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**Press Statement: 24 Young People, Our Children's Trust, and Oxfam ask the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea to Protect the World's Oceans and Marine Environment from Climate Change**

**Amsterdam**—On 16 June 2023, 24 young people—representing six U.S. states and six Canadian provinces—together with Our Children's Trust and Oxfam, submitted an [Amicus Brief](#) to the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea (Tribunal) in relation to a request for an Advisory Opinion filed by a group of Small Island States in December 2022. In their request, the Small Island States asked the Tribunal to determine what obligations countries have to prevent harms to the ocean caused by climate change given the requirement under the Convention on the Law of the Sea (Convention), “to protect and preserve the marine environment.”

In drafting its Advisory Opinion, the Tribunal has a crucial opportunity to clarify countries' responsibilities to take concrete steps to stop climate change, safeguard marine ecosystems, and protect the communities that depend on them. As the world's highest court for the oceans, the Tribunal's ruling in this case will have significant ripple effects for climate cases around the world.

The *Amicus* Brief filed on 16 June emphasizes how critical it is for the Tribunal to rely on the best available science when interpreting countries' Convention obligations to “prevent, reduce, and control pollution of the marine environment from any sources” including “pollution through the atmosphere.” In particular, the brief stresses that the temperature targets under the Paris Agreement of limiting global average surface temperature rise to 1.5°C or 2.0°C are *not* based on the best available science and are categorically insufficient to protect our oceans and marine ecosystems as well as the lives and livelihoods of communities worldwide.

According to the brief, if countries are to succeed in fulfilling their legal duties, they must set and meet scientific targets rather than aim for goals established through political negotiations. The brief highlights numerous scientific findings that make clear what needs to be done to avoid catastrophic climate impacts into the future: urgent, drastic cuts to ongoing greenhouse gas emissions and a reduction of atmospheric carbon dioxide levels from the

current concentration of about 420 parts per million (ppm) down to less than 350 ppm. It further emphasizes that pathways for countries to achieve this 350 ppm target exist and are feasible.

“At no other time in human history have the world’s marine ecosystems been so vulnerable as they are right now due to climate change,” said Paul Rink, Global Staff Attorney, Our Children’s Trust. “The science is clear: we must act much faster to halt global emissions and remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere in order to preserve a safe and stable climate for our kids and future generations.”

Ashfaq Khalfan, Oxfam’s Director for Climate Justice added, “Just as are oceans are at a historic crossroads, so too is the Tribunal. As the first international court to say what governments are required to do to tackle the climate emergency, its ruling will either leave the world’s oceans and communities everywhere that rely on them unprotected or it will galvanize global efforts to fix this existential threat to humanity.”

Read the *Amicus* Brief [here](#), and the letter asking the Tribunal to accept the brief [here](#). For more information on the Request for an Advisory Opinion currently before the Tribunal, visit the Tribunal’s website [here](#).

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*Our Children’s Trust is the world’s only nonprofit public interest law firm that exclusively provides strategic, campaign based legal services to youth from diverse backgrounds to secure their legal rights to a safe climate. We work to protect the Earth’s climate system for present and future generations by representing young people in global legal efforts to secure their binding and enforceable legal rights to a healthy atmosphere and safe climate, based on the best available science. Globally, we support youth-led climate cases in front of national courts, regional human rights courts, and UN bodies. [www.ourchildrenstrust.org](http://www.ourchildrenstrust.org)*

*Oxfam is a global movement of people, working together to end the injustice of poverty. That means we tackle the inequality that keeps people poor. Together, we save, protect and rebuild lives when disaster strikes. We help people build better lives for themselves, and for others. We take on issues like land rights, climate change and discrimination against women. And we won’t stop until every person on the planet can enjoy life free from poverty. Join us. [oxfam.org](http://oxfam.org)*