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# Preface

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Law governing disasters is undergoing a formative period in terms of its development and reach in parallel with increasing efforts by the international community to respond more effectively to the increasing number and intensity of a diverse spectrum of disasters.

Much of the scholarship and specialist legal development to date has focused on international disaster response/relief law which is primarily concerned with the actual disaster event as well as its immediate aftermath. Whilst of incredible importance, not least to affected states and persons, this is only one aspect of the disaster cycle. The latter is also concerned with ideally preventing disasters from occurring in the first place or, where this is not possible, seeking to mitigate their effects should they occur, such as through effective preparedness and due diligence. Equally, the disaster cycle is concerned with the longer-term reconstruction and reparation element of disasters which, in turn, can feed back into issues of prevention and mitigation for future disaster events.

Consequently, this Handbook has sought to contribute to existing scholarship and understanding by expanding the analysis to each element of the disaster cycle, adopting a broad approach to the meaning of disasters in the process. In doing so, the editors fully recognise that the Handbook is incomplete in the sense that it was simply not possible, whether due to contributor availability or the potential vastness of the breadth and scope of law governing disasters, to include all of the topics that they would have wished to (45 chapters in the initial proposal!). Some notable gaps include global health issues, maritime pollution, reparations and remedies, insurance, discussion of different regional responses, institutional responses, and different forms of contamination. In seeking to maximise the space available, it was also decided to exclude aspects of disasters which have already attracted most scholarly coverage and debate to date, in particular discussion of the disaster cycle itself and international disaster response/relief law. As such, the current Handbook is regarded as another step in the journey of normative discovery rather than its destination.

As with any of these projects, they require a significant amount of time, investment and commitment by a large team of people. Clearly, without our wonderful contributors – drawn from a broad range of backgrounds and different regions of the world – who so patiently and graciously put up with editorial pestering, the current Handbook would not exist. We owe you a debt of gratitude for making the time to write your contributions, knowing that so often this required an extra plate to juggle and more deprivation of sleep! As editors, we are also deeply indebted to our most diligent and reliable editorial assistant, Marie Aronsson-Storrier – the first research associate in Global Law and Disasters at the School of Law, University of Reading – who so enthusiastically and energetically immersed herself in the finer details of book editing and *Oscola*, supporting us greatly in the process. Finally, we are most grateful for the encouragement and support that we have received from the Edward Elgar editorial and

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