

# Preface

---

---

The world faces a growing number of complex global challenges, but global political leadership and international cooperation are in short supply. Climate change and other environmental threats are among the most intractable issues on the global agenda today. Accelerated biodiversity loss, disruptions to food and energy supplies, intensified competition for scarce natural resources, and a warming climate all combine to create global risks that are likely to further destabilize an already unsettled world.

Addressing global environmental threats requires a high degree of international cooperation. As could be witnessed at the recent “Rio+20” UN summit on sustainable development, however, the international community remains divided on how to tackle the most urgent environmental threats. The international institutional architecture for dealing with global environmental problems is fragmented and weak, and global environmental protection efforts are insufficiently funded. It is encouraging that environmental concerns have gained in prominence in international politics, with a large numbers of actors – from concerned scientists to environmental activists and enlightened business and political leaders – now engaged in the search for global solutions. But despite the remarkable growth in global environmental policy-making, the international community appears unable to slow down, let alone reverse, most of the destructive trends of environmental degradation.

Still, some efforts to address specific environmental problems and create innovative institutional solutions are paying off. The Montreal Protocol of 1987, an international agreement to phase out ozone-depleting substances, is one of the outstanding successes of global green diplomacy. Negotiations on a global climate agreement may have proved less successful, but myriad initiatives to halt the growth in greenhouse gas emissions have sprung up at regional, national, and local levels. Environmentalists are mobilizing around the world to limit the destructive side-effects of industrialization and urbanization, while a growing number of corporations are willing to engage with campaigners in efforts to set new rules and standards for

environmentally responsible business behavior. And international economic organizations such as the World Trade Organization and the World Bank have begun to integrate environmental concerns more fully into their operations.

As climate change and other environmental issues have moved center stage on the international agenda, global policy practitioners and students are searching for new, innovative solutions and more effective policy approaches. The purpose of this *Handbook* is to help with this search and provide an authoritative guide to recent academic research on global climate and environment policy. The *Handbook* contains 28 chapters that offer in-depth yet accessible surveys of the main global policy issues and approaches emerging from the best research in the field. The *Handbook* is multi-disciplinary in orientation and covers perspectives from international relations and political science as well as economics, environmental studies, geography, and international law. It employs a broad understanding of global climate and environment policy that includes state-centric approaches of international diplomacy, treaty negotiation and law, as well as those transnational political activities that transcend the state-centric system. As such, this volume should appeal to a wide international audience. For policy practitioners of international diplomacy, international organizations and environmental groups, the *Handbook* will provide essential surveys of academic theory and research. For students enrolled in undergraduate or postgraduate degree programs, it will offer the starting point they need for the exploration of particular research fields. For researchers, it will allow easy access to specialized literatures across different topics and disciplines alongside their own.

The contributions to the *Handbook* – all written by world-leading experts in their respective fields – are grouped into four broad parts.

The first part, on *global policy challenges*, consists of seven chapters that review specific environmental issues and the global policy responses and governance systems that have been created to deal with them. The chapters cover climate change, global water governance, biodiversity and conservation, marine environmental protection, deforestation, biotechnology and biosafety, and chemicals safety.

The second part, on *concepts and approaches*, introduces major conceptual and theoretical approaches in the study of global climate and environment policy. The seven chapters discuss the role of global environmental norms, the changing nature of global governance, the concept of global environmental security, developments in international environmental law, discussions surrounding green growth and sustainable consumption, as well as climate change justice.

The third part, on *global actors, institutions, and processes*, introduces the main actors that make up the global policy agenda and examines key processes and institutions through which the international community is addressing global environmental problems. The seven chapters in this part cover the role of the nation-state and international society, NGOs and transnational environmental activism, business actors, international regimes and their effectiveness, international environmental negotiations, regional environmental governance, and the debate surrounding United Nations reform.

The fourth part, on *global economy and policy*, brings together chapters that consider the links between global policy on climate change and environment on the one hand, and major economic trends, institutions, and policy approaches on the other. The seven chapters discuss the concept of economic globalization, the

---

role of private regulation by business actors, the linkages between international trade, environmental protection, and climate change, the environmental dimensions of global finance, linkages between energy policy and climate change, economic instruments for climate change, and the role of international aid in adaptation to climate change.

Robert Falkner