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Preface

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As the length of this volume attests, international environmental law has become a substantial field during its relatively brief history. The *Handbook* aims to take stock of the field as a whole, exploring its core assumptions and concepts, basic analytical tools, and key challenges. Although it focuses on international environmental *law*, it examines international environmental law from a broader policy and theoretical perspective, drawing on insights from other disciplines such as political science, economics, and philosophy. In doing so, it aims to strike a balance between practice and theory. Each chapter is a free-standing essay that examines an issue that is central to current scholarly debates or policy development. At the same time, the *Handbook* is structured as a whole to provide readers with both a ‘bigger picture’ of international environmental law and a more in-depth understanding of its preoccupations. In our view, this approach is particularly important at a time in the development of international environmental law when the emergence of increasingly specialized subfields obscures unifying themes and cross-cutting challenges.

Editing a volume with more than 40 authors might seem a daunting task, but, in this case, it has been a pleasure, thanks to the exceptional group of scholars and practitioners who agreed to contribute to the *Handbook*. We could not have asked for a more talented, knowledgeable, and reliable group of colleagues, who always remained good humoured through what often must have seemed like an interminable editorial process. For us, it has been a privilege to work with them.

A book of this nature, however, would never see the light of day without the contributions of those who work ‘behind the scenes’ and whose names do not appear in the list of contributors. We are particularly grateful to Stacy Belden, the copy-editor for the *Handbook*, for working with us on the manuscript and dealing with the authors’ and our own varied understandings of the English language. We also thank our student assistants for taking on a variety of tasks related to the *Handbook*: Paul Simpelaar and Gijs van der Velden at Erasmus University Rotterdam; Jennifer Edwards, Amy Hsiao, and Briant Mildenhall at the University of Georgia; and James Hunter at the University of Toronto. Last but certainly not least, we thank John Louth, at Oxford University Press, for entrusting us with this project and for his good humour and patience, even when confronted with the inevitable unmet deadline or two.

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