

EDITORIAL

In a decade in which environmental policy efforts have seemed to attempt to bring every environmental issue under climate change's rather ambiguous and non-concrete global umbrella, growing attention to plastics pollution and the impact of plastic waste on the environment at all levels is demonstrating the importance of maintaining awareness of reality rather than over-focusing on funding availability and publicity concerns.

Yes, environmental issues form a complex and entirely interconnected web; and yes, stressing the linkage between one's own issue and the climate discussion is often a way to gain both public attention and a possible hand in what is perceived as a veritable "pot of gold" in the form of international funding for environmental projects on climate. Yet it is difficult not to see that internationally assisted progress in environmental protection, conservation, sustainability and restoration has languished during the ascendancy of the climate issue.

While it remains indisputable that climate change is an important environmental legal and policy issue, this should not be used as an excuse for not addressing any other or more specific environmental point. It is not clear that the global environment has benefited from the long "time-out" that has occurred as the world waits with bated breath for the global climate framework (in which every such point is inevitably included) to be ready, before it dares take concrete action.

It is thus with a feeling of relief that we have noticed the rise of public attention to the plastics issue. Certainly, indiscriminate dumping of trash is one of the oldest areas of public environmental action – easy for a population whose attention span and awareness/educational level have been eroded by the increasing presence of social media and their offspring: oversimplification and tunnel vision. In addition, trendy media memes have a new high-tech problem to bemoan and oversimplify: the impact of microplastics. This new attention comes in conjunction with one of *EPL*'s favourite occurrences – negotiation of an international instrument that is directly relevant to the issue. The harms caused by microplastics are of particular relevance to marine ecosystems, on which a new international instrument is in negotiations.

In this issue, we highlight new developments in these two areas. We anxiously look forward to the possibility of a return to meaningful contributions by international law and policy to real on-the-ground environmental concerns.

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