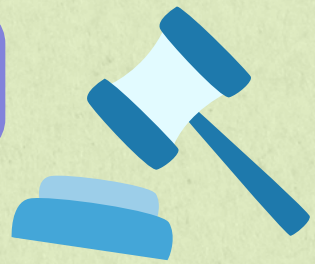


YOUTH CLIMATE JUSTICE

School of Law, UCC, Ireland

 www.ucc.ie/en/youthclimatejustice/

Case Law Database



REQUEST FOR AN ADVISORY OPINION FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

Child Friendly Summary



[Click here to read the full summary.](#)



Summary

In 2023, countries in the **United Nations** asked the world's top court, the **International Court of Justice** (ICJ), to give advice about what rules countries must follow to protect our planet from climate change. It was the idea of young people in Vanuatu, a small island country, where **climate change** is a big danger to nature and people.



THE CASE

The **UN** said that climate change is mostly caused by **pollution** from human activities and is already harming animals, plants, and people. They reminded everyone about important climate agreements, like the **Paris Agreement**, that aim to stop Earth's temperature from getting too high.

The court was asked two main questions:

- What **responsibilities do countries have** to protect the environment for people now and in the future?
- What happens if a **country's actions hurt the climate**, especially for vulnerable places like small islands or for children and future generations?



MEET THE PETITIONERS!



Mr Mert Kumru, Youth Representative, World's Youth for Climate Justice, appeared for the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Ms Brenda Reson Sapuro, Youth Representative, appeared for the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States.



What the ICJ Said About Climate Change and Children's Rights

Climate change threatens children's rights:

- **Right to life** – the right to live safely
- **Right to health** – to be healthy and live in a clean environment
- **Right to equality** – to be treated fairly without discrimination

The court said countries have a legal duty to reduce harmful gases that cause global warming. Countries must work together to fight climate change, it's a global issue. The decision recognised that environmental protection is linked to all human rights, especially children's rights.

FOR EXAMPLE:



Countries must take care of the environment to ensure the enjoyment of the right to health.



Countries must take steps to ensure intergenerational equity - making sure we don't harm the planet for future generations who will live here after us



Countries may be violating the right to privacy, family and home if they do not take steps to address climate change

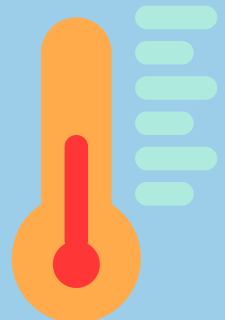
WHAT DID THE COURT DECIDE?

The **ICJ** listened to many countries, some young people and children also spoke to the court, in **July 2025**, gave its answer.

The court said everyone has the right to a healthy environment and that protecting it is essential for **human rights**, including children's right to life.

It said all countries must work together, even if they aren't part of climate treaties, to stop harm to the planet now and in the future. The court also highlighted that it's very important to care about **future generations** and treat them fairly.

- Countries need to adopt measures to reduce **greenhouse gas** emissions
- Countries need to co-operate with each other
- Countries need to contribute to reduce **global warming**





EXPAND YOUR KNOWLEDGE!

Greenhouse gas emissions (GHG): Driving cars, running factories, or using fossil fuels to get energy release greenhouse gases into the air (like carbon dioxide). These gases trap heat and make the planet warmer, which can cause big environmental problems like rising seas, melting ice or stronger storms.



“Future Generations” are all those generations that do not yet exist, are yet to come and who will eventually inherit this planet. While children and youth are part of present generations and not future generations, their lives extend further into the future than that of adults and they will be more impacted by decisions being made today than the adults making them. Concern for future generations does not mean less of a focus on present generations or efforts to address climate change. Upholding the rights and meeting the needs of present generations is a precondition for a better shared future.



The **Paris Agreement** is an important agreement signed by 196 countries on climate change. It was adopted in 2015 at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris, France. Its main goal is to avoid the average Earth’s temperature from rising more than 2°C in the coming years.



A **petition** is a legal document that asks for a specific court order. It can be created by a person, a group or an organisation, and it can be sent to a national or regional court, such as the European Court of Human Rights, or to an international body, such as the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

