

## Climate Solutions - report for August Forum by Kate Bailey

A smaller group this month because of holidays, but momentous news to consider. The highest court in the world, the UN International Court of Justice (ICJ), has delivered a landmark legal opinion that *"all states have legal obligations to protect the climate and prevent significant harm from climate change"*. Legal duties of countries include regulating greenhouse gas emissions and high-emitting businesses, and phasing out fossil fuels, so that granting oil and gas extraction licences and subsidies for production *"may constitute wrongful acts under international law"*.

The ICJ emphasised that a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is a human right for both present and future generations. This opinion comes after 5 years of international collaboration on questions of state responsibility, initiated by 27 law students in the University of the South Pacific and taken to the UN General Assembly by the Government of Vanuatu. Climate-vulnerable countries (not just the Pacific Islands) *"now have a legal basis to demand accountability, support and concrete action from high-emitting countries."* (extracts from Chatham House briefing 1 Aug 2025).

Lots of 'Good News' to report this month:

- The world's clean energy supply reached 40% in 2024, led by China's rapid transition away from fossil fuels. The Sunday Times reports that 8 countries generate 100% of their electricity from renewable sources. Vatican City runs primarily on energy from a solar hub it built on land near Rome, the result of an initiative promoted by the late Pope Francis.
- A colony of beavers has built a dam in the Czech Republic exactly where a long-planned infrastructure project (with a budget of over \$1m) had been delayed by bureaucracy. Costing nothing, the beaver 'engineers' have created a natural wetland that is revitalising local ecosystems.
- Studies of translocated pine martens, reintroduced into Wales, Devon and the Forest of Dean from Scotland, have shown that when pine martens move into an area, grey squirrels move out, allowing once-abundant red squirrels to retake old territories.



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- Researchers at Chester Zoo and Oxford University are exploring how to harvest and store living cells from animals in a non-invasive, cost-effective, and efficient way, by gathering their dung. The hope is that genetic samples can be cultured for conservation breeding programmes.
- Medicine containing scales and body parts taken from the critically endangered Asian pangolin species has been removed from China's official drugs compendium. Whilst not an outright ban, this will make it harder to prescribe, which is a positive step towards the promotion of ethical and sustainable medicines as well as efforts to save the pangolin from extinction in Asia.

