

**CLIMATE CHANGE VS. STATE SOVEREIGNTY:
BALANCING THE CONFLICTING INTERESTS IN
GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL DECISION MAKING**

Anjani Leelarathna

Faculty of Law, University of Colombo, Colombo 03, Sri Lanka.

shanikaanjani@gmail.com

Climate change rapidly became one of the main global environmental issues with the rise of sea level, increased intensity of wind storms, changed rainfall patterns and other potential harm during the last couple of decades. The recognition of need for a worldwide environmental policy response to climate change issue has led to a separate dimension in International Law. There is a global concern to manage interdependence of countries where natural resource consumption harms spill across the national boundaries and affect neighboring countries or the shared resources of the global commons. The institutional response to climate change cannot be achieved without a structure of decision making that aligns with the emerging consensus around principle of State Sovereignty. Therefore, it is intended to evaluate the conflict between climate change issue and the principle of State Sovereignty in the light of the decisions of environmental law making panels and the right of individual states to use natural resources within their own jurisdiction. In the context of sustainable development, it is evident that the right of countries to control the use of natural resources has been reaffirmed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. However, short term economic benefits may be achieved by anthropocentric decision making, but with the adverse effects on human health and ecosystem functions resulting from climate change may counterbalance such gains. Therefore, it can be concluded that nations can no longer ignore the alarming threat of climate change even though the individual states have sovereign right to exploitation or use of natural resources within their own jurisdiction. As a recommendation, to be more effective in global decision making, the panels such as The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), must focus on equity, sovereignty finance and transfer of technology and also to increase the regional level co- operation. The author has employed qualitative research methodology in this paper. Climate change will leave no corner of the planet unaffected, but the impacts will be unevenly distributed. Finally, decision making panels have to take adequate steps to smooth the function of decision making while preserving the rights of individual states in use of natural resources in order to have a balance between these two conflicting interests.