Editorial

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As we are entering into the 14th year of publication, we are proud to announce that our impact factor is growing and has gone up to 2.0! This great achievement is all thanks to the hard work of authors and reviewers, dedicated members of the editorial team and the Springer publishing group to promote the journal among the best students and colleagues worldwide. It is on this happy note that we would also like to wish you a wonderful 2014.

In the meanwhile, global environmental challenges are growing more and more severe as globalization, liberalization and demographic trends have led to a multiplication of production and consumption levels worldwide. Many of these challenges affect the delivery of global public goods, goods from which no one can be excluded (non-exclusion) and whose use by one does not affect its use by others (non-rival). The governance of these global public goods cannot be left to the market alone. Rather, we need collective governance systems that can deal with the free-rider challenge, and we need agreement at multiple levels of governance, but especially at the global level.

Looking back at the first editorial, the co-editors at the time wrote: ‘This journal aims to attract state-of-the-art articles from a wide range of disciplines and perspectives on environmental problem solving through the use of international environmental agreements, whether formal or informal, private or public’. These lines capture precisely the uniqueness and comparative advantage of this journal in relation to other journals dealing with environmental politics, international environmental law and economics: namely its focus on treaties and agreements as the central means of addressing global environmental problems and its reliance on multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research frameworks and methodologies for analysing environmental concerns and pondering on their solutions. It is for this reason and despite our cumbersome name—International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economic—that we have been able to attract top publications from the political science and international relations, law and the economics world. In fact, our cumbersome title, reflecting the spirit of the journal, has helped to focus our

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authorship and audience, and we believe that this has contributed heavily to the success of the journal.

Since the inaugural issue in 2001, there have been several changes in the world around us. First, with globalization, the associated development of porous borders that allow markets to function and the diffusion of authority, we are increasingly moving to a world of multi-actor, multi-level governance. In this world, there are complex relationships from local to global levels of policymaking and management and multiple actors, public and private, who are increasingly engaging in the process of governing the environment. No longer is the state the sole actor with decision-making authority in international affairs, and no longer are the institutions of environmental governance the sole responsibility of states. Rather actors ranging from city councils to corporations and civil society organizations at the levels of municipalities to regions to the globe are all involved in creating and generating norms, rules and regulation for the environment. Notably, these complex interactions and their implications are also increasingly reflected in the articles published in our journal.

Second, by focusing on environmental issues, we want to emphasize one of the three pillars of the sustainable development concept; not because we feel that the other two pillars are less important—namely the economy and society, but because we want to ensure that the environment component of the sustainable development concept receives adequate attention and support in the literature. Next to our strong environmental focus, we want to see more work on the interaction and integration between the three pillars. In this context, the current global shift to the discourses of green economy and inclusive development has influenced, and we hope will continue to do so, the papers in our journal. We further believe that questions and discussions on global and social justice, in particular, are especially relevant in today's world and we want to encourage future contributions on this topic. Our upcoming special issue on 'Green Economy and Justice' reflects our support towards contributions that engage with the dynamics between economics, politics and environmental and social justice concerns.

Third, we see that although the world of environmental agreements used to be based on legally binding agreements, in this last decade, we are moving more towards soft law agreements and policies and instruments such as public–private partnerships, private standards and voluntary agreements as a way to achieve our collective goals. This is to some extent compatible with the process of governance described earlier where actors other than states are increasingly getting more important roles, where interests are increasingly diverging and where the movement towards consensus in a changing geopolitical world is more and more challenged. The emergence and expansion of voluntary and networked forms of cooperation as means to address global environmental concerns and the associated implications for governance effectiveness, legitimacy and justice are some of the issues that INEA increasingly covers.

Nevertheless, international law and international organizations and agencies continue to be important. The United Nations General Assembly has, in follow-up to the Rio +20 Conference, decided to strengthen UNEP and its role as the centre for activities in the UN system on environmental issues, and as the 'authoritative advocate' to promote environmental issues. Through the establishment of universal membership of the governing body and a call for more stable funding, the General Assembly has committed itself to seeing environmental issues and the ecosystem services of our natural resources as of vital importance. It has strengthened UNEP in the hope that it can promote system-wide coherence on environmental issues. Enhanced its power as its Governing Council includes 193 member states of the UN, almost four times as much as existed before (58). And, it has

increased its legitimacy by ensuring that it can more effectively link with up all relevant stakeholders and has strengthened the ability of UNEP to engage in support to those countries that need it for the purpose of environmental governance. The discussion about the relevance, form and mandate of a stronger UNEP or even a separate environment organization gains renewed momentum in the light of these developments.

There is no doubt, however, that three parallel processes, specifically (a) the run-away effects of globalization and neo-liberalism, (b) the changing geo-politics with the rise of the emerging economies and (c) the economic and financial crises facing the developed countries, have challenged the global commitment to deal with environmental issues. As a result, a new set of questions emerges. If the political will of individual countries is low, can UNEP provide an independent advocate's role in promoting environmental issues? Does the shift from government to governance serve to strengthen or weaken environmental governance in the coming decade? Does short-term democratic politics fail to address long-term global problems where effects can easily be externalized to other parts of the globe? Are we in need of a new 'scientific revolution' in environmental governance research that will transform human societies? And how can paradigms with environmental concerns at their core become institutionalized in global politics? These are some of the issues that INEA will be grappling with in the coming years!!

The articles in this issue reflect some of the most important trends and debates underlined above. The first two articles theorize about the role, characteristics and future direction of international environmental agreements. Kim and Mackey investigate the proposition that international environmental law, as a network of treaties and institutions, exhibits some key characteristics of a complex adaptive system. Accordingly, they emphasize the need for system-level interventions to steer the direction of self-organization while maintaining institutional diversity in addressing environmental challenges. Subramanian and Urpelainen explore the desirable design features of environmental displacement treaties and the feasibility of collaboration on cross-border displacement of people on the basis of environmental degradation. Three more articles focus on emerging economies. Afionis and Stringer analyse partnership activities between Brazil and the European Union in the fields of deforestation and biofuels. Varkkey explores transboundary haze pollution in South-east Asia and argues that failure to effectively mitigate haze is due to the influence of patronage politics in the sector, which is linked to the ASEAN style of regional engagement that prioritizes the maintenance of national sovereignty. Shum argues that an international agreement on climate change will have to allocate a level of future emissions for carbon dioxide in China that is at least twice as large as the level for the USA, in order to account for the effects on Chinese interests from continued economic growth.

In addressing these and other contemporary issues, INEA will maintain its multidisciplinary character and perspective. There is a clear indication that now more than ever we require research that will help us understand the multifaceted problems we are facing with diverse methods and approaches that no single discipline alone can achieve. We are convinced that bringing together politics, law and economics under the auspices of one journal—our journal—will not only promote excellent disciplinary knowledge but also help bridge disciplinary boundaries and foster frontier environmental research for the future.

We thank you for your trust and support and look forward to a continuous and fruitful cooperation.