



Multilateral Environmental Agreements and Issue Linkage

会议论文集 加入时间: 2007-4-21 18:12:34 admin 点击: 2046

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October 2006

Abstract

A Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA) can be best defined as being a manifestation of the collective effort required at an international level to address environmental problems of a trans-boundary nature. There exist over 500 treaties and protocols aimed mainly at the protection of the environment. However, many of these elaborately drafted agreements have failed on compliance and enforcement, rendering them ineffective. The major factors contributing to non-compliance and non-enforcement can be identified as i) the public good nature of environment that brings about the problem of free-riding by the participants/non participants, ii) the absence of any overarching international legislative or judiciary body with sufficient coercive powers to ensure compliance and enforcement, iii) the excess of costs over benefits in complying with environmental treaties, iv) the intrinsic loose (or non-binding) nature of the principle of common but differentiate responsibility, and v) the surge of MEA's since 1972, among others.

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