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2 pages: 1. Information about the Hasselt University;  
2. Information about the scientific supervisors;  
3. Information about the dissertation.

1. Hasselt University is located in the city of Hasselt, north-eastern part of Belgium. The university was officially established in 1971 as 'Limburgs Universitair Centrum' (LUC). However, it was not until 1973 that the university welcomed its students. At first, there were only two faculties: the Faculty of Medicine-Dentistry and the Faculty of Sciences with study programmes in Mathematics, Physics, Computer Science, Chemistry and Biology. Over the past 40 years the Hasselt University has grown into an innovative and dynamic university with bachelor and master programmes in various fields, such as Law, Economics, Science, etc. There are more than 5000 students, 1000 academic, administrative and technical staff members<sup>1</sup>.

The University comprises 7 research institutes, in which fundamental and applied research is conducted; 19 research groups, which carry out research within a certain discipline; and 3 thematic research clusters, which group researchers, who perform multidisciplinary research in certain thematic fields. Annually more than 40 PhD students receive their scientific degree at the Hasselt University.

One of the youngest research groups is the Centre for Government and Law (CORE). It was founded in 2008. The group conducts fundamental and applied research within the broad spectrum of public law. A part of the CORE group is the Environmental Law Unit under the supervision of Professor Bernard Vanheusden. Currently, there are several projects under research at the unit: legal protection of ecosystem services; liability for chemicals; sustainable materials management in EU law, etc.

In 2013 the Hasselt University celebrates its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

2. The PhD commission consists of three members: the scientific supervisor Professor Bernard Vanheusden, and two co-promoters, Professor Marjan Peeters and Doctor Stijn Verbist. The PhD commission meets annually to evaluate the research progress. In sum, the investigation is conducted 4 years. During those years, the researcher delivers presentations on the research topic at scientific conferences, publishes findings in peer-reviewed journals, carries on some teaching assignments. The final results of the legal research are published in the form of a monograph.

Bernard Vanheusden is a Professor of the Law Faculty at the Hasselt University, Belgium. He specializes in public law, more particularly in environmental and energy law. Bernard is an Editor-in-Chief of the journals "Milieu-en Energierecht" (Environmental and Energy Law) and "Journal for European Environmental & Planning Law" (JEEPL).

Marjan Peeters is a Professor of Environmental Policy and Law at the Maastricht University in Netherlands. Marjan focuses on different topics of environmental law, with an emphasis on legal aspects of climate policies.

Doctor Stijn Verbist is a senior scientific assistant at the Law Faculty, Hasselt University, the University of Leuven and the University of Antwerp. He specialises in administrative law.

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<sup>1</sup> Hasselt University official webpage// <<http://www.uhasselt.be/UH/general/history>>, last viewed 13.11.2013

### **3. The working title of the research project is “Forests under International Climate Change Law”.**

#### Summary

It is a legal research. The main objective - is to analyse the interrelation between the climate change international regime and the international regime on forests. For the research purposes we define “Regime” as a special set of rules and principles on the administration of a determined problem. Each of the above mentioned international regimes was designed to address a particular environmental problem, respectively, climate change and global deforestation. Both environmental problems have been prominent concerns in international law for more than two decades. However, they have been largely regulated as separate and distinct with limited attention paid to deforestation role in climate change. This has given rise to overlapping and at times conflicting norms between the regimes. The research argues, because of the complexity of the issues and the diversity of the interests at stake, the environmental problems, such as climate change and global deforestation, do not fit neatly within a single international regime. In order to be effective, laws, designed to address the environmental problems, should take into account the interrelation between climate change and global deforestation.

#### Problem Description

The core components of the international climate change regime are the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its 1997 Kyoto Protocol (KP). Currently there are 195 parties to the UNFCCC, indicating universal perception that the climate change problem needs to be addressed. Although the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, which set binding limitations on GHG emissions, came to its end in 2012, the provisions of the Protocol had significance for the development of national laws and policy on climate change. A vivid example in this regard is the Russian Federation, a country, where the state regulation on CC appeared due to the desire to participate in the Kyoto flexible mechanisms.

Last year in Doha, Qatar, the KP was amended to last for the second commitment period of 2013 to 2020, but the future of its ratification is very vague. This is due to the fact, that the World’s largest emitters, namely the USA, China, India, and other countries, also including Russia, had chosen not to put any limits on their emissions and refused to enter the binding Protocol.

The CC regime is aimed at “stabilization of greenhouse gas [(GHG)] concentrations in the atmosphere”. The regime attempts to regulate major sources, sinks and reservoirs of GHG. The CC regime is interested in regulating forests: on the one hand, deforestation and forest degradation account for 20% of global GHG emissions; on the other, forests are the largest GHG terrestrial sink and reservoir. In their biomass alone, forests are estimated to store about 289 gig tonnes of carbon. All parties to the UNFCCC also agree to “promote sustainable management and cooperate in the conservation and enhancement [...] of sinks and reservoirs of GHG”. Thus, the CC regime creates an obligation in relation to forest areas.

A highly fragmented nature of the international law on forests allows for forest regulation by various CC international legal instruments. International law traditionally viewed forests as a quintessentially national resource: forests are physically located within national boundaries and many of forest functions are local or national in scope, for instance, wood production. As timber is an economically valuable resource, states have been unwilling to put any international limitations upon domestic forest use, management and conservation policies. As a result, there is no universally binding framework document on forests. Various international legal instruments regulate forests from different

perspectives: trees as commodity in the International Tropical Timber Agreement; forests as home to biological diversity in the UN Convention on Biological Diversity; trees as sinks of carbon dioxide in CC regime, etc. From that perspective, regulating of forests by the international CC regime, which has a strong political support in the international arena at present, looks very promising, and may even become dominant in setting the future international forest policy.

However, there is also a concern that regulating forests under the “stabilization of GHG” objective may further drive the global rates of deforestation and forest degradation. The rates are already alarmingly high: current world annual deforestation is estimated as 5,2 million hectares a year. If the world’s net forest area continues to decline at a present pace, it will take only 775 years to lose all forests on Earth. On top of that, CC regime puts additional pressure on forests by promoting production and use of renewable energy. Forests provide wood biomass, one of the major renewable energy resources. By 2060 some experts expect a nearly six-fold increase in the world demand for fuel wood.

For instance, to comply with the international CC regime and “to reduce GHG emissions” the European Parliament and the Council of the EU have adopted the Directive 2009/29/EC on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources [...]. The Directive sets binding national targets for the overall share of energy from renewable sources – 20%, and for the share of transportation fuels from renewable sources – 10 % to be achieved by 2020. If these targets are achieved, the amount of wood used for the energy purposes in the EU would be equivalent to today’s total wood harvest. Fuel wood import is likely to play a significant role in meeting the 2020 renewable energy target. It may lead to higher deforestation and forest degradation risks outside of the EU, for example, in Russia. It is expected to remain the most important country outside the EU from where the majority of wood biomass imports will be coming until 2020.

The above mentioned examples have determined the main objective of the research - to analyse the interrelation between the climate change international regime and the international regime on forests. The findings of the dissertation provide comments on international CC and forest regulation future prospect.

### Methodology

In order to achieve the objective of the research, the international regime on CC and the international law on forests are analysed. The research investigates also the interaction of the regimes at the implementation level: in the EU and in the RF. The two legal systems were chosen on the one hand based on the researcher’s field of expertise, on the other, because each legal system has its unique features, significant for the research.

The Union possesses a well-developed supranational legal system (regulations on Emissions Trading System (ETS), renewable energy, geological storage of carbon dioxide, etc.) to minimize anthropogenic interference with climate. The EU climate protection and forest laws have an impact not only within the EU territory, but also beyond its borders. The most famous example is, probably, the European Court of Justice Judgment in Case – 366/10. The Court stated that all flights, including those of third countries, which depart from or arrive at a European airport, have to comply with the EU emissions trading scheme.

As for the Russian Federation, its climate law is not as elaborated, compared to the EU. However, Russia possesses 20% of the World’s forests. In this regard, the implementation of international environmental obligations and the Russian national nature protection laws have global significance.