

UN High Level Meeting on the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons
September 28, 2021

Speech by **Nicole Ann Ponce**
Representative of World's Youth for Climate Justice

Dear Excellencies, His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid, Honorable Heads of Governments, distinguished Heads of Delegations, Dear Colleagues from around the world,

My name is Nicole, I grew up in the Philippines and I am a climate justice advocate. It is a great honor to speak in front of you as one of the two civil society representatives in this high level meeting.

Big challenges demand bold solutions. About 30 years ago a bold global civil society initiative successfully pushed for an Advisory Opinion from the International Court of Justice on Nuclear Weapons.

The scientists and medics back then were united when declaring nuclear weapons a threat to life on earth. Partly inspired by the resilience and the drive of civil society campaigners advocating for this Advisory Opinion in the 90s, students from the Pacific and Pacific civil society organizations are taking a courageous leap to address the biggest threat facing life on earth and communities today.

Impacts of climate change are affecting the rights of all communities in the world, and most importantly children and future generations who would take on the world in the future.

The government of Vanuatu is taking a bold initiative to address this challenge, and has formally commenced a global initiative to request an Advisory Opinion from the world's highest court, the International Court of Justice on Climate Change. Hearing this strengthens my determination and gives me great hope as a youth advocate. In its address, the Vanuatu government is looking forward to ***coordinating the efforts of Pacific Island countries and other like-minded countries to seek clarification of the legal responsibilities of large emitters of greenhouse gases with respect to human rights of present and future generations***. This is a great milestone for the Pacific youth and civil society, and World's Youth for Climate Justice campaign and we welcome your support as we journey on the next phase in seeking climate justice. We advocate a question that is focused on intergenerational equity and human rights. Such ICJ Advisory Opinion can provide legal clarity and moral authority, provide guidance to national court and inspire more ambitious climate action

The time is nigh, in our world, amidst the warming of the atmosphere, and the melting of ice, and the rising of the seas, the international Court of Justice must not be silent on the biggest problem of our time.