

Environmental Law and the Challenges of the Decades Ahead: Promoting Transformative and Recovery Responses to the Planetary Emergency

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PANEL 3. Imagining alternative pathways and taking action

INTEGRATING ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH SECURITY AND THE RULE OF LAW IN A WORLD AT RISK

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The origin of COVID-19, a high contagious respiratory pathogen spreading via respiratory droplets and infecting a large number of people across the world, is still dubious. Despite this, relevant studies have highlighted that around 70% of infectious diseases affecting people start in animal (zoonotic diseases like Ebola, MERS and SARS) and future outbreaks will be associated with environmental changes and ecological disturbances, e.g. deforestation, the destruction of natural habitats and agricultural intensification. Indeed, the overexploitation of nature is one of the main factors for the spread of new diseases, facilitating the spillover phenomenon and the evolving of new strains of bacteria and viruses. Zoonoses can be considered as both opportunistic and complex public disorders: they tend to affect those contexts already stressed by environmental, social and economic vulnerabilities and concern three often siloed sectors such as environment, public health and society. The present study focuses on tasking environmental law with generating new solutions to prevent and react to new non-traditional threats to our health and security. The analysis firstly underlines the lax enforcement of preparedness measures, the institutional and policy incoherence and the fragmentation of MEAs. Then it proposes some realistic responses to tackle the exposure to environmental and health hazards giving particular attention to the concept of environmental security, the enactment of resilience strategies and the implementation of green criminology in order to cope with future anthropogenic factors. A thorough scrutiny will regard the emerging fields of earth and green jurisprudence to re-connect the social organization, the right to a healthy planet and the ethos of Nature. The author concludes by inscribing those perspectives into a multi-risk integrated approach grounded on international law principles, human rights and the value of solidarity among States.