

# Environmental Governance

## Definition

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) <sup>1)</sup> defines **Environmental Governance** as “the means by which society determines and acts on goals and priorities related to the management of natural resources. This includes the rules, both formal and informal, that govern human behaviour in decision-making processes as well as the decisions themselves. Appropriate legal frameworks on the global, regional, national and local level are a prerequisite for good environmental governance”. <sup>2)</sup> Good **Environmental Governance** is seen as critical for achieving environmental sustainability and ultimately for achieving sustainable development <sup>3)</sup>.

## Concept

Governance in general includes the overall management of human activities by the government, civil society and businesses. It is a concept that has been widely used since the 1990's in political theory, political science and human geography to describe the nature of organizations and to describe the nature of the relationships between organizations <sup>4)</sup>. The concept **Environmental Governance** is used in the fields of **political ecology** and environmental policy and stresses that the environment should be taken into consideration at all levels of policy making. It specifically refers to “the set of regulatory processes, mechanisms and organizations through which political actors influence environmental actions and outcomes”(Lemos and Agrawal, 298). <sup>5)</sup> There are many different forms of environmental governance including global treaties, activities of NGO's, national policies and legislation, and local decision-making structures.

## Effectiveness

The effectiveness of environmental governance depends on many factors, including funding, similar views, effective governments, but can often be categorized in three broad issues. The first is long term policy effects; long time-lags between action and effect will likely have important consequences regarding uncertainty, incentive structures, and the distribution of (political) power. The second is complex systems; problems are embedded in highly complex systems that are not well understood. Third, these problems involve global collective goods of a type that links them to a wide range of human activities and leaves them beyond the scope of unilateral solutions (Underdal 386). <sup>6)</sup>

## See also

### Glossary

[natural resource management, governance](#)

<sup>1)</sup>

<http://www.iucn.org>

<sup>2)</sup>

[https://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/environmental\\_law/elp\\_work/elp\\_work\\_issues/elp\\_work\\_](https://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/environmental_law/elp_work/elp_work_issues/elp_work_)

[governance/](#) Retrieved at 30.3.2016

<sup>3)</sup>

<http://www.unep.org/environmentalgovernance/> Retrieved at 30.3.2016

<sup>4)</sup>

Dictionary of Human Geography, 4th edition

<sup>5)</sup>

Lemos, MC und Agrawal, A. Environmental governance. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*. 31(2006):297–325. doi: 10.1146/annurev.energy.31.042605.135621

<sup>6)</sup>

Arild Underdal. *Complexity and challenges of long-term environmental governance*. Global Environmental Change. Volume 20, Issue 3, August 2010, Pages 386–393. Special Issue Governance, Complexity and Resilience

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