

## Preface (Volume 53, Issue 5-6, 2023)

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# International Environmental Law (IEL): Perspectives of Women Scholars

The year 2023 became momentous as it witnessed another global conference – the *New York Summit on Sustainable Development Goals* (September 18–19), like the 2022 *Stockholm+50 Conference* (June 2–3), to take stock of the 2030 Agenda. SDG 5 aims to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.” In the third decade of the 21st century, humankind is still grappling with vital issues concerning gender-based inequality, discrimination and violence faced by women and girls who constitute almost half of the world’s eight billion population. The conference was a grim reminder of these gender-based issues on the occasion of the 75th anniversary (December 10, 2023) of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) that proclaimed: “All human beings are born free and equal” (Article 1). A forward-thinking Indian delegate, Hansa Mehta, is credited with insertion of word “human” in place of “men” in the 1948 UDHR. In fact, the draft prepared by the *UN Sub-commission on the Status of Women* vividly underscored at the time (May 13, 1946) that “Freedom and equality are essential to human development and whereas woman is as much a human being as man and, therefore, share with them.”

Notwithstanding the cherished goals prescribed in the international human rights and other regulatory instruments to bring about changes, the mental attitudes and harsh global realities persist on the ground for women and girls. They are reflected in the scholarly realm too. Hence, it was thought timely to elicit perspectives from women scholars from all continents. The basic idea was that if women take a look at the world’s environmental *problematique*, it might yield a different ideational picture for our environmental future.

The result was to devote an EPL Special Issue to highlighting the *perspectives of women scholars’ related to international environmental law (IEL)-making*. Many women scholars in all parts of the world were invited to contribute their thoughts on various facets of global environmental challenges. The editorial process of inviting contributions was a humbling experience. Extensive communication with this group of prestigious academic scholars revealed insights into the serious and persistent obstacles they face such as issues of gender parity, work environment, balancing of careers, families and health issues. While we did not achieve the number of contributions to the issue from women scholars that we had originally envisioned across numerous aspects of the IEL landscape, the issue nevertheless represents an important addition to the scholarly literature on these topics – and provides a platform for these women’s voices to be heard.

The EPL Special Issue comprises ideational papers organized in five parts: (1) *Function of International Law* (Elisa Morgera; Sara L. Seck); (2) *Sustainability* (Patricia Kameri-Mbote and Nkatha Kabira; Claudia Ituarte-Lima et al.); (3) *Climate Change* (Rowena Maguire et al.; Susana Borrás-Pentinat; Moumita Mandal; Mathilde Hautereau-Boutonnet and Sandrine Maljean-Dubois); (4) *Biological Diversity* (Pascale Ricard; Marta Abegon-Novella); and (5) *Circular Economy* (M.N. Boeve and I.M. de Waal). They address a wide range of issues such as (i) Transformative Change through the Lens of Children’s Human Rights; (ii) Women and the Marine Environment; (iii) Engendering the Legal Framework for Environmentally Sustainable Development; (iv) Environmental Human Rights Defenders to Biosphere Defenders; (v) A Feminist Perspective on UNFCCC; (vi) A Gendered Perspective on Climate Migration; (vii) Role of the Feminist Foreign Policy in Climate Change Exacerbated SGBV; (viii) Tools and Actors for a Better Enforcement: A Case of the 2015

Paris Agreement on Climate Change; (ix) A Preliminary Legal Analysis on 2023 BBNJ Agreement; (x) Making Sense of the Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction; and (xi) Global Plastic Pollution and Transition Towards a Circular Economy: A Case of the EU's Legal Framework on Plastics.

The prognosis, legal analysis and projections contained in these significant ideational papers address some of the contemporary environmental challenges of our times and provide a flavor of the scholarly engagements required for our better common future. Cumulatively, within the limits of time, space and resources, the perspectives of women scholars provide both a future trajectory of the required legal approaches as well as vindicate the audacity of hope this author has painstakingly sought to underscore through the pages of EPL as a global scholarly journal. We hope that the issues raised, legal analysis provided and balanced approaches presented in the contributions of these women scholars in this EPL Special Issue will inspire other women scholars to come forward to engage in more cutting-edge contributions. EPL would welcome such contributions from all women scholars.

The forthcoming 2024 *Summit of the Future* provides yet another occasion for audacious dialog on the relevant issue, as exemplified by the confirmed contributions for the EPL Special Issue on the *Planetary Future* to be published in the next issues of volume 54.

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