



## THE FREETOWN DECLARATION

Adopted at a  
Collaborative Conference on African-Based Climate, Environmental, Natural Resources Rights  
and Protection Tools and Mechanisms  
Held at Hotel Barmoi, Freetown, Sierra Leone  
17-21 February 2025

**We**, the representatives of the Public Interest Lawyering Initiative for West Africa (PILIWA), the Environmental Rights Africa Coalition (ERA), the African Climate Platform (ACP), and the Mano River Union Civil Society Natural Resources Rights and Governance Platform (MRU CSO Platform), convened in Freetown, Sierra Leone, from 17 to 21 February 2025, in a spirit of collaboration and determination, to advance the protection of the environment, human and natural resources rights across Africa.

**Acknowledging** the increasing threats posed by climate change, environmental degradation, the infringement of natural resource rights on local communities and indigenous peoples across the continent;

**Recognizing** the urgent need for a consolidated and strategic approach to strengthen legal frameworks, advocacy, public interest litigation, and environmental rights; ensure climate justice; and safeguard vulnerable and indigenous communities on the frontline of the climate crisis;

**Affirming** our commitment to promoting environmental democracy, transparency, and accountability in the governance of natural resources, climate policies and community rights in Africa;

**Further Recognizing** our inherent right to self-determination, to a healthy environment, and to the sustainable management of our resources;

**Mindful that** our indigenous peoples have historically relied upon the land, water, air and natural resources for livelihoods, cultural practices, and well-being; **WE RESOLVED TO:**

1. **Condemn and demand an immediate** halt to all extractive activities, land grabbing, and environmentally harmful projects that lack the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) of vulnerable and marginalized local communities.
2. **Strengthen Regional Cooperation** by establishing a collaborative framework to facilitate crossborder advocacy, legal interventions, and policy engagement for the recognition and protection of environmental defenders and environmental rights.
3. **Promote Legal and Policy Reforms** to support the development and enforcement of comprehensive legal instruments at national, regional, and continental levels to protect local communities, environmental defenders, and ecosystems.
4. **Advance Climate and Environmental Justice** by mobilizing legal practitioners, civil society organizations, and affected local and indigenous communities to challenge harmful environmental practices and advocate for rights-based climate solutions.



5. **Enhance Advocacy for the Protection of Environmental Defenders** to develop effective response mechanisms to mitigate risks faced by environmental and climate justice defenders, ensuring their safety and ability to operate freely.
6. **Facilitate Research and Documentation** for the conduct of comprehensive assessments and case studies to build local resilience, and inform evidence-based advocacy and decision-making on environmental rights and climate governance.
7. **Engage with Regional and International** bodies to strengthen engagement with African Union institutions, sub-regional bodies, and international mechanisms to reinforce the implementation of environmental rights and climate justice commitments, and
8. **The collaborating organizations, networks and platforms agreed,** among other things, to remain engaged, strengthen cohesion, improve solidarity, and leverage various expertise to advance environmental rights protection, capacity-building initiatives, strategic litigation, livelihood support for defenders and affected local communities and policy interventions across Africa.

As we conclude this landmark conference, on the theme: *“Building a Just Future: Advancing Advocacy for Natural Resources, Social Justice, Civic Engagement, Environmental Rights and Defenders Across Africa,”* we reaffirm our unwavering commitment to stand together in defense of Africa’s environmental climate justice agenda, and support of community and natural resources rights and defenders.

We call upon governments, regional bodies, and international partners to support and uphold the principles outlined in this Declaration for a sustainable and just future for all.

***Done in Freetown, Sierra Leone, on the 21st Day of February 2025.***