

COHERENCE, ALIGNMENT AND INTEGRATION

Understanding the Legal Relationship between Sustainable Development, Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction¹

Dr Dug Cubie² & Dr Tommaso Natoli³

International, regional and national law can play an important role in promoting actions to tackle the human impacts of climate change and disasters while enhancing at the same time sustainable socio-economic development. Yet the increasing complexity and specialisation of different legal regimes have led to concerns regarding a confusing fragmentation of law and policies across different sectors. This 'hourglass' model is aimed at clarifying the relationship between the three topics of sustainable development, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction from a normative perspective. It proposes the legal interactions between these three different sectors based on 'systemic' coherence at the international level; vertical alignment between the international, regional and national levels; and horizontal integration of law and policies at the domestic level. As explained below, these dynamics are meant as distinct but interconnected, as long as they reflect similar approaches and aim at the same goals.

¹ For the full theoretical analysis supporting the development of this model see D. Cubie & T. Natoli, *Coherence, Alignment and Integration: Understanding the Legal Relationship between Sustainable Development, Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction*, in Stephen Flood, Martin Le Tissier, Yaren Jerez Columbié & Barry O'Dwyer, 'Creating Resilient Futures: Integrating Disaster Risk Reduction, Sustainable Development Goals and Climate Change Adaptation Agendas' (Palgrave Publishing – forthcoming 2021)

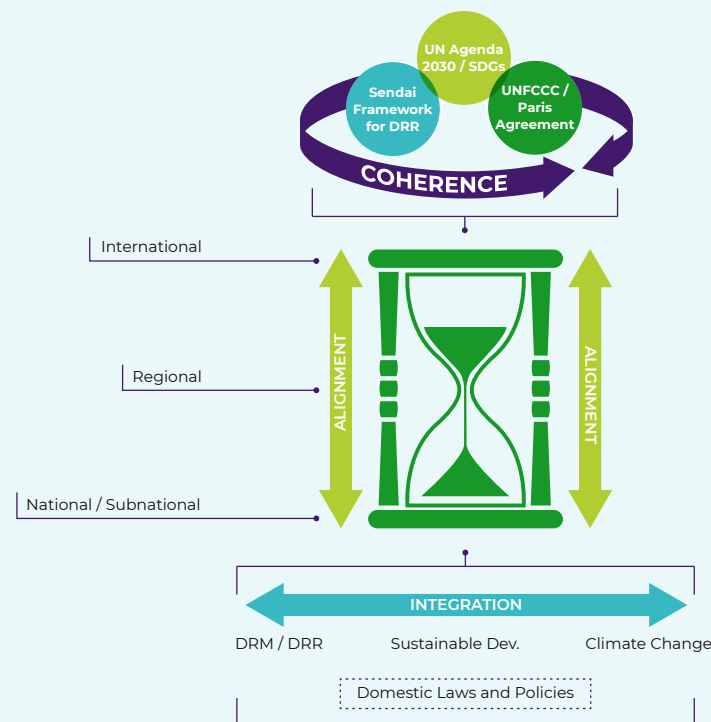
² School of Law, University College Cork, Ireland.

³ Irish Research Council /Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action CAROLINE Research Fellow, School of Law, University College Cork, Ireland & Disaster Law Programme, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), grant agreement No 713279 ([link](#)).

Coherence: Ensuring the effective coexistence between the three global frameworks of reference (i.e. the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the Paris Agreement, and the UN's Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals - SDGs) is facilitated by the extent to which they share the same principles/criteria in respective normative 'reasoning' and purposes (i.e. logic) and exert a simultaneous regulatory effect without discrepancies and in compatible forms (i.e. consistency).

Alignment: Considered through the lens of multi-level governance, namely the vertical relationship between global, regional/sub-regional and national/sub-national decision-making bodies, vertical 'alignment' between these levels correspond to any act of placing or arranging respective norms 'in a straight line or into correct relative positions'. According to this model, regional structures and initiatives may act as a central fulcrum to facilitate the two-way flow of knowledge, experience and norms between the national and the international levels.

Integration: Focussing specifically on national law and policy, the concept of integration refers to those normative components "to combine or be combined to form a whole." This corresponds to states' efforts to take a holistic view across all policy areas at the domestic level. The concept of cross-sectoral integration builds on the assessment of how different laws and policy are drafted and implemented to exert combined and synergic effects, as part of the same 'whole' (i.e. the same administrative/institutional system).



The hourglass can also be turned upside down, thereby describing how "normative inputs" provided by States can be uploaded and consolidated through intergovernmental processes at both regional and global levels.