

Foreword

Environmental degradation is one of the greatest threats facing humanity today. It is altering natural ecosystems, undermining the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and causing irreversible consequences for both people and nature. The United Nations has identified a triple planetary environmental crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution that poses an existential threat to our shared future. Plastic pollution is a significant contributor to this triple planetary crisis, demanding our urgent action.

Plastic pollution permeates every aspect of our lives, causing profound economic, social, and environmental challenges. It disproportionately affects vulnerable communities and transcends national and regional boundaries, necessitating a strategic, coordinated, and cooperative response, including all systems that regulate human behavior. While formal law remains a powerful and indispensable tool in ending the plastic pollution menace, it can greatly benefit from the complementary role of informal norms. These norms enhance and support legal frameworks by leveraging societal values, cultural beliefs, and ethical principles to amplify action against plastic pollution.

Recognizing the relevance of this issue, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, and Strathmore University Law School co-convened an academic workshop in November 2023 at Strathmore University. The workshop was titled *Beyond Formal Law: The Role of Ethics, Beliefs, and Values in Amplifying Action against Plastic Pollution in Africa*. It underscored the need to look beyond formal legal frameworks and explored how informal norms can help to address plastic pollution.

Strathmore University Law School is proud to present this special issue, which uniquely addresses the place of informal norms in addressing plastic pollution. This issue is timely, as it aligns with ongoing global negotiations for a plastic treaty. It is distinct in its exploration of informal norms, alongside environmental law, and the multidisciplinary perspectives from various professions and social contexts. These contributions offer a holistic and interdisciplinary approach to environmental governance.

Our heartfelt gratitude goes to our partners—United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, and all contributors—for their invaluable support in this initiative. Strathmore University Law School remains committed to fostering collaboration and serving as a hub for the study of the place of informal norms in environmental governance.

I hope that this special issue will inspire further dialogue, research, and action in addressing plastic pollution and broader environmental challenges. By integrating formal legal frameworks with ethics, values, and community-driven initiatives, we can advance a more sustainable and just world for all.

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