THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL COURTS AND TRIBUNALS IN INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

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Abstract

International environmental law is one of the most dynamic fields of public international law, and has rapidly acquired great breadth and sophistication. Yet the rate of global environmental decline has also increased and is accelerating. Halting and reversing this process is a challenge of effective governance, requiring institutions that can ensure that the now impressive body of environmental norms is faithfully implemented. This thesis explores whether and to what extent international courts and tribunals can play a useful role in international environmental regimes. Consideration is given to the threefold function of adjudication – in resolving environmental disputes, in promoting compliance with environmental standards, and in developing environmental rules.

The thesis is divided into three Parts. The first Part examines the spectrum of adjudicative bodies that have been involved in the resolution of environmental disputes, situates these within the evolution of institutions for compliance control, and offers a reassessment of their relevance in contemporary environmental governance. The second Part critically assesses the contribution that arbitral awards and judicial decisions have made to the development of norms and principles of environmental law, examining case law relating to transboundary pollution, shared freshwater resources and marine environmental protection. In the third Part of the thesis consideration is given to three looming challenges for international environmental litigation – accommodating greater levels of public participation in adjudicative processes, resolving practical problems stemming from the interaction among multiple jurisdictions, and ensuring that specialised courts and tribunals do not apply environmental norms in a parochial manner which privileges the policy objectives of issue-specific regimes.

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Preface

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This work takes account of international legal developments up to 1 July 2005, as well as a handful of particularly pertinent developments occurring after that date. The referencing system adopted generally follows the *Australian Guide to Legal Citation* (2nd ed, 2003) and the *Melbourne Journal of International Law Supplement to the Australian Guide to Legal Citation* (2004). However, to enhance the readability of the thesis, references to treaties are truncated in the main body of the work and cited in full in the Table of Treaties.

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List of Abbreviations

ACHR 1969 American Convention on Human Rights

ATS Australian Treaties Series

Bevans Treaties and Other International Agreements of the United States of

America (1776-1949)

CanTS Canada Treaty Series

CCSBT 1993 Convention for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna

C-CCSBT Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna

CFI Court of First Instance of the Court of Justice of the European

Communities

ConTS Consolidated Treaty Series

CUS Treaties and Agreements Affecting Canada in force between His

Britannic Majesty and the United States of America (1814-1925)

DSU Understanding on Rules and Procedures Governing the Settlement of

Disputes in the World Trade Organisation

ECJ Court of Justice of the European Communities

EComHR European Commission on Human Rights

ECtHR European Court of Human Rights

ECHR 1950 Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental

Freedoms

ECR European Court Reports
EEZ Exclusive Economic Zone
EFZ Exclusive Fishing Zone

EHRR European Human Rights Reports
EIA Environmental Impact Assessment

ETS European Treaty Series

FAO United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation

GA United Nations General Assembly

GAOR United Nations General Assembly Official Records

GESAMP Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine

Environmental Protection

IAComHR Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

ICC International Criminal Court

ICCPR 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

ICE Proposed International Court for the Environment

ICJ International Court of Justice

Abbreviations

ICJ Pleadings International Court of Justice Pleadings

ICJ Rep International Court of Justice Reports

IJC International Joint CommissionILC International Law CommissionILM International Legal Materials

ILR International Law Reports

ITLOS International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea

LNTS League of Nations Treaty Series

LOS 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

Convention

Moore's John Bassett Moore, History and Digest of the International

International Arbitrations to which the United States has been a Party (1898) vol 1-6.

Arbitrations

NAAEC 1993 North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation

NAFTA 1992 North American Free Trade Agreement

NCP Non-Compliance Procedure

NGO Non-Governmental Organisation
OAS Organisation of American States

OAS TS Organisation of American States Treaty Series

OJ Official Journal of the European Communities

OSPAR 1992 Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the

Convention North-East Atlantic

PCA Permanent Court of Arbitration

PCIJ Permanent Court of International Justice

PITS Pacific Islands Treaty Series

Recueil des Recueil des Cours, Académie de droit international de la Haye

Cours

RIAA United Nations Reports of International Arbitral Awards

TAC Total Allowable Catch

TIAS United States Treaties and Other International Acts Series

UKTS United Kingdom Treaty Series

UNCED United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

UNEP United Nations Environment Program

UNTS United Nations Treaty Series

UNSCEAR United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic

Radiation

UST United States Treaties and Other International Agreements

Abbreviations

WCED World Commission on Environment and Development

WTO World Trade Organisation

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 359 (entered into force 14 July 1866).
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- 1947 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, opened for signature 30 October 1947, 55 UNTS 187 (in force provisionally under the *Protocol of Application*, 55 UNTS 308).
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- 1956 Arbitral Compromis on the Interpretation of the Treaty of Bayonne of 26 May 1866 and Additional Act of the Same Date Concerning the Utilisation of the Waters of Lake Lanoux, opened for signature 19 May1956, reprinted in 12 RIAA 285 (entered into force 19 November 1956).
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 - Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, opened for signature 23 May 1969, 1155 UNTS 332 (entered into force 27 January 1980).
- 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, GA Res 2625 (XXV), UN Doc A/RES/2625(XXV) (1970).
- 1971 Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, Especially as Waterfowl Habitat, opened for signature 2 February 1971, 996 UNTS 245 (entered into force 21 December 1975).
- 1972 Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Materials, opened for signature 29 December 1972, 1046 UNTS 120 (entered into force 30 August 1975).
 - Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, UN Doc A/CONF.48/14/Rev.1 (1973), (1972) 11 ILM 1416.
- 1973 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, opened for signature 3 March 1973, 993 UNTS 243 (entered into force 1 July 1975).
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- 1974 *Nordic Convention on the Protection of the Environment,* opened for signature 19 February 1974, (1974) 13 ILM 511 (entered into force 5 October 1976).
- 1976 Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution, opened for signature 16 February 1976, 1102 UNTS 44 (entered into force 12 February 1978).

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- 1977 Treaty Concerning the Construction and Operation of the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros System of Locks, opened for signature 16 September 1977, (1993) 32 ILM 1247 (entered into force 30 June 1978).
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 - Convention on Future Multilateral Cooperation in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries, opened for signature 24 October 1978, 1135 UNTS 369 (entered into force 1 January 1979).
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 - Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, opened for signature 23 June 1979, (1980) 19 ILM 15 (entered into force 1 November 1983).
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 - Convention on the Rights of the Child, opened for signature 20 November 1989, 1577 UNTS 3 (entered into force 2 November 1990).
- 1991 Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, opened for signature 25 February 1991, (1991) 30 ILM 802 (entered into force 10 September 1997).
 - Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, opened for signature 4 October 1991, (1991) 30 ILM 1461 (entered into force 14 January 1998).
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 - Agreement on the Statute of the Central American Court of Justice, opened for signature 10 December 1992, (1995) 34 ILM 921 (entered into force 2 February 1994).
 - Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic, opened for signature 22 September 1992, (1992) 32 ILM 1069 (entered into force 25 March 1998).
 - Convention on Biological Diversity, opened for signature 5 June 1992, 1760 UNTS 143 (entered into force 29 December 1993).
 - Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Waters and International Lakes, opened for signature 17 March 1992, (1992) 31 ILM 1312 (entered into force 6 October 1996).
 - Niue Treaty on Cooperation in Fisheries Surveillance and Law Enforcement in the South Pacific Region, opened for signature 9 July 1992, (1993) 32 ILM 136 (entered into force 20 May 1993).
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- 1993 Convention for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna, opened for signature 10 May 1993, 1819 UNTS 359 (entered into force 20 May 1994).
 - FAO Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas, opened for signature 24 November 1993, (1993) 33 ILM 968 (entered into force 1 October 2004).
 - North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, opened for signature 8 September 1993, (1993) 32 ILM 1480 (entered into force 1 January 1994).
 - Settlement of the Case in the ICJ Concerning Certain Phosphate Lands in Nauru, opened for signature 10 August 1993, (1993) 32 ILM 1471 (entered into force 10 August 1993).
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 - Convention on Civil Liability for Damage Resulting from Activities Dangerous to the Environment, opened for signature 21 June 1993, 32 ILM 1228 (1993) (not in force).
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- 1998 Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, opened for signature 17 November

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- Convention for the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law, opened for signature 11 April 1998, (1999) 38 ILM 259 (not in force).
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- Convention on the Protection of the Rhine, opened for signature 22 January 1998, OJ L289 (entered into force 16 November 2000).
- Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, opened for signature 17 July 1998, 2187 UNTS 90 (entered into force 1 July 2002).
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