



2025 Geneva Dialogues on Human Rights and Climate Change: The role of Geneva in Building on the Historic Advisory Opinions on Climate Change

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Followed by a reception

The intensification of climate change-related extreme and slow-onset events constitutes one of the greatest threats to human rights. As the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC) has warned, an increase above 1.5°C compared to pre-industrial levels in global average temperatures would lead to ecosystem collapse and jeopardize the livelihoods of millions of people.

A growing number of courts and tribunals across the world have confirmed that States have clear obligations under multiple sources of law, including human rights law, to address climate change in a way that is grounded in science, regulates private actors, remediates harm, and ensures safe and meaningful participation of affected communities, civil society, environmental human rights defenders, and Indigenous Peoples. Over the past year, three groundbreaking advisory opinions have been delivered by international judicial courts, further clarifying States' obligations with regard to the climate crisis.

The Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the obligations of States in respect of climate change, delivered on 23 July 2025, unequivocally confirms that States have obligations to prevent climate harm and protect human rights, including the right to a healthy environment, by exercising enhanced due diligence in putting in place effective measures with the aim of keeping global average temperature rise below 1.5°C, including by regulating private actors. The Court further specified that “[f]ailure of a State to take appropriate action to protect the climate system from GHG emissions – including through fossil fuel production, fossil fuel consumption, the granting of fossil fuel exploration licences or the provision of fossil fuel subsidies – may constitute an internationally wrongful act which is attributable to that State”.

This ruling expands upon similar conclusions included in the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea (ITLOS)'s Advisory Opinion (21 May 2024) addressing States duties to protect the marine environment from climate harms and that of the Advisory Opinion of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (3 July 2025) that highlighted in particular States obligations regarding the rights of future generations, human rights defenders, corporate accountability, the right to a healthy environment, the right to remedy, rights of nature, procedural rights, *inter alia*.

The Human Rights Council, Special Procedures, and Human Rights Treaty Bodies have played a central role in identifying the rights and specific groups that are affected in the context of climate change, and the relevant obligations of States to advance human rights while addressing the triple planetary crisis. They have also sounded the alarm about the role of fossil fuels in fueling climate change and the other planetary crises. For instance, the [Joint Statement](#) by six Special Procedures stresses that “States have human rights obligations to



phase out fossil fuels, prevent human rights harms, including extraterritorially, and effectively regulate private actors”. The latest report by the Special Rapporteur on human rights and climate change, [Fossil Fuel-based Economy and Human Rights](#), provides important findings on the multiple ways in which the fossil fuel industry undermines human rights, and the corresponding obligations upon States.

Geneva-based human rights mechanisms, through their wealth of resolutions, authoritative statements, and reports have informed the advisory opinions and continue to guide States in developing national policies and measures. They now have the opportunity and the responsibility to build on the findings by the ITLOS, IACtHR and ICJ to advance effective human rights-based climate action.

The 2025 Geneva Dialogues on Human Rights and Climate Change build on previous editions to discuss how Geneva-based human rights institutions can contribute to further advancing human rights-based climate action. This year’s edition will unpack the landmark advisory opinions on climate change by the International Tribunal of the Law of the Sea, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, and the International Court of Justice, and discuss the role of Geneva-based human rights institutions in elevating and building on these rulings.

The 2025 Geneva Dialogues are organized by the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL), the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Earthjustice, and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Geneva Office, with the support of the Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and co-sponsored by the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Vanuatu. Panelists and participants will include State representatives, UN experts, representatives of civil society organizations and Indigenous Peoples, and UN officials.

