

Press Conference 7 May 2018, 14:30, Room Nairobi 4, World Conference Centre Bonn

**2018: The Year of Climate Litigation
Courts are the new frontline in the fight against climate change**

In the coming year, courts in Europe will hear cases against the Governments of Ireland, the UK, the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland and Norway. Globally, cases are proceeding in the Philippines, India, and at State and federal levels in the US.

On Monday 7 May, plaintiffs, lawyers and campaigners representing five cases in Europe will attend the UN climate talks in Bonn to discuss legal actions that aim to ensure that European leaders deliver their fair share of greenhouse gas cuts. This includes groundbreaking court cases in Ireland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Norway.

Sadhbh O'Neill, Friends of the Irish Environment: *"Ireland's per capita emissions are among the highest in the EU, and our emissions are projected to increase by 7.5-10% by 2020 compared to 1990. This is the opposite of what's needed: to help avoid dangerous climate change, Ireland has recognised that it needs to reduce its emissions by 25-40% by 2020 compared to 1990. We're asking the Government to revise its National Mitigation Plan to make it consistent with Ireland's international obligations."*

Dennis van Berkel, legal counsel to the Urgenda Foundation: *"Despite the Paris Agreement, too little is being done to address rising global temperatures. But we can help our politicians to fulfil their Paris commitments and their legal duties to protect us from climate chaos. We proved this can be done for the first time in the Netherlands: the court ruled in our favour and judged that the State needs to take more action against climate change. Unfortunately, despite protests from the opposition, scientists, lawyers and citizens, the Government has appealed the judgment, even though it has been drafting new policies to comply with the Urgenda judgment. On 28 May, we will be back in court."*

Serge de Gheldere, Klimaatzaak Belgium: *"Climate change is the biggest threat to our welfare and wellbeing worldwide. Out of that concern, a group of Belgian citizens initiated THE CLIMATE CASE (Klimaatzaak) in 2015. It is a lawsuit against the Belgian government highlighting the huge gap between the commitments made in international climate agreements and our Government's actions. Inspired by the victory in Urgenda's case against the Netherlands, we believe that court rulings are a powerful tool to get things moving. The CLIMATE CASE now has more 35,000 Belgian co-plaintiffs. It is the biggest and most important lawsuit Belgium has ever seen, showing judges that our demands are not on behalf of a few hippies, but legitimate legal claims."*

Juan Pablo Osornio, Greenpeace International: *"Our political leaders are on notice. If they do not live up to their obligations to protect human rights and prevent climate change, they will be taken to court. In Bonn, the mandate is clear: countries must agree on a transparent and ambitious rule book to close the gap between the Paris goals and the woefully inadequate national commitments. Until governments take action, communities will see them in court to protect their lives and*

livelihoods. The successful lawsuits brought in Colombia, Pakistan, New Zealand and the Netherlands provide a roadmap for doing so."

A [new report](#) from the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment counts more than 1,000 climate cases that have been filed worldwide, and confirms that these cases could have a significant impact in holding governments accountable for climate change.

Current cases:

Ireland: <http://climatecaseireland.ie/>

Netherlands: <http://www.urgenda.nl/en/themas/climate-case/>

Belgium: <https://www.klimaatzaak.eu/nl>

Switzerland: <https://klimaseniorinnen.ch/english-documents/>

Norway: <https://www.greenpeace.org/international/press-release/14527/greenpeace-and-nature-and-youth-take-the-norwegian-government-to-the-supreme-court/>

Research/background:

Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, [Global Trends in Climate Litigation and Legislation](#): <http://www.lse.ac.uk/GranthamInstitute/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Global-trends-in-climate-change-legislation-and-litigation-2018-snapshot-2.pdf>

UN Environment, Sabin Centre for Climate Change Law: [New Study Identifies Key Trends in Worldwide Climate Change Litigation](#): <http://columbiaclimatelaw.com/files/2017/05/New-study-identifies-key-trends-in-worldwide-climate-change-litigation-May-23-2017.pdf>

[Full database of climate change cases](#): <http://climatecasechart.com/>

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