

## Roundtable on Assessing the Impacts of the Climate Change Advisory Opinions

Date: Wednesday, 25 March 2026

Time: 18.15-19.30

Location: Rooms SG1/SG2, Alison Richard Building, 7 West Rd, Cambridge & online

Registration: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/assessing-the-impacts-of-the-climate-change-advisory-opinions-tickets-1983191402872?aff=oddttdtcreator>

In a matter of a few years, three international courts issued groundbreaking advisory opinions on climate change. An initial advisory opinion by the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) that focused on climate-related obligations under the Law of the Sea Convention in 2024 was followed by advisory opinions by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR) on climate-related human rights obligations, and an advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) clarifying the obligations of states in addressing climate change and the legal consequences of breaching such obligations. The contents of these three advisory opinions, as well as the proceedings leading up to them, have already been the subject of extensive commentary by scholars and practitioners.

What has received less attention, beyond some basic commentary on the effects of advisory opinions in general, is the range of specific impact of these opinions may bring about and the channels through which such impact may be sought. This is particularly important in a geopolitical context where environmental protection seems to have been downgraded in the list of political priorities, at least in the short term. An initial focus has been on monitoring whether and how the advisory opinions have been or could be referred to by litigants and judicial bodies at the domestic and regional level (e.g., the European Court of Human Rights' reference to the ICJ Advisory Opinion in its *Greenpeace Nordic v. Norway* ruling). Some attention has also been paid to references to the outcomes of the advisory opinions in multilateral processes, such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations.

However, the impacts of advisory opinions are likely to go well beyond these first-order effects. More specifically, several impacts of advisory opinions can be distinguished, including impacts on:

- *specific actors and actor groups*, such as states, corporations, courts, subnational authorities, social movements, etc.
- *litigation*, including on litigation strategies, courts' reasoning, litigation risk, etc.
- *policy processes*, including multilateral negotiations under the UN (including both the substance of outcomes of these negotiations, as well as the process itself), international cooperative initiatives, and national policy processes (e.g., the

development of new Nationally Determined Contributions, adaptation strategies, environmental impact assessment, ESG reporting).

- *market practices*, including litigation insurance premiums, contractual terms, structuring of financial instruments (e.g. green bonds), product design standards, etc.

In addition, the impacts can also be distinguished into direct/indirect, intended/unintended, and strengthening/weakening climate action. Going beyond typologies, however, there is a need to better understand *how* these various types of impacts can be assessed. Such an analysis will likely require multidisciplinary expertise (including from international law, international relations, sociology, social movement studies, political science, economics and finance, etc.), and will need to draw on a range of methods. Moreover, lessons can – and should – be learned from similar cases in the past, such as the aftermath of the *Nuclear Weapons* (ICJ) and *Responsibilities and obligations of States sponsoring persons and entities with respect to activities in the Area* (ITLOS) advisory opinions.

This event aims to bring together scholars and practitioners interested in understanding and studying the various impacts of the advisory opinions on climate change issued by the ICJ, ITLOS, and IACtHR. The first part will consist of an interdisciplinary workshop to discuss the methodologies and research agenda related to assessing the impacts of the climate change advisory opinions. The workshop organisers will prepare a background paper to inform the discussions. The workshop is aimed at producing a joint article outlining a research agenda on assessing the impacts of climate change advisory opinions. The second part will be a public event in which researchers will be invited to comment on the different types of possible impacts. This will be followed by an invitation-only dinner.

#### Speakers:

- Prof. Jorge Viñuales (University of Cambridge)
- Dr. Joana Setzer (Grantham Research Institute, London School of Economics and Political Science)
- Harj Narulla (Doughty Street Chambers)
- Prof. Lavanya Rajamani (University of Oxford)
- Prof. Lisa Vanhala (University College London)
- Dr. Ian Higham (Grantham Research Institute, London School of Economics and Political Science)
- Prof. Harro van Asselt (University of Cambridge)