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Global governance increases people's political influence

Creating institutions to make common decisions on a global scale is not to limit the scope of democracy, but to expand it, writes representatives of the Global Challenge Foundation.

A global legal order to solve global problems need not mean, as Björn-Ola Linnér and Roger Pielke Jr. seems to think, expert rule and limited democracy. On the contrary, this form of strengthened global cooperation among nations of the world may enhance people's ability to exercise democratic influence, by making it possible with joint decision in areas where the current lack of international justice makes us powerless.

In an article in Dagens Nyheter (27/9), Linnér and Pielke argue that the threat of climate is used by some researchers to scare people into accepting a "political emergency order" where democracy gives way to authoritarianism.

Maybe there are such researchers. But when Linnér and Pielke take the newly founded Global Challenge Foundation as an example, they are completely wrong.

There is no doubt that human induced climate change is a global threat. As the debate focuses on the most likely scenarios the risks of a truly catastrophic development is greatly underestimated. Based on data from the new report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change there is 1.6 percent probability of a catastrophic warming of 6 degrees or more at 450 parts per million (ppm) in the atmosphere. At up to 550 ppm, the probability is 6.2 percent.

In no other area of society do we tolerate such high probabilities of damages, even when they are less serious than the effects of global climate change.

When humanity faces a global threat with unacceptably high risks, then global cooperation, through strengthened global management, is necessary. The alternative is a threat to democracy and justice. Where is it democratically acceptable that some, mainly rich nations, sabotage development opportunities for others, especially poor nations? This realization has characterized global management for decades in the environment area ever since attempts have been made to solve challenges from acid rain, loss of biodiversity and, of course, in the global climate change negotiations.

To do as Linnér and Pielke do, describe a global legal system as scary and unfamiliar, is to create your very own theoretical view of the world. Ever since we began to realize that humanity is affecting the global environment in the 1970s and the 1980s, we have tried to establish global institutions or partnerships to address these problems, most successfully through the Montreal Protocol, in which the world agreed to a ban on ozone-depleting CFCs.

An important reason why the world so far failed to meet the threat of climate change, although this has

been known for decades, is the lack of sufficiently effective institutions and working methods to make common, and for all countries binding, global decisions.

Linnér and Pielke are right that all global agreements must be implemented practically at the local level, which requires an interplay between local communities to global agreements. Again, this is not something new, but is already being done, for example in the global trade (WTO) and the related risks of the spread of pandemics (WHO).

There is no shortage of challenges in terms of how an effective global legal system should be designed and implemented. How should influence be distributed among the world's countries and citizens? How will its power be restrained, so that political decisions are made at the right level? Global Challenges Foundation does not have a

complete solution but is working on the problem. It is high time that the issue of a global legal system is also brought up on the political agenda.

Linnér and Pielke seem to confuse a global legal order with authoritarianism. But creating institutions to make joint decisions on a global scale is not to restrict democracy range without expanding it. Climate damaging emissions occurring within a country's borders are not only a concern for the country's inhabitants. They affect all of us and therefore concern everyone.

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