

What does the ICJ 's opinion on climate mean for the future of global climate action? My opinion shared with DevelopmentAid

By Wayne Visser

It would be easy to dismiss the ICJ advisory opinion as yet another example of virtue signaling from a “woke” multilateral institution – notably one that doesn’t have the power to implement or enforce its judgements. No doubt, this is exactly what the Trump administration, the petrostates and the incumbent multinational corporations in the oil and gas sector will do.

But to ignore this landmark legal precedent would be to misunderstand what it means for shifting global norms. This is how change happens in complex, living systems. In effect, the ICJ provides a strong signal, which ripples throughout our interconnected societies, thereby reinforcing climate justice as a social norm.

On its own, this will not change the world. But it does not have to because it is not on its own. There are millions of others who are working towards the same ends. The ICJ has just created an amplifying effect – or what we call in systems science, a positive, reinforcing feedback loop.

Hence, we should celebrate this moment, while doubling down on climate advocacy and action in our own sphere of influence – not least calling on our governments to translate the ICJ judgement into national legislation.

See the full DevelopmentAid article, including other expert opinions here.

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