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Patricia W. Birnie and Alan E. Boyle. INTERNATIONAL LAW AND THE ENVIRONMENT. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. 563 pp. US \$89.50 hardbound ISBN: 0-19-876282-8.

In an attempt to assess the present state of international law concerning the protection of the world's natural environment, Birnie and Boyle present a comprehensive overview of the subject, including pollution, sustainable development, and the conservation of natural resources and ecosystems. Due to the breadth of the subject matter, the book does not examine in detail all aspects of the problems. Its intent is to explore the basic principles, structure, and effectiveness of the international legal system as it relates to the environment.

Since the book attempts to cover the very broad subject of international law and the environment by discussing all the various subtopics, there is not much depth in any one topic. For example, ocean dumping of nuclear waste is discussed in one page of the 563 page book. This treatment is necessarily brief, and is basically a summary of current agreements and activities. The book's treatment of many other issues is also done in summary form, but many topics are covered at least to this degree. One flaw is that a handful of cases are cited numerous times, but the facts, holding, parties, or particulars of these cases are never set out. The cases are cited as examples of the action of international law or an indication of the state of international law, but the reader never learns where the cases took place, what happened to whom, and what court ruled on the cases. As a law student accustomed to reading cases as examples of principles of law, this lack of a case to read seemed odd and unsatisfying.

Also many international conventions, conferences, and treaties were cited, but it was not clear which were the important or controlling ones, and which were less authoritative. Some manner of organizing the agreements and indicating their authoritativeness would have been helpful.

As a result, this book is not a book to read cover to cover. It would be a good reference book to help locate more detailed information about a particular topic of interest and is recommended for academic and law libraries.