

Preface (Volume 52, Issue 1, 2022)

We have commenced the EPL Special Section on the *Road to Stockholm+50 (2022) and beyond* with Issue 51.6 (2021). As already indicated in Preface to Issue 51.6, it entails a modest *ideational* effort to envision an environmental future on the occasion of Stockholm+50 (2022) event to be held in the Swedish Capital on 2-3 June 2022. The stage for the 50th year anniversary of the first UN Conference on Human Environment (UNCHE; Stockholm, 5-16 June 1972), has been set by the UN General Assembly's *modalities* resolution 75/326 of 10 September 2021 even as the parallel event to mark the 50th year of UN Environment Program is to be held on 3-4 March 2022. As the UN General Assembly's subsidiary organ, UNEP owes its birth (*vide* UNGA Resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972) to the UNCHE proposed and hosted by Sweden. One only hopes UNEP's 50th birth anniversary event in Nairobi (2022) does not seek to undermine significance of the 'mother' event to be held in Stockholm (2022).

Global Politics & Public Interest

This issue 52.1 comprises the lead article by Peter Haas (University of Massachusetts). It examines international environmental politics (comprising veritable processes, actors, issues, emergence of norms and governance forms) that impinging upon the policy and legal processes. It posits a crucial question: "Even as the global governance architecture has become more complex and hierarchical, what can UNCHE + 50 ordain for our environmental future?" For the architects of UNCHE + 50, Haas has proposed three strategic options: a modest approach, an ambitious approach, and a transformational approach.

Another lead article by Yann Aguila and Marie-Cecile de Bellis (Sciences Po, Paris) has sought to place under scanner *global public interest* as a "shift in the notion of sovereignty that goes beyond the interest of a State *per se*". The emerging practices enshrined in the global environmental legal instruments indicate something 'common' transcending beyond the narrow confines of state sovereignty that remains the fulcrum of global regulatory system. Notwithstanding the fact that reforming international law and global governance faces obstacles amidst "gravity of the environmental crisis", the authors have called for reforms "to give the global public interest the key role it deserves".

We expect the tranche of more thought-provoking scholarly contributions to enrich the *Road to Stockholm+50 and beyond* in the next Issues 52.2 and 52.3 (2022).

Global Regulatory Processes

There is an ambitious international law-making process at work concerning conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). A thought-provoking paper probes the first three sessions of the intergovernmental conference as well as deep discrepancies that have emerged with respect to the core issues in the negotiations in the last one decade. Due to a variety of factors, the final text of the agreement may not provide ideal solutions to the BBNJ *problematique*. Still, the author calls upon the sovereign states to undertake their responsibility as "interpreters of general interest and custodians of marine biodiversity". The proposed legal instrument holds promise for regulation of bioprospecting activities even as the global market is expected to reach \$6.4 billion in 2025. It remains to be seen as to what final shape it takes.

The section contains a paper on the crucial role of environmental legislations in addressing the challenges set out in the goals and targets of Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (SDGs 2030). Though it is draws upon the case of Bahrain, it holds value for replication in other countries. The author contends that a holistic management approach would offer a workable roadmap as the deadline draws closer for implementation of SDGs 2030.

Similarly, the paper on measuring public participation in the existing legal frameworks of Bangladesh indicates how best to grapple with balancing of competing interests to raise public awareness and strengthen role of the local communities for conservation of biodiversity.

During 2022, we look forward to further translate into action the *remit* of EPL by hosting the outstanding global scholarly works in the field – as a bridge – to make ideas and solutions available to the relevant decision-makers.

-Bharat H. Desai