Norms and principles of international environmental law as a national environmental education element

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Abstract. The objective of the study is to substantiate the necessity of studying the basics of international environmental law within the framework of national environmental education courses at all levels and profiles of the educational system, including school. The research methodology is based on the use of such methods as abstraction and concretisation, analysis and synthesis, induction, and deduction. The acquisition by students of knowledge of the basics of international environmental law, as it seems, will allow them to get an idea in a concise and capacious form about the most important achievements of mankind in the sphere of legal regulation of relations formed in the process of environmental protection and nature use, about the main environmental challenges facing mankind, about the key terms of environmental law, a universal legal language understandable to lawyers of all countries of the world, about the mechanism of implementation of the norms of international environmental law. The inclusion of information on international environmental law in educational courses will help to form a developed environmental legal consciousness among the younger generation and promote responsible environmental behaviour in the future. Key words. International environmental law, environmental education, environmental consciousness.

1 Introduction

The formation of a well-developed environmental culture is impossible without systematic and rationally organised environmental education. A responsible and careful attitude to the natural environment should be established from childhood in order to become one of the "supporting structures" of a person's worldview. The governments of most countries of the world, aware of the relationship between environmental education and environmental behaviour, take measures to educate their citizens about the environment by introducing, for example, special educational courses in schools and higher education institutions. Taking into account the global nature of environmental problems, it is necessary to achieve a certain

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universality and uniformity of environmental education. This will ensure a common vision of the nature and scale of environmental threats and challenges facing humanity, a common understanding of the ways and methods of solving environmental problems.

At the same time, the practical realisation of such a wish faces numerous difficulties. The very idea of the causes of the environmental crisis (even its existence) may differ greatly, for example, in countries with religious and secular education systems. Approaches to determining the relationship between international and domestic law may be fundamentally different. In certain regions of the world, certain environmental problems may be considered paramount (e.g., lack of drinking water), while others may take a back seat (e.g., air pollution).

It is worth noting that national governments do not always treat environmental problems in the same way. Leaders of individual states, building a peculiar "hierarchy of values", proceed from the assumption that the fight for ecology is something secondary, something that can be dealt with only after solving really serious problems, for example, after defeating poverty. And "dirty" industries can be tolerated because they provide livelihoods for many people.

One of the ways to overcome the "ecological disconnect", as it seems, can be to familiarise students within the framework of national environmental education programmes with the basics of international environmental law. International environmental law can be considered as a set of norms contained in various sources of international law that set standards in the sphere of environmental protection and rational use of natural resources. However, the term "international environmental law" is not universally recognised. Thus, M. A. Ermolina notes that "the concept of "international environmental law (or "international legal protection of the environment") corresponds to the wording enshrined in international documents, so it is recognised as more correct and accurate than the concept of "international environmental law" [1].

Environmental law education itself, certainly, does exist. Special courses on national environmental law are taught at law faculties in many countries of the world. When future lawyers study international law, such a sub-branch of it as international environmental law is usually considered as well.

However, international environmental law as a discipline is not taught to students of other areas of training, much less to schoolchildren.

It is thought that acquaintance with the basics of international environmental law will be useful for students of all levels of education and profiles of training.

2 Research methodology and methods

Such scientific methods as the method of system analysis, comparative-legal, formal-legal were used in writing the article.

3 Results

The introduction of information on international environmental law into national environmental education programmes seems to have the following positive results:

1. Students will receive, in a short period of time, information on the most important and most effective legal instruments for the protection of the natural environment in an extremely concise form. International environmental law is the quintessence of what has been developed by lawyers of different countries in the sphere of regulation of environmental relations. Acts of international environmental law crystallise the main ideas, principles, formulated over decades of regulation - all the best of the norms of national legislation. For
example, only acquaintance of students with the principles of environmental protection enshrined in the Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Environment in Stockholm (1972), as well as in the Declaration on Environment and Development adopted by the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (3-14 June 1992) will already allow to form the "skeleton" of the environmental worldview.

2. Examining the main sources of international law is an easy way to gain an understanding of global environmental issues. The structure of international environmental law is largely built taking into account the global environmental challenges facing humanity: the fight against water, air, soil pollution, the problem of waste disposal and recycling, etc. Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, 1985, etc. It seems that it is possible to draw a picture of the main directions of environmental efforts of the international community based on the blocks and elements of the system of international environmental law.

Fig.1. Complexes of international environmental law norms

3. Concerted efforts to overcome the environmental crisis require a similar view, a consensus on the nature of environmental problems, their causes, ways and methods of overcoming them. Taking into account the different worldviews of representatives of different cultures, it is very difficult to achieve a common view on how to solve environmental problems. Even their very existence may not be obvious to everyone, let alone the proper, "correct" ways of preserving the natural environment. But without a common vision, there can be no common endeavour. It is the information in the field of international environmental law that can become the "core" of national environmental education, give the property of universality to all educational programmes, and bring them closer to a common standard.

4. Information in the field of international environmental law will allow to "talk" in one environmental language" to inhabitants of different states of the planet. We can say that the language of international environmental law is an "international environmental code", a universal language, a kind of "environmental Esperanto". The norms of international environmental law embody provisions that are accepted by all countries that have ratified the relevant treaties or signed certain declarations. In the course of intensive (sometimes months-long) work on documents containing the norms of international environmental law, prescriptions are formulated to suit States with different legal systems, religious beliefs,
cultures and political regimes. The content of the norms of international environmental law is characterised by genuine universality. The ideas enshrined in them are not only recognised by the majority of the world's states (through national governments), but are also understandable to almost every inhabitant of the Earth. There is also the intractable problem of unity of interpretation of norms. When preparing documents containing norms of international environmental law, terms are harmonised (it is necessary to remember the difference of terms used to denote the same concepts in different national legal systems, as well as the possible filling of the same terms with different meanings). As a result of numerous discussions, agreements, search for compromise options, multilateral treaties still contain provisions that can be considered a substantive and terminological foundation for the development of national legislation - uniformly understood by the lawyers of all countries-participants to the agreements.

5. The study of international environmental law will help to form, if I may say so, "environmental legal consciousness" of the younger generation, to overcome "environmental nihilism". The knowledge obtained by studying the basics of international environmental law will contribute to getting rid of the narrow national approach, which is, unfortunately, very common in the modern world. Sometimes even states with generally responsible environmental policies prefer immediate profits to the long-term interests of humanity as a whole, and demonstrate double environmental standards. Gladys Shollei - Deputy Speaker of the Kenyan Parliament - argues, referring to the problem of the quality of European fertilisers used in Africa, that "some European countries are sending resources to Africa that they themselves would never take. But if they find its residues in imported foodstuffs from Kenya, they will be immediately rejected" [2]. At present, alas, not all countries are parties to even basic international multilateral treaties containing norms of international environmental law. Some major states have not ratified, for example, the 1997 Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Such isolation, selective approach in solving environmental problems, makes global environmental policy ineffective. To change the negative state of affairs, we need people with a different type of thinking, capable of thinking strategically and globally. Introducing international environmental law as part of environmental education can instil the habit of considering important decisions in terms of their global environmental consequences.

Students will realise that solving environmental problems requires certain self-restraint, a departure from the egoistic point of view, for which short-term profit is more important than the concerted efforts of states.

Familiarity with the basic ideas of international environmental law will help students to understand that only joint purposeful, coordinated efforts of all states of the planet can make it possible to solve environmental problems. The peculiarity of these problems is such that individual states can cope only with local difficulties. But fundamental problems can only be solved jointly. Knowledge in the field of international environmental law will help to adjust students to the search for cooperation, compromise, will allow them to see the environmental situation globally - not only the private problems of a particular country, but the whole complex of environmental problems facing humanity, will give an understanding that the solution of these problems will ultimately benefit all mankind. The most important conclusion to which students will come will be the realisation of the necessity of national restrictions, even if such restrictions reduce the immediate economic performance of the national economy and require large investments in technological re-equipment.

6. From the previous points the following effect of introducing the study of the basics of international environmental law into the system of national education follows: in some time people who have absorbed the idea of global environmental values, thinking and speaking in the universal language of the norms of international environmental law, will join the ranks of decision-makers in the sphere of nature use and environmental protection. The bearers of
"ecological legal consciousness" as legislators will be guided by international environmental standards when formulating legal regulations. The national legislation formed by such lawmakers will develop within the framework of the goals and principles defined by international environmental law. The vector of development of domestic environmental law will be set by international environmental law. In those legal systems where judicial precedent is important, judges will be able to make judgements and interpret the norms of national legislation through the prism of the provisions of international treaties. All this will contribute to unification, harmonisation of legislation of different countries of the world, convergence of national legal systems in the field of environmental protection.

7. In addition, the holders of environmental legal consciousness will take part in the progressive development of the norms of international law. It is necessary to further codify international environmental law, revise existing and develop new international standards for the protection of the natural environment, taking into account rapidly changing technologies, the emergence of new challenges and threats. Ecology is an area of human aspirations in which the polarised world, fragmented into political and military camps, can seek common ground. It is international environmental law that can become a space of harmony and unity.

8. An important aspect of acquiring knowledge of international environmental law is familiarity not only with the sources of this sub-branch of international law and its system of principles, but also with the practice of international co-operation in environmental protection and the rational use of natural resources. Students will learn about international bodies and organisations that are engaged in practical activities to implement international environmental standards, consider and resolve inter-State environmental disputes. In this way, students will develop an understanding of how international law is implemented, not just a set of abstract ideas. In addition, students will understand how they can contribute to the protection of the natural environment by participating in international non-governmental, non-profit environmental organisations, of which there are several hundred: Greenpeace, World Wildlife Fund, International Union for Conservation of Nature, Forest Stewardship Council, The Venus Project, World Society for the Protection of Animals, Global Environment Facility and others.

9. It should not be thought that international environmental law will foster a cosmopolitan consciousness detached from the needs and requirements of particular States. Certainly not. One should not forget about the existence of regional environmental standards (the Nordic Convention on Environmental Protection 1974, the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources 2003, the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Region 1992 (Helsinki Convention), the Convention for the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution 1992 (Bucharest Convention), etc.). Environmental problems can have different scales. E.P. Romanova points out that "on the scale of manifestation, geo-ecological problems can be local, arising in limited areas of land, regional, established in certain areas of continents, countries or states, and can have a universal, universal character and cover the entire landmass of the Earth" [3].

Thus, in addition to forming a system of knowledge about universal environmental standards in the minds of students, the inclusion of information about international environmental law in the programmes of environmental courses will also give an idea of specific regional environmental problems and ways of their solution. Environmental education programmes should also focus on country-specific environmental standards that are relevant to certain countries. For example, for residents of island countries it will be important to study the norms of treaties aimed at preserving the biological diversity of the seas; for residents of Arctic countries, it will be important to familiarise themselves with the 1973 Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears; for countries with tropical forests, it will be important to study the 2006 International Tropical Timber Agreement, etc. The study
of international environmental law will form not one-sided, but harmonious environmental consciousness of the younger generation.

10. Dissemination of knowledge about the basics of international environmental law can affect the widest range of students using distance learning technologies. In some countries of the world there are still problems with accessibility of education. Here, e-courses prepared by leading teachers of national universities and schools can help. A. Aleksandrova, M. Alekseeva, E. Lobanova and S. Feoktistova note the effectiveness of hybrid forms of learning in the context of personalised approach to education [4].

4 Conclusions

Thus, it can be concluded that mastering knowledge of international environmental law from school will lay the foundation for a well-developed environmental worldview, responsible environmental behaviour, and balanced environmental decisions in the future.

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