

ABSTRACT

Multilateral Environmental Agreements: Lessons from their Implementation in the Caribbean

Ruth Hyacinth Potopsingh

Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) have become increasingly important instruments for addressing global environmental problems. This dissertation examines the implementation of two such Agreements, The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (1987) and the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Shipment of Hazardous Wastes (1989) in three Caribbean islands: Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. Both treaties address natural resources and pollution problems; have widespread global support and the potential to create global environmental change. The Sustainable development paradigm on which MEAs are founded is very important to Small Island Developing States given their high natural resources dependence. However, MEA compliance demands scarce local resources. The question therefore is whether it makes sense to accede to these treaties.

A mixed methodology approach of quantitative and qualitative, including case studies of the treaties and the countries, two detailed self administered questionnaires, sixty key informant interviews were employed to address this question. Analysis of the information and data included content, quantitative and relational analysis. The results show that currently the most compelling reasons for treaty accession are environmental but in the future, trade will be a more compelling reason. The results of implementation indicate overall improvements in environmental quality and local capacity but an examination of the compliance performance of the treaties showed The Montreal Protocol at an advanced stage while the Basel Convention is at a relatively underdeveloped stage. This wide gap in treaty performance is linked to the structure of the treaty, its financial, technical and administrative support systems, national capacity and priorities.

This applied research identifies important lessons learned from treaty implementation in the Caribbean which may be transferred to the wider Small Islands Developing States community. It proposes a strategic framework for a "Good Treaty" which adds practical value for future MEA accession and compliance.

Keywords: Ruth Hyacinth Potopsingh; Multilateral Environmental Agreements, Montreal Protocol, Basel Convention, Sustainable Development and Small Island Developing States