Institute for
Law and Policy
on Climate Mobility

INSTITUTE BRIEFING · CHOGM 2026

Climate resilient governance

Safeguarding habitability across the Commonwealth

28th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting St John's, Antigua and Barbuda 1–4 November 2026

IN BRIEF

The Institute for Law and Policy on Climate Mobility at the University of Oxford will attend CHOGM 2026 with a delegation covering both pillars of our approach: Sangeetha Iengar, Director, an international human rights and migration barrister at Garden Court Chambers; and Aliya Anjarwalla, Climate Adaptation Specialist.

Climate mobility is a predictable policy challenge. We propose that governments meet it through climate resilient governance: one structure, established now, in which the instruments that sustain habitability in place and those that enable safe, dignified and lawful mobility are designed together.

During the week we would welcome meetings on future partnerships, and the opportunity to contribute to sessions on resilience, finance, the rule of law and the Commonwealth's small states.

IN THIS BRIEFING

01 The Institute at CHOGM 2026
02 Why it matters for the Commonwealth
03 Climate resilient governance
04 The habitability arc
05 Our delegation
06 Working with us

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01 The Institute at CHOGM 2026

The Institute will attend the 28th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in St John's, Antigua and Barbuda, from 1 to 4 November 2026. We come to share a rights-based approach to climate mobility, framed as climate resilient governance, and to contribute to the summit's work on partnerships and investment for a resilient Commonwealth.

SHARE

Our approach

Climate resilient governance: adaptation and mobility planned, financed and governed together.

PARTNER

Future partnerships

Meetings with governments, regional bodies, climate finance institutions and funders on work to take forward together.

CONTRIBUTE

To the programme

Speakers, discussants and workshop leads for sessions on climate, finance, the rule of law and small states.

WHO WE ARE

The Institute for Law and Policy on Climate Mobility brings together world-leading experts to research, inform, and advise on rights-based responses to climate mobility. We seek to mainstream climate mobility in legal and policy frameworks as the centrepiece to climate resilient governance structures.

Hosted by the Faculty of Law at the University of Oxford, the Institute combines expertise in international human rights and public law, climate adaptation and climate finance, and has developed evidence-based policy briefs for national government ministries.[1]

Our aim is a rights-based response to a predictable policy challenge: climate mobility embedded within climate resilient governance frameworks, visible in international dialogue, adequately funded, and built to outlast political cycles.

02 · WHY IT MATTERS FOR THE COMMONWEALTH

Climate and weather extremes are increasingly driving displacement in every region, and small island States are disproportionately affected.[2] Most movement takes place within countries, and many of the people most exposed cannot move at all.[3]

For the Commonwealth the question is immediate. More than half of its 56 member countries are small states,[4] many of them on the front line of sea-level rise, storms and drought.

No country can respond alone, yet climate mobility remains marginal in international dialogue, and finance for it has been bilateral and ad hoc. Adaptation needs exceed current flows by hundreds of billions of dollars a year, although resilience typically returns two to ten times its cost.[5] The summit's theme, partnerships and investment, is the right frame for the response.

HABITABILITY

The suitability of a place to support safe and dignified life and livelihoods: water, food, shelter, income and services, and safety from climate events. It is a matter of degree rather than a threshold, and it is shaped by the governance measures taken to sustain it. Choice is the measure of success: people able to remain in safety or to move in safety.[6]

1 Institute for Law and Policy on Climate Mobility, Policy Series, *Actionable climate mobility policy responses for national government ministries* (2026), developed with the International Refugee Assistance Project and generously funded by the Quadrature Climate Foundation.

2 IPCC, *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*, Summary for Policymakers, para B.1.7.

3 Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2026* (IDMC, 2026); Foresight, *Migration and Global Environmental Change* (Government Office for Science, 2011).

4 Commonwealth Secretariat, 'Small States' (thecommonwealth.org).

5 Policy Series (n 1), Brief 05 (Foreign affairs ministries); UNEP, *Adaptation Gap Report 2025* (needs of US$310–365 billion a year by 2035, against international public flows of around US$26 billion in 2023); Global Commission on Adaptation, *Adapt Now* (2019).

6 Institute for Law and Policy on Climate Mobility, *Habitability: the lens through which climate mobility should be understood*, Position Statement (2026).

03 Climate resilient governance

Most governments respond to climate mobility through two separate systems. Adaptation is funded as resilience; mobility, where it is addressed at all, is treated as border management or as a last resort once adaptation has failed. Movement then happens late, in crisis and through irregular channels, and those who cannot move, those who choose to stay and the communities that receive newcomers are left out of both systems.[7]

The Institute proposes instead a climate resilient governance structure, established now rather than in response to crisis, and built on a floor of rights.

A

A definition at the centre of government

The cabinet office, national security secretariat or equivalent adopts a working definition of climate mobility and assigns the agenda across departments. It is low in cost, needs no legislation, and shapes what is counted and funded.

B

Two pillars, designed together

Within the habitability arc, instruments that sustain habitability in place and instruments for safe, dignified and lawful mobility co-exist. Neither is held in reserve for when the other fails.

C

Linked in three ways

A common focus on regions of geostrategic relevance; instruments designed to reinforce one another; and shared institutions: one lead, one assessment of priorities, one finance line, one data pipeline and one floor of rights.

04 The habitability arc

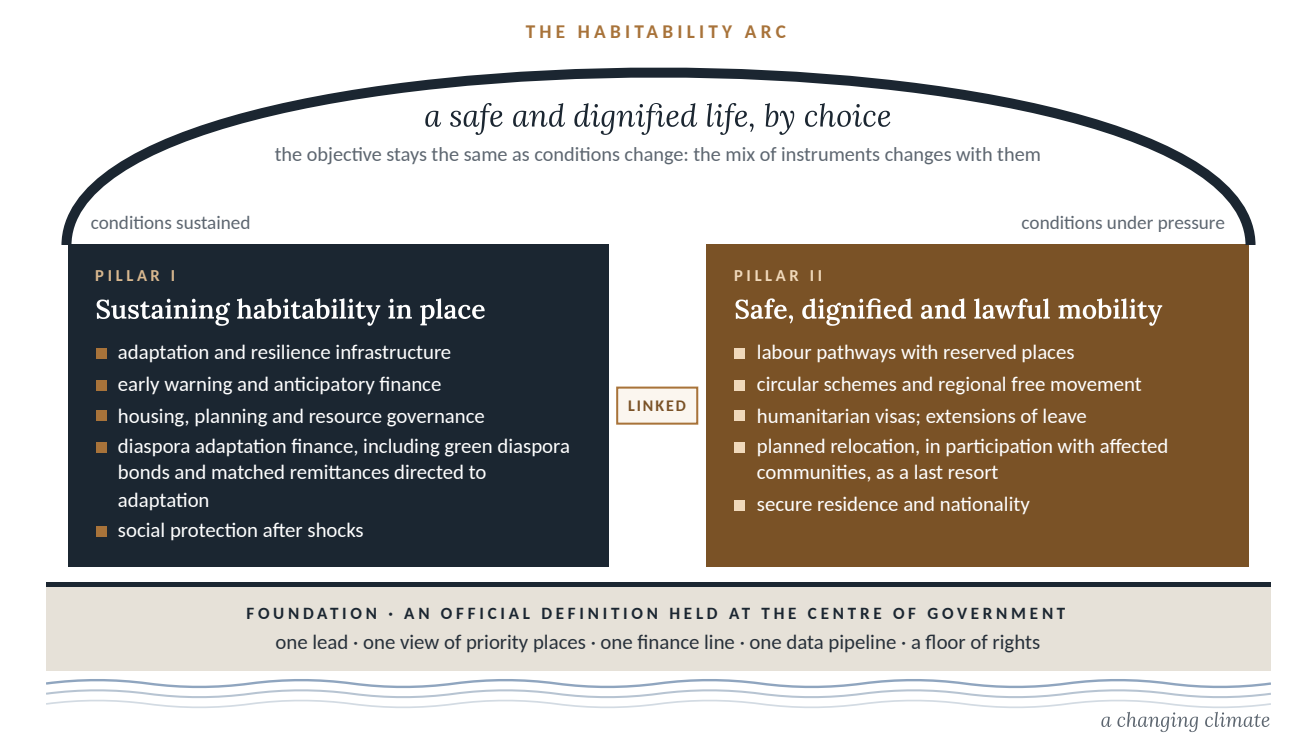


Figure 1. Two linked pillars of policy instruments operate together as conditions change, resting on an official definition held at the centre of government and on a floor of rights.

7 S Iengar, *Governing for Climate Mobility: The case for safeguarding habitability*, Policy Paper (Institute for Law and Policy on Climate Mobility, 2026).

05 Our delegation

In St John's from 1 to 4 November 2026

Our delegation covers both pillars of the habitability arc.

Sangeetha Iengar

DIRECTOR

BARRISTER, GARDEN COURT CHAMBERS

PILLAR II · MOBILITY

SPEAK TO SANGEETHA ABOUT

climate resilient governance, the legal basis for action, rights-based pathways, and partnerships with governments and funders

Sangeetha is the founding Director of the Institute. An award-winning international human rights barrister at Garden Court Chambers, she has specialised for two decades in migration and international human rights and public law. She was named International Pro Bono Barrister of the Year in 2020 and is ranked as a leading junior in the Legal 500. She has been a non-resident Senior Scholar at Yale University, researching climate-related migration, and is a Research Associate at the University of Oxford's Centre for Criminology. Alongside her practice and her academic appointments, Sangeetha also sits as a part-time Judge of the Immigration and Asylum Chamber. A two-time TEDx speaker, she writes and speaks widely on climate mobility, the rule of law and human rights.

Aliya Anjarwalla

CLIMATE ADAPTATION SPECIALIST

PILLAR I · ADAPTATION

SPEAK TO ALIYA ABOUT

adaptation, disaster risk and climate finance, including private investment in resilience

Aliya is a climate and resilience strategist with more than fifteen years' experience designing and leading initiatives across Africa, Europe and the United States. She has advised governments, investors, energy companies and multilateral organisations, including the World Bank and UNICEF, on climate adaptation and decarbonisation strategies. She began her career at Accenture in London, advising on renewable energy investment, and went on to develop programmes in East Africa that expanded off-grid renewable electricity access and strengthened community climate resilience. She holds a BA in Geography from the University of Oxford and an MSc in Public Policy and Management from SOAS, University of London.

06 Working with us

MEETINGS ON FUTURE PARTNERSHIPS

- Technical advice on defining climate mobility and assigning responsibility across government.
- Legal analysis and model policies for both pillars, grounded in human rights.
- Advice on financing both pillars, and capacity-building, including pilot climate mobility bootcamps with Commonwealth member states.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PROGRAMME

- Panellists, discussants and workshop leads on climate resilient governance, the advisory opinions, finance and the blue economy.
- Support for positions and proposals in international and regional dialogue, and convening across governments, regional bodies and affected communities.

Read more: *Governing for Climate Mobility*, Policy Paper (2026); *Habitability*, Position Statement (2026); *Climate mobility, explained* (2026).

ARRANGE A MEETING OR A CONTRIBUTION

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