

ICJ Strategic Plan 2021-2025

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) is an international NGO that brings together jurists from around the world as global advocates for justice and human rights, giving us unparalleled access to, and influence on, the operation of judiciaries and legal systems. The ICJ works hand in hand with the most marginalized people and advocates for their rights face to face with the most powerful actors.

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Who we are

Vision: The ICJ strives for a just society governed by the rule of law where all people can equally enjoy their human rights.

Mission: We are global advocates for justice and human rights.

Our mission is:

1. To ensure that people everywhere can benefit equally from the rule of law and fully enjoy their human rights, and if those rights are violated can seek and receive adequate remedies from courts that are independent, impartial, fair, and effective.
2. To work for the progressive development and implementation of international human rights law and standards in response to the great threats to human life and dignity of our times, including new challenges posed by catastrophic climate change, the resurgence of authoritarian populism, global pandemics, mass movements of people, and abuse of cyber technologies.
3. To assist judges, lawyers and prosecutors to be independent, impartial, and free to carry out their professional duties, in order to ensure the protection and promotion of human rights through the rule of law.

What we do

Problem Statement:

The independence, impartiality and accountability of the judiciary, as well as the independence of lawyers and prosecutors, are fundamental to the rule of law and legal protection of human rights, yet all are facing heightened challenges from governments and other powerful actors in many countries across all regions of the world. Fifteen years after the ICJ issued its Berlin Declaration on upholding human rights and the rule of law in combatting terrorism, the world faces heightened and new challenges because of States' responses to terrorism and other security challenges. Well-established and cherished legal principles continue to be called into question in all regions of the world. Resort to ill-conceived responses to terrorism and to new security threats continues, undermining the rule of law and human rights protections, without compelling evidence that those responses actually work. Worldwide, increasing attacks on the rule of law have intensified longstanding inequalities and compounded intersecting forms of discrimination against women and girls and persons from marginalized groups. This has limited their enjoyment of human rights and their effective access to justice. In recent years, there has emerged a trend towards closing civil society space, raising profound concerns for the preservation of the rule of law, and the protection of an international legal order.

The onset of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the unprecedented responses to it have triggered new human rights challenges and exacerbated the plight of the most marginalized groups and individuals. The pandemic is also very likely to divert the attention and resources of the international community away from other, longstanding or new, human rights crises and contemporary challenges (such as human rights in the context of climate change and in the digital age for instance). In a wider context of backlash against the rule of law, this will heighten the need to defend the global rule of law.

What makes us different – our tools and methods of change

Based on our history of work since 1952 and our analysis of contemporary issues, we have developed primary tools we can use towards bringing about the change necessary for achieving our vision of a just society. The ICJ believes that only systemic and structural solutions will address systemic and structural injustice. We therefore use our unique strengths to work in and with imperfect systems and institutions to change them and to build new systems and institutions that will ensure the rule of law and human rights.

1. The Commission. The ICJ's existence and work is based on its 60 Commissioners, each of whom is a jurist recognized for expertise and experience relevant to promoting the rule of law and human rights. The Commissioners' standing and influence give us access to decision-makers and influence-shapers, particularly within the legal community.
2. The Secretariat. The ICJ's personnel cover all continents (except Antarctica). Our staff are rooted in their local legal framework and social context and operate with an international outlook and competence.
3. Partnerships. The ICJ maintains a formal network of 21 autonomous national sections and 40 affiliates. It also has informal or ad hoc partnerships with organizations and individuals that share its vision. It has partnerships at local, national, regional and global levels, linking local to global and acting across levels for mutual support. The ICJ believes that change is most effectively and sustainably achieved through work undertaken in partnerships.
4. Developing and defending standards. Throughout its history, the ICJ has advocated for the development of new standards and progressive interpretation of existing standards through participatory processes to meet the needs of people in changing environments and circumstances. We also defend the rule of law and human rights against new challenges from authoritarian governments and non-State actors.
5. Applying the law. Once laws and standards are established, we seek to implement them. The law applied is an essential and powerful tool for achieving justice. We promote the independence and proper functioning of the judiciary and the legal system, the use of litigation to advance or defend human rights, and the adoption and implementation of international laws and standards at the regional and domestic levels.
6. Empowering rights-holders and enabling duty-bearers. We work closely with rights-holders and human rights defenders to enable them to claim and exercise their rights and hold accountable those responsible for their violation. We also build the capacity of duty-bearers to respect, protect, promote and fulfil human rights.
7. Educating and advocating. We strive to increase the knowledge and understanding of legal professionals and of civil society organizations that use the law. We also advocate with legislators so that they will ensure that all legislation is fully consistent with the rule of law and human rights.
8. Our monitoring and documentation. The ICJ's work is based on transparent evidence-based monitoring, documentation, and analysis of compliance with human rights law and standards. We regularly carry out in depth investigations of particular places and issues to inform and advance our analysis of human rights problems and offer recommendations and assistance to remedy those problems.

Finally, the ICJ contributes to change as a well-governed and well-managed organization, with visionary leadership, expert and experienced staff, and a clear and effective strategic plan. With a strong results orientation the ICJ has a robust results management framework, well selected indicators that enable it to measure its impact and the necessary financial resources for secure, stable implementation of its strategic plan. It is an organization that is primed for action and fit for purpose.

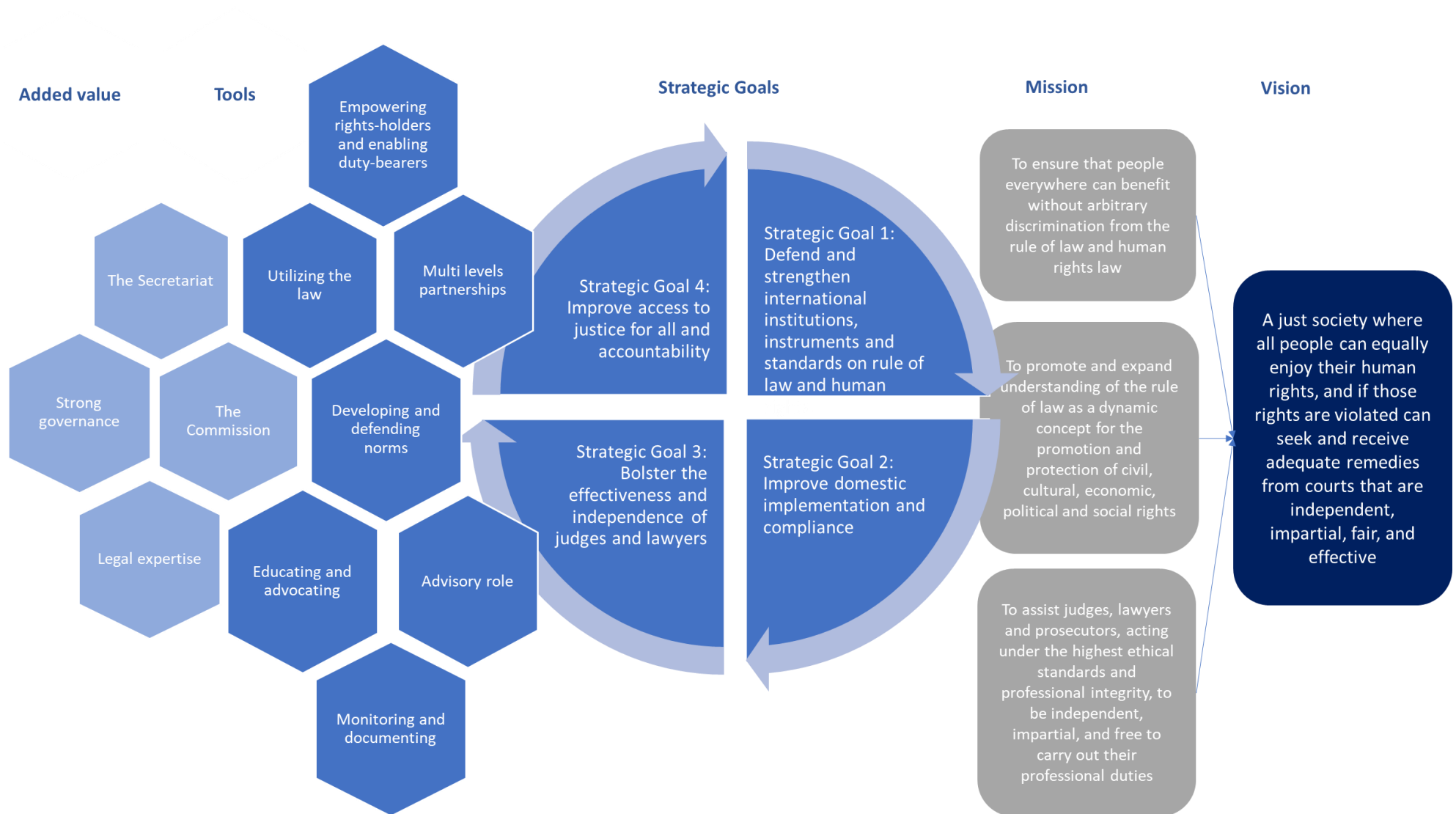
Our theory of change

The ICJ uses the law to achieve justice and the full realization of human rights for all. For the ICJ the rule of law and human rights are both the core constituents of a just society and the essential means to attain such a society. We understand the rule of law and respect for human rights to be inextricably connected. It is not possible to achieve respect for human rights without the rule of law, and it is not possible to achieve a society governed by the rule of law without respect for human rights.

The ICJ's 70-year experience around the world has shown that the response to the current crises facing humanity—including new challenges such as pandemics, climate change, and new technologies—can and must be built in a framework of rule of law and in compliance with human rights principles. The ICJ believes that an effective, just, legitimate legal system is a major tool for providing a sustainable, stable, peaceful society, as also recognized explicitly in Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The ICJ's theory of change is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. We utilize a human rights based approach to develop and defend human rights norms, enhance the ability of institutions, especially the judiciary, to fulfil their human rights obligations, empower people to know and claim their rights, and improve accountability so people can seek remedies when their rights are violated.

The ICJ global vision

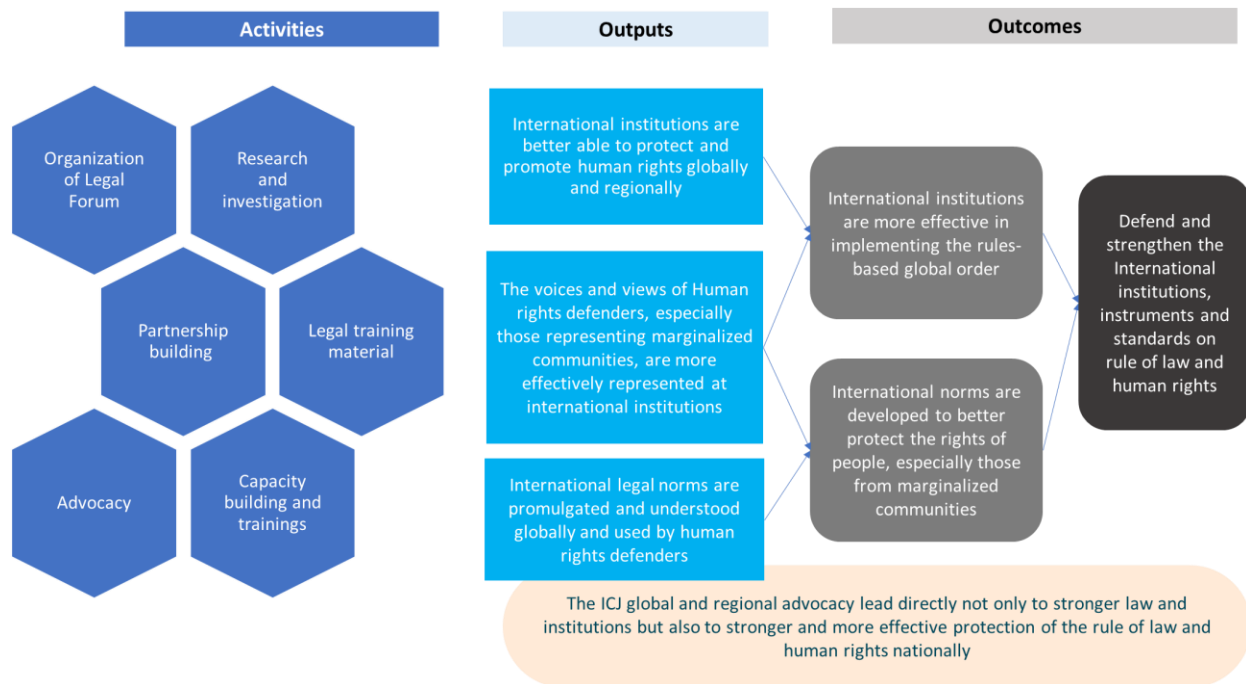


Our Strategic Goals 2021-2025

The ICJ has identified four strategic goals for the next five years in implementing its theory of change, using the tools at its disposal. These four goals are inter-related, contributing to one another in effecting change towards a just society.

Strategic Goal 1 and its Theory of Change

Develop, defend, and strengthen international institutions, instruments and standards on rule of law and human rights



What we want to do

The global and regional inter-state systems have developed bodies of law and standards relating to the rule of law and human rights. They also have institutions, including courts and tribunals, political authorities and independent expert mechanisms, which apply those instruments and enforce and promote that law and those standards. The ICJ pushes for progressive development of law and standards, and prevents their weakening, using the influence of the Commissioners, its legal expertise, and its fact-based legal analysis.

How we want to achieve this goal

The ICJ has been one of the principal architects of the global and regional human rights systems. The results of its work are seen in the enormous body of global and regional law and standards and the extent and strength of global and regional institutions today.

The ICJ also engages global and regional law and institutions in exposing national violations and abuses of human rights. It undertakes research and investigations of violations and patterns of violation and then presents the results of its work to these forums. It supports the victims of violations and abuses to bring their situations before these forums. Where possible, it engages in litigation at national, regional, and global tribunals.

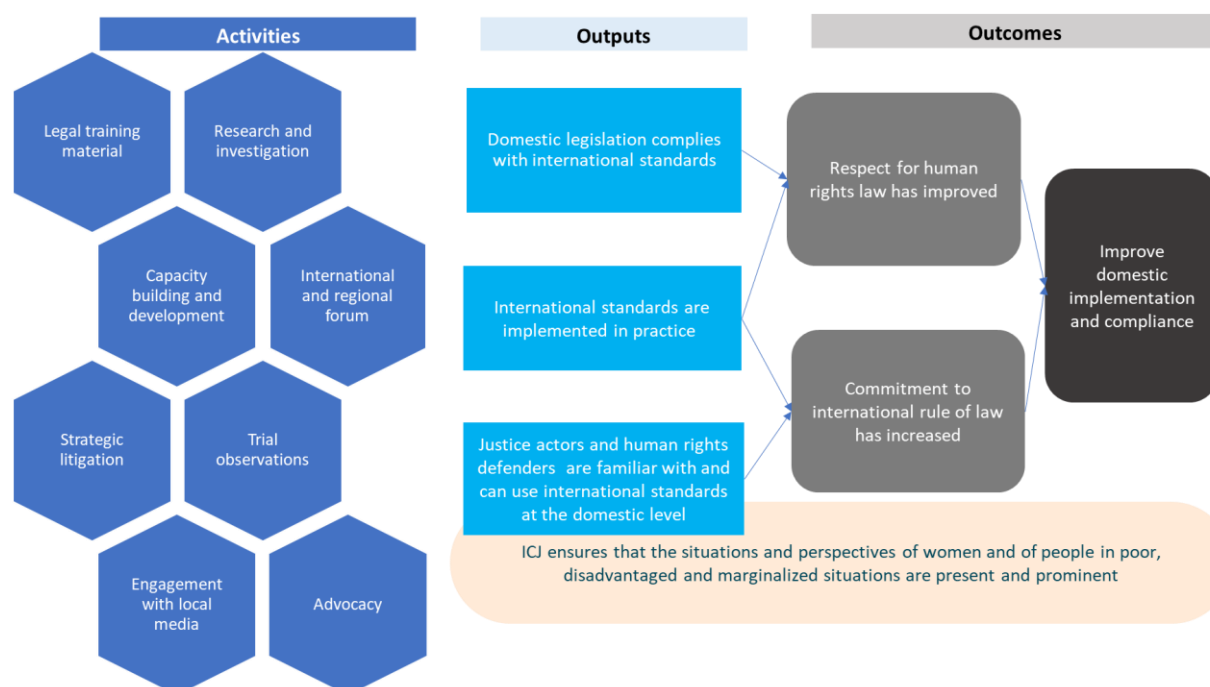
In all its work at global and regional levels, the ICJ applies and advocates for rule of law principles, including broad and non-discriminatory participation in institutional processes and strives to prominently present the perspectives of women and people from poor, disadvantaged and otherwise marginalized groups.

2025 Vision:

- *International institutions are more effective in implementing the rules-based global order and are better able to fill gaps in protection of human rights for all people, especially in response to challenges that demand a coordinated global response, such as pandemics, climate change, and cyber technology.*
- *Expanded international investigative and criminal justice mechanisms are made available and operative to fight impunity in all parts of the world.*
- *The right to a clean, safe, healthy and sustainable environment is recognized by all States and progress is made in incorporating it into law at the international and national levels.*
- *The duty of business enterprises to respect human rights is clarified and more widely enforced, including through an internationally binding legal instrument.*
- *Global standards will be developed to diminish use of criminalization to punish or deter same-sex activities, HIV status, drug use, and reproductive health care.*

Strategic Goal 2 and its Theory of Change

Improve domestic implementation of, and compliance with, international law and standards



What we want to do

We seek to ensure international laws and standards are implemented at the regional and domestic level in a way that protects people everywhere equally, especially those who are marginalized from power and influence. International human rights standards and rule of law principles must be implemented locally and with the participation of local actors if they are to be realized in practice. Changes in domestic laws, policies and practices and in domestic constitutional arrangements and political structures in some countries are required for full compliance with the rule of law and human rights.

How we want to achieve this goal

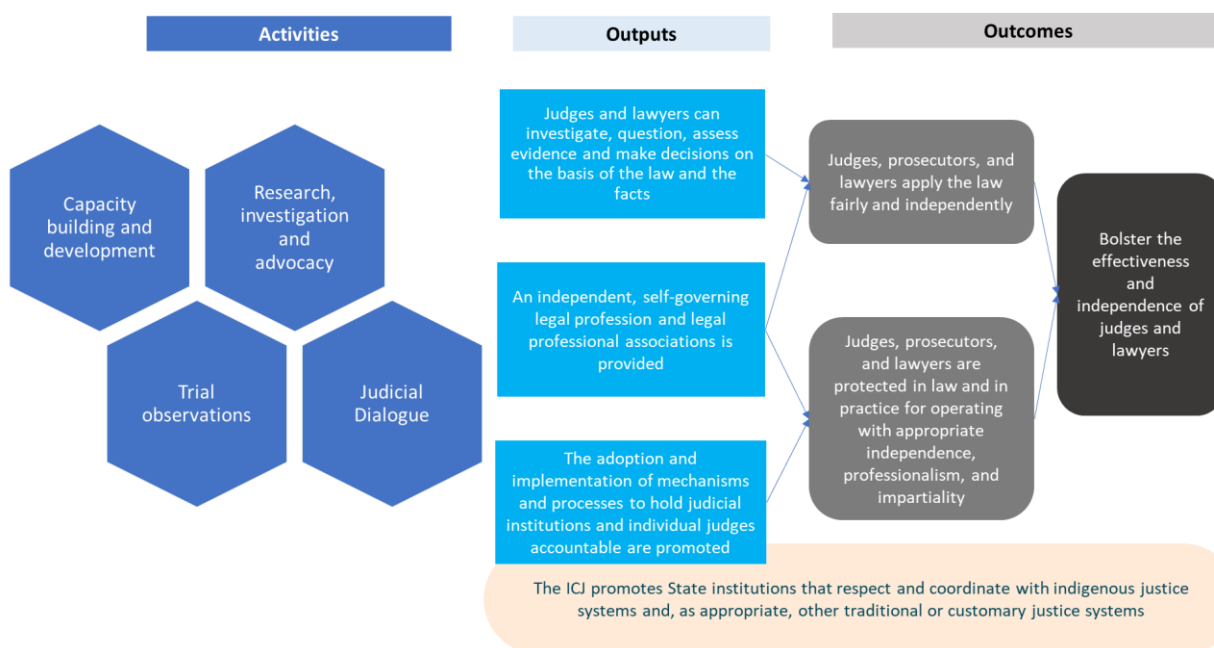
The ICJ has a presence in all regions. Being close to the ground enables the ICJ to build the partnerships that will effect change towards a just society. The ICJ believes that evidence- and law-based advocacy, including through strategic litigation in domestic courts, can convince States (and other powerful non-State actors such as business entities and armed groups) to accept their obligations under international law. The ICJ also pursues domestic implementation through its work with judges, prosecutors and lawyers, with independent state institutions, with legislators and with civil society, including human rights defenders. It provides training for those working in these areas and works with them, for example, in joint advocacy and in strategic litigation. We believe that international pressure through other States and through global and regional bodies and domestic pressure through civil society and community partners can be mutually reinforcing in convincing States to improve and strengthen local implementation. Regional and national presence also enables the ICJ to be more effective in protecting human rights defenders and activists whose work for the rule of law and human rights exposes them to serious risks from their governments and other actors. Partnership with the ICJ, with the protection it offers, encourages domestic civil society to act for change.

2025 Vision:

- *More States implement and comply with international human rights law in law, policy, and practice.*
- *National civil society actors are stronger and have more capacity to defend human rights, including by using international human rights law and participating in the advancement of human rights.*
- *Businesses and other powerful non-State entities respect human rights and implement these into their operations and practices.*
- *People everywhere are better able to enjoy and defend their economic, social, and cultural (ESC) rights, particularly as a result of States acting to ensure that ESC rights are made fully justiciable.*
- *States desist from, or reverse, laws, policies, and practices that are discriminatory or are aimed at impermissibly restricting human rights and civil society, especially where they discriminate against people on any grounds.*

Strategic Goal 3 and its Theory of Change

Bolster the effectiveness and independence of judges and lawyers



What we want to do

A just society depends on the rule of law and human rights, and the rule of law and human rights depend on effective, independent and accountable judges, prosecutors and lawyers. The effectiveness and independence of the judiciary and the legal profession are critical components of the rule of law. There is no protection and promotion of human rights without a strong, effective, independent, impartial and accountable judiciary, a judiciary that reflects the society and includes women judges and judges from diverse backgrounds. Judges, prosecutors and lawyers are uniquely placed to effect positive change for the rule of law and human rights and to guard against negative change and the ICJ is uniquely placed to work with them. Independent and impartial prosecutors must investigate violations and abuses and identify alleged perpetrators so that they can be tried before independent courts with the full guarantees of the right to a fair trial.

How we want to achieve this goal

The ICJ works to strengthen the independence of judges, prosecutors and lawyers. We also promote an independent, self-governing legal profession and legal professional associations, as well as protections to ensure individual lawyers are able to discharge their professional functions to their clients fully and effectively and to uphold human rights and the rule of law more generally. We monitor the proceedings of courts to bring to public attention any violations of the rule of law and human rights and to provide protection to judges and lawyers in implementing the rule of law. In many countries, the judiciary operates in an opaque manner and has lost its independence as a result of corruption or political pressure (or both) and turned into an instrument for restricting and violating rights, rather than protecting them.

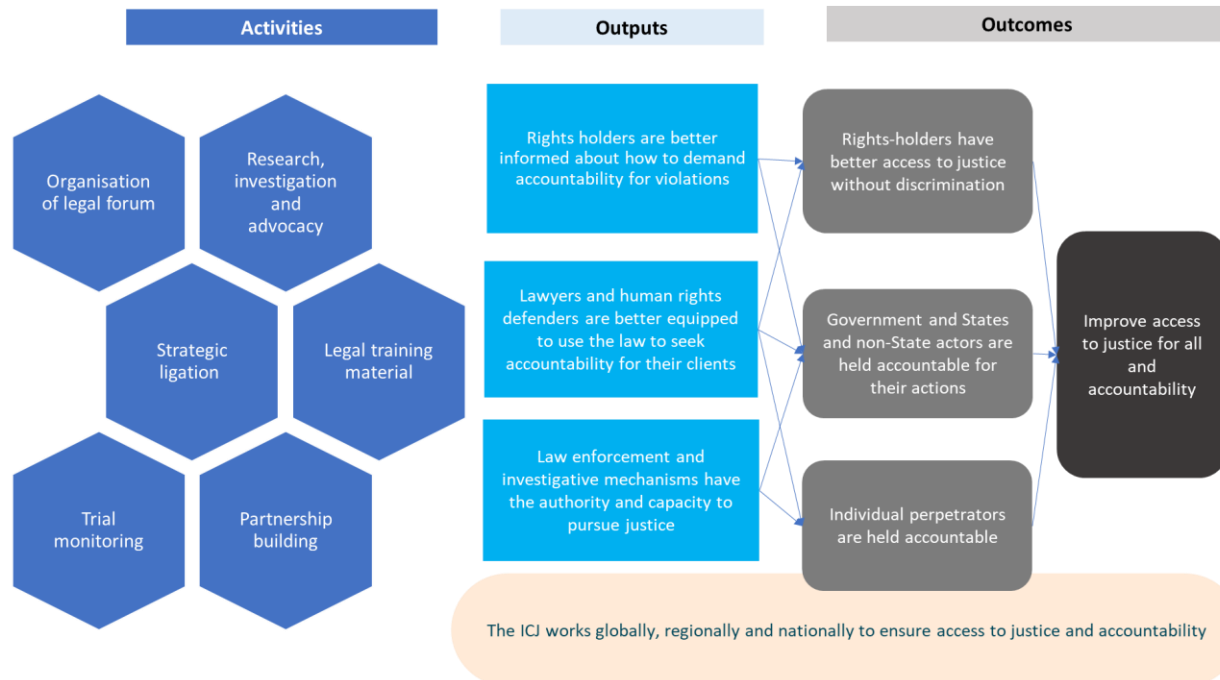
The ICJ promotes the adoption and implementation of mechanisms and processes to hold judicial institutions and individual judges accountable. International human rights law and standards recognize a role for indigenous justice systems, as well as potentially for other traditional or customary justice systems, in securing effective access to justice for the populations that use them. The ICJ promotes State institutions that respect and coordinate with indigenous justice systems and, as appropriate, other traditional or customary justice systems, while at the same time seeking to ensure that indigenous and other traditional or customary justice systems themselves fulfil international standards of rule of law and human rights.

2025 Vision:

- *National justice systems are more independent, impartial, and accountable, and increasingly rely on international standards to protect human rights.*
- *Judges, prosecutors, and lawyers carry out their respective responsibilities in compliance with international standards for protection of human rights. Courts are better able to provide fair and effective trials.*
- *Justice systems operate with transparency and are more resilient and better able to respond to states of emergency and new challenges such as pandemics, climate change, and increased reliance on cyber technology.*
- *States stop using military or extraordinary tribunals.*
- *Judges and lawyers will improve compliance with national and international law protecting the rights of migrants, stateless persons and refugees.*
- *Lawyers are better able to carry out their obligations without fear of harassment or persecution, and the institutional independence of the legal profession will be protected through strong professional associations.*

Strategic Goal 4 and its Theory of Change

Improve access to justice for all and accountability



What we want to do

In a just society, victims of violations and abuses can obtain their right to effective remedy and reparation. For rights to be meaningful, they must be accompanied by effective remedies. Perpetrators of violations and abuses, both governmental and non-governmental, should be held accountable for their actions, which means criminal prosecution for gross violations. Accountability should be provided first and foremost through domestic courts but also through global and regional courts and tribunals where domestic courts are unable or unwilling to deliver justice. Law enforcement and investigative mechanisms must have the authority and technical capacity to document violations and to pursue perpetrators.

Effective access to justice requires that all victims and all those accused of crimes or facing similar legal consequences have effective access to independent and competent legal advice and representation and enjoy full guarantees of the right to a fair trial, protected under international law. Access to justice concerns the right of all persons to obtain justice, at global, regional and national levels, in courts and other legal forums and in political institutions, without discrimination on a prohibited ground.

How we want to achieve this goal

The ICJ works globally, regionally, and nationally to ensure access to justice and accountability. It empowers and supports rights-holders, especially those who are poor or marginalized, to have access to legal advice, to court and other proceedings, to information about their rights and available remedies, and to effective remedies. We train and build the capacity of individuals and communities to understand and defend their rights, and we support and protect the human rights defenders who seek to use the legal system to claim these rights.

The ICJ advocates for and supports the establishment and strengthening of international criminal courts and tribunals, as well as international investigations of gross violations of human rights. Domestically, it monitors and researches the operation of courts and where necessary, helps build the capacity of courts to comply with the rule of law and human rights in their proceedings and protect the rule of law and human rights in their casework. The ICJ also contributes at the global, regional and national levels to the development and promotion of laws, standards and best practices for ensuring equality of access to justice, particularly for persons from marginalized groups.

2025 Vision:

- *People everywhere have greater ability to seek accountability and remedies for violations of their internationally protected human rights, particularly of their economic, social, and cultural rights.*
- *Impunity for perpetrators of gross human rights violations and crimes under international law is reduced.*
- *International accountability mechanisms as well as national authorities are better able to investigate violations. Decisions and rulings of international mechanisms are followed and implemented at the national level.*
- *States remove legislative and practical barriers to justice for all people in their jurisdiction, especially those who face discrimination on grounds of race, nationality, political opinion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity, religion, migration status, disability or other status.*

Key assumptions to enable change

Building on its analysis of contemporary issues and its decades of experience, the ICJ identifies the following key assumptions that underpin its understanding of global trends in human rights, and, therefore the strategic goals, for how to influence positive change and a just society.

Assumptions:

- **Systemic and structural solutions address systemic and structural injustice.** The ICJ works in and with imperfect systems and institutions to change them and to build new systems and institutions that will ensure the rule of law and human rights.
- **Jurists are primarily responsible and employed to safeguard and advance human rights** and therefore are one of the ICJ's main target audiences.
- Change in the rule of law and human rights is a complex and iterative rather than a linear **process** that requires the engagement and participation of multiple stakeholders. Positive long-term change takes time and usually goes well beyond the timeframe of a single project.
- **A concerted effort of many different types of partners with whom the ICJ engages is required to achieve meaningful improvements.** The ICJ relies on its partners to assist it as the organization considers that working in partnership is the most effective way in bringing about change.
- **Rights-holders and human rights defenders are at the centre of achieving social justice.** The ICJ will ensure its actions represent the views and desires of those whose rights are at stake.

Targets groups and accountability

The ICJ is committed to ensuring that all its actions benefit all rights-holders directly or indirectly.

Our key target groups and the ways in which the ICJ interacts with them appear below:

- Judges (empowerment, knowledge, capacity building, protection in cases of attack, trial observations, missions, legal submissions to treaty-based bodies, informal advice, legal fora and networking).
- Lawyers, including prosecutors (empowerment, knowledge, capacity building, protection in cases of persecution, including trial observations, formal and informal assistance in strategic litigation, missions, mentoring, legal submissions to treaty-based bodies, informal advice, legal fora and networking).
- Human rights defenders (empowerment, knowledge, capacity building, protection in cases of attack (including trial observations), reform, missions, mentoring, development of strategies, legal submissions to treaty-based bodies, informal advice, advocacy, networking, partnerships, human rights impact assessments).
- Policy-makers and influence-shapers (knowledge, capacity building, monitoring, advocacy, networking, informal advice).

Stakeholders

In addition to the key target groups mentioned, there are many stakeholders involved in the change process. Some of the key stakeholders the ICJ works with and the typical ways in which the ICJ interacts with them appear below.

- Rights-holders whose rights have been violated (empowerment, trial observations, strategic litigation, missions, legal submissions to treaty-based bodies, informal advice, advocacy, human rights impact assessments, guarantees of non-recurrence).
- Executive and legislative branches (knowledge, capacity building, legal, policy and institutional reform, missions, practice, advocacy, human rights impact assessments, guarantees of non-recurrence, adherence to, implementation of and compliance with international and regional human rights law and standards).
- Intergovernmental organizations, such as the UN, OAS, EU, Council of Europe, ASEAN, African Union, and League of Arab States (legal submissions, knowledge, capacity building, advocacy, development and protection of international and regional instruments and mechanisms).
- Independent experts, including Special Procedures of the UN and regional systems, members of the UN treaty-based bodies and other mechanisms tasked with investigating human rights situations throughout the world (knowledge, legal submissions, informal advice, advocacy).
- Non-State actors, including civil society organizations and business enterprises (knowledge, capacity building, missions, policy and practice, advice, advocacy).
- Media (knowledge, capacity building, advocacy).

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

The ICJ recognizes the importance of monitoring, evaluation and learning in the achievement of our strategic goals. The Theory of change will be monitored through our Results Based Management (RBM) Framework. It will help to:

- Continuously monitor and track the progress of our work both within and outside our projects. A set of standard indicators has been developed focusing on measuring outcome level, with scope in some instances to measure impact.
- Assess and evaluate the effectiveness of our strategic goals, programme strategies and activities, where possible. We do this through both internal evaluations and reviews along with external evaluations.
- Generate learnings from both successes as well as challenges faced which are shared across the ICJ's programmes, both regional and thematic. These also inform the design of future programmes and activities.

Our institutional priorities

a. Organizational Development and Human Resources

With our head office in Geneva, regional programmes will continue to be strengthened to ensure a fully integrated and well functioning Secretariat. The ICJ will strengthen its human resource systems and processes and further develop and implement policies to attract and retain highly qualified individuals in support of the strategic plan. Growth in staffing will continue to be gradual and dependent on appropriate and sustainable funding. Expansion in geographical scope will focus on establishing presences without necessarily opening additional offices.

Targets for the strategic period are:

1. More transparent and equitable recruitment and performance assessment processes will be established and implemented.
2. A harmonized and transparent Reward and Benefits Scheme will be developed for all staff, taking into consideration regional and local requirements.
3. A policy for staff wellbeing and flexible working arrangements will be developed and implemented to ensure a positive working environment and reduce risks of work-related stress.
4. A staff development policy will be implemented that will encourage staff learning and career development.
5. Regular training on ICJ human resource policies (including the Code of Ethics and Complaints and Grievance mechanisms) will be provided.

b. Media and Communications, and Information Technology

Media and communication are key to our ability to advocate effectively for justice and human rights. New technology and media platforms can amplify the ICJ's voice and enable us to communicate remotely (of particular importance during the period of restrictions imposed during the pandemic). The ICJ will accelerate its use of communication technologies as a tool for empowering rights-holders and enabling duty-bearers to claim and exercise their rights, and for educating legal professionals and civil society who use the law.

Targets for this strategic period are:

1. To ensure that our knowledge products including Practitioners' Guides, factual and analytical reports, legal briefs and position papers are freely available and accessible to everyone advocating for justice and human rights, including by making publications available in multiple languages.
2. To identify the different types of audiences we aim to reach through our media and communications activities, and adapt our activities in accordance with their needs, ensuring that the messages we communicate are accurate and relevant.
3. To strengthen the ICJ's visibility and profile, and use different channels of media including social media, event streaming, online interviews and multimedia more effectively to enhance the ICJ's reach and to support fundraising activities.
4. To increase our digital security to ensure the safety of staff, partners and stakeholders, and ensure the integrity of the information being shared.

c. Governance and Network

The ICJ is unique in its ability to draw upon the expertise and experience of its Commissioners, National Sections and Affiliates. The standing and influence of our Commissioners gives us access to key decision-makers and influencers, particularly within the legal community.

Targets for this strategic period are:

1. We will ensure that the Commission is at full capacity, with an appropriate balance between geographic representation, gender, thematic expertise and diversity of legal traditions.
2. To complement each others' efforts and enhance our collective impact within our network, we will ensure that there is increased strategic coordination and cooperation with our National Sections and Affiliates.
3. Outside our network we will continue to work with partners such as including international and local civil society organizations, legal professional associations (bar and judiciary), National Human Rights Institutions, UN and other intergovernmental experts and legal academics and enter into Memoranda of Understanding where appropriate.

d. Financial Resources management

The ICJ will manage its financial resources professionally and transparently to ensure the effective implementation of our strategic plan.

Targets for this strategic period are:

1. To strengthen the financial governance of the organization, the Executive Committee will appoint a non-Commissioner Treasurer with a finance background, to provide financial oversight of the organization, working closely with the CFO.
2. To strengthen the financial planning and budgeting as well as cashflow management to improve decision-making processes in implementing our strategic plan.
3. To rebuild the capital reserves of the organization, establish an 'operational contingency fund' of CHF 500,000, to be principally drawn from private fundraising efforts and from indirect cost allocations from project-specific grants.
4. To ensure full compliance of all financial procedures as well as undertaking to regularly review risks and adapt processes accordingly.

e. Funding

The ICJ will ensure that it has adequate, appropriate and predictable financial resources to implement its strategic plan and to ensure the sustainability of the organization.

Targets for this strategic period are:

1. To strengthen and diversify our funding sources, which is a priority for the ICJ to ensure optimal resort to all funding sectors, including a balance between government funding, private foundations and philanthropic funding.
2. To ensure that at least of 30% of our funding is core, unearmarked or flexible funding so that we can be responsive and timely to the most urgent human rights challenges, and also invest in the organization's development.
3. To actively pursue thematic and global grants to build synergies across countries and regions.
4. To continue to explore new avenues for fundraising including private fundraising as well as online fundraising possibilities.

f. Programme Management

The ICJ recognizes the need to continuously improve the design and delivery of its programmes to achieve the objectives of its strategic plan effectively.

Targets for this strategic period are:

1. The Project Cycle Management (PCM) tools will be adapted to align with this Theory of Change and used for the design, implementation and monitoring of the programmes.
2. The capacity to manage programmes within the organization will be strengthened with better coordination between legal, fundraising, programme, and finance staff.
3. Practices to reflect and review lessons learned will be encouraged so that these can feed into programme design.

Our regional priorities

Outlined below are the priorities for each region against each of the strategic goals. These priorities will be based on an assessment of where the ICJ can add the greatest value and where there are no other players to address these issues.

Africa Regional Programme: Strategic Plan Priorities

In Africa, the ICJ will defend the independence of judges and lawyers against attempts to undermine the rule of law; strengthen access to justice for the most vulnerable sections of the population; support progressive development of human rights law, standards and mechanisms of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, the African Court, East African Court of Justice and the ECOWAS Court of Justice; and work to ensure compliance with decisions of global and regional human rights bodies. The ICJ will also work towards promoting accountability for international crimes using the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court on the basis of universal jurisdiction for international crimes.

SG 1: Develop, defend, and strengthen international institutions, instruments and standards on rule of law and human rights

The ICJ will support litigation, including as a third-party intervener, before domestic and regional courts and other regional mechanisms, to strengthen regional human rights law and standards. It will work with national and regional civil society to promote access to justice and accountability. Country priorities include Zimbabwe, South Africa and Nigeria.

SG 2: Improve domestic implementation of, and compliance with, international law and standards

The ICJ will strive to strengthen compliance with decisions of the African Court, African Commission on Human and People's Rights, domestic decisions and other regional and global human rights mechanisms. National implementation will be supported through capacity building for judges, lawyers and civil society, as well as advocacy, including on the right to fair trial and judicial independence; counter-terrorism and security; migration and asylum; environmental rights; online and equal protection of economic, social and cultural rights. Priority countries will include Zimbabwe, South Africa, Eswatini, Lesotho, Nigeria and Ethiopia.

SG 3: Bolster the effectiveness and independence of judges and lawyers

This strategic goal will be a priority across Africa. The ICJ will work to reverse the degradation of the rule of law, including judicial independence, through national and international advocacy. It will strive to strengthen weak or dependant judiciaries, and weak legal professions. Priority focus countries will include Eswatini, Zimbabwe, and Lesotho. Across Africa, the ICJ will defend lawyers under threat for the exercise of their professional functions and build the capacity of lawyers to protect human rights.

SG 4: Improve access to justice and accountability

The ICJ will focus on supporting the access to justice of migrants and refugees, through advocacy, litigation support and training and other capacity building for judges, lawyers and civil society. It will also support access to justice for other discriminated against groups, in relation to economic, social and cultural rights and environmental rights. The promotion of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) rights will receive prominence. The ICJ will also seek to support national lawyers and civil society in securing accountability for systemic human rights violations and international crimes, with priority on Zimbabwe and Nigeria.

Asia Regional Programme: Strategic Plan Priorities

Access to justice for women, LGBTI persons and other vulnerable religious minority groups together with accountability for human rights violations remain a central focus of the Asia Pacific Programme (APP). In addition, the APP will continue to promote and protect the independence of lawyers and judges, advocate for the better incorporation of international laws and standards in domestic law in the region and build an effective public advocacy strategy in multiple countries to promote the rule of law and protect human rights.

[SG 1: Develop, defend, and strengthen international institutions, instruments and standards on rule of law and human rights](#)

Promoting principles of rule of law and the deployment of human rights standards and instruments has remained at the very centre of all of the APP's work across the region. The APP will engage across a wide range of actors at the national level, including government, private actors, faith-based organizations, and members of minority communities to build a more effective public advocacy strategy at the national and sub-national levels, and in local languages for the protection of rights, particularly in the areas of access to justice, and accountability with a focus on women's, LGBT and minority rights.

[SG 2: Improve domestic implementation of, and compliance with, international law and standards](#)

The APP will focus on the publication of legal analysis, advocacy and consultations with key stakeholders on the area of human rights and technology, focusing on issues such as the misapplication and abuse of legal frameworks to suppress and prosecute online speech as well as content moderation as it relates to atrocity crimes. The APP will also focus its attention on two areas of business and human rights: (i) the human rights impacts of the development of Special Economic Zones and of extra territorial investment, and (ii) the right to peaceful assembly of workers. A series of consultations with lawyers, CSOs and other stakeholders will culminate in a series of reports and advocacy on these issues. The APP will lead the development of a set of guidelines on freedom of association for workers in ASEAN countries.

[SG 3: Bolster the effectiveness and independence of judges and lawyers](#)

The APP will continue to implement its unique approach of engaging with governments without stepping back from its public advocacy on the rule of law and human rights issues. This will be carried out through the implementation of a region-wide access to justice for women programme, which employs both the tools of technical engagement with the judiciaries and lawyers in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Timor Leste, Fiji, Malaysia and the Philippines and public advocacy on a range of issues including the targeting of women human rights defenders, sexual and gender based violence and restrictions on reproductive health access.

[SG 4: Improve access to justice and accountability](#)

This strategic direction is a particular priority across the region. The APP will continue to implement its region-wide project on access to justice for women through a series of dialogues and workshops on gender bias and discrimination with judges, lawyers, members of the police force and court officers in the region. An annual regional judicial dialogue with Supreme Court justices will be conducted to promote and advocate for the incorporation of the [Bangkok General Guidance on Judging with a Gender Perspective](#) within court systems in the region. In addition, the APP will also focus on expanding its work on SOGI-based discrimination and improving access to justice for LGBT persons through advocacy and engagement with the activist LGBT community in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Myanmar. This work will be linked with ongoing legal analysis and advocacy on freedom of religion or belief through dialogue programs that bring together civil society from faith-based and human rights organizations in Myanmar, as well as engagement at the international level. The APP will also continue to implement a series of initiatives focusing on accountability which link public advocacy with the provision of technical assistance, briefings and public education programmes on international accountability mechanisms in Myanmar, Bangladesh, India and Nepal; as well as training of police investigators and prosecutors on the investigation of unlawful death with a particular focus on Thailand, Nepal, India and Myanmar.

Latin America Programme: Strategic Plan Priorities

Access to justice, particularly for marginalized groups including women, indigenous and other vulnerable groups, together with independence of the judiciary and accountability for serious human rights violations occurring in many countries continue to be a main focus of the ICJ's work in the region. In addition, the ICJ will continue its work advocating for the better incorporation of international laws and standards in domestic law in the region and build an effective public advocacy strategy in multiple countries to promote the rule of law and protect human rights in the region.

SG 1: Develop, defend, and strengthen international institutions, instruments and standards on rule of law and human rights

The ICJ will support advocacy and litigation, including as a third-party intervener, before the Inter-American System of Human Rights and the UN Human Rights Council and treaty bodies to strengthen the important role of these bodies for national compliance with international law. It will work with national and regional civil society to promote access to justice and accountability for serious human rights violations. Country priorities include Colombia, Venezuela, Guatemala and Peru.

SG 2: Improve domestic implementation of, and compliance with, international law and standards

The ICJ will strive to strengthen compliance with decisions of the regional mechanisms, domestic decisions and other regional and global human rights mechanisms. National implementation will be supported through engaging and building the capacity of judges, prosecutors, lawyers, human rights defenders and CSOs in upholding standards in their work as well as engaging in advocacy to press for change. Venezuela will remain a priority country for the region; the volatile political situation in the country has impacted the whole region and has required quick adjustments to the ICJ's work.

SG 3: Bolster the effectiveness and independence of judges and lawyers

This area continues to remain a priority for the ICJ across the region, particularly in the priority countries of Colombia, Guatemala and Venezuela, where the ICJ and partners are working to ensure judicial independence and strengthening of the legal profession to protect human rights. Strategies employed will include advocacy, aimed at urging the authorities to respect the independence and integrity of judges, lawyers and other human rights defenders under threat, media engagement, trial observations and emergency support to judges, lawyers and other human rights defenders under threat. The ICJ will also continue to publish information and reports on the status of the judiciary, with particular priority given to Venezuela as its political crisis continues to deepen.

SG 4: Improve access to justice and accountability

This strategic direction is a particular priority for the ICJ across the whole region. The ICJ will focus on supporting access to justice in particular for women, indigenous groups, migrants and refugees and other discriminated against groups. Also, the ICJ will continue to promote accountability for serious human rights violations occurring in several countries, and to promote access to justice for victims. This will be achieved through advocacy, research, training and other capacity building for judiciaries, lawyers and civil society across the region. A large part of this work includes engagement with victims' groups, including indigenous communities adversely affected by the extractive industry or energy projects and expropriation of land during the internal armed conflict in Guatemala. The ICJ will also continue its work with civil society and experts in securing accountability for systemic human rights violations. Priority countries include: Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala, Peru and Venezuela.

Europe and Central Asia Programme: Strategic Plan Priorities

In Europe and Central Asia, the ICJ will defend the independence of judges and lawyers against attempts to undermine the rule of law; strengthen access to justice for the most vulnerable sections of the population; support progressive development of human rights law, standards and mechanisms of the Council of Europe, European Union and Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE); and work to ensure compliance with decisions of global and regional human rights bodies.

SG 1: Develop, defend, and strengthen international institutions, instruments and standards on rule of law and human rights

The ICJ will support litigation, including as a third-party intervener, before the European Court of Human Rights, European Committee on Social Rights and other regional mechanisms, to strengthen regional human rights law and standards. It will use its observer status at the Council of Europe (CoE) Steering Committee on Human Rights to influence standard setting. It will advocate for European Union (EU) accession to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) in a manner that upholds the access to justice of applicants, and press for stronger EU mechanisms on the rule of law. It will work with national civil society to inform the work of regional mechanisms of the CoE, OSCE and EU.

SG 2: Improve domestic implementation of, and compliance with, international law and standards

The ICJ will strive to strengthen compliance with decisions of the ECHR and other regional and global human rights mechanisms. National implementation will be supported through capacity building for judges, lawyers and civil society, as well as advocacy, including on right to fair trial and judicial independence; counter-terrorism and security; migration and asylum; environmental rights; rights online and equal protection of economic, social and cultural rights. Priority countries/sub-regions will include Turkey, Central Asia, and southern and eastern EU Member States.

SG 3: Bolster the effectiveness and independence of judges and lawyers

This strategic direction will be a particular priority across the Europe and Central Asia region. The ICJ will work to reverse the degradation of the rule of law, including judicial independence, in countries including Hungary, Poland and Turkey, through national and international advocacy. It will strive to strengthen weak or dependant judiciaries, and weak legal professions, with priority given to the countries of the former Soviet Union, including Central Asia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova and Belarus. In these countries, and across the region, the ICJ will defend lawyers under threat for the exercise of their professional functions, and build the capacity of lawyers to protect human rights.

SG 4: Improve access to justice and accountability

The ICJ will focus on supporting the access to justice of migrants and refugees, through advocacy, litigation support and training and other capacity building for judges, lawyers and civil society, with a focus on EU Member States. It will also support access to justice for other discriminated against groups, in particular in relation to economic, social and cultural rights and environmental rights, in priority countries / subregions including in Central Asia and Turkey. The ICJ will also seek to support national lawyers and civil society in securing accountability for systemic human rights violations and international crimes, with initial priority given to Belarus.

Middle East and North Africa Programme: Strategic Plan Priorities

The ICJ will continue its work to improve the protection of human rights and the rule of law, including by: contributing to processes of constitutional, legal and judicial reforms; promoting accountability for serious human rights violations; enhancing access to justice for victims of human rights violations, including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and for migrants, refugees and other marginalized groups; advocating for the independence of judges, lawyers and prosecutors; contributing to the effective implementation of international human rights law and standards at the national level; and engaging with efforts to enhance the effectiveness of the African human rights system.

SG 1: Develop, defend, and strengthen international institutions, instruments and standards on rule of law and human rights

The ICJ will support litigation, including as a third-party intervener, before regional and international mechanisms, including the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights, the UN Human Rights Committee, the UN Committee Against Torture and the International Criminal Court. The ICJ will continue to engage with the Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria, the UN Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen, and the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism on Syria, providing them with information, documentation and authoritative legal analysis of domestic legal frameworks, and assisting domestic civil society actors and human rights defenders in engaging with them.

SG 2: Improve domestic implementation of, and compliance with, international law and standards

The ICJ will continue its work in promoting the rule of law, including by: contributing to uphold the right of individuals to take part in the conduct of public affairs; contributing to ensure that legally constituted branches of governments are exercising their competencies in conformity with the Constitution and international standards; promoting the subordination of armed forces to effective civilian oversight; advocating for judicial systems to be independent, impartial and accountable; and promoting that Constitutions, laws and policies are adopted and enforced consistent with international human rights standards, and that civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights are safeguarded and advanced. Priority countries include Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Lebanon, Syria, Israel and Palestine,

SG 3: Bolster the effectiveness and independence of judges and lawyers

The ICJ will continue to monitor processes where judiciaries are abdicating their responsibilities to uphold human rights and the rule of law, and instead of acting as a check on the arbitrary use of power by the executive and legislative branches of government, they are being used as a tool of repression, targeting human rights defenders, civil society organizations and all those suspected of opposing the authorities through politicized and unfair judicial proceedings.

SG 4: Improve access to justice and accountability

The ICJ will address access to justice for women, including victims of SGBV, and for the most disadvantaged, including migrants and refugees. The ICJ will work with local and national advocates on analysing obstacles that impede access to justice, pursuing strategic legal interventions, capacity building and advocacy and engagement with justice sector actors. It will challenge laws, policies and practices that systemically sustain gender inequality and/or deny women and marginalized groups and people equal access to justice. The Programme will address primarily: the need to bring to justice the perpetrators of gross human rights violations and crimes under international law, in particular in relation to the situations in Libya, Syria, Israel and Palestine; the need to ensure access to remedy and reparation for victims of human rights violations in Egypt and Libya, including through engagement with regional and international accountability mechanisms; and the need to tackle the legacy of past and ongoing crimes under international law and gross human rights violations in Tunisia and Libya, including by enhancing transitional justice processes and building the capacity of the Tunisia Specialized Criminal Chambers.