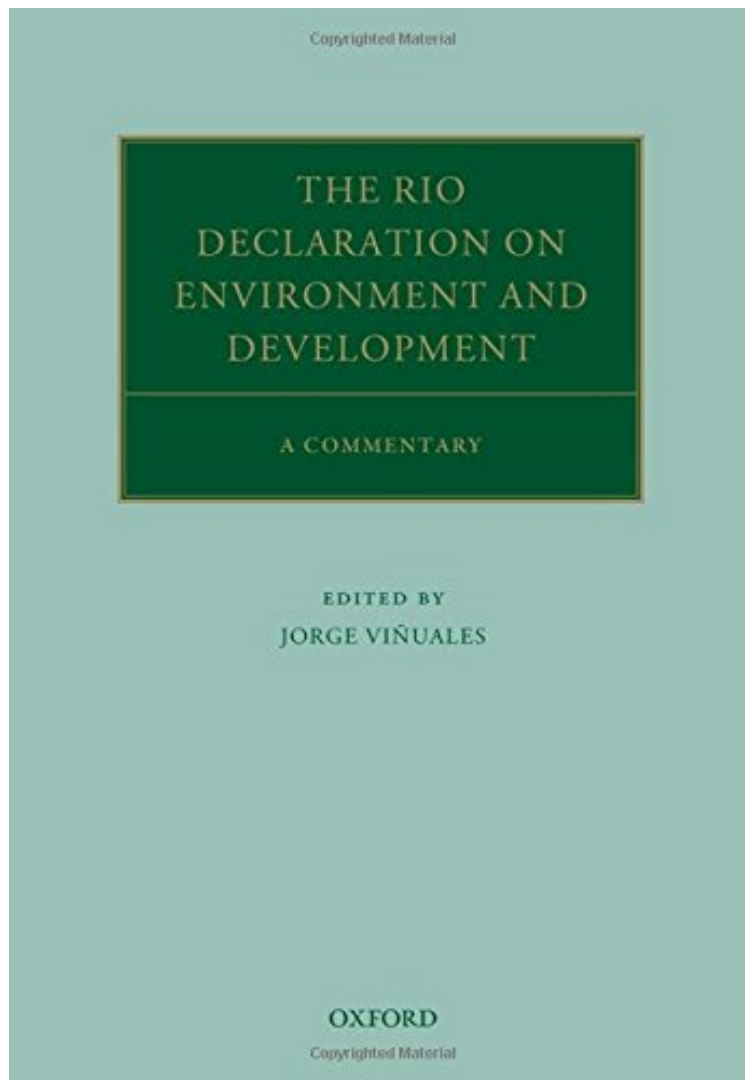


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TIME IN OVER 20 YEARS AN EXPERT AND AUTHORITATIVE WORK ON THE RIO DECLARATION OF 1992

An appreciation by Phillip Taylor MBE and Elizabeth Taylor of Richmond Green Chambers Environmental lawyers, as well as international lawyers and indeed anyone concerned with environmental issues will welcome the emergence of this new book from the Oxford University Press. As Professor of Law and Environmental Policy at the University of Cambridge, the author, Professor Jorge E. Vinuales has led a team of more than thirty experts in this field from top universities worldwide, each of whom has contributed impressively researched and informed discussion on the multitude of consequences and ramifications emanating from the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development of 1992. In his excellent introduction, Vinuales discusses the significance of the Rio Declaration particularly from an historical perspective and expresses some surprise -- and what a surprise it is -- that there has been no commentary of note published about it in the more than twenty years since the 1992 Earth Summit for which it served as a preparatory document. Now over twenty years later, amid increasing unease expressed on a range of environmental issues including threats to the environment in areas of conflict the publication of this book is nothing if not timely. The Rio Declaration, says Vinuales, is a consensual statement, laboriously reached which, shortly before the Earth Summit took place, brought together the main principles and policies that underpin our approach to the environment. Alone among the hundreds of existing treaties on environmental law, the Rio Declaration is, he says, the most representative instrument of the entire body of norms, treaties, domestic laws and decisions governing our relationship with the environment. Particularly interesting is the extensive commentary on the twenty-seven principles contained in the Declaration, each of which is discussed in turn by each separate contributor. These range from Human Beings and the Environment and Poverty Eradication to Science and Technology, Environment and Trade, The Role of Women and the consistently controversial Principle 16 the Polluter Pays Principle with its obvious links to Principle 13: Liability and Compensation. (The well-nigh intractable difficulties of enforcing the practical application of these principles, especially on China, is a related and separate topic which will ideally, be discussed in subsequent books.) Unique among environmental treaties, the Rio Declaration was adopted by all member states within the United Nations as the result of the Rio Conference and, as pointed out in Pierre-Marie Dupuys contribution, the first and until now the only conference that can be called the Earth Summit. This factor alone should persuade all those interested in, or professionally involved in the complexities of environmental issues, that that this book is one of the most important and authoritative contributions to environmental research and comment currently available. Certainly it should emerge as an essential acquisition for every environmental lawyers professional library. The publication date is cited as at 2015.

The international community has long grappled with the issue of safeguarding the environment and encouraging sustainable development, often with little result. The 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development was an emphatic attempt to address this issue, setting down 27 key principles for the international community to follow. These principles define the rights of people to sustainable development, and the responsibilities of states to safeguard the common environment. The Rio Declaration established that long term economic progress required a connection to environmental protection. It was designed as an authoritative and comprehensive statement of the principles of sustainable development law, an instrument to take stock of the past international and domestic practice, a guide for the design of new multilateral environmental regimes, and as a reference for litigation. This commentary provides an authoritative and comprehensive overview of the principles of the Declaration, written by over twenty interdisciplinary contributors, including both leading practitioners and academics. Each principle is analysed in light of its origins and rationale. The book investigates each principle's travaux préparatoires setting out the main points of controversy and the position of different countries or groups. It analyses the scope and dimensions of each principle, providing an in-depth understanding of its legal effects, including whether it can be relied before a domestic or international court. It also assesses the impact of the principles on subsequent soft law and treaty development, as well as domestic and international jurisprudence. The authors demonstrate the ways in which the principles interact with each other, and finally provide a detailed analysis of the shortcomings and future potential of each principle. This book will be of vital importance to practitioners, scholars, and students of international environmental law and sustainable development.