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ICJ Declared the Advisory Opinion on State Obligations for Climate Change

On 23 July, 2025, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague (Netherlands) has delivered its advisory opinion on obligations of States in the face of climate change. The ICJ has unanimously opined that the States are legally bound to protect the climatic system along with the other parts of the environment from the anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases. Existing climate change treaties, treaties to protect the environment from significant harms, customary international law, law of the sea and international human rights law are applicable to ensure the obligations. In case of any breach of these obligations, the States are bound to cease the continuation of the wrongful actions or omissions, to provide guarantee of non-repetition and to ensure full reparation to the injured States.

Earlier in 2023, the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) requested the ICJ to adopt a unanimous resolution by requesting the ICJ to provide an Advisory Opinion on the questions as drafted by 18 core countries led by Vanuatu. Bangladesh was within the cohort of these 18 countries. Following this request, last year, 96 States and 11 international organizations have presented their written and oral submissions in front of the ICJ at several steps. After completion of all the submissions, it took the Court about seven months to declare this opinion.

This opinion is expected to have a great impact on the future climate actions. Worldwide, the experts are celebrating this Advisory Opinion of the ICJ. In this context, an eminent climate expert of Bangladesh and the Director of Centre for Climate Justice – Bangladesh (CCJ-B) Mr. Hafij Khan said, “This opinion is a very much progressive one. Now it requires proper implementation.” On the other hand, at the first official press briefing following the declaration of the Advisory Opinion, a minister of Vanuatu, Mr. Ralph Ragenvanu has marked it as a historic intervention of the Court.

As this proceeding ends here, this Advisory Opinion will be forwarded to the UN General Assembly (UNGA). It is expected that the UNGA will adopt a resolution in support of this Advisory Opinion.

The Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change (PISFCC) and World's Youth for Climate Justice (WYCJ) campaigned worldwide to encourage the governments authorities to support this proceeding. Now it is the time to witness how this Advisory Opinion gets practically implemented.

Press Release (23 July, 2025): Centre for Climate Justice – Bangladesh (CCJ-B) and World's Youth for Climate Justice (Bangladesh Front).

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