

Foreword

Climate change is, undoubtedly, one of the greatest challenges of our time. Broad consensus has emerged in the global scientific community that global warming, occasioned by excess greenhouse gases in the atmosphere resulting from human activities, poses serious threats to the very survival of our planetary system, not least our oceans. Paradoxically, however, it is also now recognized that the oceans provide a partial solution to the global climate change problem as a result of their role in the carbon cycle, ocean fertilization to mitigate impacts of climate change, providing alternative renewable energy sources, and as a reservoir for carbon sequestration and storage. These mitigation opportunities are likely to have significant negative consequences unless properly managed.

At the broader oceans governance level, the current rules of international law, codified largely in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, assign oceans governance responsibilities to States and the international community as a whole, on the basis of well defined maritime zones of jurisdiction. However, the specific rules laid down for the determination of maritime jurisdictional space did not take into account the climate change phenomenon and its likely impact on oceans jurisdictions, particularly in terms of the determination of baselines, the demarcation of maritime boundaries and in extreme situations, the inundation or total disappearance of islands.

The strong nexus between climate change impacts on the oceans and the mitigation role the oceans can play in the global response to the climate change threat demand a new governance framework at the international, regional and national levels, an aspect which is currently not well articulated in the proliferation of literature on climate change. This collection of essays, presented as *Climate Change and the Oceans: Gauging the Legal and Policy Currents in the Asia Pacific Region and Beyond* has done what has hitherto not been attempted. The issues presented in the various chapters are anticipatory, bold and relevant to the contemporary discourse on climate change. The book not only summarizes the issues cogently and comprehensively, but also presents them in a style which is easily understood. Although the title of the book is focused on the Asia Pacific region, the broader issues canvassed have relevance well beyond this region.

From the policy and governance perspectives, there are three key messages in *Climate Change and the Oceans*. The first is that addressing climate change's impacts on the oceans presents new opportunities for global cooperation which should be fostered. The second is the need to develop a global framework to monitor and regulate marine geo-engineering activities in response to climate change mitigation efforts. Finally, there is the crucial need to develop coherent international, regional and national policy responses and frameworks that recognize climate change impacts on the oceans. To be effective, this policy framework must be based on a proper understanding of the interlocked nature of the issues. There is also an urgent need to align national policies with regional and global initiatives.

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