

Law and Development Research Network Conference

Welcome

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Virtual Event, 24 November 2021

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the 2021 Law and Development Research Network Conference, which as Nelson Mandela University we are very proud to be hosting.

I would in particular wish to welcome

- Prof Koen de Feyter, the Chairperson of Law and Development Research Network (LDRN)
- Members of the LDRN Steering Committee
- Representatives of the LDRN Partner Institutions
- The Acting Dean of the Faculty of Law, Dr Lynn Biggs
- Our keynote speakers: Prof Sakiko Fukuda-Parr and Prof Dire Tladi
- Panellists for the Keynote Panel: Professors Kevin Davis, Mariana Pargendler, Daniel Bonilla, Matthew Erie and Ada Ordor
- Members of the Scientific Committee Organising the Conference: Prof Marius Olivier (Director of the Institute for Social Law and Policy and Honorary Prof, Nelson Mandela University); Prof Patrick Vrancken (Incumbent: SARChI Chair in the Law of the Sea and Development in Africa) and Prof Joanna Botha (HOD Public Law)
- Delegates
- Guests

[The next two paras are background info for the VC, but could be incorporated into the VC's speech]

The Law and Development Research Network (the LDRN) was launched in September 2017 at the Law and Development Conference at the University of Antwerp, in Belgium. Shortly thereafter, in 2018, and represented by Professors Avinash Govindjee, Patrick Vrancken and Joanna Botha, the Department of Public Law of Nelson Mandela University became a proud Institutional Partner of the Network. The LDRN is currently made up of 17 partner institutions from Africa, Asia, Europe and South America, and also has a rapidly growing number of individual members from all over the world, particularly from the Global South.

The LDRN was founded to enhance our knowledge and understanding of the role of law in relation to development and governance. The aim is to share our collective knowledge to understand better the role that law plays in creating, causing, and combatting inequality, environmental degradation and social injustice, particularly in the Global South.

Over the past few years, and specifically following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Law and Development's role has become even more significant as a means to address, and overcome, the immense challenges our world now faces. As we know, these challenges have placed strain on health care systems, economies, our way of life, the lived reality of vulnerable persons, legal systems and domestic mechanisms of governance. Although felt worldwide, the impact of the pandemic has been felt most severely by people living in the Global South.

It is therefore fitting, that the first conference of the Network after the outbreak of the pandemic is held (albeit virtually) in the Global South, in South Africa, and hosted by an institution named for the great Nelson Mandela.

At this Conference, over the next few days, more than 200 scholars of law and development aim to address and propose solutions to the many challenges created by the Pandemic, with a specific focus on how the world should respond post the pandemic, specifically from a Global South and developing world perspective. The Papers presented address issues ranging from:

- the advancement of socio-economic rights, including access to housing, health-care and food;
- climate change, sustainability and environmental degradation;
- the conceptual challenges in law and development, including the relationship between the North and the South;
- access to land;
- the impact of poor governance and corruption on development and the rule of law;
- the law of the sea and development in Africa;
- human mobility and social protection; and
- international economic law and development finance, and the responses needed to address poverty and inequality in the Global South, especially as a result of the pandemic.

In addition to these papers, the Conference will be addressed by two prominent scholars, namely:

- Prof Dire Tladi of the University of Pretoria, who specialises in public international law, human rights law, environmental law and international criminal law and who has served as the Principal State Law Adviser for International Law for the South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation, and Legal Counsellor to the South Africa Mission to the United Nations; and
- Prof Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, a Professor of International Affairs at The New School, New York, whose teaching and research have focused on human rights and development, global health, and global goal setting and governance indicators. Prof Fukuda-Parr also contributes actively to international policy and research processes. Most recent appointments include the UN Committee on Development Policy as Vice Chair, the Secretary General's High Level Panel on Access to Medicines and Innovation, and Boards of Knowledge Ecology International and International Association for Feminist Economics. She directs the Independent Panel on Global Governance for Health at the University of Oslo, and also serves as Distinguished Fellow at the JICA Research Institute, Tokyo.

After the opening ceremony this evening, delegates will participate in a panel discussion involving five top global law and development scholars, namely Professors Kevin Davis, Mariana Pargendler, Daniel Bonilla, Matthew Erie and Ada Ordor. Representing the Global North and the Global South, they will explore the way in which Law and Development can best respond to the challenges and opportunities presented by the pandemic. The aim is to approach this question in a balanced manner, to consider whether there are separate Southern and Northern perspectives on law and development, and how these can be best reconciled to overcome the tensions between the North and the South.

The theme of this Conference, *Beyond the Crisis: Challenges and Opportunities for Law and Development*, not only captures the need to address the challenges created by the Pandemic, but also expresses our will to move beyond the Pandemic by proposing legal solutions (and highlighting opportunities) to create a better world for all our people. The Department of Public Law, the Faculty of Law and Nelson Mandela University welcome you warmly to our beautiful part of the world, specifically Gqeberha and the Eastern Cape (albeit in a virtual space) South Africa. We hope that the plurality of all our voices in this Conference will enhance Law and Development as a field of study and improve the world in which we live.

I welcome you and declare the conference open. I look forward to engaging with the scholarship that will emerge from this timely conference.

I thank you.