

## Weak governance of international treaties on environment and sustainable development

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## Too many international treaties and very few achievements

- More than 1000 different international legal environmental instruments (hard: with legal force, and soft: voluntary compliance)
- 139 major international environmental treaties of global or regional scope (Anton, 2013).
- "We have never had so many global agreements, objectives and environmental goals, but the deterioration of ecosystems continues to increase, climate change is accelerating, land and ocean degradation continues, air pollution and water is growing, garbage and waste are increasing, and we are still making a disastrously failed sustainable development." (John Vidal, 2012)
- "Very few achievements": meaning to be far of solving major global environmental threats.
- "Very few achievements": not meaning to ignore many specific achievements in many treaties

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## Science, politics and policies of climate change: time-line

- 1968: Stanford Research Institute (SRI) report's: "Sources, Abundance, and Fate of Gaseous Atmospheric Polluters" to the American Petroleum Institute (API).  
"Man is now engaged in a vast geophysical experiment with his environment, the Earth"
- 1978: Charney report
- 1990: First IPCC report
- 1992: Climate change convention
- 1997: Kyoto Protocol
- 1998: API circulates in USA's senate a detailed road map to undermining science and promoting denial of climate change:  
"Victory will be achieved when: those promoting the Kyoto treaty on the basis of extant science appear to be out of touch with reality."
- 2009: Copenhagen Summit's collapse
- 2015: Paris Agreement

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Weak global governance:  
causes related to treaties' regime

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## Weak global governance: causes related to treaties' regime

- Not treaty ratification by major countries (USA's not ratification of Kyoto Protocol, biodiversity and Basel conventions and eight other treaties)
- Proliferation of agreements making it difficult for countries to simultaneously address them
- Environmental global targets not embedded within trade treaties
- Treaty conflicts: e.g. Kyoto Protocol vs Climate Change Convention

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## Weak global governance: causes related to treaties' regime

- Weakness of sanctions or the absence or lack of a reasonable combination of stick (sanctions) and carrots (economic incentives)  
 Montreal Protocol on ozone: good architecture and practice
- Difficulties of building treaties to address the complexity of global environmental threats (planetary boundaries)
- Decisions of the United Nations by consensus: gap between the minimum common denominator political agreements of the recommendations of science

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## Weak global governance: causes related to treaties' regime

- Systematic promotion by developed countries of opening developing countries to very powerful corporations to exploit diverse natural resources without regard to compliance to environmental law
- Increasing concentration of production and consumption activities in value chains vs a vs traditional treaties
  - 10 multinationals control 55% of the fertilizer industry;
  - three commercial organizations control 80% of the world market for soy, corn, and wheat
  - one multinational produces one of every three beers consumed in the world
- **Feasibility of improving the environmental legal regime based upon lessons received throughout more than 50 years**

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## Weak governance of global treaties: substantive causes

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## Incremental policies

- International treaties based on incremental policies: many small policy changes are enacted over time in order to create a larger broad based policy change
  - In Rio 1992: a central criticism to Climate Change Convention, Biodiversity Convention, etc., emphasized that incrementalism is not a feasible way to solve major environmental global threats (climate change, species mass extinction).
  - During 27 year, this criticism has been evidenced
- Is it possible within the United Nations to agree on major policy changes?
  - The case of Solar Geoengineering and Carbon Removal solutions as major policy changes

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## Economics and governance

- Economic growth's highest priority: World Trade Organization vs a vs Climate Change Convention, Biodiversity Convention etc.
- Denial of climate change in the USA (detonated in the early stages by large multinationals): an effective campaign that permeated right wing ideologies
- Lack of strong international cooperation: the need for a level of cooperation and solidarity from all the countries of the planet -in economic, technological and social matters-, which no antecedent in human history

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## Economic transformation: an imperative to defeat major global environmental threats

- Redefinition of the notions of progress and deep changes of the current economic model
  - a complex purpose only constructible in the long term
  - not an alternative to respond to the need to place the planet on the path of not trespassing the 1.5°C limit: a short-term issue (twenty years)
- A transition
  - towards an economy that properly values nature as a way to stop its invisibility in the market and its waste and misuse; e.g. "The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity" (TEEB)
  - decoupling economic growth from its environmental impacts; an economic engine that does not trust for its stability in a relentless growth of consumption and material flow (e.g. circular economy, industrial ecology)

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## The rise of populism : the biggest threat to the Paris Agreement

- Right Wing Populism (RWP): strengthening of climate denial, introducing components of anti-elitism and anti-globalism
  - Trump's plan to quit the Paris Agreement
  - USA-China trade conflict
  - Bolsonaro's intention to relax protection of the Amazon
  - India, Indonesia, Mexico, the Philippines.....close to 50
- rise of RWP partially attributable to incomes and status erosion (groups 'left behind') across all post-industrial states, driven by technological change and globalization
  - hostility of groups 'left behind' to any climate change policy eventually associated to job losses in high-carbon industries
  - resistance to taxes to curb fossil fuels consumption
- climate skepticism and hostility to climate policy as a product of the ideological content of RWP
  - nationalism and authoritarianism in combination with anti-elitism
  - conspiracy theories: a consistent facet of climate skepticism

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## Three alternatives to strengthen global governance throughout the creation of a global democracy\*

- to bypass national governments and construct a new kind of global polity by joining local rather than national leaders together (Benjamin Barber, 2013).
- creating a political union of democracies that would exemplify the advantages of democratic federalism and presumably attract new democracies into its ranks.
- the democratization of existing global institution such as the United Nations.

\*Deese, R. S.. Climate Change and the Future of Democracy (Environmental Challenges and Solutions) (Posición en Kindle4149-4150). Springer International Publishing. Edición de Kindle.