

Preface (Volume 51, Issue 6, 2021)

As indicated in Preface to EPL issue 51.5 (2021), the Special Section on *Road to Stockholm+50 (2022) and beyond* starts with this issue. It's an ideational process that seeks to *Envision the Environmental Future* at the momentous juncture of 50th anniversary of the first UN Conference on the Human Environment (1972). It is set to be celebrated on 2-3 June 2022, as per the UN General Assembly's *modalities* resolution 75/326 (10 September 2021). Lapse of half a century of global environmental regulatory processes enjoins us to evaluate the trajectory hitherto covered as well as to think aloud and ahead into the future. A galaxy of outstanding international law scholars has agreed to share their experiences, views and assessments.

Depleting Time

This issue 51.6 comprises the lead article by Prof. Nicholas A Robinson (Elisabeth Haub Law School, Pace University) that beautifully encapsulates the essence of our quest for a better environmental future in his inquiry entitled: *Depleting Time Itself: The Plight of Today's "Human" Environment*. He has highlighted the journey of the past five decades. As a corollary, he expresses scholarly concern and cautions that "beyond depleting the resources of Earth's natural and physical environment, humanity has also depleted time itself... In 2022, time is no longer in supply, as it seemed to be in 1972 (Stockholm Conference)". This inaugural thought-provoking prognosis sets the tone for other ideational contributions till issue 52.3 (2022).

The Pledge and other issues

In a great coincidence and as a sequel to Nick Robinson's above passionate plea, EPL is also pleased to provide a platform for the initiative of concerned *World Lawyers' Pledge on Climate Action*. It is unusual campaign emanating from the proverbial fatigue effect that has set in after three decades of the global climate change regulatory processes (1992 UNFCCC, 1997 Kyoto Protocol and 2015 Paris Agreement). The Pledge is designed

as an 'open letter' from and to the global legal community for "mainstreaming concerns throughout the law and legal profession". Mooted by 18 leading scholars, judges and practitioners, the Pledge is not in the standard article style. Yet, it seeks to make an impassioned plea in the face of growing scientific evidence of human-induced climatic changes on the anvil. In view of inherent power of the logic of law embedded in the Pledge, EPL has provided it a base, without any endorsement *per se*, to communicate the 'idea' to the global legal community.

EPL issue 6 also comprises four other articles that broadly cover three global issues of recognition of the right to a healthy environment, space debris mitigation and data protection & privacy in smart cities (Dubai and Barcelona) as well as counterproductive approaches in environment crime and law enforcement in Indonesia.

Our Earth Matters

At this juncture of life of our planet earth with human population reaching 7.9 billion (2021), the global environmental crisis has assumed serious proportions with challenges such as rapidly shrinking forests, wildlife and other resources, disappearance of species, severity of climatic changes, growing menace of plastics pollution and the global havoc caused by Covid-19 pandemic. Even as we gloat over the advent of the Digital and Cyber Age, Artificial Intelligence and Cryptocurrencies, we need to provide concrete policy and legal solutions to guide the decision-makers for safeguarding our essential ecological processes as well as, finally, overcome the human predicament as vividly underscored in *Our Earth Matters* (IOS Press, 2021). It posits a challenge and an opportunity for scholarly engagements to moot ideas and solutions that cannot wait for the datelines of 2050 or 2070 or 2100. As the year 2021 draws to a close, within the limits of its remit, EPL looks forward to hosting such cutting-edge research articles on issues of *global* environmental concern.

-Bharat H. Desai