

Preface (Volume 53, Issue 1, 2023)

The Global Environmental Perplexity

The year 2022 witnessed a great amount of perplexity on the global environmental scene. At EPL we took the lead in highlighting the historical significance of commemorating anniversaries of 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm) as well as 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

As a corollary to the back-to-back ideational processes carried out during 2020–2022 period, EPL brought out the special issues on (i) 2022 Stockholm+50 Conference (Vol. 52, Issue 3-4) and (ii) UNFCCC@30 and Beyond (Vol. 52, Issue 5-6). As a sequel to the 2020-2021 EPL 50th anniversary special issue comprising 21 scholarly articles, the 2022 special issues comprised 22 and 12 scholarly articles from around the world, respectively.

As the year drew to a close, it also witnessed two major Conference of Parties meetings on climate change (UNFCCC – COP27: Sharm el-Sheikh, November 6–20) as well as on biological diversity (CBD – COP15: Kunming-Montreal, December 7–19).

In continuation of our coverage of significant global environmental events and legal processes, this first issue of 2023 comprises an article (B. H. Desai) making scrutiny of the normative significance of the Stockholm+50 Conference outcome. It needed to be placed in a proper context, normative value to be understood and lessons to be deciphered for the road ahead. Unlike the ‘act of origin’ at 1972 Stockholm Conference, the fiftieth anniversary event was overshadowed by the UN Secretary-General’s warnings “to rescue” world from the “environmental mess” and the gathering storm of a planetary level crisis.

This issue covers a specially invited article (D. Bodansky) that provides a retrospective and an assessment of the thirty years trajectory of the global climate change regulatory juggernaut. It formed part of the climate change special issue (Vol.52, Issue 5-6). It seeks to assess as to how the climate change regime is doing at thirty, why climate change has been so intractable and how international law might address the problem. Due to some technical reasons, it now appears in this issue.

The issue covers four other seminal legal, policy and institutional perspectives on global environmental concerns as follows: (i) mapping the new horizons of law and science through the lens of 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (M. P. Poto et al.); (ii) concerted environmental justice issues in urban roof top policies of three North American cities (S. R. Asl); (iii) use of ecosystem services model in sustainable coral reefs management (Andreas Pramudianto et al.) and (iv) the legal framework for carbon tax in Cameroon (G. F. Ngwome) as an exemplar that could be replicated elsewhere.

The first issue sets the stage for EPL’s intensive scholarly coverage of other seminal global environmental legal developments during 2023.

-Bharat H. Desai