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Enviro-activists

WILLIAMSBURG

“There was a time when the United States led the way on international environmental cooperation,” writes Maria Ivanova in the prestigious academic journal *SAIS Review*, published by John Hopkins University Press.

She is an assistant professor of Government and Environmental Policy at the College of William & Mary, as well as director of the Global Environmental Governance Project at the Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy.

In the article, co-authored with Daniel C. Esty, an environmental law professor, Ivanova describes the U.S. effort that was instrumental in launching the U.N. Environmental Program in 1972. President Richard Nixon pledged to contribute 40% of the \$100 million that initially capitalized the environment fund.

Subsequently the U.S. was the driving force behind the World Heritage Convention, the International Whaling Commission, the convention on international trade in endangered species of wild flora and fauna, and was in the forefront to phase out chlorofluorocarbons and other chemicals threatening to the earth’s protective ozone layer.

“However,” she writes, “the United States has since retreated from its global environmental leadership role. The Bush administration obstructed progress

on a number of international environmental initiatives... The high watermark, or perhaps the low tide of U.S. obstructionism, came with the U.S. ‘unsigned’ of the Kyoto Protocol on climate change.”

Ivanova and Esty argue that the Obama administration must re-engage the United States with other nations, because success in protecting the planet from climate change cannot be achieved alone.

What seems to distinguish Ivanova is her active involvement in the international environmental movement. She took part in the recent U.N. Environment Program Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum held

in Nairobi as the North American Civil Society representative.

“This was a notable event because it was the first international governmental meeting for the Obama administration,” she said.

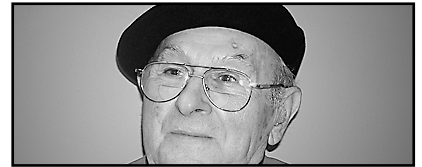
She was also the speaker at the Gender Forum organized by the Network of Women Ministers and Leaders for the Environment. Her participation was even more distinctive because she took along one of her star students, Clare Stankwitz ’11, the winner of a Monroe Scholarship. “This was an opportunity to immerse her in the real work of international policymaking,” she said.

Apparently, Ivanova and Esty are



Ivanova

World Focus



Frank Shatz

not content with participating in conferences and writing about environmental problems. “We plan to convene a Global Environmental Governance Forum to be held in Switzerland in June and bring together the past, present and future architects of the environmental governance system. The goal of this effort is to lay a foundation for rebuilding of UNEP, the closer integration of the multilateral environmental agreements...” states a press release issued by the Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy and W&M.

They intend to construct an online resource that will feature the oral histories of the individuals who created the governance system, an environmental governance encyclopedia, videos and teaching materials. “This contemporary format would create a vehicle for introducing a broad audience to the discussion on governance in the environmental arena and inspire young people to engage.”

Ivanova believes that as a result of the rapid ascent of climate change, environmental concern has risen to the top of the political agenda around the world. “Most scholarly work has focused on reaching a scientific consensus without giving adequate attention to the necessity for more coherent global governance,” she said.