of thousands. I personally moderated several sessions and delivered closing remarks to the conference while helping coordinate the event’s Rio portion. The conference sessions featured some of the most important voices working to combat climate change internationally. Our work — both in creating this event and in contributing to the global effort to protect the environment been widely noticed and appreciated. None of it would have been possible — has without CEL’s partnership and support ... All told, the event itself was inspiring and important, and set

the stage for much and important work in the future. I am deeply grateful for CEL's support and look forward to future collaborations.

**A Mandate for All - The Legal and Civic Imperative to Confront the Climate Emergency, 12-13 November 2025** – The conference is archived and can be seen on YouTube:

November, 12: Morning

ING: [https://youtube.com/live/9J\\_LAOKg-kc?feature=share](https://youtube.com/live/9J_LAOKg-kc?feature=share)

November, 12: Noon

ING: <https://youtube.com/live/euxU1-D50PM?feature=share>

November, 13: Morning

ING: <https://youtube.com/live/8QdLICBAobs?feature=share>

November, 13: Noon

ING: <https://youtube.com/live/JddPGQz0YIY?feature=share>



## § Featuring CEL's Board Members: Trajectory and Vision

-By Haoting Guo - J.D. Candidate, Class of 2026, Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University. Haoting asked Professors **Catherine Tinker and Ann Powers** to reflect on their trajectories and their involvement in CEL.

**Professor Catherine Tinker** reflects on her career in international environmental law, deeply shaped by the field's early development and the influence of Professor Nicholas Robinson, particularly during the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. Observing how environmental law emerged through inclusive dialogue grounded in science, ethics, and respect for nature convinced her that environmental protection must be addressed at a global and systemic level.



Professor Tinker explains that while early international environmental law focused on incorporating scientific knowledge into treaties and regulations, the field has increasingly shifted toward rights-based approaches, including human rights, the rights of nature, and protecting future generations. Framing environmental harm as a rights issue, she argues, enhances legal accountability and clarifies state responsibility. She also supports ecological law as an integrated framework that links local environmental decision-making with global legal principles. Instead of viewing environmental law as a collection of isolated rules, ecological law emphasizes the interconnectedness of legal systems and strengthens the connection between local practices and international obligations.

Brazil has been central to Professor Tinker's work and to the broader evolution of international environmental law. Through long-standing academic partnerships and exchanges with Brazilian universities, she has seen how environmental protection, human rights, and institutional innovation intersect in practice. Brazil's continued leadership in global climate and biodiversity discussions, including recent COP negotiations, reflects this ongoing influence.

Finally, Professor Tinker highlights recent advisory opinions from international courts that clarify a state's failure to address climate change may constitute an internationally wrongful act. She remains optimistic, pointing to the growing role of civil society, indigenous knowledge, and youth participation, and encourages students and young professionals to apply their legal skills across sectors to advance sustainability and environmental justice.

**Professor Ann Powers** feels fortunate to have begun her legal career at the Department of Justice—first as an Assistant U.S. Attorney, and later in the Environment Division. It was consequential and important work, undertaken at a time when many environmental laws and regulatory frameworks were still being developed. The work was deeply satisfying but also sobering. It gave her a broad view of environmental issues and regulatory programs and instilled a tremendous respect for the lawyers at the Department, as well as those at federal and state agencies, who work every day to protect the environment and the people who depend on it.

Her work with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation then brought me “down to earth”—or perhaps more accurately, down to water—in a very real sense. That experience integrated law and science at the landscape level, reinforcing the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to environmental protection.

These experiences have profoundly informed her teaching at Pace, where she also gained a global perspective through work at the United Nations, primarily on ocean-related issues. Engaging with environmental challenges at the local, national, and interna-



tional levels has fostered a deep appreciation of their interconnectedness. Today, CEL’s Board offers her the opportunity to work alongside internationally recognized scholars and practitioners who are critically rethinking how environmental problems are addressed, and who are developing new partnerships and perspectives aimed at protecting our planet.

Looking ahead, notes Professor Powers, it is imperative that the requirements and programs of the High Seas Treaty are fully pursued if we are to protect global ocean resources. Equally critical is the need to assess and address the impacts of climate change. The Treaty incorporates several key mechanisms, particularly marine protected areas (MPAs), environmental impact

assessments (EIAs), and marine genetic resources (MGRs). Tracking activity under these frameworks will reveal whether progress is being made toward the Treaty’s goals, how that progress is achieved, and by whom. We will be able to assess whether the extent of ocean areas under protection has increased and whether such protections have improved ecological health; whether EIAs are being conducted and whether they meaningfully reduce harm to marine ecosystems; and whether the development of marine genetic resources, along with associated monetary benefits, is being shared equitably.

Professor Powers concludes: Although the global challenges we face are substantial, there are dedicated scientists, lawyers, and advocates committed to meeting them. CEL has an important role to play in encouraging innovative thinking about environmental issues and advancing effective, forward-looking solutions.

## § A Decade+ Engagement with the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)

- By CEL Board Member/Treasurer, Professor Dr. Shakeel Kazmi

We started this campaign when the late Hon. Richard L. Ottinger and I visited Abu Dhabi to attend the First Session of the Assembly of IRENA and the Fifth session of the Preparatory Commission for IRENA in April 2011. We had meetings with IRENA Director General and other IRENA officials to explore the collaboration opportunities between IRENA and Pace Law School.



Dick again visited Abu Dhabi to attend IRENA's fourth session of the Assembly in January 2014. Dick was invited to participate in IRENA Legislator's Forum. We also had the opportunity to meet with IRENA Director General and discussed collaboration opportunities. I have been attending IRENA annual meetings since 2010, the last in January 2026 (photo above), and hope to continue the work to honor Dick's legacy in renewable energy and climate change.

## § "Victor's Endnote" – Honoring the Late Richard L. Ottinger and moving Forward

-By CEL Executive Director, Professor Dr. Victor M. Tafur

A final word, as we move forward with CEL into the next phase. This past 2025, our third year, defined our work. First and foremost, as educators we focus our work, vision and impact on training new leaders in practical global Ecological Law and diplomacy. If the question over the coming decades for environmental law and policy is not what we will stop but what will we build, the answer is rooted in an Earth-centered vision for Harmony with Nature, with abundance in renewable energy and ecological services integrally valued in our societies, and with future generations in mind.

The late Hon. Richard L. Ottinger was my doctoral thesis advisor to address "[Sustainable Energy Law in Latin America](#)" (2006). Dick was an inspiring, resolute and unwavering mentor throughout all endeavors since I arrived at Pace in 1999. He was exemplary in every possible way - we will honor his legacy.

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