



## **PRESS RELEASE: International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea delivers unanimous Advisory Opinion**

*Hamburg, Germany, 21th May 2024* – The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea delivered an unanimous advisory opinion in case no. 31, following a request by the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law.

The historic announcement of the Advisory Opinion is taking place at a crucial time. The Climate Crisis is taking an ever-increasing toll on the world's oceans because states are inexcusably failing to act.

To emphasize the significance of the Advisory Opinion, it is worth remembering that 71% of the Earth's surface is covered by oceans and that ITLOS' jurisdiction therefore extends to a vast and substantial part of our planet.

As the first international court to address climate and ocean protection, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) has seized the opportunity to send an unmistakable message to governments around the world: their obligation to stop the climate destruction caused by greenhouse gas emissions.

International Lawyer and Councilor of the World Future Council, Neshan Gunasekera, states:

"A pivotal day in the history of international law. This opinion on State responsibilities on addressing the climate crisis paves the way for accepted principles of international law to be supported by the best available sciences. A bridge between indigenous knowledge systems and our responsibilities as good ancestors paves the way for intergenerational equity and rights of Future Generations. A journey renewed!"



*WFC Councilor and advocate for the island state of Vanuatu, Raima Te Maile Fifita (centre), represents the strength of three generations. Credits: Julius Brede*

Even if it does not mean the end of the road, our board member Marie Biermann sees a step in the right direction:

"The ITLOS advisory opinion on climate change and the marine environment is a landmark in global efforts against climate crisis.

It clarifies State duties under UNCLOS, emphasizing pollution prevention and international cooperation. This opinion sets a vital precedent for future climate-related legal discourse, signaling the imperative for collective action to protect our oceans and climate."



*Left to Right: WFC board member and lawyer Marie Biermann with Councilors Neshan Gunasekera and Raima Te Maile Fifita. Credits: Julius Brede*

While the Advisory Opinion from the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) addresses climate and ocean protection, it falls short of what is critically needed. As the first international court to tackle these issues, ITLOS had a unique chance to send a clear message to governments worldwide about their obligation to curb climate destruction caused by greenhouse gas emissions. Unfortunately, the opinion does not strongly emphasize the urgent need for robust action. This missed opportunity underscores a gap in international accountability at a time when decisive guidance and stringent measures are crucial to protecting our oceans and, consequently, our planet.

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