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# **Sustainable Development: Theory and Policy**

**Week 10**

**New International Institutional Contexts**

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## 10.1 Multilateralism

### Environment- Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)

**On the environmental side, there is no single international legal agreement that is comparable to the GATT/WTO on the trade side.**



# Multilateral Environmentalism

*However...*

There is an increasing trend toward the **direct harmonization** of approaches to issues involving international protection of the environment, health and safety through the negotiation of regional and global agreements to deal with very broad environmental problems.



In recent years, attention has focused on three of these MEAs because of their explicit restrictions in international trade:

- **the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)**
- **the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, and**
- **the Basel Convention**



# Time Frames examples

- **The Montreal Protocol** was negotiated in just two years, between 1985 and 1987, although some preparation had taken place during the negotiation of the Vienna Convention, completed in 1985.
- **The Basel Convention**, completed in 1989, was also negotiated in a relatively short period,



## Two Implications

- (a) Some environmentalists see protection-of the environment as an absolute imperative.**
  
- (b) Some trade specialists see free trade (or the best approximation of free trade that can be achieved in the real world) as the only way to maintain a healthy global economy and support economic development.**





## 10.2 Nestedness Again

### Four Levels or Images:

- Man – individuals
- The State – the country
- The International System
- The Global System



# The Realities are Defined by:

- The requirements and conditions of **anarchy of the international system** (the third level). Stated differently, multilateralism -- as coordinated action among sovereign states -- emerged as a means of protecting the interests/ and activities of states in the international system -- in their pursuit of wealth and of power (Gilpin 1987).
- This pattern of interaction, driven by the imperatives of the sovereign states and the realities of power politics -- recognized no constraints on state action other than those agreed upon by the contracting parties. And the agreements were about **state action** in the international arena.



## 10.3 Reversing the Process

### The State - Reminder

- Historically, multilateralism emerged as a means of defining and stabilizing relations among nations-- and specifically with respect to their international property rights.
- Reverting to the traditional literature in the study of international relations, as articulated by Boulding (1956, Waltz 1957, and synthesized by North 1990), multilateralism emerged as a means of accommodating state-level actions (the "second image" in international relations) to the realities



# Reversing the Process:

- The "reverse process" evident in multilateralism for environmental management is to **protect common spaces** -- defined in terms of air, atmosphere, land and oceans.
- Indeed, this "reverse process" served to consolidate attention to the importance of common spaces and to accord to these ~spaces a quasi legal status in international law.
- Importance of Reversing the Process:



## **10.4 Barriers to Knowledge – Reducing Barriers – A Strategy**

- **Coherent Conceptual Framework**
- **Multidisciplinary Perspectives**
- **Knowledge Screening for Reliability**
- **Cross Indexing & Content Connectivity**
- **Multiple Search Strategies**
- **Multilingual Capabilities**
- **Strategic Partnerships**
- **Development of New Knowledge**