

## EDITORIAL

# Managing Climate Change: Challenges for International Organizations and for Scholars Who Study Them

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### The Challenge

There is a strong scientific consensus that anthropogenic factors based on emissions of greenhouse gases are increasing global temperatures at levels that will cause significant climate change.<sup>1</sup> The fifth assessment by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to be issued in 2014, will reflect a consensus, based on new information, that the problem is even worse than previously suggested. Dealing with this problem will make exceptional demands on an emerging international public sector. This issue of the *Journal of International Organizations Studies (JIOS)* explores why this is the greatest challenge to global governance ever and presents some of the evidence about how institutions are responding. It indicates that more work needs to be done to understand the implications of the challenge.

Historically, international organizations have emerged when nation-states, the building blocks of international political order, have decided that a problem cannot be addressed in an orderly fashion by state actions within their own sovereign borders or by the magic of the marketplace and private enterprises. These problems usually cross borders, require concerted and agreed action by groups of states (or, in most cases, by all states), and need a competent but neutral public institution to ensure order in solving the problems.

Climate change is a borderless, universal problem that cannot be solved by the action of individual states or the marketplace. It requires that states act but that they do so in a consistent way. Managing climate change will involve significant regulation and considerable financial flows. These, in turn, will require neutral and competent international public institutions if the problem is to be addressed successfully.

Academic research has helped understand the dimensions of both the problem and the response by institutions in the past and is a significant part of the process of defining the contours of the problem to be addressed. In a formal sense, this has been done through the IPCC, which has been established to collect and weight scientific evidence about climate change and was analyzed in the inaugural issue of this journal (Mathiason and Bhandari 2010). There are many analyses of climate change, including some by early public figures like James Hansen (Hansen 2009), climate scientists (Cullen 2010), and economists (Goodstein and Intrilligator 2012).

Despite the fact that international institutions will clearly be tasked with coping with the global response to climate change, little research has focused on the current and new institutions dealing with climate change. This is partly due to the fact that the negotiations about how

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1. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), *Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report, Summary for Policymakers*, 2007, p. 2 states "Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice and rising global average sea level."

to address the climate change problem have not concluded. Indeed, the negotiation process itself has received considerable attention over time (Paterson 1996; Mintzer and Leonard, 1994; Depledge 2004) including by the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* from the International Institute for Sustainable Development, which has covered climate change since 1992.

As part of *JIOS*' goal of stimulating new and innovative research on global institutions, the editorial board decided to dedicate this issue to the management of the institutions of the international public sector dealing with the international response to climate change. We reached out to scholars through the very active listservs dealing with climate change and received a modest response. This is probably because there has historically been a lag between the time an issue becomes noticed and when it generates academic research. Often the research is done by younger scholars who have realized the importance of the issue. That is clearly the case with several of the authors of articles included in this issue. A few are young, either just finishing their doctorates or at an early stage of their careers. Others are more experienced scholars like Pamela Chasek, who has been following the climate change negotiations for decades through her work with *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*, the International Institute for Sustainable Development, and her well-known publications on the climate change negotiations (Chasek, Downie, and Brown 2010). Her article on funding the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification is a result of her work on that key issue. Another is Michael Mehling, president of the Ecologic Institute and an adjunct professor at Georgetown University. Orr Karrasin, in addition to her teaching and research, has been a member of Israel's delegation to the UNFCCC negotiations.

When I was the deputy director of the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women at the time of the first Rio Conference, one issue we addressed was whether there was a gender dimension to the environment. At that time, we observed one dimension: Women were more concerned with the environment than men, arguably because they were more accustomed to taking a longer-term view of problems and their solution. This finding is confirmed in this issue. With the exception of Mehling and myself, all of the authors are women.

The articles in this issue suggest there is beginning to be an interest in the institutional and managerial issues, but this is still in early stages. This is unfortunate, since many of the decisions to be made over the next five years will have to do with international public institutions. Absent from a clear understanding of what these institutions can and cannot be expected to do, decisions about how to organize the international public sector will be guided by political rather than managerial capacity criteria.

Management of international institutions has been a focus of governments, often in the context of financing the organizations, but not of scholars. One reason may be that the organizations themselves seem opaque and impenetrable. They are non-sovereign and exist formally at the behest of their sovereign member states. In fact, they are mostly visible only when member states negotiate. As I have argued in my study of international secretariats, *Invisible Governance* (Mathiason 2007), it is the de facto policy of international officials to remain below the radar. For that and other reasons, it has typically been difficult for scholars to examine the inner workings of the international public sector. Certainly, scholars of public administration and management have not paid much attention to the management of the international public sector, and there are few universities who have bothered to look seriously at these issues.

In examining the problems, the articles in this issue show the range of focus that is necessary to understand the management challenges. They include examinations of the overall structure of the international public sector in dealing with the issue, emerging elements of the negotiating process that will affect the institutional decisions to be made, the key issue of how to finance this part of the international public sector as it emerges, and how existing organizations can and will have to adapt to the new tasks. These analyses point to new needs for research and analysis.

### **Overall Structure of the International Public Sector**

The complexity of management at the international level has to be taken into account in determining the governance structure to be put in place. The international system itself is complex, consisting of a system of independent intergovernmental organizations including the United Nations and its specialized agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions (World Bank Group and the IMF), regional development banks, regional organizations like the Organization of American States and the African Union, organizations of like-minded states like the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. Under normal circumstances, obtaining a consistent policy and management structure is difficult. As an example, the quadrennial report on operational activities of the UN secretary-general, in his capacity as chair of the Chief Executives Board of the United Nations System, sent to the General Assembly in 2012 stated:

16. . . . We no longer think in terms of agencies working in isolation as in the past. At the same time, we need a fresh approach where coherence is found through issue-based alliances and coalitions and in which United Nations agencies, singly or in groups, fully exploit their potential. We need to help countries build on the United Nations normative agenda and the Organization's policy knowledge and advice, including by involving non-resident agencies.

17. Far-reaching change will require reform in a number of areas, supported by strong commitment from Member States. There is a limit to what can be achieved with the present instruments at our disposal, given the separate lines of accountability, funding, and governance. These matters are complex but warrant consideration both at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and in the preparatory discussions on the post-2015 development goals.

The problem of coherence in the structure was evidenced at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012. There was an effort to upgrade the United Nations Environment Programme to the status of a specialized agency, as a means of ensuring coordination in all elements of environmental management, including climate change. This failed, and there is currently no central organization responsible for managing the system as a whole.

In this context, Michael Mehling's analysis in "Frameworks for International Climate Governance: Assessing the Alternatives" looks at how scholars and research institutions have examined the nature of the governance issue. He reviews some major evaluations and concludes that there is an emerging consensus about criteria to apply in assessing institutional arrangement suggestions. He develops a matrix that could be applied to analyzing the likely effectiveness of proposed arrangements.

### **Negotiation Process**

Over the life of the climate change management regime, negotiation will continue to be an essential function, since once the procedures are built into an international convention, the periodic meetings of states party will continue to determine how the regime functions. The annual meetings of the Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) have been where agreements are reached or not. The COP having agreed to achieve the binding agreement by 2015, the next sessions will be critical.

UN negotiations, for very practical reasons, take place by groups. While individual states have the right to negotiate by themselves, in practice they find themselves more effective in groups. The main groups are the G-77, the European Union, and groups of the main non-European developed countries. Each seeks to achieve positions that they can use as the basis for negotiation. The EU, by rule, negotiates as a bloc. The G-77 is less homogeneous and within

it regional groups negotiate. One of these is the African group. By its size in number and the consequence for its members of not dealing effectively with climate change, this group should have a major say in the negotiations and, if the negotiations are to be successful, the group needs to be effective.

This is the focus of Anesu Makina's article, "Managing Change: The Africa Group in Multilateral Environmental Negotiations." Her approach explores the factors necessary for the group to be effective. She finds that there have been serious problems in achieving results in different climate change negotiations. Based on an analysis of different cases, she suggests where African countries can improve their success in ensuring that their interests are taken into account in final agreements. The approach taken could be applied to other negotiating groups in the process.

### **Funding**

A major issue in managing international organizations is funding. Since international organizations cannot levy taxes to obtain revenue, they have essentially three sources: assessed contributions of members, voluntary contributions by members, and fees for services rendered. Each of these has limitations. Assessed contributions are somewhat like country club dues. States are expected to pay them as a condition for being a member of the organization. Because they are mandatory, increasing them has proven extremely difficult, and for most organizations in the UN system, budget-to-budget resources have been limited to zero real growth or less. Voluntary contributions are also problematic. Many organizations, particularly the development funds, rely on them rather than assessments, but they can vary according to the global economy and, in any case, tend to follow the donors' priorities rather than other needs. Finally, funding organizations using fees-for-services has proven difficult since there has been a principle that services should be free. The exceptions here are the development banks, who fund their operations by interest charges, and the World Intellectual Property Organization which charges for registering patents and copyrights.

How the new (or existing) organizations dealing with climate change management will be funded is an essential discussion. If they can be placed on a firm financial footing, they will deliver the necessary services, but if not, the political problems that have plagued international organizations, when one or another of the major contributors objects to policies and programs, will carry over to the climate change management institutions.

Probably more importantly, the existing premise of the climate change negotiations, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, means there will be a significant flow of financial resources through these multilateral organizations as issues of adaptation and mitigation are tackled in the main carbon emitting economies and those affected but not historical emitters.

The article by Orr Karassin on multilateral climate change funds and the governance of climate risks addresses fundamental concerns. Karassin notes that in climate change a different philosophy, alleviating risk, should motivate financial flows rather than classical references to development. She examines two funds that function differently than traditional funds. One, the Adaptation Fund, is itself a beneficiary of another mechanism, the Clean Development Mechanism, in that a fee for service in the CDM is used to provide resources to the fund.

For other organizations, obtaining sufficient funds to permit operations continues to be a problem. This is an issue addressed by Pamela Chasek in "Follow the Money: Navigating the International Aid Maze for Dryland Development." She looks at the financing for the poorest of the Rio Convention organizations, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, which faces a constant financial crisis because secure funding is not available. Funding from assessed contributions has not responded to need, although it should be noted that UNCCD is one of the few organizations of the UN system that has adopted results-based management and for one biennium at least had an increase in assessed contributions in real

terms. In so doing, she looks at the Global Environment Facility (GEF) that was set up under World Bank management but with UNDP governance (one country-one vote) structures and is expected to be the source of voluntary contributions.

In that sense, Karassin and Chasek explore the two extremes of funding climate change organizations with those studied by Karassin increasingly being based on fee for service, while the UNCCD, studied by Chasek, continues to depend on traditional financing.

### **Adapting Organizations to the Task**

While to a certain extent climate change will be managed by newly created organizations, much will also depend on older, existing organizations that will have to adjust their policies and priorities in order to provide the policies and programs necessary to address climate change.

Nina Hall in “Moving Beyond its Mandate? UNHCR and Climate Change Displacement,” explores the issue of how an institution, set up primarily to deal with political refugees, often in the context of war and internal violence, can deal with the expected problems of people crossing national borders because of the consequences of climate change. She notes some of the difficulties in making this transition and her analysis suggests other organizations may face similar needs for reform.

M. Leann Brown in “European Union Environmental Governance in Transition” explores a different kind of institution. The EU is both an international organization and has some almost sovereign authority, depending on the subject area. In some areas it has been delegated authority by its members. Climate change management is one of these, and the EU, since its members have accepted the imperatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions established in the Kyoto Protocol, has set up functions that go beyond those of international organizations. These include regulatory systems and also institutions to manage mitigation such as a European cap and trade market.

### **What Next?**

The articles in this issue show that solid research is possible but also show where there are gaps in dealing with management of the climate change regime. More research will be needed over the next decade if academics are to be able to influence and improve the process.

One area not covered by the papers for this issue, and in fact seemingly not of interest, is how to make the climate change management regime accountable. Because the institutions are not sovereign and are dependent of the compliance by individual states, ensuring that states live up to the obligations that they have taken on has been a concern for decades in areas like human rights, as well as in nonproliferation. A similar concern needs to be applied for climate change, where institutions (including funding institutions) will depend on national reporting of compliance to determine whether goals are being met and institutions are working effectively. We need research to look at how compliance is verified in other regimes and how that could be applied to the new and evolving climate change agreements and institutions would be very valuable.

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