

Preface

The year 2020 witnessed a remarkable transition of the journal, *Environmental Policy & Law* (EPL). Notwithstanding the unprecedented challenge of Covid-19 pandemic, the sheer tenacity of IOS Press colleagues ensured a smooth transition into the online-era global practice of author submission site, double blind peer review system and author proof-checking. My audacious task of curating the 50th year EPL Special Issues (vol.50, no.6, 2020 and vol.51, no.1–2, 2021) also coincided with this transformation. The tenacity of the entire team was tested with pushing the boundaries to attain the unattainable in extreme circumstances of the global loss of lives and livelihoods. It vindicates the human capacity to overcome all the odds.

As I sought to explain in my earlier preface to the EPL Special Issues, its crystallization was nothing short of a miracle as it brought together, in an unprecedented circumstance, contributions of 23 outstanding scholars from 5 continents of the world. In a remarkable spirit of team work, IOS Press colleagues led by Marten Stavenga, Marleen Berfelo, Anne Marie de Rover and Carmel McNamara saw to it that the Special Issue articles are also presented in a book form – *Our Earth Matters* – in time for release on the World Environment Day of 05 June 2021. In a sign of huge positivity, the Webinar held on the occasion brought together contributing scholars virtually together from 15 countries. After the initial introductions and the statements of representatives of supporting institutions - International Council of Environmental Law, IUCN Commission of Environmental Law, Global Pact Alliance, Olof Palme International Centre and Jawaharlal Nehru University- the two Webinar sessions were chaired by eminent scholars Edith Brown Weiss (Georgetown University) and Nicholas A Robinson (Pace University).

Road to Stockholm + 50 (2022)

In a way, my year-long shouldering of the marathon shift in EPL's 50th year from one system to another did entail personal cost. Bereft of any

predicament, it was ordained by strong scholarly moorings to marshal best efforts to position EPL in the forefront of discourse in the field of international environmental policy, law and governance. The underlying aim has been to provide a robust platform to reflect upon cutting-edge ideas, proposals, processes and structures for our better common environmental future.

It is in this context that EPL will carry a sequel special section *Road to Stockholm + 50 (2022) and Beyond* to seed the ideas on way to another milestone of 50 years of the first UN Conference on Human Environment in June 2022. As a corollary, we plan to carry specially invited contributions of several thought leaders in the forthcoming issues of EPL vol.51 (2021) and 52 (2022). It will seek to reflect upon 'envisioning' the outcome at both the seminal events in June 2022: the 50th anniversary of 1972 UNCHE held in the City of Stockholm (Sweden) as well as the 50 years of UNEP located in the City of Nairobi (Kenya). A galaxy of outstanding scholars and decision-makers at international institutions are expected to provide their contributions. It will be yet another significant churning that EPL and IOS Press will host. It is expected to culminate with online/offline deliberations on World Environment Day of 05 June 2022.

Defining the *Gravitas*

As a corollary to the abovementioned rejig, the process of defining the *gravitas* of EPL will gradually comprise providing a platform for publication of scholarly articles on issues of contemporary global environmental concern. EPL is primarily a *global* journal and hence it will carry scholarly works that have global significance. Still, it will try to accommodate innovative ideas and high-quality research of regional and national significant that holds special value for the global audience as well as replicable in other parts of the world. Thus, the calibration of EPL's remit will be primarily guided by these *mantras*.

Relevance for the Decision-Makers

It is in this context of articulating relevance of EPL for the scholars and the other decision-makers, this issue 3 of EPL comprises six contributions. As an exemplar, the lead article on, “role of climate change in exacerbating sexual and gender-based violence against women”, seeks to deduce and analyze from scattered initiatives, scholarly literature in different areas, existing international legal instruments and intergovernmental processes, the growing causal relationship between climate change and SGBV against women and girls. It is a new challenge for international law that needs to be taken seriously and duly addressed in a timely manner. Alongside this, the article on “rights of nature versus conventional nature conservation”, provides good insight into the “rights of nature” as a superior environmental outcome compared to traditional nature conservation techniques including creation of protected areas. Though focused on Australia’s Tarkine wilderness region, it holds global value in affirming rights of nature as a major conceptual shift especially in how people via the law relate to the natural world.

There are two contributions that pertain to international water resources law from environment and sustainability perspectives. These analyze the legal status of regulatory process, structure and

mechanisms for water resources in the Indian sub-continent and the Kurdistan region. The 1960 Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) has now attained 60 years (1960–2020). It provides a classic governance model in action as regards hydro-diplomacy and treaty law. The IWT has resolutely stood the test of time. Still, with declining water flows due to climatic changes, it might need a review in the near future. So, a look ahead seeks to construe the future of the IWT for the riparian states of India and Pakistan. Similarly, the contribution on the Kurdistan region provides a glimpse into the water use practices and existing laws on water from the sustainability angle.

Finally, the two other articles provide analysis of the Mexican policies from Earth System Perspective concerning dryland degradation and the legal framework issues in the establishment and control of the Indonesian Marine Protected Areas.

We do hope that EPL’s global readership will enjoy this scholarly fare. It provides a cue, concrete ideas and a pathway to the scholars as well as the decision-makers in governments and international institutions to address respective issues and challenges effectively.

-Bharat H. Desai