



# ANGUILLA NATIONAL TRUST

## *Preservation For Generations*

### ECO-CORNER

#### **Multilateral Environmental Agreements: Merging Global and National Environmental Policies**

##### The Web of Life

Biodiversity, the web of life that is made up of plants, animals, micro-organisms, and the ecosystems in which they live, is increasingly being irreversibly changed, degraded, and in some cases, completely destroyed by humans. We have moved from chopping trees with simple stone tools to clear-cutting thousands to millions of acres of forested land with efficient machines; we have moved from fishing with simple hooks and lines to massive factory ships equipped with mesh nets that drag along the ocean bottom and that have on-board icing and processing facilities; we have moved from small-scale harvesting of agricultural goods to intense industrialised practices of cultivating genetically modified food products. Because of technological advances and unprecedented population increases, we are producing more, taking more, consuming more, and disposing of more. And the natural environment is being forced to deal with the additional stress. The effects are being felt at local, national, and international levels.

But all has not been lost. Over the last decade and a half – particularly since the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 – there has been a significant increase in awareness of and concern for the natural environment. Indeed, the Earth Summit marked an important milestone in global cooperation with 178 governments uniting to formally declare that every person in the world is entitled to both accessing information about the environment and being active participants in the decision-making processes – regardless of whether they relate to sustainable development, poverty alleviation, healthcare, or any other social, economic, political, or environmental issue.

While support for the Earth Summit (and the Convention of Biodiversity that emerged from it) was unprecedented, it was far from being the first international environmental agreement signed. As early as 1933, with the passing of the Convention Relative to the Preservation of Fauna and Flora in their Natural State, governments from across the world have been coming together to promote cross-boundary, trans-national environmental strategies.

Unlike countries that have definite and clear boundaries, ecosystems and natural communities are dynamic and fluid, with species often migrating across international country boundaries. Animals, plants, insects – anything living and non-human – do not follow the political lines that separate countries from one another. They exist in their own spatially-defined worlds and in complex relationships with each other and the natural environment on which they depend for food, water, and shelter. And this is why international cooperation is so important.

##### International or Multilateral Environmental Agreements

In order to better address trans-national environmental concerns and to manage natural resources and areas and human impacts on them, over 500 international or multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) have been negotiated by the international community.

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##### About the Anguilla National Trust

The Anguilla National Trust was established in 1993 to act as custodian of Anguilla's heritage, preserving and promoting the island's natural environment and its archaeological, historical and cultural resources for present and future generations. It is in the business of ensuring the sustainability of Anguilla's heritage. The ANT is a dynamic people-centred organisation working in collaboration with public and private sector entities to manage Anguilla's natural social and cultural heritage.

P. O. BOX 1234 • THE VALLEY • ANGUILLA  
TEL: 264-497-5297 • FAX: 264-497-5571 • [axanat@anguillanet.com](mailto:axanat@anguillanet.com)

MEAs are legally-binding arrangements among two or more state governments that seek to manage or prevent human impacts on natural resources, plant and animal species, the atmosphere, oceans, rivers, lakes, terrestrial habitats, and any other element of the natural world that provides ecosystem services.

#### Bringing it Home: MEAs, Anguilla, and the Rest of the World

Although Anguilla is a United Kingdom Overseas Territory (UKOT), all legislation is developed at the national level – and this includes environmental policies and regulations. At the same time, in order for Anguilla to sign onto important MEAs, the island nation must work with the United Kingdom to have the agreements extended. After deciding which agreements are most appropriate and relevant to Anguilla, the Executive Council of the Government of Anguilla requests MEA extension from the UK. Before extension is approved by the UK, local legislation that will support the MEAs must be in place.

The Ministry of Environment is currently working on developing a comprehensive set of environmental policies and laws. Built into this environmental framework is the legislation that is required for easy integration of multilateral environmental agreements. After careful consideration, the Executive Council will be requesting that at least 11 different MEAs be extended to Anguilla. Should the UK government approve extension, the agreements must be tailored and implemented in a way that suits the Anguillian context. Reporting and monitoring, sometimes by Advisory Boards, will be needed to ensure proper implementation.

Over ten years since the Earth Summit, Anguilla is still trying to find that balance between conserving its natural resources and biodiversity and developing its economy. The fact that finding that balance is still considered important, that environmental legislation is still being drafted, and that projects and programmes related to sustainable development are still being supported and implemented are testament to an understanding that we cannot separate ourselves from the environment – that a healthy environment is necessary for a healthy economy. Combining national and international legislation to create and implement something that is uniquely Anguillian only further supports this recognition.

The 11 MEAs being considered for extension include:

- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;
- Kyoto Protocol;
- Biosafety Protocol of the Convention on Biological Diversity;
- Protocol on Persistent Organic Pollutants;
- Convention on Biodiversity;
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES);
- Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena);
  - Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities;
  - Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA Protocol);
- Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter;
- Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal;
- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild;
- Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context.

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**Eco-Corner is a regular feature provided by the Anguilla National Trust in cooperation with The Anguillian.**