



The Hon Anthony Albanese MP  
Prime Minister  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600  
Australia

17 June 2022

Dear Prime Minister,

We wish to firstly extend our warm congratulations for your victory in the recent national election and wish you every success as you lead Australia at this vital time in human history. We are heartened by the prospect of an Australian Government that genuinely prioritises both effective action on climate change, and mutually respectful relations with Pacific Island communities. In addition to lending our support for your efforts, our purpose in writing is to seek your support to bring climate change before the International Court of Justice.

We write this open letter on behalf of the *Civil Society Alliance Supporting an Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on Climate Change* (CSO ICJAO Alliance). Our membership represents more than 1500 civil society groups from all regions of the world. This includes hundreds of grassroots associations whose members are subsistence farmers and fishers, the young and the elderly, and people of all genders. Our alliance is spearheaded by grassroots Pacific Islands civil society and strongly supported by larger organisations such as Oxfam, Greenpeace and Amnesty International. While differing in approaches and scales, our member organisations are united around poverty alleviation, defending human rights and protecting the environment. The CSO ICJAO Alliance, while now global in scope, first arose in the Pacific Island Region, primarily as an initiative of students and other young people.

We formed the CSO ICJAO Alliance for a single purpose: to promote the initiative championed by the Government of the Republic of Vanuatu in seeking the support of the United Nations General Assembly to ask the International Court of Justice to issue an advisory opinion on climate change and human rights (ICJAO).

We strongly believe that an ICJAO will strengthen both the Paris Agreement and international responses to climate change more broadly by clarifying the obligations of states under international law. A recent speech by Vanuatu's Prime Minister, Bob Loughman, expresses this well: "*This is not a court case. We do not seek to assign blame. This is for the*

*world's most vulnerable, for all of humanity, and our collective future. This is about what we must save, not what has been lost. This is a campaign to build ambition, not division. This is a campaign to uplift the goals of the Paris Agreement. This is the young generations' call for justice to the world's highest court."*

Prime Minister Loughman also noted a core belief of the CSO Alliance: The climate crisis is undeniably also a human rights crisis. Despite this, the climate crisis is yet to be adequately viewed through a human rights lens in a formal legal sense. Basic human rights obligations are yet to be effectively integrated into climate treaties, climate laws or climate debates. Only the International Court of Justice has the authority to bring this about.

This year, demands of Pacific Island countries and of the youth of the world to take climate change and human rights to the International Court of Justice, must be answered – firstly at the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting, and then at the United Nations General Assembly. These demands present a great opportunity to your government to demonstrate its willingness to listen to Pacific Island voices and to prove that you are prepared to act on the existential threat of the climate crisis in a manner that offers hope to future generations of Australians and Pacific Islanders.

We warmly welcome Foreign Minister Wong's comments announcing a new era in Australian engagement in the Pacific and Australia's intention to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Pacific family in responding to the climate crisis. We ask that you affirm Australia's support for the initiative at the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting and vote in favour of the resolution at the United Nations General Assembly.

Yours faithfully,

350 Pacific  
Amnesty International Australia  
Climate Action Network International  
Greenpeace Australia-Pacific  
Oxfam Pacific  
Pacific Islands Climate Action Network  
Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change  
Vanuatu Climate Action Network