

Climate seniors' case to be heard today in Strasbourg

Zurich/Strasbourg, 29 March 2023. Today has the potential to go down in history as a milestone in the global fight against the ever-more imminent climate crisis: The public hearing of the complaint of the Senior Women for Climate Protection Switzerland and four individual applicants takes place just now before the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Strasbourg. It is the first climate case to be heard by the Court. The legal team of Senior Women for Climate Protection shows that Switzerland's previous and planned measures are far from sufficient to make its contribution to compliance with the 1.5 degree limit.

The board of the Senior Women for Climate Protection Switzerland travelled to Strasbourg for the hearing - together with 45 members of the association, 30 supporters, individual plaintiffs, sympathisers and employees of Greenpeace. The environmental organisation helped to set up the Senior Women for Climate Protection Switzerland association and has supported it with financial and human resources since the beginning.

For the first time in its history, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) is addressing the substantive impact of climate change on human rights in a case. The proceedings will clarify for Switzerland and as a precedent for all states of the Council of Europe whether and to what extent a country such as Switzerland must reduce its greenhouse gas emissions more stringently to protect human rights.

«We are confident that we can make history with this case and move Switzerland towards more climate protection», said Anne Mahrer, co-president of Senior Women for Climate Protection Switzerland. Rosmarie Wydler-Wälti, co-president of Senior Women for Climate Protection Switzerland, added: «The Court has recognised the urgency and importance of finding an answer to the question of whether states violate the human rights of elderly women by not taking the necessary climate protection measures.»

The Senior Women for Climate Protection Switzerland and four individual applicants have filed a lawsuit because their right to life and health is threatened by the increasingly frequent and intense heat waves caused by climate change. Elderly women are extremely vulnerable to the effects of heat. There is substantial evidence to show that they are at a significant risk of death, as well as ill health as a result of heat.

Consequently, Switzerland must fulfil its duty to protect older women and strengthen climate protection. But so far, the country is doing far too little to limit global warming to a maximum of 1.5 degrees.

In their plea before the 17 judges, the advocates of the Senior Women for Climate Protection are correspondingly clear: «We respectfully say that in light of the failures to date, it is

essential that this Court, as other Courts have done, order Switzerland to take the necessary measures. This includes concrete emission reductions, as requested.»

The complaint by the Swiss Senior Women for Climate Protection is one of three climate change lawsuits that are currently pending before the Grand Chamber.[3] The two other lawsuits are:

- ***Carême v. France (no. 7189/21)***: This case – also to be heard by the Court today, 29th of March, in the afternoon – concerns a complaint by a resident and former mayor of the municipality of Grande-Synthe, who submits that France has taken insufficient steps to prevent climate change and that this failure entails a violation of the right to life (Article 2 of the Convention) and the right to respect for private and family life (Article 8 of the Convention).
- ***Duarte Agostinho and Others v. Portugal and Others (no. 39371/20)***: This case concerns the polluting greenhouse gas emissions from 32 member States which, in the view of the applicants – Portuguese nationals aged between 10 and 23 –, contribute to the phenomenon of global warming, resulting, among other things, in heatwaves affecting the applicants' lives, living conditions, physical and mental health.

Based on the three climate change cases, the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights is expected to define whether, and to what extent, States violate human rights by failing to mitigate the impacts of the climate crisis. This will have far-reaching consequences. A leading judgement is expected at the end of 2023 at the earliest.

Note: Following the hearing at the ECtHR, the Senior Women for Climate Protection, their supporters, the individual plaintiffs, the legal team and representatives of Greenpeace will meet in the [Pavillon Josephine](#), which is located close to the Court. Media representatives are invited to come to the pavilion as well.

Photos available in the Greenpeace Media Library of the Senior Women for Climate Protection Switzerland in front of the European Court of Human Rights this morning: <https://media.greenpeace.org/Detail/27MZIFJLI4EZK>

More Information

Learn more about the case in media documents from [ECtHR](#) and [KlimaSeniorinnen](#)

The relevant documents submitted by both parties in the case, as well as by third parties to the Grand Chamber for the proceedings, are listed below:

- Submission of the Senior Women for Climate Protection Switzerland ([Observations on the facts, admissibility and the merits](#))

- Submission of the Swiss Government (statement in [French](#) (original) and [English](#) (unofficial translation) - as well as statement on the facts in [French](#) (original) and [English](#) (unofficial translation))
 - [Third party interventions](#) by 23 third parties.
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Contacts

The contact persons listed below are all on site in Strasbourg today and will be present at the public hearing. They can be reached from 12:00 noon.

If you are unable to reach your desired contact person directly, please contact from 12:00 onwards: Yvonne Anliker, Media Spokesperson Greenpeace Switzerland, +41 79 306 53 42, yvonne.anliker@greenpeace.org (also on site).

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