

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

Human rights, sustainable development and the environment: few subjects have been occupying so much space in the contemporary international agenda like those that form this trilogy. Those themes are closely related among themselves, and have been forming, each one with greater or lesser emphasis, the common denominator of the great cycle of World Conferences of this end of century which began with the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992). They have occupied a central place in the three great Conferences of the kind held so far - the above-mentioned Rio Conference of 1992, the II World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), and the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994). They are bound likewise to mark their presence in the three other great Conferences of the kind scheduled for the near future, namely, the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, March 1995), the IV World Conference on Women (Beijing, September 1995), and the II United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat-II, Istanbul, 1996).

In its regional scope of action, the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights (IIHR), anticipating itself to those endeavours of universal thinking, organized, with the cosponsorship of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), in Brasilia, in March 1992, three months before the taking place of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, a pioneering Seminar, of a very high academic level, from which the book *Human Rights, Sustainable Development and the Environment* resulted. By the time the Rio Conference closed, the book was already in circulation. Its first edition was quickly sold out, and ever since some of the studies contained therein have been republished, in the form of articles, with the due authorization of the IIHR, in leading periodicals of distinct countries. Moreover, the book has served as source of consultation to several institutions, and has been quoted in various scientific works, including in official documents of the United Nations.

In attention to the numerous requests received by the IIHR since its first edition was sold out, we are very pleased now to launch the second edition, updated and enlarged, of *Human Rights, Sustainable Development and the Environment*. The new edition faithfully reproduces the whole contents of the first edition, which was very successful in dwelling upon the examination of the interrelationships between those themes - and in special between the protection of human rights and environmental protection - and setting up possible grounds for a program of education in human rights and the environment, attentive to the necessary balance

between the conceptual and operational ambits. After three years, the original publication remains timely; the new edition, however, adds the new Annexes XIII to XIX, disclosing the extraordinary dimension which the themes of human rights, sustainable development and the environment have acquired in the contemporary international agenda.

As to the global level, our study reproduced in Annex XIII assesses, on a comparative basis, the pertinent results obtained in the first two World Conferences of the present cycle, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992) and the II World Conference on Human Rights (1993), with special attention to significant passages of Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration, adopted by the former, and of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the latter. Annex XIV reproduces the Draft Declaration of Principles on Human Rights and the Environment, prepared, in May 1994, in the United Nations Office at Geneva, by a Group of Experts which we had the honour to integrate.

As to the regional level (American continent), the more recent pronouncements and commitments of Latin American countries are unequivocal in establishing as of priority the subjects forming the trilogy human rights / sustainable development / environment, besides the objectives of the strengthening of democracy and the eradication of extreme poverty. Indications to this effect are found, for example, in the last Declaration of the Group of Rio, of 1994 (Annex XV), and in the present joint platform of the Central American countries, encompassing the Declaration of Guácimo, of August 1994 (Annex XVI), the Alliance for Sustainable Development, adopted in Manágua in October 1994 (Annex XVII), and the Declaration of Tegucigalpa on Peace and Development in Central America, of October 1994 (Annex XVIII). To those documents some passages of the Declaration of Principles of the Summit of the Americas (Miami, December 1994 - Annex XIX) are added.

The matter at issue stresses the importance of the right of participation, as well as the role and strengthening of civil society and democratic institutions. Of equal importance results the empowerment for the full exercise of human rights, in order to enable every human being to decide about his own destiny. The distinguished collaborators in this book have indeed produced a pioneering work which made it possible for the IIHR to pave the way, in its regional scope of action, for the study in depth of the great themes of our times. The proposal of the IIHR, in this context, cannot be other than the consideration of the global themes of our age, notably those of sustainable development and the environment, from the outlook of human rights. The ultimate objective of this exercise cannot be other than that of the protection of human life and the improvement of the conditions of living of all human beings, without discrimination of any kind, and in a temporal perspective, comprising present and future generations.

Human rights permeate all areas of human activity, and the recognition of this reality corresponds to a new *ethos*, for the crystallization and dissemination of which the IHR does not hesitate to render its most determined contribution.

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