

The Important Role of MEAs in the 21st Century

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MEAs - General

- Multilateral Environmental Agreements, **MEAs** for short, also known as Environmental Conventions or Treaties
- More than 200 MEAs were adopted in the last three decades of the last Century
- Some of these MEAs have a global character with the participation of a large number of States; some others have a regional coverage but still a significant number of States
- MEAs are dynamic, as they are subject to new interpretations, clarifications, amendments and adjustments which are decided by the Parties to the MEAs at their periodic meetings (typically, once a year). MEAs thus tend to evolve with time to accommodate the new reality

MEAs – General (cont.)

- These MEAs deal with many environmental concerns of global and regional nature .Their declared goal is to prevent, or provide solutions to, such global or regional problems
- Many of the MEAs are in the form of a Framework Convention with independent sub-treaties known as Protocols

MEAs – General (cont.)

- One of the best known global MEAs, because of its international success, is the 1985 Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer, with its 1987 Montreal Protocol
- The 1997 Kyoto Protocol of the 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change was modeled after the successful 1987 Montreal Protocol. The UNFCCC and its Protocol are not considered successful
- A regional MEA, also well-known because of its success, is the 1976 Convention on the Long-Range Transport of Air Pollutants (LRTAP Convention) and its 8 Protocols, which cover Countries from West Europe (including Malta and Cyprus)

Principal MEAs

Other principal MEAs, recognized by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), are (+ indicates that Israel is Party to it):

1. 1973 Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) (+)
2. 1979 Bonn Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) (+)
3. 1989 Basel Convention on the Control of Trans-boundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (CBS) (+)

Principal MEAs (cont.)

4. 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (+), with its 1997 Kyoto Protocol (+)
5. 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (+), with its 2000 Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (-)
6. 1994 UN Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) (+)
7. 1998 Rotterdam Convention on Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (PIC) (signed but not ratified)
8. 2001 Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) (signed but not ratified)

Other MEAs of interest

Some MEAs dealing with sea pollution, which are of interest to Israel, are:

1. 1972 London Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (LDC) (-), and its 1996 Protocol ((-)
2. 1973 International Convention on Pollution from Ships, as Modified by the Protocol of 1978 Relating thereto (MARPOL 73/78) (+ only to Annexes I-III)
3. 1976 Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution (+) and its 6 Protocols (Regional)

Effectiveness of MEAs

- The effectiveness of these MEAs in reaching their declared goals for protecting the environment proved so far, with a small number of exceptions, to be rather limited
- Experience shows that at the meetings of the Parties to MEAs, the issues that raise their main interest are often related to international trade rather than to protecting the global environment

Effectiveness of MEAs (cont.)

- However, experience has also shown that these MEAs are a powerful tool for increasing the awareness of Governments and the public at all levels to advanced environmental legislation adopted by some other countries, as well as to their environmental standards, management objectives and priorities. These MEAs, by providing global exposure, thus promote and initiate advanced environmental legislation at the national level

Principles of MEAs

Adjusting these MEAs according to the experience gained increase their effectiveness in the 21st Century

Implementing in the 21st Century some of the environmental principles and practices that were formulated and introduced in the MEAs mainly towards the end of the last Century, should make a significant difference and markedly improve their effectiveness in avoiding their declared environmentally adverse effects

Principles of MEAs (cont.)

These environmental principles and practices were first formulated in 1972 in Stockholm in the UN Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE), and further developed in the 1987 Brundtland Report (Our Common Future), in the 1992 UN Convention on Environment and Development (UNCED) (known as the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit) and in the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg

Principles of MEAs (cont.)

These principles include:

- All Parties to be treated with equity and fairness. This does not necessarily imply equality or equal treatment of all Parties by the MEAs
- Recognizing the Precautionary Principle, but also including a flexibility of integrating new scientific and technological findings, that allow revisions of the MEAS in reaching their goals

Principles of MEAs (cont.)

- Considerations of Sustainable Development, which recognizes our responsibility to the future generations, play a crucial role in determining such policy
- Widest possible participation of all countries in the principal MEAs
- All decisions taken by the MEAs agreed by the Parties by consensus

Principles of MEAs (cont.)

- Beside State Governments, active involvement of the non-Governmental Civil Society in determining such policy, to ensure both transparency and wide public participation
- Establishing effective regimes to ensure compliance of the Parties with the MEAs' provisions, including full national reporting, monitoring systems, and Non-Compliance Procedures (NCPs)

Principles of MEAs (cont.)

- Establishing common but differentiated responsibilities of the Developed and Developing Countries, including differentiated commitments and provision of adequate funding and technology transfer to the Developing Countries
- Polluter-pays principle: Polluters should pay not only the full cost of meeting environmental regulations and standards, but also the full cost of any environmental damage caused by their activities