



The issue of climate change and its impacts cannot be separated from the responsibility to protect human rights. Whether in situations of conflict, war or in the aftermath of environmental disasters linked to human-induced climate change, the issue of climate justice needs to be at the heart of our advocacy. In this issue of News from the UN we highlight the theme of climate justice through the lens of recent events at the UN following on from the COP 29 Climate Conference in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Hearings on Climate responsibility of States in the world's highest court

What is climate justice? Over a period of 10 days in December, the UN **International Court of Justice in the Hague** held hearings on the obligations of States under international law to combat Climate Change. The hearings were held in response to the UN General Assembly call in 2022 for the global court to issue an **Advisory Opinion** on the subject in order to clarify responsibility and state liability for loss and damage caused by extreme weather events due to climate change. Young law students and climate activists from Vanuatu in the Pacific Islands had initiated the request. Advocates joined them and the call was sequentially endorsed by **the Human Rights Council** and passed by consensus in the **UN General Assembly** in 2022.



The hearings at the **ICJ** began with testimony from **Vanuatu and the Melanesian Spearhead Group**,

arguing that the expansion of fossil fuel production and consumption is a clear breach of countries' climate obligations. A total of **110 statements and testimonies** were given during the hearings, many of them giving voice to young climate activists whose future is intimately tied to the protection or destruction of their homeland. As the representative from **Vanuatu** said : *"The survival of my people and so many others is on*

the line... We trust in the wisdom of this Court to uphold the principles of international law." In closing, the judges asked questions relating to the interpretation of the **Paris Agreement**, fossil fuel production and the right to a healthy environment. The Court is expected to issue their Opinion in 2025.



➔ [Read more](#)

Fast Facts calling for Climate Justice

- **Nearly 80 %** of the estimated **26 million people displaced by climate change** are **women and children**.
- Global funding for **climate initiatives that focus on women** stands at a shocking **0.01%**.
- People in **low-and lower-middle-income countries** are around **five times more likely** to be displaced by extreme weather disasters than people in high-income countries
- The **World Health Organization (WHO)** conservatively projects **250 000 additional yearly deaths** by the 2030s due to **climate change impacts** on diseases like malaria and coastal flooding.
- **Heat-related deaths** among those **over 65** have **risen by 70%** in two decades.

The **International Union of Superiors General (UISG)** joined the launch of the **"Women faith and Climate Network"** in late October in Frascati, Italy. This is a multifaith initiative bringing together women-led faith-based organizations belonging to eight different faiths and who are engaged in concrete actions for climate justice.

➔ Learn more about it and watch [the short video](#).

Climate Justice and Vulnerable Populations

Our **RSHM NGO** was active in the Preparatory Committee meetings held in New York in early December, leading up to the **4th Financing for Development Conference** which will be held in Spain in June/July 2025. During the main session, **Veronica RSHM** presented a two-minute intervention in the interactive discussion of systemic issues, in the name of the **NGO Committee on Financing for Development**. She highlighted the ways in which systemic discrimination increases the vulnerability of women and children to climate-related disasters and the urgent need for climate finance to acknowledge and address these issues. On December 6th our Climate Finance Working Group sponsored a hybrid event which addressed the issue of “**Climate Justice and Vulnerable Populations**”. Speakers from the *Philippines*, the *Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights*, *Catholic Relief Services*, the *Temple of Understanding and Bridging Gaps* explored a framework for action on the **Loss and Damage** resulting from extreme weather events and the impact of human induced climate change.



High Tide Don't Hide

On December 10th - **Human Rights Day** - the **United Nations Human Rights Office** in New York, together with the Permanent Missions of **Germany** and **New Zealand** hosted a discussion on human rights, climate action & future generations, led by the Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights, **Ilza Brands Kehris**, and the Ambassador to the UN of New Zealand. The discussion was followed by a screening of the film **High Tide Don't Hide** – a full-length documentary, which traces the story behind the mobilization of youth and activists by five teenagers who brought the 2019 climate strike in New Zealand to unprecedented levels of engagement by adults and youth in order to avert cataclysmic climate change.

➔ Watch the [trailer](#)



Empowering women in the Peace Process.

On November 12th, the **United Nations** hosted a collaborative event with **Columbia Law School** and **UNITAR** on Empowering Women in the Peace Process. This interactive workshop focused on understanding the importance of gender equality in negotiations and augmenting women's participation. Additionally, participants learned about ways to self-advocate and how to support women from a diplomatic perspective.

The workshop was led with a presentation by Shawn Watts, the director of **Columbia Law School's Mediation Clinic**, along with students from the program. It included statistics related to the **Sustainable Development Goals**

(SDGs) indicators such as the fact that **49 countries currently have no laws protecting women**. It also highlighted measures that significantly impact women's lives.



Many of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals depend on women

being included in peacemaking initiatives. Columbia Law School student Katiana Klain, who spoke on the panel, pointed out that "unless we prioritize women's contributions and perspectives," we cannot resolve critical international issues, such as ending poverty for all. The key takeaway from the presentation was the analysis of case studies. One focused on amplifying women's voices in the **White House** and the other on fostering inclusivity in **Rwanda**. Participants examined how each case study went about including women in the peacemaking process. This was followed by a small group discussion among the attendees present.

➔ Watch a [short video](#)

Internship at the UN - A few words from **Angelina Ispir** as she finishes her internship.



*"This past fall semester with the **Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary (RSHM)** at the **United Nations** has been an incredible experience. From diving head-first into the **Summit of the Future** and participating in various UN meetings and side events, my experience as a **Youth Delegate Intern** has shown me the vital role that NGOs play within the United Nations system. Furthermore, this internship has realigned my career goals, and I hope to work for an NGO such as RSHM someday. I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to Sister Veronica for being a fantastic supervisor throughout my time with RSHM. Her guidance allowed me to experience this internship opportunity to the fullest. I look forward to having more opportunities like this in the future!"*

Thanks to Angelina for her contribution to our NGO and to the News from the UN!

Distribution

Institute Leadership Team; Area Leaders, JPIC Animators; Global Network of RSHM Schools; UN Interest Group