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### THE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS (IEA) DATABASE PROJECT: CONTENTS AND USAGE\*\* (abstract)

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#### Introduction

The International Environmental Agreements (IEA) Database Project was started in 2002 to foster analysis of international environmental agreements (IEAs) by providing a "single source" repository for information related to IEAs and to the evaluation of their influence. The Database seeks to provide negotiators, treaty secretariats, scholars, researchers, students, and interested citizens with a comprehensive list of multilateral IEAs as well as a large, but non-comprehensive, list of bilateral IEAs. IEAs, for the Project's purposes, are "intergovernmental document[s] intended as legally binding with a primary stated purpose of preventing or managing human impacts on natural resources".

The project was begun to improve on other efforts to catalogue global environmental governance by:

- establishing a clear and explicit definition of an "international environmental agreement" (the definitions used by other projects are often unclear or unstated);

- identifying all IEAs (i.e., the population of IEAs) fitting the definition above (agreements included in other projects are often incomplete, unsystematic, or out of date);

- providing electronic texts of all MEAs (the project has collected and, where necessary, digitized the texts of many obscure MEAs that are not readily available elsewhere in electronic format);

- categorizing IEAs by "lineage" (see below -- no other projects clarify the legal linkages among agreements);

- linking agreements to performance indicators (no other projects link agreements to corresponding empirical evidence regarding behaviors and environmental quality that could be used to assess their influence on state behavior);

- identifying a comprehensive list of environmental secretariat websites (no other project identifies as many environmental secretariats); and

- updating the list annually, and often more frequently, to ensure it is current with respect to agreements included as well as membership.

As of July 2012, the IEA Database contains:

- a systematic, comprehensive, and current list of over 1100 multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs);

- an extensive (but necessarily incomplete) list of over 1500 bilateral (BEAs) and other environmental agreements;

- basic information on each agreement (date and place of signature, date of entry into force, membership, responsible secretariat, etc.);

- the electronic texts (fully searchable) for all MEAs and many BEAs, including the original, as well as the current ("as amended"), versions of the texts;

- coded versions of over 150 MEAs, with each provision categorized into one or more of 33 categories that foster systematic comparison of agreements based on the similarities and differences in their specific provisions; and

- access to an extensive repository of "performance data" that can be used to assess institutional influence on state behavior.

Defining the population of International Environmental Agreements

Creating a systematic and comprehensive catalog of all "international environmental agreements" requires a clear and explicit definition of the three elements of that phrase: agreement, international, and environmental. The definitions given here clarify for all database users the basis on which instruments were included or excluded from the database. These definitions are not intended to suggest that those agreements not included are less important than IEAs. Rather, the Project has sought to build a more useful database by carefully developing -- and consistently applying -- explicit definitions with the hopes that others will undertake to do the same in other areas. Building the database: past and future

The IEA Database Project has benefited greatly from assistance from numerous people and funders since its inception in 2002. Although the project was initiated by the author as part of ongoing research, the US National Science Foundation funded the project from 2003-2007 under Grant No. 0318374 for "Analysis of the effects of environmental treaties." The project also benefited greatly during this period from the insight and guidance of an Advisory Board that included Peter H. Sand, Robert O. Keohane, and William C. Clark. Development of the database was also supported by a Sabbatical Fellowship Grant from the American Philosophical Society (2002-2003), a Summer Research Award (2002) from the University of Oregon, and research assistance support in various years from the University of Oregon Environmental Studies Program.

In addition, scores of undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Oregon and at Stanford University have played crucial roles in identifying international environmental agreements, coding those agreements, and collecting, digitizing, and proof-reading texts of those agreements. From 2005-2009, Dr. Steve Rothman played a central role in helping develop the coding manual and train and manage the 40 undergraduate students who coded the 150 agreements in the database.

Ensuring that the IEA Database Project remains useful in the future depends on making it a "live" database. Given the dynamic world of international environmental law and politics, more international environmental treaties, conventions, protocols, and amendments surely will be signed every year. And the ability of those agreements to effectively resolve the problems that prompt their creation will depend crucially on whether the scholarly community can provide more compelling and accurate insight into what features of IEAs most foster environmental success and under what conditions they will do so. Therefore, it is crucial for the IEA Database Project's success that scholars help identify new agreements for inclusion as they are signed, identify agreements found missing from and errors in the Database, and, perhaps most important, use the Database to undertake analyses of the effectiveness of the IEAs in the Database.

#### Footnote

\*\*Interested individuals are encouraged to visit the IEA Database Project website at <http://iea.uoregon.edu/> to learn more and are encouraged to contact the author with questions, with suggestions for agreements to add to the database, and with requests for assistance in assessing institutional effectiveness and performance.

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