



Summary

Roundtable B: Law-I: Security as Independence or Interdependence: Implications for Global Governance

The Hague Conference on Environment, Security and Sustainable Development Peace Palace, The Hague, 9-12 May 2004

Questions – This roundtable discussion focused on two central questions: 1) why has the current system of international environmental governance not worked, and 2) how can we best change it?

With regard to the first question, no consensus could be reached on the degree to which the current system has been (un)successful. Points of view expressed ranged from the belief that the existing system needs to be radically reformed to the opinion that it is not that the system has failed, but rather that our goals have been too ambitious. The obstacles to reaching consensus on such broad and complicated questions were therefore significant.

Proposed solutions – A number of suggestions were put forward for the reform and/or improvement of international environmental governance institutions, organizations and mechanisms.

- Sovereignty is both a legitimate concern of states and a political crutch. It is important to build consensus among parties, but we should also recognize avoidance for what it is. Need to build a stronger sense of mutual interest in global/regional goods and reflect this in a broader notion of sovereign accountability.
- Focus on more specific issues: identify specific target areas and hot spots, analyze the problems, set priorities, and act upon them matching solutions with problems and actors with priorities.
- Build from the bottom up rather than the top down by approaching problems through local knowledge or by beginning with smaller coalitions of concerned states or parties, rather than trying to build immediate consensus among 180+ nations.
- Instill systemic thinking and attitude change. Unless we understand the underlying causes and conditions of a problem, we will not be able to find and apply the proper tools and strategies necessary to achieve optimal outcomes.
- Communication is at the heart of every successful exchange. All relevant parties must speak a common language in order to reach effective and mutually satisfying solutions.
- Financing for development: the sustainable development community needs to become more closely engaged in the financing for development process and key macroeconomic arenas.
- Cultivate public/private partnerships. In many cases, the private sector can be a willing partner, as corporations stand to benefit from environmentally responsible behavior and sustainable natural resource management. Consequently, industry should be involved in the process of determining the shape of regulatory and strategic environmental action. In so doing, we need to establish clearer mechanisms for insuring legitimacy, accountability, and mutual responsibility.
- Valuate benefits of environmental services.
- Establish an honest broker institution. Impartial third party mediation will insure that resources are matched with needs and commitments are fulfilled.
- Role of individuals: leadership and initiative in promoting environmental responsibility remain critical ingredients for effective environmental governance at all levels.