

## Original Research

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## The Legal Framework for Addressing Climate Change: A Study in the Context of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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**ABSTRACT:** Climate change is one of the most serious environmental challenges facing the international community in the modern era, due to its negative effects on the environment, economy, health, and food security. Countries and international organizations have paid increasing attention to developing legal frameworks to confront it, starting with international agreements such as the Paris Climate Agreement, through national legislation, as well as the annual United Nations conferences.

This paper aims to shed light on the international legal framework for combating climate change, with a comparative study of the legal system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in light of its regional and international commitments and its 2030 development vision.

## INTRODUCTION AND DIVISION

Climate change is one of the major global challenges affecting the planet's environment and requires effective responses by governments and international institutions to establish a legal framework that limits its causes and addresses its effects.

In this context, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia plays a pivotal role, based on its national vision and development plan to achieve sustainable development, which includes dealing with climate change as part of its national strategy.

The study represents an attempt to analyze the Saudi legal framework dedicated to addressing climate change, with a focus on the policies, legislation, and international agreements to which the Kingdom has acceded. The study also reviews the compatibility of Saudi laws with the Sustainable Development Goals and assesses their effectiveness in achieving a balance between economic development and environmental conservation.

The study aims to provide insights and recommendations to strengthen the national legal framework, which will contribute to accelerating the pace of the national response to climate change and achieving a unique model that reflects positively on international efforts in this field.

Second: Research Objectives.

- Describe the legal foundations and national policies adopted by the Kingdom in combating climate change.
- Analyze the compatibility of these policies with the Sustainable Development Goals in the field of climate action.
- Highlighting the most important proposals and recommendations in the field of combating climate change.

Third: Importance of the research.

- Scientific importance: It contributes to the development of mechanisms to combat climate change through legal thought related to modern technologies in the field of sustainable development within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- Practical importance: Saudi Arabia's focus on the balance between economic development and climate change within Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

IV: Research Problem.

What is the extent of the possibility of a legal framework to confront climate change "a study in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia" and how compatible with comparative trends in other legal systems? This leads to several questions, including but not limited to.

- What is the legal framework followed by the Kingdom in addressing climate change?
- To what extent are Saudi environmental policies consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals?
- What is the extent of compatibility between Saudi legislation and international climate commitments?

V: Research methodology

- Analytical approach: Analyzing legal texts and general principles.
- Comparative approach: Comparing the Saudi system with international systems in line with the SDGs.
- Inductive approach: To draw conclusions by analyzing different models and situations.

VI: Limitations of the research

- Substantive limitations: Limited to official studies and ministerial reports.
- Spatial Limits: Focuses on the comparison between the Saudi system and other legal systems of some countries.
- Temporal Limits: Focuses on UN reports related to sustainable development and developments of legal systems until 2025.

VII: Research plan:

The study of the legal framework for addressing climate change "A study in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia" is organized as follows:

**Section I:** The legal framework to confront climate change.

The first requirement : International and regional efforts to confront climate change

Second Requirement: Models of national legislation to address climate change.

The second section: The judicial framework to address climate change.

The first requirement: The international judicial context in confronting climate change.

The second requirement: the Saudi regulatory and judicial context in the face of climate change.

## Research I

### Legal Framework to Combat Climate Change

Countries and international organizations have paid increasing attention to establishing legal frameworks to combat climate change, starting with international agreements such as the Paris Climate Agreement, and passing through national legislation. This research comes to shed light on the international legal framework to combat climate change, with a comparative study of the legal system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia<sup>(1)</sup> In order to explain the nature of the legal framework to address climate change, we can divide this research into two requirements, which we address as follows:

First Requirement: International and regional efforts to address climate change

Second Requirement: Examples of national legislation to address climate change.

### First Requirement

#### International and regional efforts to address climate change

International and regional mechanisms to address climate change are based on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from industrial, agricultural, transportation and energy sources, switching to renewable energy (solar, wind, green hydrogen), afforestation and rehabilitation of forests, improving sustainable transportation systems until industrial emission standards are achieved and encouraging the circular economy (Saudi Arabia also focuses on the balance between economic development and addressing climate change, within Vision 2030 and the following goals

Section I: The international framework for addressing climate change.

Second branch: The Saudi legal framework to address climate change.

### Section I

#### International legal framework to address climate change

The international legal framework to address climate change includes several efforts, which we address as follows:

1. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 1992.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), adopted at the Rio de Janeiro Conference in 1992, is the primary legal framework for international cooperation in addressing climate change, entered into force on March 21, 1994, and is now almost universally adhered to (197 Parties)<sup>(2)</sup>

The Convention aims to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that prevents dangerous interference with the climate system, taking into account the developmental rights of countries<sup>(3)</sup> The agreement includes several important principles, including:

- Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) recognizes the differences in the economic capabilities and environmental history of countries.
- The precautionary principle: It calls for proactive action even in the face of scientific uncertainty.
- The right to sustainable development: Emphasizes that addressing climate change should not impede countries' pursuit of development<sup>(4)</sup>

The Conference of the Parties (COP), the supreme decision-making body of the Convention, is the most prominent mechanism for implementing the Convention, and is held annually to assess progress and make decisions to operationalize

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<sup>(1)</sup>Bodansky, D., Rajamani, L., & Peel, J. (2021). *International Climate Change Law*. Oxford University Press .

<sup>(2)</sup>United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). 1992 Available at: <https://unfccc.int>

<sup>(3)</sup>Bodansky, D., Brunnée, J., & Rajamani, L. (2017). *International Climate Change Law*. Cambridge University Press.

<sup>(4)</sup>UNEP. (2023). *Emissions Gap Report* .

the Convention<sup>(5)</sup> Saudi Arabia hosted the sixth Conference of the Parties (COP16) to combat desertification in Riyadh from December 2 to 13, 2024, the conference was part of wider events including the Saudi Green Initiative Forum 2024.

## 2. Kyoto Protocol Efforts 1997

The Kyoto Protocol's efforts to reduce industrialized countries' emissions of the six major greenhouse gases by an average of 5.2% below 1990 levels from 2008 to 2012<sup>(6)</sup> The commitments included Annex I countries, i.e. industrialized countries and market transition economies<sup>(7)</sup> However, it did not mandate emissions reductions, but encouraged technical cooperation and sustainable development<sup>(8)</sup>

Among its positive outcomes: It helped establish an international legal basis for holding countries accountable for emissions, paved the way for voluntary and regulated carbon markets, and supported clean development projects in the Global South<sup>(9)</sup>

As for criticisms and challenges: we find the withdrawal of the United States from the Protocol in 2001, despite being the largest emitter at the time, as well as poor compliance from some countries such as Canada, which later withdrew in 2011, and the failure to include major developing countries (such as China and India) within the binding commitments, which achieved limited environmental impact in the long term, which led to the need for the Paris Agreement in 2015.<sup>(10)</sup>

## 1. Efforts of the 2015 Paris Agreement.

The Paris Agreement was adopted on December 12, 2015 at the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and entered into force on November 4, 2016 <sup>(11)</sup>

The agreement is the first international legal framework that commits almost all countries in the world, regardless of their level of development, to efforts to address climate change<sup>(12)</sup> The main objective of the agreement is: “to limit the increase in global average temperature to less than 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and to continue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C”<sup>(13)</sup>

The core principles of the Paris Agreement included working towards a “nationally determined contributions” (NDCs) approach, with each country submitting and updating its NDCs every five years; non-binding, but contractually binding; no sanctions, but an international transparency and accountability mechanism; integrating climate justice and the right to development into considerations; and a commitment by developed countries to provide \$100 billion annually to help developing countries, with recent discussions about raising the amount after 2025.<sup>(14)</sup>

Saudi Arabia submitted its first NDC in 2016 and updated it in 2021 to include a reduction of 278 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per year by 2030.

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<sup>(5)</sup>Rajamani, L. (2020). International Climate Change Law. Oxford University Press .

<sup>(6)</sup>United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). (2023). *Kyoto Protocol – Status of Ratification & Implementation Report*. Available at: [https://unfccc.int/kyoto\\_protocol](https://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol)

<sup>(7)</sup>Streck, C. (2023). "The Legacy of the Kyoto Protocol: Lessons for Future Climate Agreements." *Climate Policy*, 23(2), 150–169 .

<sup>(8)</sup> UNEP. (2022). Emissions Gap Report 2022: The Closing Window – Climate crisis calls for rapid transformation of societies.

<sup>(9)</sup>Bodansky, D., Brunnée, J., & Rajamani, L. (2017). International Climate Change Law. Oxford University Press .

<sup>(10)</sup>Rajamani, L., & Peel, J. (2021). The Paris Agreement and Climate Change Law: A Commentary. Oxford University Press

<sup>(11)</sup>Climate Action Tracker (2024) *Warming Projections Global Update* <https://climateactiontracker.org>

<sup>(12)</sup>UNEP (2023). *Emissions Gap Report 2023 – Broken Promises: Climate Inaction Continues*. <https://www.unep.org>

<sup>(13)</sup> .UNFCCC. (2024). *Synthesis Report on Nationally Determined Contributions Under the Paris Agreement*. <https://unfccc.int>

<sup>(14)</sup>IPCC (2023). *Sixth Assessment Report. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* <https://www.ipcc.ch/ar/ar6>

## Second Section

### Saudi legal framework to address climate change

Climate change is one of the most prominent contemporary global challenges, due to its far-reaching effects on the environment, economy, public health, and food security<sup>(15)</sup> them, including Saudi Arabia, which has given this issue special attention within its ambitious Vision 2030, based on its commitments under the Paris Climate Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

First: National Environmental Legislation

(Environment Law 2020, Executive Regulations)

National environmental legislation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, represented by the Environment Law issued in 2020 and its Executive Regulations in order to protect and develop the environment, prevent pollution, and preserve natural resources.

The system also focuses on protecting public health from activities harmful to the environment and making environmental planning an integral part of comprehensive development planning<sup>(16)</sup> The system aims to protect, develop and sustain the environment, adhere to environmental principles, and organize the environmental sector and related activities and services<sup>(17)</sup>

## II: Saudi Arabia's Policies and Strategies

### (Vision 2030, Saudi Green Initiative, Energy Efficiency)

As climate change risks escalate and international pressure for environmental transformation increases, Saudi Arabia has emerged as one of the regional players in leading sustainability efforts by launching the Saudi Green Initiative (SGI), announced in March 2021.<sup>(18)</sup> The initiative is a cornerstone of the Kingdom's strategy for environmental transformation, realizing the goals of Saudi Vision 2030, as well as fulfilling its commitments under the Paris Climate Agreement.<sup>(19)</sup>

Challenges facing the initiative:

- Limited water resources in the Kingdom and its impact on afforestation.
- Social adaptation and environmental behavior of individuals and companies.
- Massive funding requirements to implement long-term initiatives.
- Continuous monitoring and evaluation of the real environmental impact of the implemented projects.

Overall evaluation of the initiative:

It is estimated that the Saudi Green Initiative represents a paradigm shift in Gulf and Arab environmental policies, and shows a gradual shift in the Saudi economic model towards sustainability and environmental balance. However, its success depends on the extent of the capacity for systemic transformation in the field of environment and climate, coordination between agencies, and activating the participation of the private sector and civil society.

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<sup>(15)</sup> IPCC. (2023). Sixth Assessment Report (AR6). Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

<sup>(16)</sup> *Environmental System* Date of issue: 1441/11/19 AH corresponding to: 07/10/2020 AD, publication date: 1441/11/26 AH corresponding to: 07/17/2020 AD, Royal Decree No. (M/165) dated 11/19/1441 AH, by Cabinet Resolution No. (729) dated 11/16/1441 AH

<sup>(17)</sup> See Article (2) of the *Environment System* issued by Royal Decree No. (M/165) dated 11/19/1441 AH.

<sup>(18)</sup> Saudi Green Initiative. (2023). Official Website and Progress Reports. <https://www.greeninitiatives.gov.sa>

<sup>(19)</sup> Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture, Saudi Arabia. *National Environmental Strategy* 2022.

III: The role of the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture, and the Environmental Development Authority.

The Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture (MEWA) is the government entity responsible for developing and implementing environmental and climate policies in the Kingdom, and is also the authorized entity to prepare national climate reports and submit them to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)<sup>(20)</sup>

The Kingdom established the National Center for Vegetation Development and Desertification Control (NCVC) to determine who is responsible for implementing national afforestation and desertification control programs, monitor vegetation change, analyze satellite data, and coordinate with municipalities, farmers, and the private sector<sup>(21)</sup> The General Authority for Meteorology and Environmental Protection (before the restructuring of the environmental system in 2019) was the regulator, and its powers were transferred to the national environmental centers and the ministry, according to the new environmental law, and the “Environmental Development Authority” as a name is no longer an official entity, but it was a precursor to a new structure that ended up in specialized centers under the supervision of the ministry.”<sup>(22)</sup>

Evaluation and analysis

Strengths:

- Existence of an integrated environmental institutional structure (ministry - specialized centers).
- Harmonization of modern environmental legislation with international conventions.
- Adopting a circular carbon economy approach.
- High-level political and economic support (Vision 2030 - Investment Fund).

Challenges:

- The need to accelerate the shift from administrative decisions to independent environmental courts.
- Strengthening civil society participation in climate protection.
- Improving digital integration between environmental agencies.

## Second Requirement

### Examples of national legislation to address climate change

We seek to review legal models from some countries that show how they have developed national legislation that translates international obligations into binding domestic rules, so that we can reach the extent to which some countries have succeeded in enacting effective national legislation to confront climate change, and what are the common legal characteristics of these legislations?

The importance of environmental legislation:

1. Highlighting recent legal trends in climate regulation.
2. Analyze national legislative models from different countries.
3. Provide a comparative legal basis for the development of Arab and Gulf legislation.

**First: United Kingdom** - Climate Change Act 2008 is the world's first comprehensive climate law that aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 100% by 2050 (carbon neutrality).<sup>(23)</sup>

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<sup>(20)</sup> UNEP. (2023). *State of Climate Action: Country Report – Saudi Arabia*.

<sup>(21)</sup> UNFCCC. (2023). *Saudi Arabia's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)*.

<sup>(22)</sup> Saudi Green Initiative. (2023). *Official Website and Progress Reports*. <https://www.greeninitiatives.gov.sa>

<sup>(23)</sup> UK Climate Change Act 2008, c.27, *legislation.gov.uk*

**II: France** - Energy and Climate Law (2019) aims to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, impose a legal obligation on the public and private sector to switch to renewable energy, require companies to submit annual climate reports, include climate in the environmental assessment of projects, and create the Haut Conseil pour le Climat.<sup>(24)</sup>

**III: Germany** - Federal Climate Protection Act (Federal Climate Protection Act 2019 - 2021 Update), which aims to reduce emissions by 65% by 2030 compared to 1990, and achieve full climate neutrality by 2045, and its mechanisms included allocating emissions budgets to each sector (transportation, industry, buildings), imposing annual obligations on sectoral ministries, as well as the intervention of the constitutional court in 2021 and requesting the amendment of the law to protect the rights of future generations.<sup>(25)</sup>

**IV: Kenya**: The Climate Change Act 2016 is one of the earliest climate laws in Africa and establishes a National Climate Change Council to oversee the national strategy<sup>(26)</sup>

**Fifth: Egypt**: Egypt introduced amendments to the Environment Law under Law No. 146 of 2022 to include climate change among the priorities of environmental legislation, by requiring government agencies to submit climate plans, establishing a climate unit in each ministry, and environmental supervision of emissions through the Environmental Affairs Agency.

**Sixth: Saudi Arabia** The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia issued by Royal Decree No. M/34 dated 28/7/1422 and Cabinet Decision No. 193 dated 7/7/1422 the "General System for the Environment", which included the most prominent tasks of environmental education and environmental awareness - development planning and environment, preparation of environmental protection standards - application of environmental protection standards - violation of environmental protection standards - control of harmful activities - inspection.

Comparative analysis: Common characteristics of national climate legislation in terms of the availability of the "cross-legislation element"

- Legal obligation to set legally binding climate targets.
- Regulatory bodies towards establishing national councils or independent climate committees.
- Long-term planning towards the development of national plans extending to 2030 and 2050
- Accountability and transparency Periodic reports and ministerial accountability.
- Community engagement and stakeholder participation in policy development.

## Second Research

### Judicial Framework for Addressing Climate Change

The last two decades have witnessed a remarkable growth in the number of lawsuits related to climate change, as the judiciary has become an effective tool to hold governments and companies accountable for their environmental inaction, and to implement the commitments contained in the Paris Climate Agreement (2015) and other international agreements, and we review the most prominent recent cases that have addressed climate disputes before national and international courts

<sup>(27)</sup> In order to explain the nature of the judicial framework in the face of climate change, we can divide this research into two requirements, which we address as follows:

The first requirement: The international judicial context in the face of climate change.

The second requirement: the Saudi regulatory and judicial context in the face of climate change.

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<sup>(24)</sup> *Loi n° 2019-1147 relative à l'énergie et au climat – legifrance.gouv.fr*

<sup>(25)</sup> Bundes-Klimaschutzgesetz (KSG) – *gesetze-im-internet.de*

<sup>(26)</sup> Kenya Climate Change Act, No. 11 of 2016 – *kenyalaw.org*

<sup>(27)</sup> *Peel, J., & Osofsky, H. (2020). Climate Change Litigation: Regulatory Pathways to Cleaner Energy. Cambridge University Press .*

## First Requirement

### International Judicial Context in the face of climate change

Recent judicial applications in the field of climate reflect a qualitative shift in the role of the global judiciary, as it is no longer only an arbiter of environmental disputes, but also a partner in climate policy-making and a guardian of commitment to climate justice and human rights in light of environmental changes that threaten societies and future generations<sup>(28)</sup>

Among the various judicial applications in the face of climate change are the following:

The Dutch Supreme Court in *Urgenda v. Netherlands* (2015-2019)) The merits of the case: Urgenda sued the Dutch government for not taking enough action to reduce carbon emissions, and the court concluded that the government must reduce emissions by at least 25% by 2020 compared to 1990 levels, on the grounds that the government's inaction violates the right to life under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)<sup>(29)</sup>

In *Neubauer et al. v. Germany* 2021, the German Constitutional Court addressed a youth group's challenge to Germany's climate law because it did not guarantee sufficient protection for future generations, and the court ordered the government to amend the law to include more ambitious measures beyond 2030, basing its decision on the principle of “the rights of future generations to a safe climate”<sup>(30)</sup>

The U.S. Federal Court (Oregon Court) (*Juliana v. United States* 2015-) addressed the issue: A group of children and youth sued the U.S. government for violating their constitutional rights by subsidizing fossil fuels.

Status: Despite the dismissal of certain defenses, the case is still ongoing and was revived in 2023.

Significance: One of the first cases to directly link climate change to constitutional rights<sup>(31)</sup>

The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) addressed the issue in *Swiss Senior Women for Climate v. Switzerland* 2024: A group of elderly Swiss women sued their government for its failure to reduce emissions, which harmed their health, and the Court found that the Swiss government's inaction violated Article 8 (right to private life) of the European Convention. Significance: First final international ruling condemning a government for climate inaction<sup>(32)</sup>

In *Leghari v. Pakistan* 2015, in which a farmer sued the government for failure to implement the National Climate Change Action Plan, the Lahore High Court held that the government's inaction constituted a violation of human rights and ordered the formation of a judicial oversight committee to oversee implementation<sup>(33)</sup>

The European Court of Human Rights is also hearing the case of *Greenpeace Nordic v. Norway* (pending case) Subject: Appeal against Arctic oil drilling licenses by the Norwegian government, Argument: Violation of human rights through policies leading to harmful climate change, Status: Judgment still pending<sup>(34)</sup>

An observational analysis of these applications: A pivotal role in compelling governments to modify climate policies The affected rights are the right to life, health, environment, property, and the next generation, and the courts have relied on their reference law: the Paris Agreement, the European Convention on Human Rights, and the national constitution, resulting in a clear expansion of the judicial trend in recognizing climate rights before civil and constitutional courts.

## Second Requirement

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<sup>(28)</sup>Rajamani, L., & Bodansky, D. (2021). *International Climate Change Law*. Oxford University Press

<sup>(29)</sup>Urgenda Foundation v. The State of the Netherlands 2019.

<sup>(30)</sup>Bundesverfassungsgericht, Order of 24 March 2021

<sup>(31)</sup>*Our Children's Trust – Juliana v. U.S*

<sup>(32)</sup>ECtHR Press Release – 2024 Judgment

<sup>(33)</sup>*Sabin Center for Climate Change Law – Columbia Law School*

<sup>(34)</sup>*Greenpeace International Climate Litigation*

## The Saudi legal and judicial context in the face of climate change

The regulatory and judicial context in Saudi Arabia is based on the 2020 Saudi Environment Law, which represents the highest legislative framework for environmental protection, but it does not include explicit provisions on climate litigation or emission reduction claims.

Through it, environmental violations are often dealt with through specialized administrative committees or environmental control, rather than through the traditional judiciary, and in the Saudi context, there are recent quasi-judicial applications and procedures that reflect a regulatory and supervisory orientation towards controlling activities affecting the climate, which can be considered a nucleus for future climate litigation<sup>(35)</sup>

Quasi-judicial mechanisms currently exist in Saudi Arabia in the face of climate change, including:

1. Decisions of the National Center for Monitoring Environmental Compliance, where the center assumes a quasi-judicial oversight role: Issuing fines against facilities that exceed the approved emission limits or cause pollution, and may lead to the temporary or permanent closure of activities with a negative environmental impact, and obligating factories to modernize emission reduction technologies.<sup>(36)</sup>

Applied Example (2023): The center announced the suspension of a number of factories in the Eastern Province for failing to install continuous environmental monitoring systems and submit emissions reports, which are indirectly affecting climate change.

2. Committees to examine violations of the Environment Law: Administrative committees are formed to examine environmental violations (similar to mini administrative courts) and issue decisions that can be appealed to the Board of Grievances, some of which deal with complaints related to the damage of gas emissions, thermal impact, or industrial waste burning.

The following is a review of the most prominent climate-related judicial or quasi-judicial applications in the Kingdom:

a. Binding administrative decisions against industrial emissions" Case: Seizing violations of factories in the Eastern Province (2023-2024), Entity: National Center for Monitoring Environmental Compliance, action included: Imposing fines on industrial facilities for violating air emission standards, and temporarily suspending the activities of some of them due to exceeding the permissible limit for CO<sub>2</sub> and NO<sub>x</sub> emissions.

Legal basis: Article (18) and (22) of the Saudi Environment Law and the Air Quality Regulation.

Climate significance: Although the decisions are based on air quality laws, they represent an indirect application of the control of emissions that affect the climate.

b. Objection to the license of a thermal plant (2022)

Incident: Citizens in a southern region filed an objection to the competent authorities against the license of a thermal power plant, alleging its impact on health and the environment.

Procedure: The objection was referred to the Environmental Violations Review Committee, and it was decided to temporarily suspend implementation until the environmental impact assessment is re-evaluated.

Significance: This case highlights the right of the local community to object to environmentally impactful projects, an important development that could contribute to the emergence of climate litigation.

c. Judicial directive to reassess the environmental impact of an industrial project (2021)

Judicial Authority: The Board of Grievances (Administrative Judiciary).

Subject matter: Revocation of an environmental license due to the inadequacy of the environmental study.

Ruling: Requiring the competent authority to re-evaluate the environmental impact according to updated standards.

Significance: Opening the way for judicial oversight of the quality of environmental studies, a vital step in regulating high-carbon projects.

d. Decisions of the Environment Committee to stop violating projects (2023)

Entity: Environment Committees of the National Centers.

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<sup>(35)</sup> UNFCCC – Saudi Arabia's NDC Update (2023)

<sup>(36)</sup> UNEP (2023). *Middle East Climate Governance and Litigation Review*

Decisions: Temporarily suspending licenses for mining and cement factories in environmentally sensitive areas.

Linking renewal to the submission of plans to reduce carbon emissions.

Basis: Saudi Environment Law, Environmental Compliance Regulations, and the Paris Agreement (within national plans).<sup>(37)</sup>

- Commentary and assessment

- To date, there are no lawsuits filed by civil society organizations or citizen groups in Saudi Arabia challenging a government agency's failure to protect the climate, as there are no legal provisions that allow individuals to file lawsuits on behalf of the environmental public interest.

- Future directions for environmental and climate justice in Saudi Arabia, which is realized through the allocation of environmental judicial departments within the Board of Grievances.

- Strengthening the work on the environmental court system, as part of the recommendations issued by the National Environmental Strategy.

- The possibility of future lawsuits challenging the environmental licensing of major projects with high carbon emissions, especially with the expansion of civil and private sector participation.

## CONCLUSION

Saudi Arabia has demonstrated a growing commitment to combating climate change through a package of ambitious regulations and initiatives that are in line with its international commitments and strategic vision. However, the effectiveness of these mechanisms requires continuing to develop legal frameworks and enhance cooperation between sectors to ensure an environmentally and economically sustainable future.

The Saudi Green Initiative embodies the Kingdom's commitment to its climate responsibilities at the local and international levels, and serves as a model for the region. With the continued development of legislation and enhanced regional and international cooperation, the Kingdom can become a global leader in environmental and climate action.

Results:

- It is estimated that the Saudi Green Initiative represents a quantum leap in Gulf and Arab environmental policies, and shows a gradual shift in the Saudi economic model towards sustainability and environmental balance.

- Recent judicial cases have shown that national and international courts are no longer neutral in the face of the climate crisis, but have become an active party in regulating the performance of states and companies through binding decisions that have legislative and executive effects.

- A global trend towards specialized and independent climate litigation:

- There are increasing calls for the establishment of specialized environmental and climate courts at the national and regional level, such as the European Court of Human Rights, which topped the scene with its landmark ruling against Switzerland in 2024.

Recommendations :

- We recommend banning environmental pollutants that cause climate change, banning gasoline cars and replacing them with electric cars.

- We recommend working on establishing an international fund for climate losses and damages, and directing the funds to the countries most vulnerable to climate change.

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<sup>(37)</sup> UNFCCC – Saudi Arabia's NDC Update (2023)

- We recommend the creation of an international climate action charter between countries at various levels in Europe, America, Africa and the Arab world to confront these climate changes and reach the stage of adoption by the international community as a family to confront climate change.
- We recommend the need to establish an international court specialized in climate change and the environment to address the immediate effects of climate change on the environment at the international level.

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