

Water Law in the Context of Climate Change commitments

Relatively modern International Water Laws had been evolving since late 19th Century. There are many international declarations, treaties, articles, resolutions, statements, rules, regulations, principles and recommendations which may be constituted as so called "laws" governing international waters. The history of these laws cover more than 260 international river basins across all continents and cover water bodies including rivers, lakes and aquifers. There is no single international forum, however, which binds the nations of the world to abide by these laws, but nations and states have often taken guidance from the principles in resolving their disputes. But in the current scenario of climate change, new challenges are emerging - including, but not limited to, extreme events (floods and droughts), melting glaciers in the shared basins, excessive pumping in transboundary aquifers, and the integrity of ecosystems in the face of mega dams/diversions etc.

The panelists will discuss the international laws, principles and provisions in the global context, but also bring out its applications for the Indus Basin. For example: What is the climate-sensitivity of the IRSA? Can the Indus Treaty be climate-proofed? What are the impacts of climate change on the Kabul Basin? Questions such as these go the heart of the interface between transboundary water law and the practice of water-institutions. With Pakistan not only existentially dependant on the Indus Basin and extremely vulnerable to climate events, this Panel discussion will attempt to highlight how and where climate issues have played a part in water management within Pakistan and beyond.