

Media Briefing

ICJAO Vote

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Summary

Greenpeace has been a key part of an alliance campaigning to get the highest court in the world (the International Court of Justice) to make a determination on what duties countries have to protect the human rights of current and future generations from the climate crisis; and what should happen under international law when countries breach these legal duties.

On Thursday morning (Wednesday in NY) the United Nations will hold an historic vote to determine whether the matter is referred to the International Court of Justice.

This moment could mark the start of a formal process where the world's leaders receive authoritative guidance on international law that could bring about the kind of deep change that the climate crisis requires.

The campaign to take human rights and climate change to the highest court in the world was spearheaded by university students in Vanuatu, now known as the Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change (PISFCC) and [World's Youth for Climate Justice](#) (WY4CJ).

It's a significant and monumental moment for the people of the Pacific, whose homes, languages, histories, artefacts, families and livelihoods are on the brink of collapse, threatened by a changing climate fuelled by other countries.

If approved, the ripple effect of the vote will be felt across the world. Wealthy nations, such as Australia, may become legally obliged to keep future generations safe from climate disaster.

What is an Advisory Opinion?

The UNGA will ask the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to issue an advisory opinion on the obligations countries owe to protect human rights from the climate crisis.

The campaign already has the support of over 100 countries, including Australia, the United Kingdom, France and New Zealand.

An Advisory Opinion is an opinion handed down by a court on the question of law raised by a legislative body. Though they are not legally binding, courts can cite them as evidence of the law.

What happens next?

If this historic vote is successful, it will launch a process in the world's highest court with the power to:

1. **Cement the consensus** on climate change science;
2. Increase ambition under **International legal instruments like the Paris Agreement**;
 1. **Provide a baseline** for state action around the world;
 2. Breathe new life into multilateral negotiations and international **cooperation**;
 3. Integrate **climate and human rights** law;
 4. **Be cited as persuasive precedent in legal proceedings around the world** thereby guiding local, regional and international adjudications;
 5. Elevate the **voices of communities** on the front lines of the climate crisis, including voices in **the Global South, and the Pacific** where the grassroots campaign began before becoming a global movement; and
 6. Arm every lawyer around the world with a new sword to fight climate change by **holding governments and big corporate polluters to account**.

Images

- Greenpeace Australia Pacific, in collaboration with the Vanuatu Government, Climate Action Network and Amnesty International organised a COP27 side event in Sharm el-Sheikh exploring the landmark campaign to link climate change and human rights through the world's highest court. Photos and videos [here](#)
- Greenpeace activists joined with civil society organisations to demand member nations Vote Yes to the referral of the resolution to the International Court of Justice. ICJ AO solidarity events were held in Fiji, Sydney and New York. Photos and video footage from Fiji [here](#), [photos](#) and video footage from Sydney [here](#), and [photos](#) and video footage from New York [here](#).

- Flotilla and festival for climate justice at the Pacific Islands Forum in 2022. These events called on world leaders to support climate justice by endorsing the campaign for an advisory opinion at the International Court of Justice as the Pacific Islands Forum kicked off in 2022. Photos and video footage [here](#).
- Mobilisation training in Fiji. Greenpeace held 2 days of mobilisation training in Suva, Fiji, in the lead up to the Pacific Islands Forum in 2022, where activists called on Pacific Island Forum leaders to endorse the advisory opinion.
 - Photos and video footage [here](#).
- Climate impacts in Vanuatu
 - Areas such as Efate Island, Emou Island, Teouma.
 - Photo and video footage [here](#).