

ClientEarth®

Legal wins for people and nature

Lessons from legal actions and advocacy.
CBD COP17 Briefing.





Foreword from ClientEarth CEO, Laura Clarke

We are nothing without nature. Nature provides us with clean air and water, fertile soil and food, medicine, protection from heat and extreme weather. Yet ecosystems are being degraded at an unprecedented rate, increasing risks for people's lives, health and livelihoods. Protecting and restoring nature is essential not just for our planet, but for human rights, public health, economic security, and climate resilience.

Law is a vital part of the solution. If you get the right laws in place, you change the rules of the game. At ClientEarth, we work to make practical progress: stronger laws and regulations, precedent-setting legal judgments, and people, everywhere, using the law to drive change. Communities in Spain fighting for clean water; Indigenous peoples and Local Communities shaping forest governance in Africa and Southeast Asia; and coastal communities working to protect the seas on which they depend.

Ambitious international agreements can set the direction of travel, but they cannot protect a river, restore a habitat or reduce pollution on their own. Real world action depends on translating these agreements into national laws, ensuring their effective implementation, and holding institutions accountable.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), agreed at COP15, provides a roadmap for this action through four long-term goals and 23 global targets.

Through partnerships with communities, civil society organisations, IPLCs, legal experts and others, ClientEarth works across the KMGBF's priorities, protecting and restoring ecosystems, tackling pollution and unsustainable exploitation, strengthening corporate accountability, supporting deforestation-free supply chains, and securing public participation and access to justice. We also strive to ensure that Indigenous peoples and Local Communities are recognised as rights holders and essential partners in conservation.

The examples in this briefing show that environmental decline is not inevitable, and progress is possible when people use the law to protect nature and secure lasting change. Above all, these case studies show that biodiversity cannot remain on the sidelines of decision-making. Every decision around infrastructure and agriculture, finance and corporate strategy, has consequences for the natural world. When biodiversity is considered from the outset, better outcomes for both people and nature become possible. Only then will the promise of the biodiversity framework be realised: with thriving nature on land and sea, and in the water we drink, the air we breathe, and the food we eat.

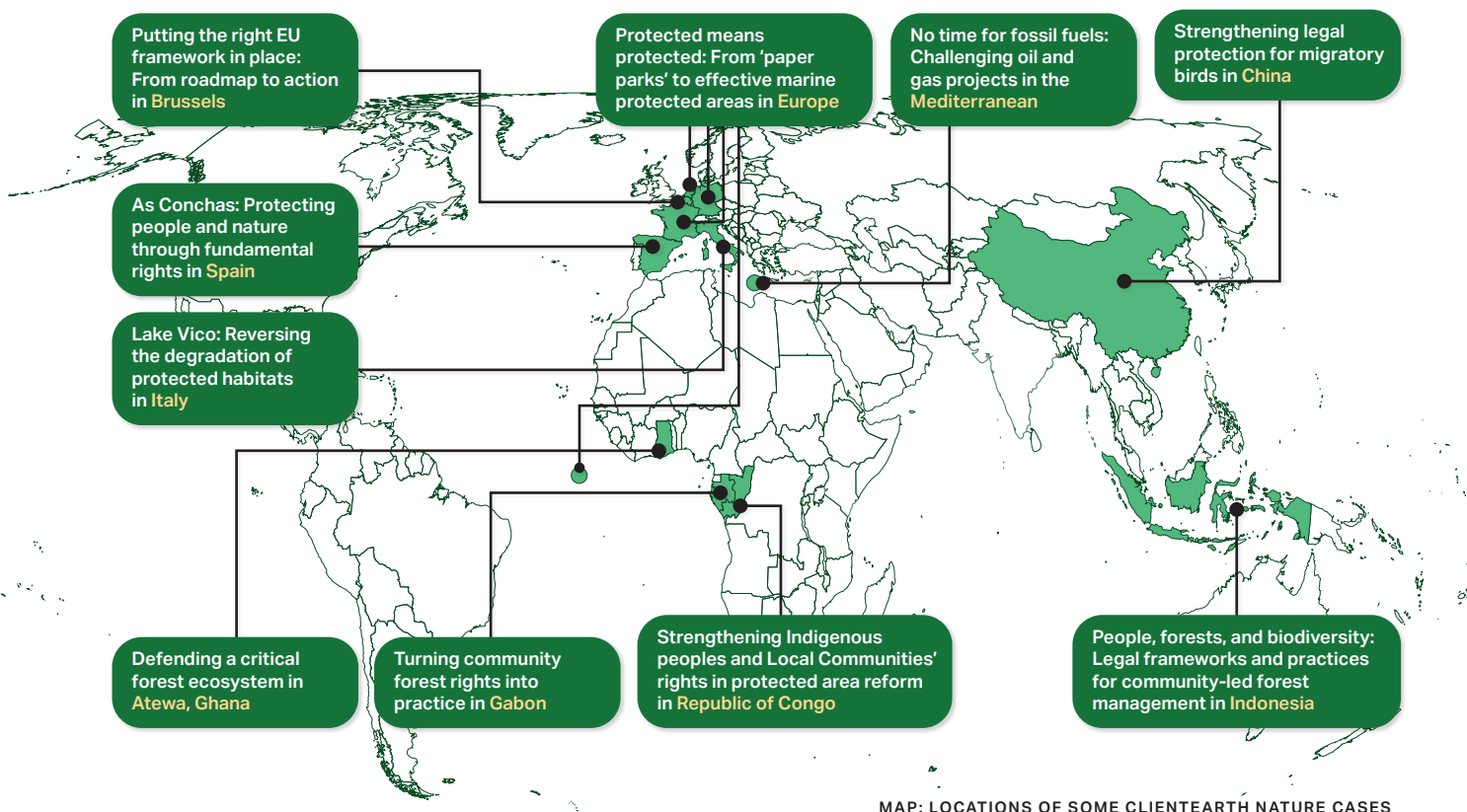
Laura Clarke OBE

Chief Executive Officer, ClientEarth

Contents

Empowering people and communities through fundamental rights	9
As Conchas: Protecting people and nature through fundamental rights in Spain	10
Strengthening Indigenous peoples and Local Communities rights in protected area reform, Republic of Congo	11
Protecting the ocean	12
Protected means protected: From 'paper parks' to effective marine protected areas in Europe	12
No time for fossil fuels: Challenging oil and gas projects in the Mediterranean	13
Putting the right EU framework in place: From roadmap to action	14
Protecting forest land and resources	15
Defending a critical forest ecosystem, Atewa, Ghana	15
Turning community forest rights into practice, Gabon	16
People, forests, and biodiversity: Legal frameworks and practices for community-led forest management in Southeast Asia	16
Strengthening legal protection for ecosystems and wildlife	18
Lake Vico: Reversing the degradation of protected habitats, Italy	18
Strengthening legal protection for migratory birds in China	19
Conclusions: From legal wins to lasting change	20





Empowering people and communities through fundamental rights

The KMGBF's¹ rights-based approach recognises that effective biodiversity conservation depends on recognising and supporting the role of IPLCs. To deliver on Target 22, national frameworks should guarantee their full and effective participation in decision-making; respect their rights to lands, territories and resources; and access to information and justice. Frameworks should also recognise secure land tenure as a key conservation tool (Target 3), uphold Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) (Targets 5, 9, 22), and support direct access to biodiversity and financing (Target 19).

Together with partners, ClientEarth advances these objectives through legal advocacy, access to justice and community-centred governance initiatives. This work supports the implementation of KMGBF targets globally, from strengthening IPLCs' forest rights in Africa, to advancing community forestry and biodiversity protection frameworks in Asia.

This approach is notably reflected in ClientEarth's landmark As Conchas case² in Spain, where the court recognised the authorities' failure to protect residents from pollution linked to intensive livestock farming. This success highlights how environmental rights, public participation, and access to justice can deliver better outcomes for both people and nature.

¹ [15/4. Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#)

² [Court rules Spain breached residents' human rights in livestock megapollution | ClientEarth](#)

As Conchas: Protecting people and nature through fundamental rights in Spain

For years, residents of As Conchas in Galicia endured severe water pollution linked to intensive livestock farming. Nitrate pollution and recurring toxic cyanobacterial blooms degraded water quality, harmed freshwater biodiversity and ecosystem health, and contaminated local water sources, affecting both nature and residents' quality of life. Supported by ClientEarth, Friends of the Earth Spain and the Spanish Federation of Consumers and Users, the community challenged the authorities' failure to enforce existing environmental laws and protect residents' rights to health, a healthy environment, access to information and effective judicial protection.

In July 2025,³ the High Court of Justice of Galicia ruled in favour of the residents, finding that public authorities had failed to take adequate action to address the pollution. The judgment became final in February 2026 after Spain's Supreme Court dismissed appeals against the ruling.

Regrettably, the authorities have not yet fully implemented the measures required by the court and pollution problems persist. However, the residents have been able to continue to hold the authorities to account and, in September 2026, returned to court seeking the compulsory enforcement of the judgment to restore the affected ecosystem and protect local communities.

Combining scientific evidence, community testimony and rights-based litigation, it offers a replicable model for advancing KMGBF Targets 7 and 22 through pollution reduction, accountability, participating and access to justice.

Recommendations for how this work could be replicated:

- 🌐 Build a robust evidence base by combining scientific data, environmental monitoring and community testimony to document pollution impacts and authorities' failure to act.
- 🌐 Use a rights-based approach, linking environmental harm to fundamental rights, such as the rights to health, a healthy environment, access to information and access to justice, while holding all responsible authorities accountable.
- 🌐 Plan for implementation from the outset, seeking clear remedies, timelines and monitoring mechanisms, ensuring affected communities remain engaged and pursuing enforcement action where authorities fail to comply.

³ [Court rules Spain breached residents' human rights in landmark case on livestock megapollution | ClientEarth](#)



Strengthening Indigenous peoples and Local Communities rights in protected area reform, Republic of Congo

Outdated legislation has long governed wildlife and protected areas in the Republic of Congo⁴ providing limited recognition of IPLCs and failing to reflect approaches to participatory and rights-based conservation. When reforms recently began, ClientEarth and Forum pour la Gouvernance et les Droits de l'Homme engaged early with civil society to embed community-led conservation in the 2023 draft revised law.⁵

For the first time, the draft recognises the role of IPLCs in protected-area governance, including community-managed hunting and fishing, benefit-sharing, buffer zones and environmental finance.

ClientEarth and Comptoir Juridique Junior also trained 14 communities on their rights to FPIC under the Forest Code,⁶ laying the foundations for a community paralegal network.

While adoption is pending, the case shows how early legal engagement, disciplined tracking of civil society proposals, and community legal empowerment can shift conservation law towards rights-based governance. This approach advances KMGBF Targets 3, 9 and 22 on equitable conservation, sustainable use, participation and community rights.

Recommendations for how this work could be replicated:

- 🌐 Engage early,⁷ turning technical legal analysis into clear civil society demands while reforms are still open.
- 🌐 Track influence, documenting how civil society input is reflected in draft legislation through to final adoption.
- 🌐 Enhance community power, strengthening legal literacy and local capacity so communities can use the legal gains secured.

⁴ [Loi n°37-2008 du 28 novembre 2008 sur la faune et les aires protégées | Ministère des finances, du budget et du portefeuille public](#)

⁵ <https://www.fao.org/in-action/swm-programme/where-we-work/congo/fr>

⁶ ClientEarth, Final Report to Norad 2021–2026. These reports are not published in general but can be provided upon request.

⁷ N.M. Dawson et al. (2021), *Ecology and Society* 26(3):19; RRI (2020), *Rights-Based Conservation*, pp.28–29



Protecting the ocean

Living on a blue planet where water covers 70% of our world's surface means that ambitious ocean action is essential to achieving the KMGBF targets. Together with communities, civil society organisations, local experts and public interest lawyers, ClientEarth uses law and policy advocacy to turn the KMGBF's ocean commitments into enforceable action, including Targets 2 and 3 on restoration and protection, Target 5 on preventing unsustainable exploitation, Target 14 on mainstreaming biodiversity across decision-making, and Target 18 on harmful subsidies.

ClientEarth's work ranges from advocating for a first-of-its-kind EU Ocean Act, to challenging marine "paper parks" and unsustainable fishing practices in national courts, to engaging at the international level to protect the deep sea from destructive mining.

The ClientEarth office in China works with institutions, legal professionals, and civil society to strengthen marine law enforcement, tackle illegal fishing and harmful fisheries subsidies, and improve governance of distant-water fisheries through stronger compliance oversight and the development of a full-chain traceability system.⁸

The recent international legal wins on ocean protection heavily determine today's legal landscape - from the ratification of the landmark BBNJ (Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction) Agreement,⁹ to the advisory opinions by the top courts of the world, including the International Court of Justice,¹⁰ International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea¹¹ and Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.¹² ClientEarth is engaging at international, regional, national and local levels to ensure these global victories are translated into real-world change – and to help achieve the KMGBF targets.

Protected means protected: From 'paper parks' to effective marine protected areas in Europe

Despite their protected status, many marine protected areas (MPAs) across Europe remain open to destructive fishing practices such as bottom trawling. To ensure that "protected means protected", ClientEarth and its partners in the MPA Legal Coalition,¹³ a network of organisations working to strengthen the protection of Europe's seas, use strategic litigation to ensure that MPAs deliver real protection for biodiversity and coastal communities, not just protection on paper.

Members of the MPA Legal Coalition have filed national legal claims in France, Spain, the Netherlands, Germany, and, most recently, in Italy. ClientEarth and its partners also filed two complaints with the European Commission, showing that the continued authorisation of bottom trawling in MPAs reflects a systemic failure to comply with EU law, including the Habitats Directive. ClientEarth and partners are calling on the EU Commission to use its enforcement powers to open infringement proceedings, in order to secure consistent and effective protection of the EU's marine Natura 2000 network.

This wave of strategic litigation has already led to a major success. In May 2026, the District Court of The Hague in the Netherlands ruled that Dutch bottom trawlers could

⁸ [ClientEarth in China | ClientEarth Asia](#)

⁹ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/09/1165901>

¹⁰ International Court of Justice (ICJ), [Obligations of States in Respect of Climate Change, Advisory Opinion, I.C.J. Reports 2025](#), 21 of July 2025 (ICJ, AO 2025)

¹¹ International Tribunal of the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), [Request for an Advisory Opinion Submitted by the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change](#), No. 31, 21 of May 2024 (ITLOS, AO 2024).

¹² Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR), [Advisory Opinion on the interpretation of State obligations under Human Rights law in light of climate change](#), 3 of July 2025 (IACtHR, AO 2025).

¹³ [MPA Legal Coalition](#)

no longer operate without a permit and an appropriate environmental assessment in the Dogger Bank Natura 2000 site, confirming that blanket exemptions from EU nature protection requirements are unlawful. While this decision is currently being appealed by the Dutch government, it sets an enormously important precedent that will help set the direction of travel across Europe when it comes to MPA management. Only a few weeks later, in France, the Administrative Court of Rouen confirmed insufficient protection for the Natura 2000 site of Bancs des Flandres.

Recommendations for how this work could be replicated:

- 🌐 Build a coordinated legal coalition, sharing expertise and developing consistent arguments to challenge destructive activities across multiple jurisdictions.
- 🌐 Combine legal action with policy advocacy, using litigation, scientific evidence and public engagement to strengthen implementation and drive systemic change.
- 🌐 Address systemic non-compliance, using site-level cases to demonstrate broader enforcement failures and seek effective protection across the entire network of protected areas.
- 🌐 Legal takeaways from the wins: The Dogger Bank ruling confirmed that governments cannot grant blanket exemptions that let bottom trawling continue in MPAs. Environmental assessments must first be carried out to understand the impact. The burden of proof lies with the state: fishing can generally only be authorised if it is shown not to harm the site.

No time for fossil fuels: Challenging oil and gas projects in the Mediterranean

As the interlinkages between climate change and ocean health are undeniable, so too are the harmful impacts of fossil fuel infrastructure on marine biodiversity.

With regard to offshore hydrocarbons, ClientEarth and its partners have successfully challenged harmful gas exploitation authorised by the Italian government in a sensitive MPA near the Po Delta – a UNESCO World Heritage Site. They argued that the authorities had failed to assess the environmental impacts of the proposed gas platform and were therefore failing to apply the EU Habitats Directive. In November 2024, the Lazio Administrative Court ruled in our favour – halting the project.¹⁴

In Greece, ClientEarth, WWF Greece and Greenpeace have filed a complaint with the European Commission over similar systemic breaches in Greek seas.¹⁵ In particular, the organisations called for enforcement action against oil and gas projects in the Hellenic Trench – a marine biodiversity hotspot – which were approved without the relevant environmental assessments of potential impact on marine biodiversity, in violation of EU law. Following the legal submissions, the Commission confirmed, in December 2024, that it would seek clarifications from Greece.¹⁶ These inconsistencies highlight the need for continued scrutiny and accountability to ensure that protection commitments are upheld in practice.

Recommendations for how this work could be replicated:

- 🌐 Challenge inadequate environmental assessments, scrutinising whether offshore oil and gas projects properly assess potential impacts on protected areas, habitats and species.

¹⁴ <https://www.clientearth.org/latest/news/dolphins-turtles-under-threat-from-new-italian-gas-project-we-re-taking-action/>

¹⁵ <https://www.clientearth.org/latest/press-office/press-releases/ngos-urge-european-commission-to-intervene-as-greece-flouts-eu-law-for-benefit-of-oil-and-gas-activities/>

¹⁶ <https://www.clientearth.org/latest/press-office/press-releases/commission-to-probe-greek-oil-and-gas-drilling-after-ngo-intervention/>

- 🌐 Address systemic failures in environmental governance, combining legal action, advocacy and public accountability mechanisms to ensure that nature protection laws are effectively implemented.
- 🌐 Build strong NGO partnerships, combining legal expertise, scientific evidence and local knowledge to challenge harmful projects and secure effective enforcement of nature protection laws.

Putting the right EU framework in place: From roadmap to action

Europe's seas are at a crossroads – 93% are under human pressure.¹⁷ ClientEarth and its partners in the Blue NGO coalition – supported by more than 140 civil society organisations and businesses – have developed the Blue Manifesto.¹⁸ This is a pragmatic, science-based roadmap to guide EU decision-makers for a healthy ocean by 2030, while also guaranteeing a just and socially fair transition to sustainable ocean management.

Following this roadmap – next to other inputs from civil society and stakeholders – the European Commission has adopted the European Ocean Pact, promising a holistic approach to ocean policies and a landmark European Ocean Act. The EU now has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to bring European seas back to life. Continued efforts are needed to deliver the promises of the Pact and its implementing acts – such as the Ocean Act that could become the instrument to translate the biodiversity targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and KMGBF into EU law and practice.

Recommendations for how this work could be replicated:

- 🌐 Build a strong coalition of diverse actors, bringing together civil society, communities, scientists and responsible businesses around a shared vision and common policy demands.
- 🌐 Develop a clear, evidence-based roadmap, translating international commitments into practical legal and policy measures, timelines and accountability mechanisms.
- 🌐 Use political opportunities strategically, promoting the roadmap during major legislative or institutional reforms where opportunities for public consultation may be provided and advocating for the integration of international commitments in domestic efforts.

¹⁷ [Multiple pressures and their combined effects in Europe's seas | Publications | European Environment Agency \(EEA\)](#)

¹⁸ [Blue Manifesto - Seas At Risk](#)



Protecting forest land and resources

Across Africa and Southeast Asia, ClientEarth works with local partners and IPLCs to strengthen laws and policies that conserve forests and biodiversity, as well as strengthen and enforce IPLC rights. From supporting community-led forest governance, community forestry and the exercise of IPLC rights in West and Central Africa, to developing social forestry principles for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and community-led conservation in Indonesia, this work helps translate the KMGBF into practice.

This contributes particularly to Target 1 on biodiversity-inclusive spatial planning, Target 2 on ecosystem restoration, Target 3 on conservation, Targets 5 and 9 on sustainable use, and Target 22 on participation, access to justice and the rights of IPLCs. The realisation of the global goals will rely on understanding and navigating the practical realities on the ground. By bridging the gap between international legal frameworks and grassroots-level management of forests, ClientEarth ensures that IPLCs and civil society are supported to advocate for implementation approaches that continue to strengthen their rights. This then helps to generate a regulatory framework that supports effective, long-term conservation outcomes.

Defending a critical forest ecosystem, Atewa, Ghana

The Atewa Forest Range in Ghana is a Globally Significant Biodiversity Area, and an internationally recognised Key Biodiversity Area: home to more than 78 threatened species; storing an estimated 9.3 million tonnes of carbon and providing a critical water source for nearly five million people. Despite the availability of alternative deposits for bauxite (commonly used to produce aluminium), the Government of Ghana selected Atewa as a site for bauxite mining, putting one of Ghana's most important forest ecosystems at risk.

In 2020, A Rocha Ghana, alongside other civil society organisations and individual plaintiffs, initiated legal proceedings challenging the government's decision to permit mining in Atewa. The case argues that mining in the forest reserve is incompatible with Ghana's constitutional obligations to protect the environment and safeguard the rights of present and future generations, as well as its commitments under international environmental agreements, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the CBD. The claim also challenges the legality of prospecting activities undertaken in the forest.

The litigation was conceived and led by Ghanaian environmental advocates. ClientEarth supported it during its early stages through comparative legal research, strategic legal and advocacy input, and targeted assistance to strengthen evidence gathering. The case remains before the courts, with a decision expected before the end of 2026.

Recommendations for how this work could be replicated:

- 🌍 Support locally led forest protection efforts. Partnerships between communities, civil society organisations and legal advocates can be highly effective in defending ecologically significant forests from harmful development.

- ⊕ Increase accountability for decisions affecting forest land and natural resources. Legal action can help ensure governments and companies comply with environmental safeguards and recognise the biodiversity, climate and water values of critical forest ecosystems.

Turning community forest rights into practice, Gabon

Gabon's community forestry framework¹⁹ gives local communities legal rights to manage and benefit from designated forest resources through the community forest scheme. However, many communities initially struggled to put these rights into practice. In Sakeville, a logging operator brought an unfounded legal claim against the community, threatening the revenue and autonomy the framework was intended to secure.

With support from ClientEarth's partner Brainforest, the community of Sakeville successfully challenged the claim, regularised its logging contract and strengthened its governance structures. As a result, the community was able to reinvest forest revenues into local priorities, including a water tower, a plantain plantation, and a pigsty for income generation.

Sakeville is one of nine community forest associations, covering 28,541 hectares, that ClientEarth and its partners Brainforest and Essono Ondo Cabinet for Social and Environmental Affairs, have supported through legal training, dispute-resolution assistance and practical tools, including a Community Forest Guide²⁰ used by communities and forestry officials. Women's leadership²¹ has also increased, with three women-led associations set up by 2023 and women now holding 70% of governance positions in Bissobilam.²²

The experience shows that legal empowerment can help turn rights on paper into effective community-led forest governance.²³

Recommendations for how this work could be replicated:

- ⊕ Commit to the long haul, replacing one-off interventions with sustained, embedded technical accompaniment and legal literacy training.
- ⊕ Translate the law, co-producing plain-language guides with communities and have them endorsed by the government so they carry real institutional weight.
- ⊕ Build local defence, equipping communities with dispute-resolution skills so they can fight exploitation, and support communities in reinvesting their revenues into their own development priorities.

People, forests, and biodiversity: Legal frameworks and practices for community-led forest management in Southeast Asia

Across Southeast Asia, ClientEarth works to translate regional principles into effective community-led forest management.²⁴ Together with the Regional Community Forestry Training Center, it supported the ASEAN Guiding Principles for Effective Social Forestry

¹⁹ Loi n°16/01 du 31 décembre 2001 portant Code Forestier en République Gabonaise (Art. 156–162), and its implementing decree n°001028/PR/MEFEPEPN du 01/12/2004

²⁰ ClientEarth (2026), Guide pratique sur les forêts communautaires au Gabon

²¹ B. Agarwal (2009), "Gender and forest conservation," *Ecological Economics* 68(11), 2785–2799

²² ClientEarth (2025), Final Report to Norad 2021–2026 (unpublished); Gabon Review article ("Forêts communautaires : un projet structurant et des perspectives au Gabon"). This report is not published in general but can be provided upon request.

²³ N.M. Dawson et al. (2021), *Ecology and Society* 26(3):19; RRI (2020), *Rights-Based Conservation*, pp.28–29

²⁴ [Strengthening Community-Based Forest Management in Lampung through the ASEAN Guiding Principles for Effective Social Forestry Legal Framework | ClientEarth Asia](#)

Legal Frameworks,²⁵ endorsed in 2022 as a common benchmark for strengthening national laws, identifying gaps and advancing context-specific reforms.

In Lampung, Indonesia, ClientEarth and WALHI Lampung have put this regional approach into practice by supporting communities to secure Conservation Partnership recognition, enabling them to manage forest areas while protecting biodiversity and sustaining local livelihoods.

The experience shows that regional guidance can drive locally grounded conservation when supported by legal mechanisms that give communities clear rights, responsibilities and a recognised role in decision-making.

Recommendations for how this work could be replicated:

- 🌐 Recognise communities' role by creating legal and policy mechanisms that enable them to participate in forest management and conservation.
- 🌐 Define clear rights and responsibilities, alongside shared and measurable conservation objectives.
- 🌐 Adapt measures to local contexts, co-developing them with communities based on each area's ecological and social conditions.

25 [13.-ASEAN-Guiding-Principles-for-Effective-Social-Forestry-Legal-Framework.pdf](#)



Strengthening legal protection for ecosystems and wildlife

The implementation of the KMGBF depends on effective measures to restore degraded ecosystems, address biodiversity pressures and reduce threats to wild species. The following examples illustrate how legal action and public-interest enforcement can contribute to the delivery of Target 2 on ecosystem restoration, Target 4 on halting species extinctions and supporting species recovery, Target 5 on ensuring the sustainable, safe and legal use of wild species and Target 7 on reducing pollution risks and impacts on biodiversity. From securing the restoration of protected habitats in Italy to strengthening protections for migratory birds in China, these cases demonstrate how law can help achieve tangible outcomes for biodiversity conservation and recovery.

Lake Vico: Reversing the degradation of protected habitats, Italy

In a legal first in Italy, ClientEarth and Lipu-BirdLife Italy successfully challenged the Lazio region's failure to protect Lake Vico, a Natura 2000 site and source of drinking water, from pollution linked to intensive hazelnut farming.

In 2024, the Italian Council of State applied the EU Habitats Directive, which requires public authorities to prevent the deterioration of protected Natura 2000 sites. The court found that the authorities failed to act, ordering the region to adopt concrete measures within six months to reverse the degradation of the lake's protected habitats. The final ruling demonstrates that authorities must not only prevent further damage to protected sites, but also take proactive measures to restore degraded habitats. This approach could be replicated in other EU jurisdictions where administrative inaction allows the continued deterioration of Natura 2000 sites.

By requiring proactive measures to reverse habitat degradation, the case supports KMGBF Target 2 on ecosystem restoration, Target 3 on effective conservation and Target 7 on pollution reduction.

Recommendations for how this case could be replicated:

- ⊕ Challenge administrative inaction, using legal remedies against authorities that fail to prevent the deterioration of protected habitats.
- ⊕ Use the instruments of the Habitats Directive proactively, seeking concrete measures to halt and reverse degradation in Natura 2000 sites.
- ⊕ Request enforceable remedies, including clear restoration measures, deadlines and responsibilities, supported by scientific evidence and local partnerships.

Strengthening legal protection for migratory birds in China

Illegal mist-nets pose a serious threat to migratory birds across Asia, indiscriminately trapping protected and threatened species along major flyways. In China, ClientEarth has engaged with Chinese procuratorial authorities and conservation partners on migratory bird protection and legal responses to mist-netting. Procuratorial authorities have strengthened action against illegal mist-netting as part of broader efforts to protect migratory birds and biodiversity.

Procuratorial authorities made mist-net management a biodiversity enforcement priority for 2024 and 2025 and promoted coordinated action across government authorities. Prosecutors also encouraged e-commerce platforms to strengthen controls over prohibited bird-trapping tools and provide legal warnings to users searching for mist-nets online.

The approach increasingly combines enforcement with prevention. Following consultation with regulators, net users, conservation volunteers and experts, prosecutors have supported standards and guidance for more visible, bird-friendly protective nets in more than ten provinces, seeking to distinguish legitimate agricultural and aquaculture uses from practices that pose unacceptable risks to wild birds.

The experience shows how public-interest enforcement can complement conventional wildlife enforcement by addressing not only individual violations, but also upstream drivers such as product standards, online sales, and institutional coordination.

Recommendations for how this work could be replicated:

- 🌐 Combine enforcement against illegal trapping with regulation of the manufacture, sale, and online distribution of harmful trapping equipment.
- 🌐 Develop science-based standards and practical alternatives that balance species protection with legitimate livelihood needs.
- 🌐 Strengthen coordination across authorities and along migratory flyways.



Conclusions: From legal wins to lasting change

The examples presented in this briefing demonstrate that law is essential to translating the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework into action. Litigation, legal reform and policy advocacy can protect and restore ecosystems, uphold fundamental rights, strengthen accountability and integrate biodiversity into public and private decision-making.

Across regions and ecosystems, five lessons emerge:

- 🌐 **Implementation and enforcement are essential.** The recent successes in the courts demonstrate that we already have a strong legal framework in place. The targets are set. The tools are there. Holding decision-makers accountable for their international, regional, and domestic commitments is a powerful way to address the biodiversity, climate, and pollution crises.
- 🌐 **Mainstreaming biodiversity across domestic legal and policy frameworks is essential for both people and nature.** Biodiversity considerations must be embedded across all levels of decision-making. Laws, permits, investments, subsidies and financial frameworks should be systematically aligned with biodiversity objectives and should not support activities that contribute to nature loss or undermine ecosystems resilience.
- 🌐 **Communities must be at the centre.** Lasting conservation outcomes depend on recognising the rights, knowledge and experience of Indigenous peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) and other affected groups. As well as enabling their meaningful participation in environmental governance and ensuring access to justice.
- 🌐 **Legal strategies should operate at multiple levels.** Combining community engagement, national litigation and legislative advocacy with regional and international mechanisms can address both individual harms and systemic failures.
- 🌐 **Collaboration strengthens impact.** Partnerships between communities, civil society organisations, lawyers, scientists and other stakeholders can build stronger evidence, increase legitimacy and support the replication of successful approaches across jurisdictions.

Legal wins for people and nature

ClientEarth CBD COP17 Briefing



Pierre Cannet

Global Head of Public Affairs & Policy

pcannet@clientearth.org

Paloma Colmenarejo

Policy Advisor, Coordinator

pcolmenarejo@clientearth.org

ClientEarth is an environmental law charity, a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales, company number 02863827, registered charity number 1053988, registered office The Joinery, 34 Drayton Park, London, England, N5 1PB a registered international non-profit organisation in Belgium, ClientEarth AISBL, enterprise number 0714.925.038, a non-profit limited liability company in Germany, ClientEarth gGmbH, HRB 202487 B, a registered foundation in Poland, Fundacja "ClientEarth Prawnicy dla Ziemi", KRS 0000364218, NIP 7010254208, a registered delegation in Spain, Fundación ClientEarth Delegación en España, NIF W0170741C, a registered 501(c)(3) organisation in the US, ClientEarth US, EIN 81-0722756, a branch office in China, ClientEarth Beijing Representative Office, Registration No. G1110000MA0095H836, a registered subsidiary in Japan, Ippan Shadan Hojin ClientEarth, corporate number 6010405022079, a registered subsidiary and company limited by guarantee in Australia, ClientEarth Oceania Limited, company number 664010655.

Nature protected through the law