

*Батурина Е.А.,
студент,
2 курс, факультет «Институт права»
Уфимский университет науки и технологий
Россия, г. Уфа*

FROM GLOBAL PRINCIPLES TO LOCAL ACTION: VALUES IN UN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW AND THEIR OPERATIONALIZATION IN RUSSIAN LEGAL DOCTRINE

***Abstract:** This article argues that the value layer of international environmental law, as expressed in UN texts, is predominantly global and declarative, while national legal doctrine plays a key operational role by translating those values into concrete legal mechanisms, educational strategies and action models for specific social groups (in particular, youth). The argument is illustrated through the Rio Declaration (1992), the 2030 Agenda (2015), and Russian doctrinal writing, with special attention to youth participation in urban environmental protection.*

***Keywords:** values; environmental law; UN documents; sustainable development; participation; youth; legal doctrine; discourse.*

Introduction. To avoid discussing “values” in an overly abstract way, this article treats values as meanings that mark what is presented as desirable, necessary, or legitimate in legal communication. Such meanings are typically realized through evaluative lexis (e.g., protect, responsibility, integrity) and modality (shall/should/must), which position readers and allocate agency.

1. Global values in UN environmental texts: declarative universality. The Rio Declaration frames environmental protection as a universal condition of

development: “environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process” [1]. The modal verb shall performs strong normative positioning, but the proposition remains principle-level: it does not specify instruments, procedures, or enforcement pathways. Likewise, Principle 7 introduces fairness and shared duty through the formula “common but differentiated responsibilities” [1], establishing a moral-political balance while leaving operational details to later treaties and domestic implementation.

Participation is stated in a similarly programmatic way. Principle 10 declares that “Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens” [1]. The statement expands the community of agents (“all concerned citizens”) but does not itself describe how participation is to be organized (procedures, access rules, education, institutional design). Principle 21 additionally highlights youth as a bearer of future-oriented value: “The creativity, ideals and courage of the youth of the world should be mobilized” [1]. Here should signals direction rather than a binding mechanism.

The 2030 Agenda maintains the same global register. Its preamble repeatedly uses the collective voice (“We are determined”) and formulates an overarching commitment: “We are determined to protect the planet from degradation” [2]. The phrase constructs resolve and urgency, yet the text remains at the level of common goals, delegating concrete legal and educational engineering to states, institutions, and expert communities.

2. The operational role of national legal doctrine. Compared to UN declarations, national doctrinal writing often performs a different communicative task. While international texts establish a shared axiological horizon, doctrine tends to convert values into manageable categories: who must act, by what legal tools, in which social settings, and with which expected outcomes. In short, doctrine ‘thickens’ values by making them actionable.

This operational logic is visible in N.S. Ibatullina’s discussion of youth participation in urban environmental protection. Instead of leaving participation at

the slogan level, the author foregrounds necessity and institutional conditions: “Young people must also be involved in environmental issues. To do so, legal platforms must be in place to provide guidance.” [3] The double must shifts the value of participation from recommendation to practical requirement, and the reference to platforms and guidance frames participation as a legal-technical design problem.

Ibatullina further links participation to education and ecological culture as prerequisites for effective action: “The formation of an environmental culture provides for basic principles of ecological knowledge and a behavioral model.” [3] In doctrinal terms, this turns an abstract value into a causal chain (culture → knowledge → behavior) that can be supported by local legal and educational measures in cities.

A similar orientation appears in Russian environmental-law doctrine more broadly. In the introduction to an environmental law textbook, M.M. Brinchuk explicitly treats legal environmental education as a state function aimed at shaping ecological culture: “Юридическое экологическое образование — самостоятельное направление деятельности государства... задача... экологического воспитания и формирования экологической культуры” [4] (author’s translation: legal environmental education is an independent state activity whose task includes ecological upbringing and the formation of ecological culture). Here, values are not merely declared; they are embedded into institutional responsibility (education policy and professional training).

3. What this means for the ‘value’ dimension of environmental legal discourse. Read together, UN documents and doctrinal texts reveal a stable division of labor between genres. At the global level, values are projected as universal principles and collective commitments, expressed through inclusive actors (States, all countries, all people, youth of the world) and high-level modality (shall/should; determined). At the doctrinal level, values become operational through (a) stronger necessity markers (must), (b) narrower, more concrete agents

(youth, municipal actors, legal educators), and (c) explicit enabling mechanisms (platforms, guidance, education, culture-building).

Conclusion. UN environmental texts construct a global axiological frame: protection, partnership, fair responsibility, and public participation are declared as shared commitments [1–2]. Russian doctrinal writing—illustrated through Ibatullina and Brinchuk—shows how these values may be translated into implementable pathways: legal platforms for youth involvement and education-oriented strategies for forming ecological culture and behavior [3–4]. Therefore, the value dimension of environmental law does not end with declarations; it continues in doctrine, where values are converted into legal and educational designs.

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