

ICJ Strategic Plan 2026-2030

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Introduction

For more than seven decades, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) has stood as an independent non-governmental organisation, composed of eminent judges and lawyers from all regions of the world. Its 60 Commissioners, distinguished jurists of the highest standing, bring together exceptional legal expertise and moral authority, actively contributing to the design and oversight of the ICJ's legal work. They enable the organisation to speak with a single, authoritative voice in defence of the rule of law and human rights worldwide.

The ICJ, active in every region of the world, works to advance the legal protection of human rights and to uphold justice under the rule of law. Renowned for its formidable legal expertise and credibility, the ICJ combines rigorous, independent legal analysis and advocacy to defend and promote the rule of law and human rights for all, focusing on the protection of the most marginalised. It enables, protects and promotes the work of human rights defenders, including judges, lawyers and civil society actors, by challenging reprisals, strengthening legal safeguards and fostering environments in which they can act freely, safely and effectively to uphold justice and human dignity.

In an era of shrinking civic space and growing attacks on judicial independence, the ICJ serves as a unique and indispensable bulwark safeguarding the justice systems that protect rights globally. It also plays a vital role in the progressive development and implementation of international law, ensuring that legal norms address contemporary challenges, that these are informed by the experiences of those most affected, and that they advance the realisation of human rights for all.

This ICJ's work is developed with partners from all regions of the world, reflecting the organisation's global mandate and collective commitment to the rule of law and human rights. **We recognize that we cannot address all challenges alone, particularly at a time when both funding and operating challenges are growing. Therefore, we will focus on areas where we have unique strengths—such as legal standard-setting, judicial independence, and access to justice for the most marginalised. In other areas, we will actively collaborate with other organisations, leveraging partnerships to amplify impact and multiply effect. This collaborative approach ensures that the ICJ remains both strategic and effective, aligning its work with broader movements for justice while maintaining its distinctive role as a legal authority in the human rights ecosystem and a trusted ally to those defending it.**

Vision

A world in which everyone can live in security, dignity, and justice, and where the rule of law serves as a force for justice and human rights.

Mission

- We support the development of international human rights law and standards.
- We promote their adoption and implementation.
- We defend and preserve them when they come under attack.
- We work to ensure the independence of the judiciary, and support judges, lawyers, and prosecutors in their roles as human rights defenders.

Context

This plan sets out how we will build on concrete gains of previous years and adapt our work to counter the rapidly evolving threats to the rule of law and human rights. Over the five years of our previous strategic plan, the ICJ helped to strengthen and develop international mechanisms to facilitate accountability and redress where national systems had failed. We deepened our engagement in regional fora and national governance systems and carried out advocacy for international responses to accountability gaps, working to ensure that local voices and needs were given primacy.

Defending and promoting the independence of judges, lawyers and prosecutors remained a core pillar of our work. We combined urgent interventions on behalf of threatened human rights defenders, including legal professionals, with long-term efforts to implement standards into national practice, continuing to promote and apply the international principles that underpin the independence and accountability of judges and lawyers. Our country missions, amicus curiae briefs, legal interventions and targeted advocacy reinforced the practical application of those standards and provided concrete support to hundreds of human rights defenders and legal professionals. In doing so, the ICJ not only protected individuals but also strengthened the broader ecosystem of defenders who uphold justice and human rights in their societies. This remains core to our new plan.

We increased the ICJ's role as a source of practical legal tools, research and capacity building. Our publications and practitioners' guides — developed with partners and frontline lawyers — translate complex international legal norms into usable guidance for judiciaries, bar associations and civil society, while also empowering human rights defenders to use these tools effectively in their advocacy and practice. Our submissions to processes such as UN Special Procedures, treaty bodies and Universal Periodic Reviews, and negotiations on international legal instruments have informed international decision-making and strengthened protections for those defending rights.

Our vision for 2026–2030 is bold and necessary: to strengthen international human rights law, prioritise implementation of international norms and standards, and expand the spaces in which human rights defenders, including independent judiciaries, can operate safely and effectively. We will work to close accountability gaps by linking national realities to effective international action. Compared to 2021–2025, this plan places greater emphasis on ensuring effective national implementation of international standards through sustained engagement with human rights defenders, civil society, legal institutions and policymakers.

Over the next five years, we will deepen partnerships with civil society, national bars, and judiciaries, while continuing evidence-based advocacy at the United Nations and within regional systems. We will also invest in the capacity and protection of human rights defenders, equipping them to implement and uphold human rights law in increasingly hostile environments, and ensuring their vital contributions are supported and safeguarded.

The past five years have demonstrated that the law, when rigorously implemented, courageously defended, and independently applied, remains the most powerful safeguard for human rights. Our strategy for 2026–2030 is to defend and strengthen that foundation, ensuring that justice systems worldwide stand firm against authoritarianism, impunity, and inequality, and that access to justice and accountability are realised in practice for all. While

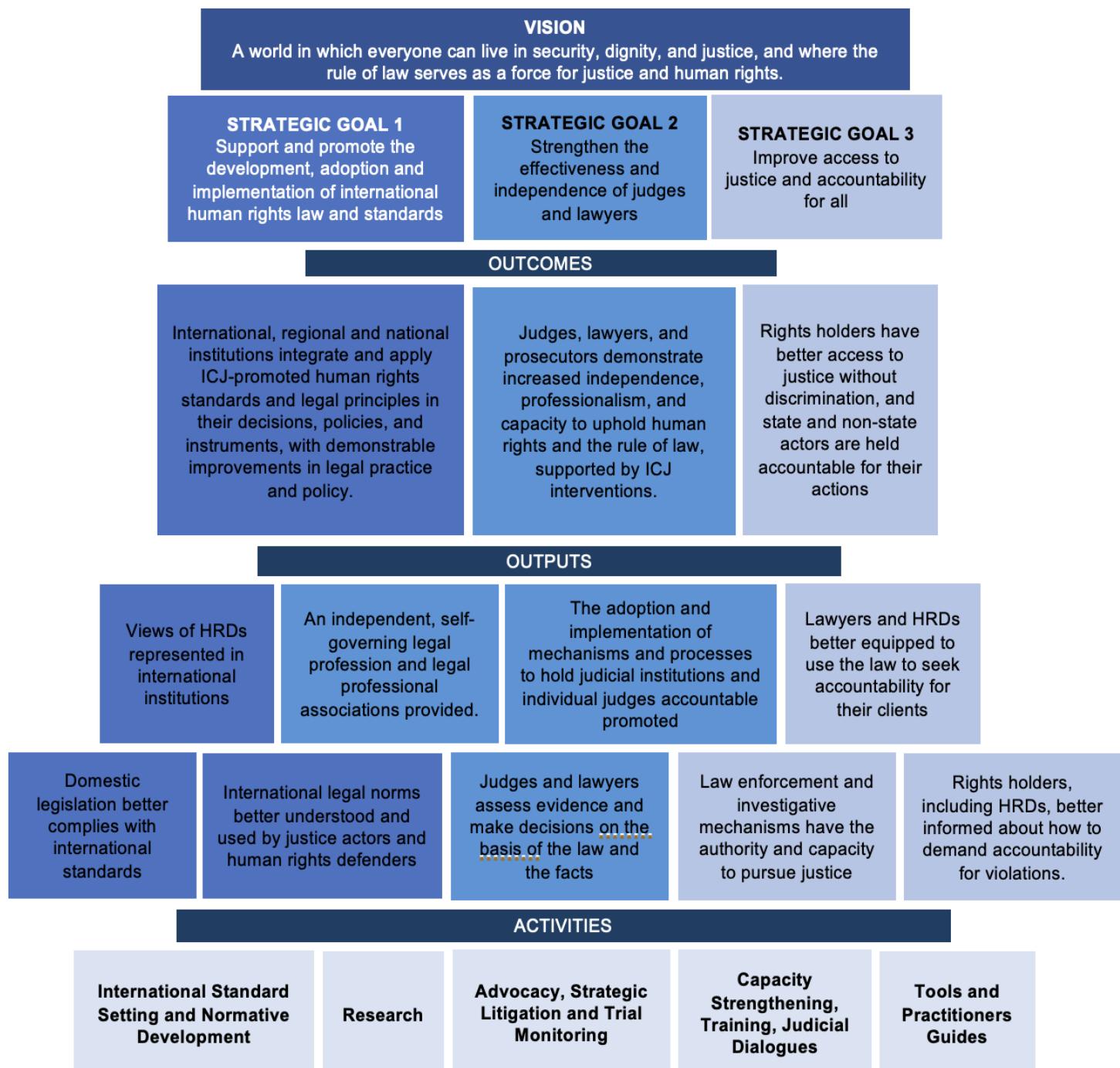


our direction remains constant, our efforts will be focused to respond to a more hostile environment.

Adapting to evolving and interconnected challenges: The ICJ recognises that the landscape of human rights and the rule of law is evolving faster than ever before, while funding to meet these challenges has diminished. New and complex issues – from artificial intelligence to climate change, migration and growing inequality – are reshaping the terrain in which justice operates. These developments are deeply interconnected with long-standing struggles for equality and non-discrimination, including gender justice, SOCIESC rights, the rights of persons with disabilities, and the protection of children and young people.

The ICJ will therefore remain flexible and responsive, ensuring that its expertise, tools and networks adapt to new realities and integrate these themes across its strategic goals. This adaptive approach safeguards the ICJ's ability to respond effectively to new forms of injustice that have the potential to profoundly affect the core values of the ICJ and the rule of law itself.

THEORY OF CHANGE



Our approach is grounded in decades of legal practice and international human rights law and standards, and the principle that the rule of law and human rights are mutually reinforcing pillars of a just society. Our experience has demonstrated that by strengthening legal frameworks, empowering legal professionals, and supporting human rights defenders and the most marginalised, we can foster independent and accountable institutions that uphold justice. We can achieve this through targeted activities such as developing legal standards, legal interventions, training legal actors and human rights defenders, and engaging in advocacy at national and international levels.

The expert standards we have developed—from the Siracusa Principles on human rights in public emergencies to the 8 March Principles on human rights and criminal law - have been cited by courts, UN bodies, and governments worldwide, demonstrating their normative influence. The ICJ has worked with States in the elaboration of human rights treaties and instruments that make up the contemporary legal architecture. Evaluations of our legal interventions, and capacity-building efforts have shown tangible improvements in creating standards that make a difference to the lives of people everywhere, judicial independence, access to justice, the work of human rights defenders, and legal protections for marginalised groups. These outcomes validate the ICJ's theory that legal empowerment and principled advocacy can drive systemic change.

To meet the new challenges we face, climate justice will be integrated more deeply into our legal strategies, including engagement with national, regional and international bodies on the right to a healthy environment. We will develop a digital rights strategy, including legal standards for digital governance to protect civic space while protecting from online harms and guiding efforts to legally protect human rights in the digital space.

We will expand our intersectional approach to encompass non-discrimination and equal protection of all persons, including those affected based on SOGI status, gender, migration status, disability and age, ensuring inclusive legal analysis and partnerships with underrepresented groups.

The ICJ's seven decades of experience have shown that the response to the current crises facing humanity, including new and emerging challenges, requires action grounded in the rule of law and consistent human rights principles.

Our Strategic Goals 2026-2030 – What we aim to achieve

We have chosen to retain three strategic goals for the next five years, identifying these as the most critical in the face of persistent global challenges to the rule of law and human rights. They reflect our historical mission and evolving role in a complex global landscape:

- 1. Support and promote the development, adoption and implementation of international human rights law and standards**
- 2. Strengthen the effectiveness and independence of judges and lawyers**
- 3. Improve access to justice and accountability for all**

These goals are deeply interconnected. Strengthening international legal standards supports the domestic implementation of those standards, which in turn relies on an independent and capable judiciary to ensure access to justice and to protect those who defend human rights.

We recognize that we cannot address all challenges alone and therefore we will focus on areas where we have unique strengths—such as legal standard-setting, judicial independence, and the legal protection of human rights defenders. In other areas, we will actively collaborate with other organisations, leveraging partnerships to amplify impact and multiply effect. This collaborative approach ensures that the ICJ remains both strategic and effective, aligning its work with broader movements for justice while maintaining its distinctive role as a legal authority in the human rights ecosystem and a trusted ally to those defending it.

This prioritisation will respond to the growing threats to multilateralism and the increasing politicisation of international legal frameworks and institutional architecture, including a robust defence of normative standards and multilateral institutions. At the same time, attacks on judicial independence, the legal profession, and human rights defenders in many countries undermine the very mechanisms needed to uphold those standards. The ICJ will continue to enable, protect and promote the work of human rights defenders—judges, lawyers and civil society actors alike—by advocating for their safety, amplifying their voices, and ensuring that international and national legal systems safeguard their work.

We aim to shore up the foundations of the rule of law globally, ensuring that legal systems remain resilient, rights-respecting and protective of those who defend them, even in turbulent times. This strategic emphasis aligns with the ICJ's core strengths in legal expertise, standard-setting, and direct engagement with legal professionals and defenders worldwide.

Strategic Goal 1 - Support and promote the development, adoption and implementation of international human rights law and standards

We will strengthen the global legal architecture for human rights and the rule of law and ensure its effective implementation at regional and national levels. Through research, advocacy, standard-setting, and legal interventions, we will advance thematic legal standards and mechanisms. We will focus on translating global standards into domestic practice through legal reform, capacity-strengthening, and partnerships with human rights defenders, civil society, lawyers and judges.

How we will achieve this goal

- Support global and regional human rights systems through expert legal analysis, standard-setting, and engagement in intergovernmental negotiations.
- Advocate for the establishment, defence, and strengthening of UN and regional human rights bodies, independent accountability mechanisms, and international criminal courts and tribunals.
- Promote domestic incorporation of international human rights law and standards through legislative and judicial reform.
- Build the capacity of judges, lawyers, prosecutors, and legislators to apply international law, and support human rights defenders and civil society partners advocating for compliance and reform.
- Promote inclusive and participatory approaches to justice, ensuring the perspectives of women and marginalised groups are central to all processes.
- Strengthen partnerships with bar associations, judicial schools, and national institutions to embed rule of law principles and enhance domestic ownership of reform efforts.
- Address new and emerging issues—such as climate justice, digital governance, and equality—through the evolution and application of legal standards.

How we will measure this goal

of ICJ recommendations adopted or cited in national / international legal instruments, court judgments, or UN resolutions, disaggregated by type and level of uptake (e.g., citation, endorsement, full adoption)
of instances ICJ publications are used as advocacy tools to support, defend and strengthen institutions, instruments and standards on rule of law and human rights

of recommendations or positions made to strengthen and defend national institutions, instruments, standards or resolutions on rule of law and human rights, and supported law and constitutional reform

Strategic Goal 2 – Strengthen the effectiveness and independence of judges and lawyers

A just society depends on the rule of law and human rights, and these in turn depend on effective, independent and accountable judges, prosecutors and lawyers. The independence of the judiciary and the legal profession is a critical component of the rule of law. Judges, prosecutors and lawyers are uniquely placed to effect positive change.

We will equip legal professionals to defend human rights across thematic areas including transitional justice, digital rights, criminal law, and gender and disability rights. Our training and advocacy will emphasise the role of judges and lawyers in upholding accountability, resisting politicised prosecutions, and applying international standards in complex and evolving legal contexts.

How we will achieve this goal

- Promote an independent, self-governing legal profession, highlighting protections needed to ensure lawyers and judges are able to discharge their professional functions effectively, and to uphold human rights and the rule of law.
- Monitor court proceedings to bring to public attention any violations of the rule of law and human rights and provide protection to judges and lawyers in implementing the rule of law.
- Promote the adoption and implementation of mechanisms and processes to hold judicial institutions and individual judges accountable.
- Promote State institutions that respect and coordinate with indigenous justice systems and other traditional or customary justice systems, ensuring that indigenous and other traditional or customary justice systems themselves fulfil international standards of rule of law and human rights.

How we will measure this

% of participants in ICJ who report or demonstrate the application of international human rights standards in their decisions, pleadings, or legal opinions. Improved ability to conduct rights-based legal analysis, with examples provided

of instances where ICJ interventions contributed to advancing judicial independence and protection of legal professionals, demonstrated through legal submissions, public advocacy, or documented changes in practice or awareness

Strategic Goal 3 - Improve access to justice and accountability for all

Effective access to justice requires that all victims and all those accused of crimes or facing legal consequences can access independent, competent legal advice and representation, and have the right to a fair trial. Everyone should be able to obtain justice, at global, regional and national levels, in courts and other legal forums and in political institutions, without discrimination. Particular attention will continue to be given to groups who face structural barriers to justice — including women, persons with disabilities, migrants, LGBTIQ+ persons, indigenous peoples, and children.

Perpetrators of violations and abuses should be held accountable through criminal prosecution. Accountability should be provided through domestic courts - or through global and regional courts and tribunals where domestic courts are unable to deliver justice. Law enforcement and investigative mechanisms must have the authority and technical capacity to document violations and to pursue perpetrators, and protect those who expose or challenge such abuses, including human rights defenders.

We will promote access to justice for victims of human rights violations, including those affected by environmental degradation, digital censorship, gender-based violence, and disability-based discrimination. Our work will support transitional justice processes, strategic litigation, and the development of inclusive remedy frameworks, ensuring that accountability mechanisms—both domestic and international—are responsive to the needs of marginalised and at-risk communities, and to the protection and empowerment of human rights defenders who advance these causes.

How we will achieve this

- Develop effective international accountability mechanisms.
- Contribute 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 marginalised groups.
- Work with national judiciaries to advance non-criminal civil and administrative remedies for gross human rights violations and abuses
- Build the capacity of partners and communities to understand and defend their rights and support them to use the legal system to claim these rights.
- Monitor and research the operation of courts and where necessary, help build their capacity 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

% of rights holders reporting improved ability to navigate justice systems after ICJ support, based on structured feedback.

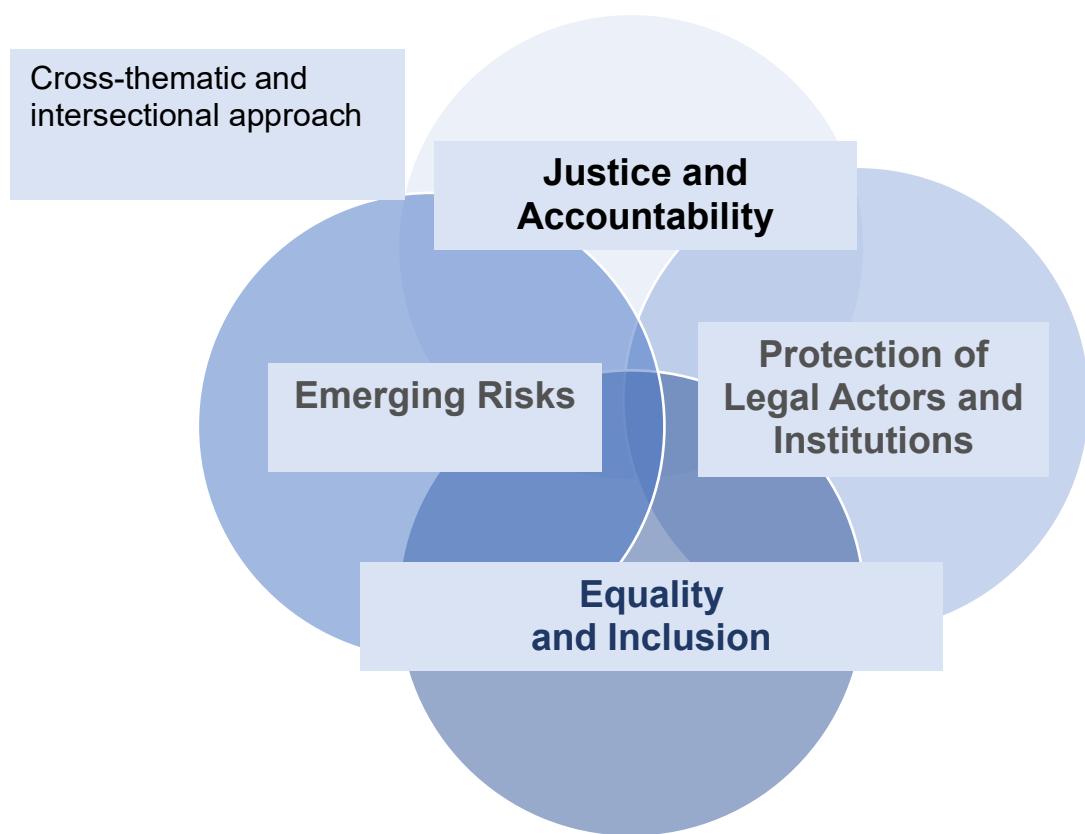
% of target group who report an enhanced understanding of subject matter following ICJ training

of individuals whose rights to a fair trial are increased through ICJ Trial Monitoring

of litigation arguments submitted by the ICJ and partners/victims groups/HRDs with international, regional and national courts and bodies that are adopted

Thematic Lenses – How we apply our mandate

The ICJ's work will be delivered through four interlinked thematic lenses that operationalise the strategic goals across regions. Each theme represents a field where our legal expertise, networks, and partnerships add distinctive value. This approach reflects the complex realities of legal systems and human rights today: defending judicial independence is essential to ensuring access to justice for marginalised groups, while strategic litigation on environmental harm often intersects with accountability for corporate misconduct and the protection of indigenous rights. Similarly, digital repression undermines both freedom of expression and fair trial guarantees, requiring integrated legal responses across domains. To maximise resources and impact, the ICJ fosters cross-thematic programming, shared learning, and joint advocacy. This includes leveraging its global network of Commissioners, national sections, and local partners to co-design interventions, pool expertise, and ensure that all work is informed by diverse perspectives and grounded in lived realities.



Justice and Accountability

We will pursue accountability for international crimes and systemic human rights violations through domestic, regional, and international mechanisms. Our work includes legal interventions and advocacy before international, regional courts, and UN mechanisms; promoting the elaboration and adoption of international instruments such as the Convention on Crimes Against Humanity; strengthening compliance with decisions of regional courts and treaty bodies; developing guidance for States, lawyers, civil society and human rights defenders; and advancing post-conflict justice, reparations, and guarantees of non-recurrence. In all these efforts, the ICJ will enable, protect, and promote the work of human rights defenders—especially those pursuing justice and accountability in hostile or repressive contexts—by strengthening the legal frameworks and protections that allow them to act safely, effectively, and with impact.

Examples of work to be undertaken:

- **Global:** Engage with the UNGA process to elaborate a Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Humanity, ensuring the Convention is optimally fit for its protective purposes and strengthens safeguards for victims, witnesses, and human rights defenders.
- Support effectiveness of international accountability mechanisms, including work to establish a Standing Independent Investigative Mechanism (SIIM), replacing the present ad hoc arrangements, and ensuring these mechanisms engage meaningfully with and protect human rights defenders providing evidence or advocacy.
- Develop, through expert consultations, guidance for States, legal practitioners, civil society, and human rights defenders on pursuing non-criminal (civil and administrative) remedies and redress for gross human rights violations and abuses.
- **Africa:** Strengthen compliance with decisions of the African Court and African Commission; support domestic and regional litigation; and promote adherence to the rule of law and accountability in South Africa, Eswatini, Zimbabwe, and Lesotho, sharing good practice from jurisdictions with strong judiciaries and active human rights defenders.
- **Asia:** Link international and national advocacy with technical assistance and training on accountability mechanisms in Myanmar and Nepal; support victim-centred transitional justice with focus on conflict-related sexual violence; and reinforce protections for human rights defenders engaged in documentation and legal advocacy.
- **Europe & Central Asia:** Support litigation before the European Court of Human Rights and other regional mechanisms; use observer status at the Council of Europe to influence standard-setting; advocate for EU accession to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), and press for stronger EU mechanisms on the rule of law. Strengthen compliance with decisions of the ECHR and other regional and global human rights mechanisms.
- **Latin America:** Support litigation and advocacy before the Inter-American System; reinforce transitional justice in Colombia through the Special Jurisdiction for Peace; and promote legal environments where human rights defenders can safely pursue justice and truth.
- **Middle East & North Africa:** Support advocacy on Palestine; promote UN accountability mechanisms for Libya and Syria; and assist transitional justice and

victims' rights efforts in Tunisia, Syria, and Libya, with dedicated attention to the protection and participation of human rights defenders in these processes.

Protection of Legal Actors and Institutions

We will reinforce the independence of judges and lawyers, and their key role as human rights defenders, ensuring they can operate free from interference or reprisal. Our work includes interventions and trial monitoring in cases of threats or attacks; promoting reforms to strengthen judicial independence and accountability; collaborating with professional associations and regional bodies to uphold standards; and producing and disseminating practical tools on judicial integrity and fair trial.

Examples of work to be undertaken:

- **Global:** Produce practitioners' tools on the independence of judges and lawyers and the fair administration of justice.
- Work with the UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers and areas of mutual concern, and to bolster the mandate.
- Strengthen the Centre for the Independence of Judges and Lawyers (CIJL) to promote the independence of the legal profession, internationally and domestically, including in its fundamental role of protecting human rights.
- **Africa:** Strengthen weak or captured judiciaries and legal professions; defend lawyers under threat; and build the capacity of lawyers to protect human rights.
- **Asia:** Promote judicial independence and right to fair trial through capacity-building for judges, lawyers, and civil society.
- **Europe & Central Asia:** Support capacity-building and advocacy for judicial independence; defend lawyers under threat, especially in Central Asia.
- **Latin America:** Advocate for the protection of judges, lawyers, and defenders under threat and publish reports on the status of the judiciary, with priority on Venezuela.
- **Middle East & North Africa:** Promote self-governing judicial institutions in Tunisia, Lebanon, and Syria; monitor politically-motivated trials; and support the adoption of judicial accountability mechanisms in Libya and Syria.

Equality and Inclusion

We will promote equality before the law and inclusive justice systems that respond to the needs of all persons. Our work includes working with human rights defenders and CSOs to challenge discriminatory laws and practices through advocacy and legal interventions; promoting gender-sensitive and disability-inclusive judicial practice, including uptake of the ICJ's 8 March Principles, the Bangkok Guidance, and the CRPD standards; and supporting access to justice for women, children, LGBTIQ+ persons, persons with disabilities, migrants, refugees, and indigenous peoples.

Examples of work to be undertaken:

- **Global:** Defend the UN human rights system from retrogression, especially political attacks and waning State commitments. Counter trends towards shrinking civic space and attempts to degrade the independent organs of the Human Rights Council and treaty bodies.
- Facilitate participation of human rights defenders from all regions at the Human Rights Council and with independent human rights mechanisms.
- Develop practitioners' tools on gender rights and the rights of persons with disabilities.

- **Africa:** Advocate for implementation of the Africa Disability Protocol; support access to justice for LGBTIQ+ persons, persons with disabilities, and non-citizens through litigation and training.
- **Asia:** Promote the Bangkok Guidance on gender-sensitive judging and the Kathmandu Declaration on access to justice for persons with disabilities; address SOGIESC-based discrimination.
- **Europe & Central Asia:** Support the access to justice of women, migrants and refugees (particularly children), and persons with disabilities through advocacy, litigation support and training and other capacity building for judges, lawyers and civil society.
- **Latin America:** Strengthen access to justice for women, indigenous peoples, migrants, and other marginalised groups.
- **Middle East & North Africa:** Focus on ensuring access to justice for women, particularly survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

Emerging Risks

We will address emerging global risks that profoundly affect the rule of law, ensuring that new legal frontiers remain grounded in human rights. This work includes integrating climate justice and environmental rights into legal standards and interventions; supporting and protecting environmental and digital rights defenders and recognition of the right to a healthy environment; advancing rights-respecting digital governance and legal accountability for online harms and surveillance; and promoting ICJ-led checklists for the development of policies and global principles for human rights in digital spaces.

The ICJ will continue to enable, protect and promote the work of human rights defenders at the forefront of these new frontiers—those challenging environmental degradation, confronting digital repression, and advocating for accountability in emerging technologies—ensuring that their safety, participation, and expertise are central to the evolution of legal standards.

Examples of work to be undertaken:

- **Global:** Co-develop global Principles and Guidelines on Protecting Human Rights in Digital Spaces and complementary tools, including a commentary; disseminate and promote these principles and tools around the world.
- Develop and disseminate practitioners' tools on human rights and the environment, highlighting the role of environmental defenders.
- **Africa:** Promote human rights-based approaches to environmental law and digital rights through practitioner tools and training.
- **Asia:** Produce legal analyses and practitioner tools and engage in advocacy on digital rights and environmental law, in partnership with civil society and human rights defenders advancing these causes.
- **Europe & Central Asia, Latin America, Middle East & North Africa:** Strengthen the capacity of legal actors and human rights defenders on environmental and digital rights through training and advocacy.

Assumptions

- **Systemic and structural transformation remains essential.** We work in and with imperfect systems and institutions to reform them and to help build new mechanisms that uphold the rule of law and human rights. Structural injustice is reinforced by inequality, discrimination, authoritarianism, corruption, and climate crises, which require sustained, multi-layered responses.
- **Change is complex, iterative, and increasingly contested.** Advances in the rule of law face strong resistance from entrenched interests, disinformation, digital repression, and populist backlash. Positive change therefore requires persistence, adaptability, and long-term engagement that extends well beyond project cycles.
- **Jurists and legal professionals are key actors but not alone.** While judges, lawyers, and prosecutors remain central guardians of justice, meaningful progress requires alliances with human rights defenders, civil society, media, academics, and movements for social, racial, gender, and climate justice.
- **Those defending human rights are at the centre, but increasingly at risk.** Human rights defenders, lawyers, and judges face unprecedented threats — from digital surveillance to violent reprisals. ICJ must not only amplify their voices but also prioritise their safety, wellbeing, and resilience while ensuring its actions reflect their lived realities and demands
- **Partnerships are indispensable but must be more diverse.** ICJ's impact depends on working with a broad spectrum of actors: from grassroots defenders to international institutions, regional bodies, bar associations, and emerging networks on digital rights and climate justice. **In an era of geopolitical fragmentation, building inclusive, cross-regional alliances is critical.**

Our tools and methods of change

We have developed a series of tools we use to bring about real change. As only systemic and structural solutions will properly address injustice, we work with and within imperfect systems and institutions to improve them and ensure the rule of law and human rights.

1. **The Commission.** The ICJ's existence and work is guided by its 60 Commissioners: judges, lawyers and academics recognised for their expertise and experience in promoting and protecting the rule of law and human rights. The Commissioners' standing and influence give us access to decision-makers and influence-shapers, particularly within judiciaries, and among lawmakers and the legal community.
2. **Partnerships.** The ICJ maintains a formal network of autonomous national sections and affiliates. We have informal partnerships with organisations and individuals that share our vision, at local, national, regional and global levels, linking local to global and acting across levels for mutual support.

3. **Developing, defending and implementing standards.** Since 1952, 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. At the national level, we work for the adoption and implementation of international laws and standards, promotion of the independence and proper functioning of the judiciary and the legal system, and the use of legal interventions and advocacy to advance or defend human rights. We also support human rights defenders, civil society actors and lawyers to engage with and use international mechanisms.
4. **Capacity strengthening.** We provide capacity strengthening to all of those involved in promoting human rights and the rule of law, from human rights defenders and CSOs to legal professionals, government officials and security forces. **We support marginalised communities, survivor groups and human rights defenders to understand and exercise their rights and build the capacity of lawyers, judges and security forces to respect, protect, promote and fulfil human rights.**
5. **Advocacy:** We undertake a wide range of advocacy, including direct engagement with national governments and judicial bodies to influence law and policy reforms; submissions and interventions before international and regional human rights mechanisms; and strategic litigation to advance the interpretation and application of human rights standards. The ICJ also conducts public advocacy through press releases, legal and policy briefs, and formal statements that respond to human rights crises or developments, highlight violations, and call for accountability and reform.
6. **Tools.** We develop tools that support a range of stakeholders in their human rights duties, from practitioners' guides to guidance documents, legal principles, compendia of good practices, guidebooks, bench books and discussion guides. We make these freely available through our website so the greatest number of people can benefit from them.

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 how we interact with them:

- Judges (knowledge, capacity strengthening, protection in cases of attack, trial observations, missions, legal submissions to treaty-based bodies, informal advice, legal fora and networking).
- Lawyers, including prosecutors (knowledge, capacity strengthening, 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 (knowledge, capacity strengthening, protection in cases of attack (including trial observations), missions, mentoring, strategy development, legal submissions to treaty-based bodies, informal advice, advocacy, networking, partnerships).
- 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 strengthening, 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 CSOs and business enterprises (knowledge, capacity building, missions, policy and practice, advice, advocacy).
- Media (knowledge, capacity strengthening, advocacy).

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Plan

We recognise the critical role of **monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL)** in achieving our strategic goals. Our MEL approach is grounded in our robust **Theory of Change**, operationalised through a **Results-Based Management (RBM) Framework**. This framework enables us to adapt to evolving global challenges, ensure accountability, and foster continuous improvement.

Purpose and Objectives

The MEL system is designed to **track progress** across all strategic goals and programmatic areas, both within and beyond individual projects. It **evaluates the effectiveness** of strategies and interventions, using both internal and external assessments, and **generates actionable learning** to inform future programming and enhance organisational resilience.

Key Enhancements for 2026–2030

Adaptive Monitoring – Using standard indicators we will continue to focus on outcome-level measurement, with expanded scope to assess impact where feasible. We will introduce real-time data collection tools and dashboards to improve responsiveness and decision-making.

Integrated Evaluation – We will time evaluations to align with key decision points. We will use a mix of formative, summative, and developmental evaluations to assess relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability.

Learning for Transformation – We will embed learning in all stages of the program cycle, with structured reflection sessions and cross-program knowledge exchanges. We will systematically document and disseminate lessons learned from both successes and challenges across the organisation and with partners. The ICJ will promote Global South leadership in governance and programming, decolonise legal narratives by centring local jurisprudence and reframe partnerships to ensure mutuality and shared agenda-setting.

Equity and Inclusion – Our MEL processes will incorporate gender-sensitive and inclusive indicators, ensuring that marginalised voices are captured and considered. We will strengthen participatory approaches to enhance stakeholder ownership and accountability.

Digital and Data Innovation – We will invest in digital tools and data analytics to support smarter and economically effective MEL practices. Data privacy and ethical standards will be upheld in all MEL activities.

Implementation Approach

Annual MEL reviews will assess progress against strategic goals.

Mid-term and end-of-cycle evaluations will inform strategic adjustments and future planning.

MEL capacity-building will be prioritised across ICJ teams and partners

Institutional Priorities

Having achieved significant organisational improvements over the past five years, we will enter a new phase of institutional strengthening, aimed at ensuring our resources are deployed where they can have the greatest impact. To this end, we will explore merging aspects of our administrative operations with other, similar human rights-focused organisations based in Geneva. We will combine this with innovation: a central element will be the integration of technological solutions across all administrative functions. This includes digital platforms for finance, secure cloud-based systems for collaboration, and automated tools for monitoring, reporting and compliance. These will not only save time and resources but also allow staff to concentrate more fully on the organisation's substantive mission.

Ultimately, we aim to align the ICJ's internal capacity with the scale of the challenges it faces. By working collaboratively with peer organisations and embracing technological support, we will build an administrative backbone that is adaptable and resilient. This ensures that scarce resources are channelled into frontline programmes, advocacy, and partnerships, strengthening our ability to respond quickly and effectively in a rapidly changing global environment.

Enhance Knowledge Management and Institutional Memory

Consolidating systems and platforms. We will continue to develop a unified, secure digital knowledge hub that integrates case law, legal analysis, internal policy papers, and programme data. This will ensure that staff across regions and headquarters, as well as partners and stakeholders, can access up-to-date resources quickly, as well as increasing institutional memory.

Embedding knowledge-sharing practices. Beyond technology, we will foster a culture of collaboration, building on our structured peer-learning sessions to establish cross-regional working, and regular knowledge exchanges both internally, with Commissioners, and with partner organisations. This will make expertise more widely available, ensuring that lessons learned in one context strengthen strategies elsewhere.

Leveraging AI and data-driven tools. We will explore the use of artificial intelligence solutions to support legal research, automate document classification, and surface relevant precedents from global jurisprudence. These tools will enhance the capacity of legal teams, freeing up time for deeper analysis and strategic advocacy.

Our knowledge management will become increasingly proactive, and forward-looking, enabling us to further amplify the organisation's impact.

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. We will accelerate our 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.

Building internal capacity and resilience. Communications will no longer be treated as an add-on but as a core tool of advocacy. We will train staff and Commissioners to act as effective spokespersons, ensuring consistency and authority across platforms.

Promote ICJ knowledge resources - this includes Practitioners' Guides, factual and analytical reports, legal briefs and position papers through social media and the Resource Hub on our website, making them accessible to legal professionals, CSOs, human rights defenders, governments and all other relevant stakeholders.

Strengthening reach and influence. We will sharpen our global voice by aligning communications more proactively with programmatic priorities and legal interventions. By developing multilingual media content, podcasts, and visually engaging explainers, we will ensure our legal expertise is accessible not only to policymakers and practitioners but also to broader publics whose support is increasingly critical for defending the rule of law.

Harnessing digital and social platforms. We will expand our use of digital media to amplify impact, with targeted campaigns across platforms like LinkedIn, X/Twitter, and region-specific channels. Data analytics will guide communications, enabling us to better understand audiences, tailor messaging, and respond quickly to emerging threats to human rights. Strategic partnerships with journalists and human rights media outlets will further extend reach and credibility.

Increase and diversify audiences. We have grown audiences significantly and will target a younger demographic through our media and communications activities, and adapting these in line with engagement rates and feedback.

Ensure ongoing high levels of digital security. This is critical to ensure the safety of staff, partners and stakeholders, and ensure the integrity of the information being shared.

Together, these steps will position the ICJ as not just a leading legal authority but also a trusted and influential voice in global debates on justice and human rights.

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.

Commissioners will be strategically identified to ensure the ICJ has a strong and dynamic balance between geographic representation, gender, thematic expertise and diversity of legal traditions.

To complement 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.

Outside our network we will continue to work with partners including international and local civil society organisations, 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 and Fundraising

The ICJ will manage its financial resources professionally and transparently to ensure the effective implementation of our strategic plan. Targets for this period are:

Create a Strategic Investment Fund

Launch a dedicated fund to support innovation, strategic litigation, and rapid-response initiatives. This fund would be sourced from unrestricted income, legacy gifts, and high-net-worth donor contributions, and managed with a long-term investment horizon.

Institutionalise Multi-Year Donor Agreements

Shift from short-term project funding to multi-year, flexible donor agreements that support core operations and strategic initiatives. This includes building strategic partnerships with foundations, governments, and philanthropic networks.

Integrate Financial Planning with Strategic Impact Forecasting

Link financial planning directly to impact forecasting, enabling the ICJ to allocate resources based on anticipated legal, social, and policy outcomes. This approach supports evidence-based investment in high-impact areas.

Optimise Digital Finance Tools

The ICJ now operates a state-of-the-art financial system (current Business Central shift to Netsuite in 2026) and IT set up (Microsoft 360). The priority for this period is to optimise their use. This includes enhancing integration with strategic impact forecasting, integrating donor reporting, expanding real-time dashboards for managers, and ensuring robust digital security. The aim is to maximise the value of existing investments rather than initiate a costly new finance overhaul.