



**MEDIA RELEASE - 27 June 2019**

**Take Climate Change and Human Rights to the International Court of Justice!  
USP Law Students Write to Pacific Island Forum Leaders**

A group of USP law students from 8 countries this month wrote to all Pacific Island Forum leaders asking them to place international legal issues of climate change and human rights before the World Court in The Hague, Netherlands. The students hope PIF leaders will discuss and approve the proposal at the August 2019 meeting in Tuvalu.

The 14 June letters appeal to regional leaders: “[W]e look to an intervention by the International Court of Justice to endorse at the highest level our fundamental moral and legal rights; to live with dignity without fear of climate change denying us and our children of that freedom.”

“The recent UN report on 1.5 degree warming makes two things very clear: firstly, that climate change is threatening our fundamental human rights under international law, and secondly, that we as Pacific islanders must do everything we can to fight global carbon emissions,” said Solomon Yeo, a signatory to the letter.

“We are inspired by the [Torres Strait Islanders who this year commenced a case](#) against the Australian Government in the UN Human Rights Committee and also by the plaintiffs in the [Juliana v United States case](#) where 21 young people are suing the US Government on grounds that US government’s fossil fuel policies jeopardize human life, private property and civilization itself said PISFCC member Madeleine Lavemai.

“Despite being small, each Pacific island country has the same UN General Assembly vote as the US or China. We believe our leaders need to use that power and lead a movement of climate-vulnerable developing countries in seeking an opinion on climate change and human rights law from the International Court of Justice”, said student signatory ‘Elenoa Salt.

The students believe benefits flowing from an ICJ opinion on climate change may include:

- Cementing consensus on the scientific evidence of climate change;
- Encouraging more ambitious action under the Paris Agreement;
- Integrating areas of international law that are currently separate, such as human rights law and environmental law;
- Providing baselines for state action on mitigation and international cooperation and assistance; and
- Providing impetus for domestic, regional and international court decisions.”

We affirm UN Secretary-General [António Guterres’s speech this week in Lisboa+21](#); it is time Governments take their seats on their youths’ table. A brief sent with the letter notes the rise in global youth movements protesting the lack of global climate action: “Now is the ideal time for the ICJ to consider climate change . . . Governments choosing to stand in solidarity with young people across the world, who hope only for effective global action on climate change, are on the right side of history. We seek merely to hear what the world’s highest court has to say about the world’s biggest problem.”

The students, organized in early 2019 as **Pacific Island Students Fighting Climate Change**, are from Kiribati, Tuvalu, Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Tonga and Micronesia. The letters and documents sent to PIF leaders are posted on the [PISFCC Facebook page](#).

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