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General Assembly Strengthens Fight against Climate Change, Adopting Contentious, Yet Broadly Supported Draft among Several Texts on Myriad topics

The fight against climate change received a fresh boost today, as the General Assembly adopted a set of draft resolutions and decisions, including a contentious but broadly supported climate text designed to turn the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion into tangible political, legal and practical momentum for stronger global action and accountability.

By a vote of 141 in favor to 8 against (Belarus, Iran, Israel, Liberia, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, **United States**, Yemen), with 28 abstentions, the 193-member Assembly adopted the draft resolution titled "Advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the obligations of States in respect of climate change" (document [A/80/L.65](#)).

Before the vote, amendments to L.65 (documents [A/80/L.66](#), [A/80/L.67](#), [A/80/L.68](#) and [A/80/L.69/Rev.1](#)) were proposed to address four provisions of the text, but the Assembly rejected them.

By "L.65", the Assembly - "determined to translate [the Court's findings](#) into enhanced multilateral cooperation and accelerated climate action at all levels, consistent with international law" - welcomed the unanimous 23 July 2025 advisory opinion and affirmed its importance as "an authoritative contribution to the clarification of existing international law".

Further, the Assembly called upon all States to "comply with their respective obligations under international law to ensure the protection of the climate system and other parts of the environment from anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, as identified by the Court".

It also requested the UN Secretary-General, within existing resources, in consultation with Member States, to submit to the Assembly during its eighty-second session a report containing ways to advance compliance with all obligations in relation to the Court's findings.

Today's action comes on the heels of the Assembly's 28 July 2022 resolution (document [A/RES/76/300](#)) recognizing the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right, as well as its 29 March 2023 resolution (document [A/RES/77/276](#)) requesting the Court to render an advisory opinion on the obligations of States in respect of climate change.

On 23 July 2025, the Court clarified that protecting the climate is not optional diplomacy — it is a legal duty grounded in treaties, customary law and human rights, and States that fall short risk legal responsibility and claims for repair.

“The draft resolution before you does what an Assembly should do when its own Court has spoken,” said the representative of Vanuatu, who spoke also on behalf of the Core Group — a cross-regional group of States.

He said that the resolution does neither adjudicate disputes, assign responsibility to any State nor reopen, replace or compete with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. On the contrary, he added, it reaffirms them as the primary legal instruments and intergovernmental forums for the global response to climate change.

“The role of this Assembly is complementary: to receive the Court’s clarification with integrity and to support cooperation and implementation across the United Nations system,” he explained, declaring: This day will be remembered as “the moment the United Nations received the considered judgment of its highest Court on the defining challenge of our time — and decided what to do with it”.

Saudi Arabia was among the countries tabling the amendments. Its representative insisted that climate obligations must remain strictly confined to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change–Kyoto–Paris treaty framework, stressing that these are “the competent and agreed-upon reference points to determine the responsibilities and obligations” and warning that the resolution “gives the impression that there are new obligations or extended obligations that goes beyond what was collectively agreed”. The Court’s advisory opinions are non-binding and cannot be used to expand or operationalize new legal duties through the Assembly, he emphasized.

The representative of the United States said her country’s position rests on a firm rejection of giving legal or operational weight to the Court’s advisory opinion, emphasizing that “the resolution improperly treats the Court’s opinion as irrefutably authoritative (AA note: exactly what it is!) and as setting out binding obligations on States”. On this basis, it objects to any attempt to derive duties from the opinion, arguing that “this resolution is highly problematic in calling on States to comply with so-called obligations that are based on non-binding conclusions of the Court on which UN Member States’ views diverge”. The text also frames the Court’s legal approach as an overreach into State sovereignty, she added, cautioning that “such an expansive legal rule would impermissibly interfere with each State’s sovereign rights to regulate and manage its own energy policy”.