

UPDATE: Sustainable Development Law (SDL) Research Guide

By Gary Yessin

Update by Sarah Sullivan

[Sarah Sullivan](#) is a Research Librarian at Baker McKenzie in San Francisco, California. She has a J.D. from UC Hastings College of the Law, an MLIS from San Jose State University, and a BA from UC Santa Cruz.

Published May/June 2018

(Previously updated by Kristina Alayan in [February 2014](#))

[See the Archive Version!](#)

Table of Contents

- 1. [Introduction](#)
- 2. [Searching Library Catalogs & Selected Monographs](#)
 - 2.1. [Searching Library Catalogs](#)
 - 2.2. [Selected Monographs](#)
- 3. [Treaties and Agreements](#)
- 4. [Serials](#)
- 5. [Academic Programs](#)
- 6. [Organizations](#)
- 7. [Research Guides](#)
- 8. [Abbreviations](#)

1. Introduction

Historically, sustainable development law has often focused on environmental issues in developed countries. Indeed, sustainable development was recognized long before the 1972 Stockholm UN Conference on the Human Environment (culminating in the Stockholm Declaration). Scholars, citizens, and government officials have debated the tension between the Earth's natural resources and the needs of both current and future generations. More recently, the field of Sustainable Development Law (SDL) has shifted to an integration of international economic, social, and environmental law. Human rights advocates hope that this more integrated approach will allow SDL to respond more nimbly to chronic, complex issues like poverty. "The link between poverty and environmental degradation is well recognized and constitutes, unfortunately, a vicious cycle: poverty leads to environmental degradation which, in turn, leads to more poverty which leads to even more environmental degradation" (p. 314-5, Segger and

Khalfan, 2004). Still, one of the major issues in this area is whether "sustainable development" is law, soft law, or policy.

Sustainable development law: principles, practices, and prospects (Segger and Khalfan, 2004) provides the best introduction to the emerging field of Sustainable Development Law (see below). This guide will provide an extended introduction to the topic in an effort to aid legal researchers, but it is not intended to be comprehensive. Researchers will likely find the interdisciplinary nature of this field to be challenging. SDL can be found in traditional primary law, as well as soft law. As this field evolves, policy and scholarly work will continue to move the discussion and legal developments forward.

2. Searching Library Catalogs & Selected Monographs

2.1. Searching Library Catalogs

Subject searches allow for more focused catalog searching with generally fewer, higher value results. Some recommended starting points include the following:

- Sustainable development -- Law and legislation
- Sustainable development -- Law and legislation – [country]
- Sustainable development -- International cooperation
- Environmental law, International
- Environmental protection -- International cooperation
- Sustainable development
- Sustainable development -- Environmental aspects
- Sustainable development -- Environmental aspects – [country]

As Mary Rumsey noted in her GlobaLex article titled "[Basic Guide to Researching Foreign Law](#)," "Not every country will have materials indexed under every subject heading." As a result, researchers may need to expand their search using a broader keyword searches. These searches may also be useful for highly specialized and developing areas of law.

2.2. Selected Monographs

- *Sustainable Development, International Criminal Justice, and Treaty Implementation*. Jodoin, Sebastien, and Segger, Marie-Claire Cordonier. Cambridge University Press, 2015; 367 p. [See Table of Contents and other publisher information](#). This book includes contributions from both academics and practitioners examining the cross-section between international criminal law and SDL.
- *Natural Resources and the Green Economy: Redefining the Challenges for People, States and Corporations*. Blanco, Elena, and Razaque Jona. Martinus Nijhoff, 2012; 275 p. [See the Table of Contents and other publisher information](#). This edited compilation explores "the link between investment, trade and natural resource managements in the context of the growing economic inequalities between states" (publisher).
- *Environmental Law and Sustainability after Rio*. Benidickson, Jamie, et al. Edward Elgar, 2011; 413 p. [See the Table of Contents and other publisher information](#). Academics from

around the world examine the development of environmental law and sustainability since the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro.

- *The Evolution of Sustainable Development in International Law: Inception, Meaning and Status*. Schrijver, Nico. Martinus Nijhoff, 2008; 265 p. [See the Table of Contents and other publisher information](#). This is the second volume in The Hague Academy of International Law Pocket Book Series and contains the text of Professor Schrijver's Hague Academy course. The book examines the history of sustainable development, and assesses the extent to which relevant fields of international law are responding to these growing demands.
- *Environmental Law for Sustainability: A Reader*. Richardson, Benjamin J., and Wood, Stepan. Hart, 2006; 487 p. [Table of Contents and other publisher information](#). This interdisciplinary reader includes original essays from both international and comparative perspectives on the law in sustainable development. Topics covered range from predictions and developments to risk assessment, self-regulation and challenges for developing countries.
- *International Law and Policy of Sustainable Development*. French, Duncan. Manchester University Press, 2007; 220 p. [See the Table of Contents and other publisher information](#). In addition to environmental and economic concerns, the book considers the politics of sustainable development and legal implications. Relevant legal instruments are critically examined. The author concludes with challenges for future implementation.
- *Sustainable Development in World Trade Law*. Gehring, Markus W., and Segger, Marie-Claire Cordonier. Kluwer Law International, 2005; 735 p. [See the Table of Contents and other publisher information](#). In this collection of papers, sponsored by the Centre for International Sustainable Development Law, the authors review developments in WTO negotiations and WTO Appellate Body decisions from a SDL perspective.
- *Sustainable Justice: Reconciling Economic, Social, and Environmental Law*. Segger, Marie-Claire Cordonier, and Weeramantry, C. G. Martinus Nijhoff, 2005; 598 p. [See Table of Contents and other publisher information](#). This edited collection includes a preface by Harold Koh, and contributions from judges, academics, and stakeholders. Chapters cover issues of implementation, courts and tribunals, recommendations for the future, as well as specific examples of and concerns related to SDL.
- *International Law and Sustainable Development: Principles and Practice*. Schrijver, Nico, and Weiss, Friedl. Martinus Nijhoff, 2004; 714 p. [See the Table of Contents and other publisher information](#). The efforts of policymakers and interest groups to invoke and rely upon international law to further the goals of sustainable development are assembled and explored in this book. It includes examples of the practice of states and of relevant international organizations.
- *Sustainable Development Law: Principles, Practices, and Prospects*. Segger, Marie-Claire Cordonier, and Khalfan, Ashfaq. Oxford University Press, 2004; 464 p. [See the Table of Contents and other publisher information](#). Also available as an eBook. [Marie-Claire Cordonier Segger](#) is a leading figure in the field of SDL. Not only is she a prolific author, but she has provided legal advice on the implementation of international treaties on sustainable development to the United Nations and governments around the world. The Foreword by H.E. Judge Christopher G. Weeramantry, Former Vice-President of the International Court of Justice, contains the [1987 Brundtland Report](#) (also known as the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common

Future) definition of sustainable development, which is revisited throughout the text; “[Development which]...meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (part 3, para. 27). The first chapter discusses the origins of the Sustainable Development concept, and the next one is dedicated to the “Results of the [2002 World Summit for Sustainable Development](#),” reporting that there were 45,000 participants, including over 100 heads of state, in Johannesburg. The [Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development](#), a three page document with six sections, reaffirms a commitment to sustainable development and building a humane, equitable and caring global society. It emphasizes the three pillars of sustainable development at all levels and a common resolve to eradicate poverty, change consumption and production patterns, and protect and manage the natural resource base. Later, the book summarizes the 62 pages of the [Johannesburg Plan of Implementation](#), as well as the [New Delhi Declaration of Principles](#). The final section of this book, focused on ‘the prospects’ for sustainable development law, provides proposals for a future legal research agenda. In essence, it proposes “further directions for legal research by those interested in advancing the understanding, development and implementation of international sustainable development law” (p. 278). It concludes by adding that “sustainable development law is both an emerging body of legal principles and instruments, as well as an ‘interstitial norm,’ a concept that serves to reconcile conflicting environmental, social and economic development norms in international law, in the interest of present and future generations” (p. 365).

- *Regulating International Business: Beyond Liberalization*. Picciotto, Sol., and Mayne, Ruth. St. Martin's Press, 1999; 277 p. [See the Table of Contents and other publisher information](#). This book proposes a new regulatory framework for international business aimed at reducing poverty and promoting sustainable developments.
- *International Economic Law with a Human Face*. Weiss, Friedl, and Denters, Erik. Kluwer Law International, 1998; 566 p. [See the Table of Contents and other publisher information](#). Scholars from around the world examine a variety of aspects of international economic law and relevant state practice. Three main topics are covered in the twenty-seven chapters of this book: 1) Towards a new human and economic order, 2) Trade, environmental protection and resource management, and 3) Investment and finance.
- *International Protection of the Environment: Conservation in Sustainable Development*. Burhenne, Wolfgang E., and Robinson, Nicholas A. Thomson Reuters/West, 2017- loose-leaf. [See the Table of Contents and other publisher information](#). This multi-volume set is updated on a quarterly basis. Materials include both relevant primary international legal instruments, as well as soft law. Recent additions address energy and polar regions, which were not included in the Rio conference.
- *Sustainable Development and Good Governance*. Ginther, Konrad. Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995; 483 p. The Table of Contents and other information is available on [WorldCat](#). This book includes a series of essays about the correlation between sustainable development and good governance, and discusses both procedural and political challenges to the evolving field.

3. Treaties and Agreements

(From "Table of major treaties and other documents," *International law and policy of sustainable development*, French, 2005)

1945:

- [Charter of the United Nations](#), 1 UNTS xiv: 68
- Articles of Agreement of the International Monetary Fund, 2 UNTS 39: 39, 196
- Articles of Agreement of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2 UNTS 134: 184

1946: [International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling](#), 161 UNTS 72: 38, 60, 126, 127

1947: [General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade \('GATT 1947'\)](#), 55 UNTS 194

1948: [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), GA Res. 217 A, 10 December 1948: 71, 73, 156, 209-210, 311

1957: [Treaty Establishing the European Economic Community \('Treaty of Rome'\)](#), 298 UNTS 11: 39, 42, 56

1958: [Convention on Fishing and Conservation of the Living Resources of the High Seas](#), 559 UNTS 285: 38

1960: [Founding Convention of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development \('OECD Convention'\)](#), 888 UNTS 179: 39

1966: [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#), 6 ILM (1967) 360: 65

1969: [Convention on the Law of Treaties \('1969 Vienna Convention'\)](#), 8 ILM (1969) 679: 44

1972: [Declaration of the UN Conference on the Human Environment \('Stockholm Declaration'\)](#), UN Doc. A/CONF/48/14/REV.1 (1972): 47, 52, 55, 58, 64, 88, 135, 170, 182

1973: [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora \(CITES\)](#), 993 UNTS 243: 119, 125, 127, 140

1974: [Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order](#), GA Res. 3201 (S-VI), 1 May 1974: 28, 60

1982: [United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea \(UNCLOS\)](#), 21 ILM (1982) 1261: 38

1986: [UN Declaration on the Right to Development](#), GA Res. 41/128, 4 December 1986: 14, 62

1990: [Agreement establishing the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development](#), 29 ILM (1990) 1077: 41, 182, 210

1992:

- [Treaty on European Union \('Maastricht Treaty'\)](#), 31 ILM (1992) 247: 39, 42
- [North American Free Trade Agreement \(NAFTA\)](#), 32 ILM (1993) 289 and 605: 42, 183, 206
- [Convention on Biological Diversity \('Biodiversity Convention'\)](#), 31 ILM (1992) 822: 8, 17, 38-39, 56, 57, 59, 66, 115, 130-132, 134-138, 141-142, 146-149, 158, 207
- [UN Framework Convention on Climate Change \('Climate Change Convention'\)](#), 31 ILM (1992) 849: 8, 17, 30, 41, 52, 56, 57, 59, 60, 62, 66, 76-77, 80-82, 92-93, 95-96, 98, 140
- [Declaration on Environment and Development \('Rio Declaration'\)](#), UN Doc. A/CONF.151/26/REV.1, Vol. 1, 12 August 1992: 18, 29, 31, 41, 46, 47, 52, 54-55, 56, 57, 58, 60, 62, 64, 66, 68, 88-89, 93, 173-174
- [Agenda 21](#), UN Doc. A/CONF.151/26/REV.1, Vol. 1, 12 August 1992: 18, 19, 22, 31, 32, 53, 56, 122, 173, 175-176
- [Establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development](#), GA Res. 47/191, 29 January 1993: 19

1994:

- [Agreement establishing the World Trade Organization \('Marrakech Agreement'\)](#), 33 ILM (1994) 15: 42, 44, 199, 201
- [Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights \(TRIPS\)](#), 33 ILM (1994) 81: 138, 199
- [UN Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa \('Desertification Convention'\)](#), 33 ILM (1994) 1328: 42, 57, 68, 120, 140

1997: [Protocol to the Framework Convention on Climate Change \('Kyoto Protocol'\)](#), 37 ILM (1998) 22: 43, 70, 77-80, 81, 82, 96, 104-105

2000: [Millennium Declaration](#), GA Res. 55/2, 18 September 2000: 15, 176

2001: [Doha Ministerial Declaration](#), WT/MIN(01)/DEC/1, 20 November 2001: 163, 200, 201, 205-207, 210

2002:

- [Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development](#), UN Doc. A/CONF.199/20 (2002): 20
- [Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development](#), UN Doc. A/CONF.199/20 (2002): 20-21, 22-24, 27, 32, 63, 64, 115, 123, 138, 140, 154-155, 176-179, 181-182

2009: [The Copenhagen Accord](#), FCCC/CP/2009/11/Add.1

2015:

- [Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development \(2030 Agenda\)](#), A/RES/70/1
- [Adoption of the Paris Agreement](#), FCCC/CP/2015/L.9/Rev.1 (2015) (draft decision)

4. Serials

- [Journal of Environmental and Sustainability Law](#): University of Missouri School of Law
- [Legal Aspects of Sustainable Development Series](#): M. Nijhoff
- [McGill International Journal of Sustainable Development Law & Policy](#): McGill University, Faculty of Law
- [Sustainable Development Law & Policy Journal](#): American University, Washington College of Law
- [Treaty Implementation for Sustainable Development Series](#): Cambridge University Press
- [Yearbook of International Co-operation on Environment and Development](#) (1992 – 2004): Fridtjof Nansens Institutt

5. Academic Programs

- [Columbia Law School Sabin Center for Climate Change Law](#). The Sabin Center focuses on developing legal techniques to combat climate change, training law students and attorneys in these techniques, and provides the public with up-to-date resources on climate law and regulation.
- [Harvard Project on Climate Agreements](#). This program identifies and advances scientifically sound, economically rational, and politically pragmatic public policy options for addressing global climate change.
- University of Washington School of Law: [Law of Sustainable International Development Graduate Program](#). The Sustainable International Development LL.M. program is the first graduate program at a U.S. law school to focus on international development law.

6. Organizations

- [Center for International Environmental Law](#) (CIEL)
- [Centre for International Sustainable Development Law](#) (CISDL) "The mission of the Centre for International Sustainable Development Law (CISDL) is to promote sustainable societies and the protection of ecosystems by advancing the understanding, development and implementation of international sustainable development law. The CISDL is engaged in six primary areas of sustainable development law research, each of which is led by a CISDL Lead Counsel based at a developing or developed country law faculty or international organization.
 - [Trade, Investment & Competition](#) (Finance);
 - [Biodiversity & Biosafety](#)
 - [Health & Hazards](#)
 - [Climate Change](#)
 - [Human Rights & Poverty Eradication](#)
 - [Natural Resources](#)
- [Global Development Initiative - Carter Center](#)

- [International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development \(ICTSD\)](#)
- [International Institute for Environment and Development \(IIED\)](#)
- [International Institute for Sustainable Development \(IISD\)](#)
- [IISD Linkages](#) provides information for upcoming international meetings related to the environment, sustainability and development
- [International Law on Sustainable Development Committee \(2003 – 2012\)](#)
- [International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\)](#)
- [Sustainable Development and the Green Economy in International Trade Law \(ILA\)](#). (Scroll down main page to Index of Current Committees).
- United Nations
 - [UN Conference on Trade and Development \(UNCTAD\)](#)
 - [UN Development Programme \(UNDP\)](#)
 - [UN Division for Sustainable Development \(DSD\)](#)
 - [UN Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#)
 - [UN Framework Convention on Climate Change \(UNFCCC\)](#)
- [World Bank - Topics in Development](#)
- [Climate Change](#)

To find additional organizations please see Duke University's [NGO](#) and [IGO](#) Research Guides. Both guides include a custom search engine. In addition, the NGO Research Guide includes a searchable [database](#) with nearly 700 NGOs including relevant contact information, websites, and affiliations. Users can filter results by subject, region, and type.

7. Research Guides

Many research guides are available for the broader topic of International Environmental Law, and often include a handful of resources dedicated to SDL. Online research guides dedicated to SDL are beginning to become more readily available, though they often have a domestic focus. Karina Condra's [Sustainable Development and International Law](#) guide is designed to support a course taught at the Sturm College of Law. The wide variety of issues and integrated nature of SDL is reflected in the numerous tabs, headings, and subheadings. Resources are organized by type (e.g., Secondary Sources, Reference Materials, Statistics), as well as by organization (e.g., United Nations, World Bank, World Trade Organization), and subject (e.g., Indigenous Peoples).

The American Society of International Law's Electronic Information System for International Law ([EISIL](#)) research tool provides access to primary legal materials, authoritative websites and relevant research guides organized by subcategory. EISIL includes a subcategory on [Sustainable Development](#). Related subcategories include [Biodiversity and Protection of the Environment](#), and [Trade & Environment](#).

8. Abbreviations

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific group of States
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
CBD	1992 Convention on Biological Diversity

CDF	Comprehensive Development Framework
CISDL	Centre for International Sustainable Development Law
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CSD	Commission on Sustainable Development
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC	European Community
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
G7	Group of 7: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom, United States
G77	Group of 77: non-aligned movement of developing States (often G77/China)
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
HDI	Human Development Index
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICSID	International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes
ICTSD	International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development
IDA	International Development Association
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IFI	International Financial Institution
ILA	International Law Association
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
MDB	Multilateral Development Bank
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MNE	Multinational Enterprise
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NIEO	New International Economic Order

OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PRGF	Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
R&D	Research and Development
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SIA	Sustainability Impact Assessment
TRIPS	1994 Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNCED	1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNTS	United Nations Treaty Series
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WTO	World Trade Organization
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature (formerly World Wildlife Fund)