

“In less than fifteen years, the response of the international community to the challenges of environment and sustainable development included four international summits, four ministerial conferences, three international conventions, two protocols, and a new financial entity – the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

On the face of it, these are remarkable achievements. But in spite of the high-powered gatherings, agreements and commitments, little progress has been achieved in improving the environment and in pursuing sustainable development. Global environmental trends continue to be negative and the promise of significant financial resources to address the challenges of environment and development has not materialized. Ninety million people are added to our global village every year, mostly in developing countries; one person in three still lacks adequate freshwater; greenhouse gases are steadily increasing; ecosystems that are critical for human survival continue to be undermined; and land degradation threatens food security and livelihoods, especially in Africa. It is ironic that as the evidence for environmental degradation becomes more convincing, the political will for action becomes weaker or lacking.

There are many reasons for such lack of progress, key among them is a weak and fragmented international environmental governance. Governance is about how decisions are being made, who is responsible, how they carry out their mandate, and how they are accountable. The international system is complex, fraught with duplication, and lacks coordination. The inadequacy of the current system is the result of having outgrown its original design.”

Mohamed El-Ashry
Pages 7-8

This book aims to make a contribution to the understanding of the current system of global environmental governance, its strengths and weaknesses, and the options and opportunities to achieve much needed reform.

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GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

Perspectives on the Current Debate

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