

EDITORIAL

In his policy statement at the opening of the 27th (first universal) session of the UNEP Governing Council, Executive Director, Achim Steiner, emphasised that “[e]nvironmental policy, which is not rooted in and cognizant of the political economy of our societies and thus the economic policy and development discourse of our respective nations, will be at risk of being marginalized and ignored”. Thus, we have reprinted Council Decision 27/9: “Advancing justice, governance and law for environmental sustainability” in the Selected Documents section of this issue, for your consideration. Focused on the 4th Montevideo Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law (2010–2020) and its forthcoming mid-term review, it requests the Executive Director to further present a report on the progress made on implementing this Decision.

We are sure that the wider environmental law and policy community will make contributions toward advancing the 4th Programme. A coordinated effort to seek input from concerned organisations would ensure that the Executive Director’s mid-term review is as comprehensive as possible. Perhaps a committee should be established to assess the outcomes of the review, track implementation up till now, assess remaining gaps and provide guidance for the next five years, as well as jumpstart the next Programme for 2020–2030.

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We have been waiting for a decision regarding the date of the 20th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-20). It is now clear, following short informal discussions held on 28 March, that it will be postponed until after the intergovernmental consultations on the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) have been completed.

With no schedule for CSD-20, given HLPF’s focus and its aim to conclude negotiations by May 2013, one must wonder if, when it finally meets, the CSD will quietly be put to rest with a short procedural session. This would not be surprising, considering the CSD’s lack of consensus and results at recent sessions.

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We recently wrote a letter to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon congratulating him on his continued efforts to implement the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially his call for “a single, coherent global agenda” uniting the efforts of the HLPF, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the post-2015 development landscape. Therein, we highlighted the efforts of the International Council of Environmental Law along with the IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law that led to the adoption of the World Charter for Nature by the UN General Assembly in 1982. We also detailed the subsequent initiative to transform this “soft” law into internationally binding provisions through The Draft International Covenant on Environment and Development. Now in its 4th edition, the Draft Covenant is a blueprint for an international framework, consolidating and developing existing legal principles related to environment and development. Over the 18 years since the first edition was prepared by leading experts from all regions of the globe, it remains a “living document”, serving as a guide to the newest developments in the field of public international law. The Draft Covenant is an indispensable tool to unite the HLPF, SDGs and post-2015 deliberations.

Wolfgang R. Böhm

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