

Ecocide could become an international crime

5th December, 2020



There could be a new law on the international statute books. Lawyers across the globe are drafting regulations to make ecocide a crime. Ecocide is the destruction of the world's ecosystems. Lawyers want to make it a legally enforceable crime,

much like crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide. The initiative is being led by a professor from University College London (UCL) and a former judge at the International Criminal Court. It has attracted support from several European countries, notably France and Belgium. Island nations at risk from rising sea levels, such as Vanuatu and the Maldives, have voiced their support. A politician in the UK has called for ecocide to be incorporated into law.

Professor Philippe Sands of UCL spoke about why there is a need for ecocide to be made illegal. He said: "The time is right to harness the power of international criminal law to protect our global environment." He wants the law to hold governments and multi-national corporations accountable for the environmental damage they cause. The Stop Ecocide Foundation said: "In most cases ecocide is likely to be a corporate crime." It outlined the scale of destruction that would require an ecocide law being used. It said: "It would have to involve mass, systematic or widespread destruction. We are probably talking about Amazon deforestation on a huge scale, deep sea-bottom trawling or oil spills."

Sources:
theguardian.com / commondreams.org / republicworld.com

Writing

Ecocide should be made a crime and be subject to severe punishments. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

law / international / statute / globe / destruction / ecosystem / at risk / sea levels / ecocide / power / criminal / corporations / corporate / Amazon / deforestation / oil

True / False

- a) A new law on the environment has been passed into the statute books. T / F
- b) Lawyers want ecocide to be a crime like genocide. T / F
- c) The ecocide initiative is being led by a group of environmentalists. T / F
- d) Vanuatu and the Maldives backed the new ecocide law. T / F
- e) A professor said now was not the time to incorporate ecocide into law. T / F
- f) The professor wants to hold governments accountable for ecocide. T / F
- g) An ecocide foundation said most ecocide is caused by corporations. T / F
- h) The foundation highlighted oil spills and deep-sea trawling. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| 1. statute | a. proposal |
| 2. globe | b. won over |
| 3. initiative | c. responsible |
| 4. attracted | d. law |
| 5. voiced | e. devastation |
| 6. harness | f. extent |
| 7. accountable | g. expressed |
| 8. outlined | h. exploit |
| 9. destruction | i. defined |
| 10. scale | j. planet |

Discussion – Student A

- a) How worried are you about our planet's environment?
- b) What do you think of ecocide becoming a crime?
- c) Who are those most responsible for ecocide?
- d) How does ecocide compare to crimes against humanity?
- e) What environmental destruction most concerns you?
- f) Should ecocide be made into law?
- g) In what way has the environment in your country been destroyed?
- h) Why isn't ecocide already a crime?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| 1. There could be a new law on the international | a. a huge scale |
| 2. Lawyers across the globe are | b. enforceable crime |
| 3. Ecocide is the destruction of the | c. accountable |
| 4. Lawyers want to make it a legally | d. world's ecosystems |
| 5. Island nations at risk from | e. the power |
| 6. The time is right to harness | f. destruction |
| 7. hold governments and multi-national corporations | g. statute books |
| 8. In most cases ecocide is likely to be a | h. rising sea levels |
| 9. mass, systematic or widespread | i. corporate crime |
| 10. Amazon deforestation on | j. drafting regulations |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- How successful do you think an ecocide law would be?
- What do you want to see done about environmental protection?
- What punishments should countries receive for ecocide?
- Should we boycott companies that are guilty of ecocide?
- How damaging is deforestation?
- What do you know about deep-sea trawling?
- What questions would you like to ask the lawyers?

Spelling

- the international tatuste books
- a legally noreceafibe crime
- war crimes and ngcoeid
- The niitative is being led by a professor
- otanby France and Belgium
- ecocide to be oiorprntaced into law
- nraehss the power
- coutnaaclbe for the environmental damage
- rcropaote crime
- It ulonited the scale
- systematic or widespread ustdetrion
- deep sea-bottom rawlitng

Answers – Synonym Match

1. d	2. j	3. a	4. b	5. g
6. h	7. c	8. i	9. e	10. f

Role Play

Role A – Deforestation

You think deforestation is the biggest threat to the environment. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their threats aren't as serious. Also, tell the others which is the least serious of these (and why): overfishing, water pollution or biodiversity loss.

Role B – Overfishing

You think overfishing is the biggest threat to the environment. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their threats aren't as serious. Also, tell the others which is the least serious of these (and why): deforestation, water pollution or biodiversity loss.

Role C – Water Pollution

You think water pollution is the biggest threat to the environment. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their threats aren't as serious. Also, tell the others which is the least serious of these (and why): overfishing, deforestation or biodiversity loss.

Role D – Biodiversity Loss

You think biodiversity loss is the biggest threat to the environment. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their threats aren't as serious. Also, tell the others which is the least serious of these (and why): overfishing, water pollution or deforestation.

Speaking – Environment

Rank these with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------------|
| • Deforestation | • Loss of biodiversity |
| • Overfishing | • Water pollution |
| • Oil spills | • Desertification |
| • Acid rain | • Climate change |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	F	d	T	e	F	f	T	g	T	h	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.