

Preface

International environmental governance is likely to be a key topic on the political agenda in 2010, with an increasing number of governments interested in engaging on reform and others calling directly for it.

Governance will be a key focus of this year's UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum in Bali, providing an opportunity for reflection but also for focus as the world looks towards Rio+20 in 2012.

The UNEP Year Book 2010 underlines the way in which the international environmental architecture and machinery continues to expand, but perhaps in ways that are duplicating efforts to address environmental challenges and leading to more rather than less fragmentation.

The Year Book points out that, over the period from 1998 to 2009, 218 new multilateral environmental agreements, protocols, and amendments have emerged, in addition to existing ones.

The three chemicals and waste conventions—Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm—are, however, spotlighting part of a possible new approach aimed at streamlining and focusing efforts towards a Green Economy. In Bali the Conferences of the Parties to the three conventions will take part in a simultaneous extraordinary conference, having agreed in early 2009 to consolidate their common functions and enhance cooperation and coordination at the administrative and programmatic levels.

The events and the outcome of the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen have generated thousands of column inches and stimulated debate in the media and beyond.

The challenge of delivering the Copenhagen Accord is also fuelling the governance debate, with some world leaders calling for immediate and far-reaching action with respect to relevant UN institutions.

Where there was certainly light rather than heat was in regard to Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD). Well-supported and speedily implemented, REDD will make an important contribution not only to combating climate change but also to overcoming poverty and to a successful UN International Year of Biodiversity.

The Year Book estimates that investing US\$22-29 billion into REDD could cut global deforestation by 25 per cent by 2015. It also highlights a new and promising REDD project in Brazil, at the Juma Sustainable Development Reserve in Amazonas.

Here each family receives US\$28 a month if the forest remains uncut, one potential way of tipping the economic balance in favour of conservation versus continued deforestation.

Only time will tell whether the overall package contained in the Copenhagen Accord—including the pledges and intentions on emissions and funding for developing countries—will genuinely move the world forward in the direction of a low carbon, resource efficient, Green Economy.

It is clear that an increasing number of countries are pressing forward on this front, and for reasons above and beyond just climate change. 2010 will be a litmus test on whether this can be accelerated nationally but also globally. The UN Climate Change Conference in Mexico may well be a defining moment in this respect.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Achim Steiner".

Achim Steiner

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Executive Director,
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