



Special Session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development

Following the CSD-11 *Multi-Year Programme of Work for CSD: 2004/2005 to 2016/2017*¹ and the Fifteenth Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, to be held from April 30th to May 11th 2007, a Special Session of this Commission is convoked with regard to a very puzzling theme: *The Global Commons of the atmosphere: ozone depletion and climate change*.

According to Held, McGrew et al, global commons are *elements of the global ecosystem that are simultaneously used, experienced and shared by all and are under the effective jurisdiction or sovereignty of no one*, and the best examples would be exactly the atmosphere and the climate system.²

Since 1970s, there has been a growing concern with both the atmosphere and the climate system. This concern has been expressed through some actions taken such as the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the Kyoto Protocol. According to Elliot, while negotiations regarding the atmosphere are generally considered to be very successful, those regarding the climate system are highly politicized and there are several areas of dispute.³ Even so, the UNFCCC is considered a breakthrough in building the regime of climate change.⁴

Notwithstanding these differences, several linkages among both Conventions and Protocols can be noticed. The Vienna Convention has its potential set forth in its precautionary nature, contributor to the UNFCCC pillars, which contain more than the precaution principle but also equity, cooperation and sustainability.

The Montreal Protocol is viewed as a successful example of environmental diplomacy and the Kyoto Protocol is well known for its contentious nature. However, both Protocols have some common issues such as the North-South conflict, the technology transfer demand and the funding matter. But crucially, both are now in a moment of looking forward and appraising their effects, since the targets' deadlines are coming to their terms.

In the Eighteenth Meeting of Parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the concern regarding the Kyoto's Protocol Clean Development Mechanism impact in hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) production, which has global warming potential, was raised. In consequence, in addressing the future of regimes concerning the global commons, it becomes clearer the importance to address such linkages in order to guarantee their success.

¹ http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd11/CSD_multyyear_prog_work.htm

² HELD, David, McGREW, Anthony, et al. **Global Transformations. Politics, Economics and Culture**, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999, p. 378.

³ ELLIOT, Lorraine. **The global politics of the environment**. New York: New York University Press, 2004, p. 74.

⁴ Earth Negotiation Bulletin, Vol. 12 No. 318. Online at <http://www.iisd.ca/climate/cop12/>

The committee has only one topic that will be divided into two subtopics: ozone depletion and climate change. This way, it is very important to address comprehensively the agenda. Furthermore, the committee's topic is not to be presented as a problem, such as barely "the ozone depletion and climate change", but, rather, it will consider the evolution of the question through a *global commons approach*. In other words, the delegates will be expected to critically review the conventions, frameworks and protocols and bring up new solutions and interpretations.

Last but not least, the steps of the committee ought be taken bearing in mind the up-coming meetings such as the Nineteenth Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol, which will take place from 17 to 21 September 2007 and the Thirteenth Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC and Third Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, from 3 to 14 December 2007. Ultimately, the Special Session of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development will provide proper forum to a knowledgeable treatment of the global commons matter in deep perspective as deserved by one of the most important debates of the contemporary world.