Preface

This *Handbook* brings together the work of 18 leading experts in the field of global health law. Whereas some of them focus on a specific component of global health law, such as infectious disease control and the human rights dimensions of HIV/AIDS, others analyse the protection of health under related branches of international law such as international trade law and international environmental law. Altogether the book gives a comprehensive overview of the most important components of global health law.

Writing this *Handbook* has been a stimulating and augmenting experience. We have very much enjoyed our collaboration with all the authors and feel truly enriched by their insights. We thank all the authors for their wonderful contributions and for their confidence in this project. We wish to extend a special thanks to Meaghan Beyer for her first-rate research assistance and are also grateful to the Edward Elgar staff for their valuable support in the finalization of this project.

The editing of a *Research Handbook on Global Health Law* also came with a number of intellectual challenges. The more we advanced with our *Handbook*, the less confident we became about the conceptualization of global health law as a branch of international law. We must now conclude that global health law is a highly fragmented field with undefined boundaries and parameters. We are unsure whether we can call it an existing branch of public international law, or rather a systematic approach to the normative role of health in international law and an aspiration for those who engage with this field.

Having said this, we still very much believe in the project of global health law. We argue that it is crucial that health remain protected as an important value in international law so as to counterbalance potentially conflicting interests such as increasing global trade and economic liberalization. We consider that global health law may be a cornerstone in the protection of health both globally and domestically, provided that its legal contours and implications are carefully scrutinized and identified. Global health law is a diamond in the rough that requires further polishing, and it is our ambition and expectation that this *Handbook* makes a worthwhile contribution to this goal and may serve as a stepping stone for further research.

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