



The Commonwealth and Climate Change



The Commonwealth





Message from the Secretary - General

Thirty-three of the 56 nations of the Commonwealth are Small States, of which 25 are Small Island Developing States. Climate change is a daily challenge, and an existential threat, for our most vulnerable member states – so climate change is a priority for Commonwealth Heads of Government, and a clear focus for collective action across our family of nations.

The conclusion of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) *Working Group III Contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report (AR6)* is emphatic: we are at code red for humanity, off track to limit global warming to 1.5°C; the scale of change required is unprecedented, and the window for action is rapidly closing.

From the ground-breaking 1989 Langkawi Declaration to the present day, the Commonwealth has a long track-record of climate leadership, and an established commitment to helping our member states address the causes and consequences of climate change. From energy and natural resources to food, land and ocean, we take a principled and practical approach which is member-led and action-oriented, and prioritises human rights whilst mainstreaming gender and youth.

I believe our approach to climate change illustrates the Commonwealth's status as a beacon for multilateral co-operation. We utilise our unique convening power to share, plan and act together through practical interventions, advocacy, innovation and partnerships to serve all 2.5 billion people of the Commonwealth – especially those most exposed and most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

For our Small Island Developing States, and our many other vulnerable member states, climate change is already a matter of life and death. We need urgent action now – there is no more time to waste.

This is the context in which we approach COP27. We need urgency and unity of purpose. I look forward to working together with our friends and partners to raise ambition, to deepen collaboration and to deliver decisive, practical and urgent action for the wellbeing of all people and our planet.

The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland KC
Secretary-General of the Commonwealth

The Commonwealth and Climate Change

The Commonwealth has a long history of commitment to addressing climate change and supporting member countries in dealing with its adverse impacts. Collective political will to protect the planet for future generations has been explicit and robust, ever since the Langkawi Declaration on the Environment of 1989, when Commonwealth leaders resolved to act both individually and as a group on a programme of action on the environment and climate change.



In 2015, just before the UN Climate Conference in Paris (COP21) Commonwealth heads of government made a commitment to limit global temperature rise below 2°C, while aiming for 1.5°C from pre-industrial levels. This undertaking was reaffirmed at COP21 and captured in the global agreement known as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

At the 2022 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), leaders reiterated their call for urgent action to mitigate climate change, reduce vulnerability and increase resilience, including enhanced participation of young people in climate action.

Real problems, real solutions

The Commonwealth's multidisciplinary work to support member countries on climate change includes programmes on



climate finance, youth, climate law, energy transition, human rights and ocean governance. The Commonwealth also contributes to the global climate change discussion by sharing

experiences and highlighting key issues related to small island developing states, least developed countries, and other small and vulnerable countries.

Unlocking Climate Finance

In many Commonwealth countries, the devastating impacts of climate change are clear, sea levels are rising, storms, droughts and heatwaves are increasing in both intensity and frequency, and arable land is turning into desert. Although the international community has pledged billions to address climate change, countries find it extremely difficult to draw from financing mechanisms – such as the Green Climate Fund – for projects to help people adapt to and mitigate against climate change and its impacts.

A pioneering Commonwealth initiative proposed by a Commonwealth Expert Group in 2013 and mandated by CHOGM 2015 with its central hub in Mauritius, the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub

(CCFAH) helps Commonwealth small and other vulnerable states access funding for climate projects by embedding highly skilled long term expertise in the form of Commonwealth National and Regional Climate Finance Advisers in relevant government departments.

CCFAH through its unique Hub and Spokes model supports member states to build human and institutional capacity to plan for and access all sources of climate finance required to convert national climate change priorities and targets into action. In this regard CCFAH has assisted 17 countries across the Commonwealth and has expanded its support through Commonwealth Regional Climate Finance Advisers for Africa and Indo-Pacific Regions, with the Caribbean to follow shortly.

CCFAH beneficiary countries

Africa	Caribbean	Pacific
Mauritius	Antigua & Barbuda	Fiji
Eswatini	Belize	Solomon Islands
Namibia	Grenada*	Tonga
Seychelles*	St Lucia	Vanuatu
Zambia	Barbados, Jamaica & Guyana*	Regional Technical Assistance – Commonwealth Regional Climate Finance Adviser, Indo Pacific
Regional Technical Assistance – Commonwealth Regional Climate Finance Adviser, Africa	Incoming - Regional Technical Assistance	

* Countries which have previously been supported by a Commonwealth National Climate Finance Adviser.

As of August 2022 CCFAH has helped secure approximately US\$53 million worth of funding, for both mitigation and adaptation actions. The programme also delivered approximately 95 training initiatives with nearly

2,000 government officials trained on various aspects of climate finance. The CCFAH receives support from the Commonwealth Secretariat, Australia, the United Kingdom and Mauritius, as well

as from institutional partners including the UK Space Agency and NDC Partnership.

Small States and Vulnerability

Thirty-two of the 56 Commonwealth countries are classified as small states. Often, climate change puts their economies at risk. The Commonwealth is helping small states build their resilience and adapt to climate change. To strengthen disaster risk management, the Commonwealth has developed a Commonwealth Disaster Risk Finance Portal, which is an online tool to help countries navigate an increasingly complex disaster finance landscape. Small states will enjoy quicker and simpler access to financing as a result, helping them understand and manage natural disaster risks, including those linked to climate change.

Preliminary Commonwealth research shows that small states are losing out on an estimated \$4.1 billion of aid opportunities because their governments do not have the capacity to deal with the complex process of negotiating, receiving and managing development assistance. The Commonwealth is also mobilising international support for a universal definition and common measurement of economic vulnerability, which would include climate shocks. This Universal Vulnerability Index provides clarity on the exposure of countries to climate change using an index focused on physical vulnerability to climate change as part of its vulnerability framework, making it easier to mobilise support for aid opportunities.



The Commonwealth has also now focused its work on the circular economy, helping small states to rethink their consumption patterns and providing a framework through

which governments and the private sector can act as accelerators for the circular economy in Commonwealth countries.

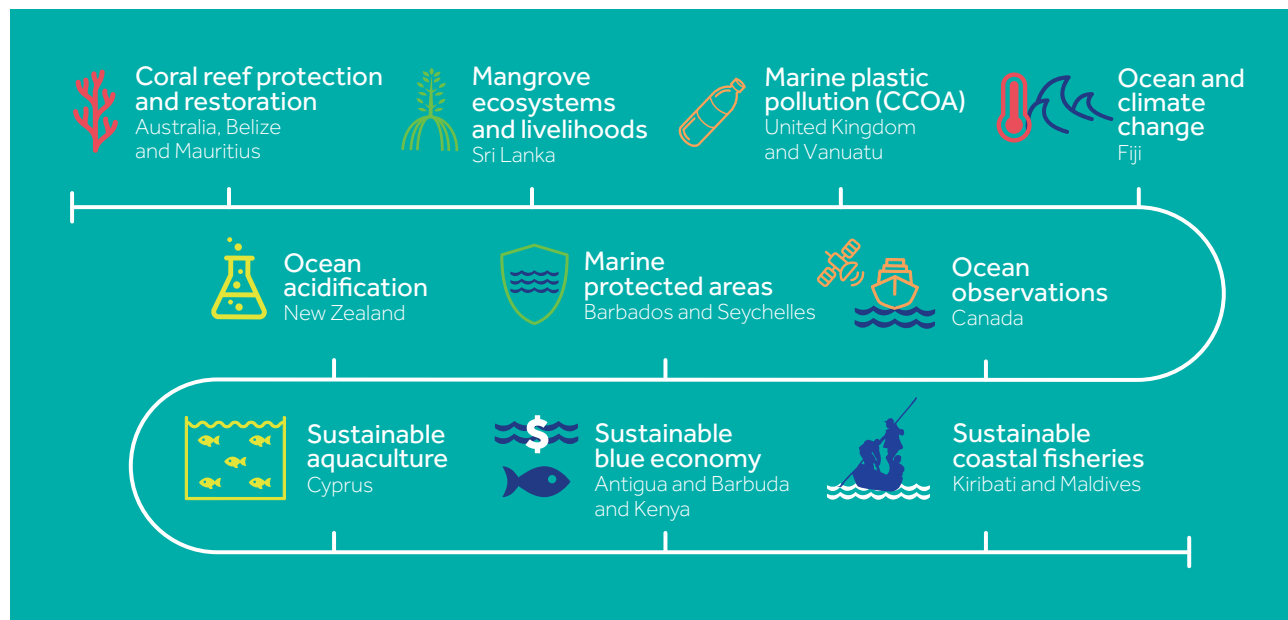
Ocean and Climate Change

The Commonwealth Blue Charter is an agreement by all 56 member countries to co-operate on tackling our shared ocean-related problems and meet commitments for sustainable ocean development.

The Charter of the Commonwealth provides the underlying principles for the Blue Charter, ensuring that the Commonwealth takes a fair, equitable, inclusive and sustainable approach to ocean economic development and protection.

Blue Charter Action Groups are led by 'champion' countries. Sixteen countries are champions on ten topics they have identified as priorities. Fiji champions the action group on ocean and climate change. This group works with existing networks to improve ocean health through climate action. It

Blue Charter Action Groups



also explores financial mechanisms to enable a 'blue carbon' approach – restoring the ability of coastal ecosystems to store carbon in mangroves, seagrass and other

coastal ecosystems. In addition, the Commonwealth is continuing research and advocacy on the effectiveness of adaptation measures to address sea level

rise and the sharing of durable, sustainable solutions.

Commonwealth Sustainable Energy Transition (CSET) Agenda

With the rest of the world, Commonwealth countries are facing challenges from global warming caused by the increased emissions of greenhouse gases, two thirds of which emanate from the production and use of energy. Many developing member countries also have a significant energy access gap and expanding energy access is a priority for sustainable development. Recognition continues to grow of the need for new levels of ambition in current efforts to decarbonise and transform the global energy system.



The Commonwealth Sustainable Energy Transition (CSET) Agenda is a platform for collaborative action amongst member countries towards acceleration of the transition to low carbon energy systems and the achievement of SDG7. It is anchored on three key pillars – Inclusive Transitions, Technology and Innovation and Enabling Frameworks, and advocates member-led action for accelerating inclusive and equitable energy transitions and achieving the goals of SDG7. Three new member-led action groups have been launched under the CSET Agenda on Energy Literacy, Geothermal Energy and a cross-cutting Youth Action Group.

Despite significant clean energy resource potential, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are characterized by their heavy

dependence on imported fossil fuels that result in some of the highest electricity costs in the world and significant supply chain challenges. Together with partners Sustainable Energy for All, the Commonwealth Secretariat has developed a Toolkit to assist SIDS develop business cases and strategies to facilitate investment in clean energy projects in the power sector.

As part of its broader initiative around energy literacy, the Commonwealth Secretariat has published an exciting children's book series on the global transformation of energy systems. Developed and commissioned by the Commonwealth Secretariat and written by children's book author Allan Drummond, these books present the concepts of sustainable and inclusive energy in



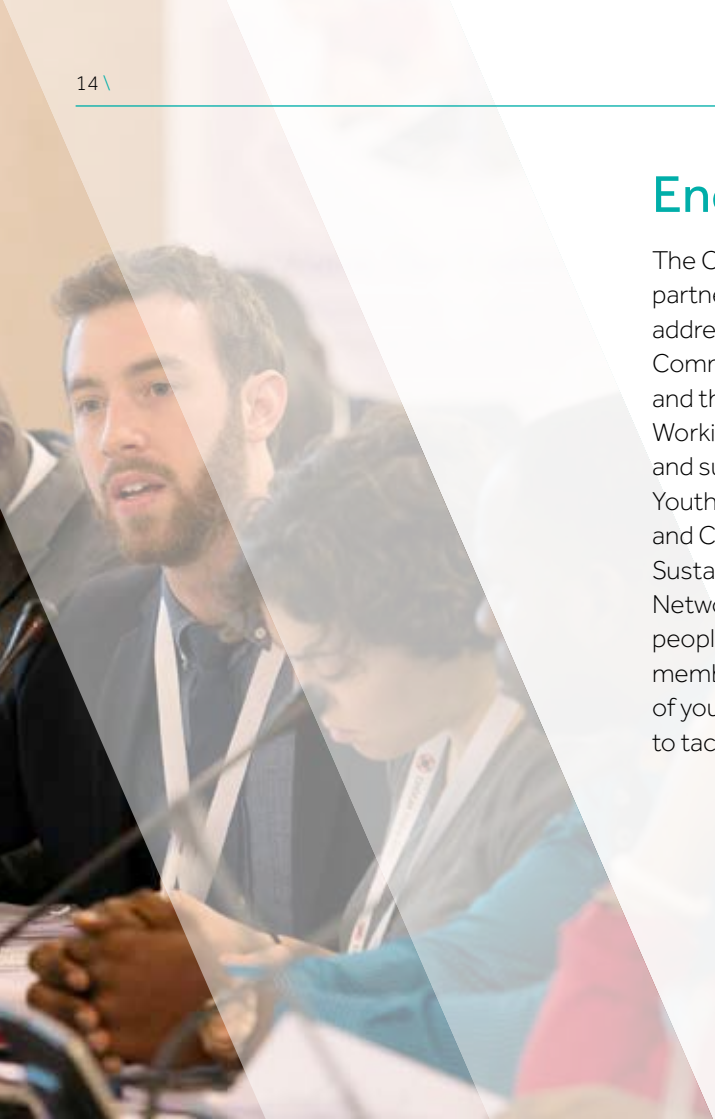
a digestible and engaging format and encourage young readers to find out how they can be part of the change in the way the world produces and uses energy. Targeted at readers aged 7 – 12, the books are available for distribution and can also be downloaded from thecommonwealth.org/oceans-and-natural-resources

Engaging Youth

The Commonwealth works in partnership with young people to address climate change through the Commonwealth Youth Programme and the Youth Networks and Working Groups it has established and supports the Commonwealth Youth Climate Change (CYCN) and Commonwealth Youth for Sustainable Urbanisation (CYSU) Networks, which represents young people from all Commonwealth member states, builds the capacity of young people and professionals to tackle climate change and

convene policy and advocacy spaces to mainstream youth-led solutions in climate and sustainable urbanisation policy and practice.

In addition, the Commonwealth has launched a policy toolkit to help governments boost green and blue growth through youth entrepreneurship. The first of its kind, the toolkit was developed by the Commonwealth in partnership with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).



Raising youth voices for climate action

Members of the Commonwealth Youth Network advocate within governments and international agencies to ensure that succeeding generations are spared from the harshest effects of climate change. The Network empowers young people to translate climate change programmes into effective policies that have a measurable impact on youth wellbeing.

CYCN has launched a SIDS and climate advocacy toolkit and convened climate advocacy workshops dubbed #Prep4COP in SIDS in Seychelles, Mauritius and Fiji, where over 100 young climate advocates have received training on:

- Effective Climate Communications
- Resource Mobilisation for Climate projects
- UNFCCC and COP Climate Processes
- Climate Advocacy and Campaigns

In previous COP meetings, our youth leaders have:

- **convened** an intergenerational climate dialogue between the Commonwealth Secretary-General

and young climate leaders that will focus on youth and the Paris Agreement implementation process

- **co-ordinated** policy advocacy workshops co-hosted by the CYCN and YOUNGO focusing on climate change education, training and public awareness and on action for climate empowerment
- **participated** in partner organisations' climate events including, at COP24, the UNDP-World Bank Invest4Climate platform that brought philanthropists and business leaders together in a discussion about innovative climate finance mechanisms.

CYSU also organised a strong delegation at CHOGM 2022 in Rwanda and WUF 2022 in Poland, as speakers and conveners of capacity building sessions to highlight the role of sustainable urbanisation and intersectionality in the global action against climate change.

Human Rights and Climate Change

Human wellbeing and the full enjoyment of human rights depends upon a healthy environment. Equally, climate change, deterioration of biodiversity, habitat loss and desertification are immediate threats to the human rights of every individual in both present and future generations. These environmental harms jeopardise food security, weaken public health, exacerbate conflict and displacement, deepen inequalities, undermine development, threaten achievement of the SDGs and impede economic growth. Although the negative human rights impacts of environmental harm are felt by all, they are disproportionately borne by indigenous peoples, local communities, women and girls,

children and youth, the poor, and persons, groups and peoples in vulnerable situations.

Human rights are crucial to addressing environmental harm, as was acknowledged by the UN General Assembly in July 2022 when it formally recognised the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a fundamental human right, and called on states and international organisations to enhance international co-operation, strengthen capacity-building and continue to share good practices in order to scale up efforts to ensure a clean, healthy and sustainable environment for all.

Building on normative developments in international human rights law and international environmental law, the Commonwealth Secretariat Human Rights Unit provides contextualised support to member countries to integrate human rights norms into domestic legal frameworks for environmental protection.

Human rights-based approaches to environmental policy have great potential to effectively and equitably address climate change and safeguard biodiversity. The Human Rights Unit can also provide technical assistance to member countries for the development and implementation of rights-based approaches in economic, social, legislative, political and technological actions relating to environmental protection. This includes, for example, assistance for the development and



implementation of due diligence standards for businesses in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and support to integrate traditional knowledge and practices into inclusive decision-making processes with the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous

peoples and the protection of cultural rights.

Please contact the Head of the Human Rights Unit, Dr Shavana Haythornthwaite, at GPD-HRU@commonwealth.int for more information.



Gender Integration for Climate Action

The Commonwealth's fourth priority on gender equality is on gender and climate change. This Commonwealth consensus-building for action recognises the link between gender inequality and higher climate impacts, and advocates for women and girls to be positioned as agents of change for climate action.

As part of its work to support Commonwealth member countries to mainstream gender into their climate change policies and implementation plans, the Commonwealth Secretariat launched a report last year at COP26 on *Gender Integration for Climate Action: A Review of Commonwealth Member Country*

Nationally Determined Contributions.

The purpose of this study was to better understand how and to what extent Commonwealth member countries are integrating gender and social inclusion concerns into their NDCs, with a view to identifying prevailing gaps, entry points and opportunities for the integration of gender into NDCs. The report provides useful best practice examples and recommendations for strengthening gender responsiveness in the implementation of NDCs, under the following topics: prioritising gender in context; policy integration of gender; institutional co-ordination across gender and climate change; capacity building in technology; MRV systems, sex-disaggregated data and information; and financial resources for gender inclusion. Building on this analytical piece



of work, the Commonwealth Secretariat has developed a Best Practice Guide on Gender Integration in NDCs to support Commonwealth member countries in their journey towards gender equality in climate action.

Furthermore, the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub (CCFAH), through the Commonwealth Regional and National Climate Finance Advisers, supports Commonwealth member countries to advance

and mainstream gender equality across all areas of operational support provided, including policy and strategy development, project development, capacity building and knowledge management and advocacy. In addition to important mainstreaming efforts, the Commonwealth Regional and National Climate Finance Advisers are supporting targeted gender-specific climate change proposals to attract higher funding envelopes on gender and climate change initiatives.

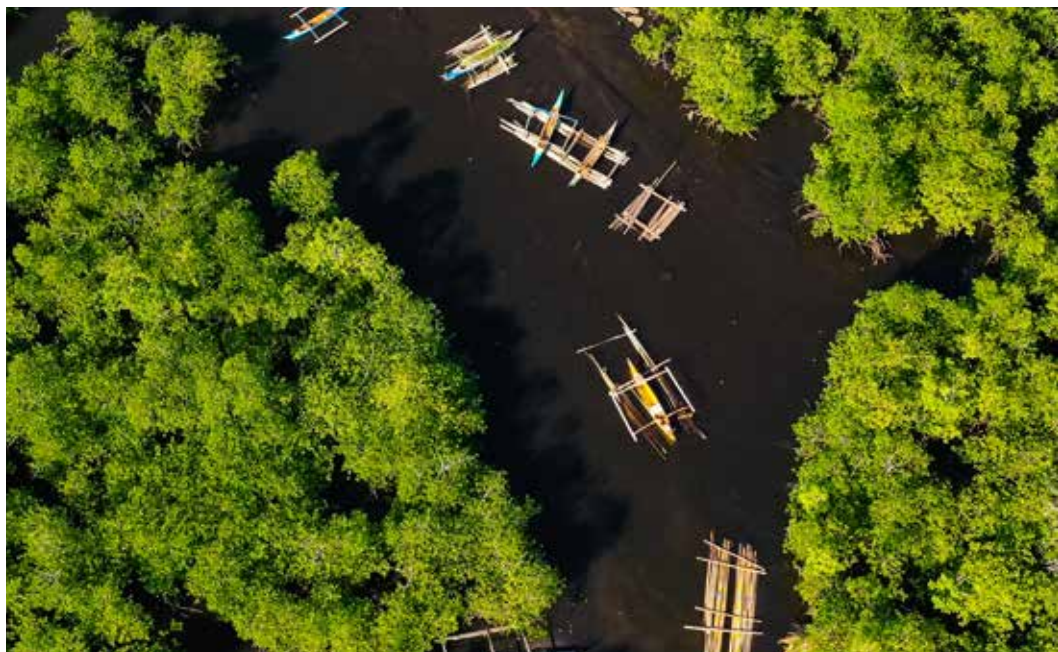
The Commonwealth Living Lands Charter

The Commonwealth Living Lands Charter – A Call to Action on Living Lands (CALL) – was adopted by the leaders of the Commonwealth at the Heads of Government Meeting in Kigali, Rwanda in June 2022. The Charter seeks to support the Commonwealth's 56 member countries to work, in integrated and co-ordinated ways, on critical land issues of biodiversity, climate change and land degradation.

These three issues are covered under three separate conventions: the United Nations conventions on Conservation of Biological Diversity (UN CBD), on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The conventions are derived from the

1992 Rio Earth Summit and are historically and intrinsically linked, addressing interdependent issues and often operating in the same natural ecosystems. Evidence from the 2019 IPCC Special Report on *Climate Change and Land* emphasised the need for countries to implement their commitments together, harnessing co-benefits in pursuit of a shared vision of living in harmony with nature.

The Commonwealth Living Lands Charter supports member countries through innovative partnerships, established platforms, mechanisms and initiatives of the Commonwealth Secretariat to address a number of themes common to the three conventions. These include climate-resilient agriculture, soil and water conservation, green cover and biodiversity, livestock and animal



husbandry, indigenous people and resilient development. Across these themes, the Secretariat supports countries with the delivery of evidence-based analysis for policy,

closing the funding gap, capacity building and technical support related to governance, institutions, data and monitoring, equity and justice.

Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda

Agriculture and food systems

With the increasing impacts of more frequent extreme weather events, adaptation and resilience are of crucial importance, especially to the food system. In this time of increased food insecurity, it is necessary but not sufficient to engage in global dialogues. Rather, these dialogues need to be complemented by policy actions to enhance the resilience and livelihoods of smallholder farmers, increase agriculture productivity, reduce losses in food production, and eventually deal with the food insecurity challenge. Digitalisation is enabling climate adaptation approaches that can enhance the resilience of agriculture and food systems against adverse climate impacts.

The Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda

The Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda (CCA) is enabling the policy environment for member countries to leverage digitalisation for agriculture and fisheries transformation. The Connectivity Agenda supports capacity-constrained members through policy dialogues, knowledge products and advisory support to position them to:

- better deploy digitally-enabled advisory services on drought resistance and short season seed varieties
- engage in precision farming to reduce the negative impact of agro-chemicals on soils and land
- benefit from index-based insurance services to cushion farmers against flood, drought, pest and diseases
- utilise alternative credit scoring solutions based on big data and analytics to facilitate access to financial services
- deploy smart tools to enable fisherfolks to respond to SOS alerts at sea when traditional storm models fail.



Law and Climate Change

Countries need effective legal frameworks to implement the Paris Agreement. The Law and Climate Change Toolkit supports them with a global resource on climate change law.

Developed by the Commonwealth in partnership with the UN (UNEP and UNFCCC), the Toolkit provides policymakers and legislators worldwide with an online and open global resource on climate change law in order to help countries put in place the legal frameworks necessary for effective domestic implementation of the Paris Agreement and their nationally determined contributions. The Toolkit is organised by thematic modules, including overall climate change frameworks, urban development, energy, and agriculture and forestry.

At COP26, the Commonwealth presented the toolkit's latest module, on energy law, at Climate Law and Governance Day. Potential users of the Toolkit are encouraged to register at climatelawtoolkit.org.

Contact occjr@commonwealth.int for more information.

Contact Information

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