



보도자료



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ICJ Takes Historic Step to Hold States Accountable for Climate Crisis

- From Vanuatu's Appeal to Global Legal Obligations -

In a landmark move for climate justice, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on July 23 formally launched advisory proceedings to examine the legal responsibilities of states in addressing climate change—marking a pivotal moment in international law.



ICJ opens advisory proceedings on states' climate obligations (Photo=ICJ)

For the first time, the UN's principal judicial body is considering whether governments may be held accountable under international law for climate inaction and fossil fuel-related emissions. The ICJ emphasized that “governments

are duty-bound to address climate change caused by fossil fuel emissions,” warning that failure to act could result in state liability for climate-related harm to other nations.

The proceedings stem from a historic request by the Pacific island nation of Vanuatu, which faces existential threats due to rising sea levels. Backed by more than 130 UN member states, the initiative was endorsed through a rare joint resolution of the UN General Assembly, signaling unprecedented global consensus.

Significantly, the ICJ’s opinion marks the first time climate change has been explicitly linked to human rights under international law—including the rights to life, health, and adequate housing. This reframing elevates the issue from an environmental concern to a matter of global justice.

ICJ President Yuji Iwasawa stated that these climate obligations fall under “erga omnes” duties—legal responsibilities owed to the entire international community. He stressed that protecting the global climate system is essential to upholding the fundamental rights of both present and future generations.

Governments are currently submitting detailed legal briefs that address key issues such as:

- Transboundary climate impacts
- Interpretation of emissions reduction agreements
- Differentiated responsibilities between developed and developing nations
- Obligations to safeguard the interests of future generations

These submissions will inform a series of public hearings scheduled over the coming months.

Nations such as Germany and New Zealand have argued that failure to act on climate change could constitute a violation of human rights. They are calling for the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)—a core element of the Paris Agreement—to be codified as a binding legal standard.

While the ICJ’s advisory opinions are not legally binding, their influence is far-reaching. Major outlets including The New York

Times report that this opinion could reshape global climate litigation, steer international policy, and set a powerful precedent for future legal frameworks.

The department in charge The 3rd HLMUN PRESS team	Team leader	Total management	ANN TAEHYUN
	Team member	Writer&Article translator	MAENG MINJU, KIM JIMIN
Hallym University Student Council hallym39th_baekya@naver.com			
Hallym University 3rd HLMUN hallymmun@gmail.com			

