

## THE CRIME OF ECOCIDE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CONCEPT OF ECOLOGICAL SIN – SELECTED ASPECTS

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**Abstract.** This article examines the concept of the crime of ecocide in the context of environmental sin, with a particular focus on the legal aspects. The crime of ecocide, understood as the indiscriminate and prolonged destruction of the natural environment, is receiving increasing attention in the international debate on its inclusion in the catalogue of the most serious crimes under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court. In this context, an analysis of the concept of ecological sin, derived from Catholic social teaching, which emphasises man's moral responsibility for the destruction of the environment, is carried out. The aim of the article is to explore and compare two key concepts: ecocide as an international crime and ecological sin as an ethical-religious category, in the context of contemporary environmental challenges. The article seeks to show how these two categories can complement each other, pointing to the need to strengthen moral and legal responsibility for environmental destruction. Due to the overview nature of this paper, it follows a methodology based on a descriptive approach and critical analysis. Within this approach, particular emphasis will be placed on the analysis of papal encyclicals, doctrinal texts and legal provisions related to the topic of ecocide and ecological sin. In addition, the study will take into account an in-depth analysis of scientific literature, including monographs, articles published in reputable journals and reports of international organisations. Such a multifaceted review of the material will provide a broad theoretical and legal context to critically examine current legal and ethical regulations on environmental protection and crimes against nature. The analysis will also relate to the debate on ecotheology and the role of ethics in shaping environmental legislation at the international level.

**Keywords:** ecocide; ecological sin; environmental degradation; Catholic social teaching; protection of ecosystems.

### INTRODUCTION

In the face of increasing environmental degradation and the growing effects of climate change, questions of legal responsibility for the destruction of ecosystems are becoming increasingly pressing. The crime of ecocide is the subject of intense international debate, with calls for its recognition as one of the most serious crimes under the jurisdiction of the International

Criminal Court. Alongside this legal context, the notion of ecological sin, derived from religious-ethical traditions, particularly Catholic social teaching, is also emerging in the discourse. Ecological sin refers to the moral responsibility of human beings for actions leading to the destruction of the environment, which introduces a new dimension in the assessment of the ethical consequences of the degradation of nature. Contemporary international law is beginning to recognise the need for a systemic view of environmental protection, including the criminalisation of actions leading to massive ecological damage. Ecocide, although not yet formally recognised as a crime, is increasingly emerging in discussions about the future of global legal accountability. In this context, it is worth looking at how ethical categories such as ecological sin may influence the development of international legal norms.

The purpose of this article is to explore the relationship between the concept of the crime of ecocide and the concept of ecological sin, with a particular focus on their potential legal implications. The analysis focuses on how these two approaches – one derived from international law and the other from religious tradition – can complement each other in the development of new legal frameworks that can effectively respond to global environmental challenges.

## 1. ENVIRONMENTAL SIN – AN ATTEMPT AT DEFINITION

The negative effects of human activity on the environment are often referred to as 'ecological sin', which points to the moral aspect of the destruction of nature. In this view, man's destructive activity is not seen as the fulfilment of God's command to 'make the earth subject to himself' (Gen 1:28), but as a negation of the original mission entrusted to mankind [Bar 2020, 38]. Rather than responsibly stewarding the created world, man acts to the detriment of nature, which constitutes a misappropriation of his task to protect and care for the Earth. One of the key sources for the development of this concept was the teaching of the popes, in particular John Paul II, who significantly expanded the reflection on ecology that had already begun during the Second Vatican Council. In the documents of his pontificate – in particular in encyclicals such as *Redemptor Hominis*, *Sollicitudo rei Socialis*, *Centesimus annus* and *Evangelium Vitae* – there were numerous references to issues related to human responsibility for the natural world. John Paul II emphasised the need to care for the natural environment, treating care for creation as an integral part of man's mission on Earth. In these documents, the Pope addressed topics such as the progress of civilisation, the sustainable use of natural resources, responsibility for future generations and the ethical challenges of the continuing impacts of human activity on ecosystems. John Paul II's teaching became an important inspiration for the development of ecotheology, i.e. theological reflection on human

responsibility for the natural world. The Pope clearly indicated that the issue of ecology is not merely a technological or political problem, but has a profound spiritual and moral dimension. Man, as part of creation, is responsible not only for his own development, but also for the protection of the earth as a common good, given by God to all mankind. In this way, his teaching has helped to arouse an ecological consciousness in the Catholic Church and beyond, laying the foundations for a contemporary environmental ethic that emphasises a harmonious relationship between man and nature.

In the final document of the October 2019 Amazon Synod, Pope Francis referred to the proposal of John Paul II, postulating a definition of 'ecological sin' as an act or omission that violates relationships with God, neighbours, communities and the environment. He pointed out that this type of sin has consequences for future generations and manifests itself, among other things, in habits of destroying and polluting the environment, in violations of the principles of interdependence and in a lack of solidarity among creatures, which is also an offence against the virtue of justice. The Pope stressed that the Church, as a member of the international community, should actively address the topic of ecology [Babiński 2012, 252]. Examples of ecological sin include excessive accumulation of wealth, exploitation and destruction of nature, cruelty to animals and littering of forests, oceans, the atmosphere and even outer space. Although not a complete list, these phenomena show that the term 'ecological sin' has gained a place in professional, journalistic and colloquial discourse. It has been emphasised that the cause of the ecological crisis is, among other things, the unfair exchange of goods, which leads to developmental inequalities between countries. Lack of access to modern technologies and unequal distribution of natural resources force poorer countries to use energy-intensive and environmentally harmful solutions.

The ecological sin is also linked to insufficient intergenerational solidarity, which means a lack of concern for future generations who will have to deal with the consequences of current neglect. Any action in the ecosystem should take into account its impact on other areas of life and on the quality of life of future generations. Man is not the owner of natural resources but their steward, which means that he does not have the right to treat them as his exclusive property, using them thoughtlessly or destroying them [Łukomski 1997, 262]. The source of ecological sin, and the accompanying ecological crisis, is the so-called 'anthropological error', i.e. the belief that man can freely exploit the earth's resources, questioning their value and the order God has given to creation. In practice, this leads to an exploitative, short-sighted and often predatory approach to nature, with no regard for the far-reaching consequences. A misunderstanding of one's role in the world and a false belief in man's unlimited capabilities

lead to irresponsible decisions and actions that do not take into account the real needs and well-being of all creation [Babiński 2012, 258].

The world created by God is meant to be a place for the realisation of the human vocation, and man should respond to God's love by respecting and creatively using nature's resources. Ignoring this plan leads to environmental degradation. Rabid, short-sighted thinking and actions, with no concern for long-term consequences, contribute to deepening the ecological crisis, the consequences of which are borne by both present and future generations. Armed conflicts are recognised as one of the most serious pathologies in social relations, which at the same time constitute a significant cause of the ecological crisis. Wars, by directly destroying the environment, lead to permanent damage to ecosystems, and often their scope is global and difficult to repair. This destruction not only extends to infrastructure and natural resources, but also alters the political and social landscape, making the process of reconstruction and environmental protection even more difficult. Extinguishing armed conflicts and building international cooperation for peace are key elements in minimising the negative effects of wars and the resulting environmental destruction.<sup>1</sup> This aspect also appears to be crucial in the context of the examples of ecocide following Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

The demand for global peace-building, with an awareness of the potential consequences of the use of vast arsenals of weapons, gains importance in the context of contemporary environmental challenges. Today's calls for the protection of nature and the preservation of ecological balance are closely linked to the idea of peace, and inaction in this regard contributes to the deepening of the ecological crisis. In the context of contemporary conflicts, such as the war in Ukraine, they take on particular force. The Council's call to 'read the signs of the times' in relation to ecological issues obliges the international community to take decisive action. The Pope's appeals for commitment to the struggle to save the environment and his insistence that shirking this responsibility, as well as a lack of commitment to counter environmental catastrophe, should be considered a grave moral offence. The whole of humanity – individuals, states and international organisations alike – has a responsibility to protect nature and must actively engage in efforts to save it. Environmental responsibility is everyone's responsibility, and avoiding this responsibility not only jeopardises the future of ecosystems but also violates basic principles of justice towards future generations.

This points to the need for an ecological conversion, but also to the fact that world peace and care for the environment are inextricably linked. Actions for sustainable development and nature conservation are, according to him,

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<sup>1</sup> Ioannes Paulus PP. II, Post-synodal exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* (02.12.1984), AAS 77 (1985), p. 185-275.

an integral part of global peace-building. This combination of ecology and the ethic of peace poses new challenges to humanity, requiring it to take greater responsibility and make a concerted effort to prevent both ecological destruction and conflicts that may exacerbate the environmental crisis.<sup>2</sup>

Environmental sin is the result of a lack of responsibility towards future generations, resulting from inadequate intergenerational solidarity. In his view, concern for the quality of life of future generations, who will have to grapple with the consequences of the mistakes made by present generations, is one of the most important moral challenges. Environmental sin manifests itself primarily in environmental pollution, which contradicts the virtue of justice, since it harms not only contemporary societies but also those who will come after us. It is important to put this concept in the context of global responsibility, which is in line with the 1987 Brundtland Report 'Our Common Future', presented at the United Nations. This report introduced the concept of sustainable development, which emphasises that the actions of today's generations must not harm future generations.<sup>3</sup> Caring for nature is not just a technical issue, but a profoundly moral one, requiring a change in attitudes and structural reforms at the global level.

Mention should also be made of the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), signed in 1992, which became the basis for global action to combat global warming. Equally important are the Kyoto and Paris Protocols, which addressed the topics of sustainable development and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions [Zbierska 2007, 76-78]. Considerations of environmental sin are not limited to theoretical considerations, but have had a significant impact on the formation of global environmental awareness and the development of legal mechanisms to protect the environment. New calls for a paradigm shift in thinking about nature – from an exploitative approach to one based on responsibility and solidarity resound in an important way. An environmental sin in this context is not only an act of negligence, but also a deeper moral obligation to act to protect the Earth for future generations.

## 2. THE CRIME OF ECOCIDE – ASSUMPTIONS

Moving from the concept of ecological sin to the concept of the crime of ecocide, it is worth noting that both terms refer to the consequences of human actions that have a negative impact on the environment, but differ in their meaning and legal consequences. Ecological sin, derived from

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.are.admin.ch/are/en/home/media/publications/sustainable-development/brundtland-report.html> [accessed: 07.10.2024].

the social teaching of the Church, focuses on the moral and ethical aspects of human activity towards nature. It reflects a deep concern for future generations, indicating the individual's responsibility for environmental degradation and the destruction of natural resources.

Ecocide, on the other hand, as a legal term, refers to actions that lead to massive destruction of ecosystems and aim to eliminate or weaken their ability to live. Thus, ecocide implies more serious consequences that can be qualified as a crime under international law. The two concepts are linked in that ecological sin often leads to acts that can be qualified as ecocide, especially when they involve the systematic destruction of the environment for economic or political gain. In this way, ecological sin can be seen as a moral foundation that justifies the need to criminalise actions that constitute ecocide. Ultimately, understanding ecological sin as a moral obligation to care for the environment can provide a strong argument in the debate on the introduction of legal regulation of the crime of ecocide, highlighting the importance of the unity of ethics and law in the context of protecting our planet.

The term 'ecocide' was first coined by Professor Arthur W. Galston in 1970, at a conference in Washington DC. He defined it as the massive damage and destruction of ecosystems [Bar 2020, 34]. The term gained particular relevance in the context of the then ongoing Vietnam War, where the US military made extensive use of an herbicide known as 'Agent Orange'. This dangerous substance, a mixture of chemicals, was not only used for defoliation, which in itself posed a serious ecological threat, but also contained toxins that had dramatic health effects on humans. The scale of the destruction caused by the use of such substances was widely discussed at the 1972 UN Stockholm Conference, which focused on environmental issues. It was in this context that Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme first publicly used the term 'ecocide', explicitly referring to the Vietnam War as an example of this phenomenon. Although the topic aroused much excitement and discussion, the final document of the conference made no formal reference to the concept of ecocide. A year later, in 1973, American law professor Richard A. Falk undertook the ambitious task of codifying ecocide as a crime. In his article published in the *Revue Belge de Droit International*, he proposed the creation of an International Convention on the Crime of Ecocide, tackling the challenge of defining the term. Falk pointed out that ecocide consists of 'the conscious or unconscious infliction of irreversible damage on the environment in times of war and peace'. His work was a step towards formalising the concept in the context of international law, opening the door to further discussions on legal responsibility for environmental destruction [Falk 1973].

Analysing these events, it is clear that ecocide is not only a war-related problem, but also involves a wide spectrum of human activities that lead to environmental degradation. As awareness of the impact of human

activities on ecosystems increases, the need to define ecocide and to introduce appropriate regulations becomes more important. Such actions can help to protect not only nature, but also the health and lives of future generations, making the topic not only a legal issue, but also an ethical one. In 1985, another attempt to include a definition of ecocide in the Genocide Convention was made by Benjamin Whitaker, the UN Special Rapporteur on Genocide. He described ecocide as 'adverse changes, often irreversible, to the environment', but this initiative also failed.<sup>4</sup>

Although ecocide was included in early drafts of the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court in 1998, under pressure from countries such as the United States and France, it was eventually removed before the Statute was adopted. Only Article 8 was introduced, defining certain acts as war crimes that are likely to cause 'widespread, prolonged and serious environmental damage'.<sup>5</sup> It is noteworthy that this framing limits ecocide to the context of warfare, although it can also occur in other situations.

In 1990, Vietnam, in response to the tragic experience of war, became the first country to codify ecocide, introducing regulations in its penal code that provided penalties for the mass destruction of people and natural resources. A year later, the Russian Federation introduced similar legislation, imposing penalties for the mass destruction of ecosystems [Zierler 2011]. Today, criminal liability for ecocide is in force in many countries, such as Belgium, Chile, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Georgia. Bills on the matter have been tabled in Brazil, Italy, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru and Scotland, among others. In April 2021, the French National Assembly criminalised ecocide, introducing severe penalties for deliberate pollution.<sup>6</sup>

Efforts to recognise ecocide are also being made in European Union legislation, where the European Parliament has asked the Commission to examine the meaning of ecocide (European Parliament Resolution of 20 May 2021). A watershed moment in the debate on this topic came in June 2021, when an international panel of experts on the legal definition of ecocide, set up by the Stop Ecocide Foundation, presented a new definition of ecocide. A panel of lawyers from different countries defined ecocide as 'unlawful, reckless acts that are likely to cause serious, long-term damage to the environment'<sup>7</sup> pointing to the need to protect natural resources and ecosystems on an international level. The proposed definition therefore introduces two criteria that must be met for a behaviour to be considered unlawful. First, there should be a substantial likelihood that the act or omission in question

<sup>4</sup> See <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/108352?v=pdf> [accessed: 07.10.2024].

<sup>5</sup> Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998).

<sup>6</sup> See <https://wyborcza.pl/7,75399,27108787,ekobojstwo-jak-ludobojstwo-czy-miedzynarodowy-trybunal-karny.html> [accessed: 07.10.2024].

<sup>7</sup> See <https://www.stopecocide.earth/legal-definition> [accessed: 07.10.2024].



will cause serious, widespread or long-term damage to the environment. The Panel notes that this first threshold may be too broad, as there are legitimate and socially beneficial activities that may nevertheless lead to such damage.<sup>8</sup> For example, the construction of new housing estates or transport infrastructure can have serious environmental consequences, despite the fact that these are considered desirable investments.

Similar proportionality issues arise in the Rome Statute, particularly in Article 8(2)(a)(iv) and Article 8(2)(b)(iv), which deals with provisions protecting the environment during armed conflict. In this context, damage is assessed in relation to potential military gains or other war necessities. Accordingly, the Panel decided that it was necessary to add a second criterion, which relates to the unlawfulness or wantonness of the action in question. As a result, in order to bring charges, there would have to be evidence of a substantial likelihood of serious, widespread or long-lasting harm caused by acts or omissions that are either unlawful or show a lack of prudence.<sup>9</sup>

Ecocide is a complex phenomenon that can take different forms depending on the context and the actions that lead to environmental destruction. One of the most well-known examples is the discharge of toxic substances into waterways by industry, which leads to severe pollution of aquatic ecosystems. In such cases, aquatic organisms, including fish and other creatures, die and the drinking water for local communities becomes contaminated. Another example of ecocide is the massive deforestation that takes place in tropical rainforests such as the Amazon. Cutting down forests on a huge scale to obtain land for agriculture or the timber industry leads to a loss of biodiversity, soil erosion and negative effects on the climate. Such activities not only threaten local ecosystems, but also have far-reaching consequences for the entire planet. The immoderate use of pesticides and herbicides in agriculture is another example of ecocide. As well as destroying vegetation, these substances have dramatic health consequences for humans, including long-term diseases and genetic defects. Activities related to the extractive industries also fall under the definition of ecocide. The expansive extraction of oil or coal leads to significant environmental degradation, groundwater and air pollution. An example is the environmental catastrophe associated with the 2010 oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, which had catastrophic consequences for local ecosystems and the economy.<sup>10</sup> The destruction of natural habitats, for example as a result of urbanisation or infrastructure construction, is another aspect of ecocide. These activities lead to loss of habitat for many species, threatening their survival and contributing to the extinction of some species [Nowak 2023, 76-78].

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998).

<sup>10</sup> See <https://www.aquaquick2000.com/pl/wyciek-ropy> [accessed: 07.10.2024].



The environmental impact of warfare cannot be overlooked either. The use of chemical weapons or the bombing of natural areas during armed conflicts causes long-term ecological damage. In the context of the armed conflict in Ukraine, the concept of ecocide takes on particular significance. The environmental destruction resulting from warfare has serious long-term effects on ecosystems and human life, as well as on the country's ability to recover from the end of hostilities. During the war in Ukraine, as a result of Russian aggression, there are numerous actions that can be considered examples of ecocide. Examples include the bombing of industrial infrastructure, causing toxic substances to spill into rivers and land. In eastern Ukraine, a region rich in heavy industry, damage to coal mines, chemicals and factories has been a particular danger, with the potential to contaminate groundwater, soils and air. The destruction of forests, agricultural areas and attacks on energy installations also have far-reaching ecological consequences. The destruction of Ukraine's green areas not only contributes to soil erosion, but also destroys natural plant and animal habitats, leading to large-scale ecosystem disruption. In addition, warfare leads to significant contamination of the atmosphere and soil through the use of heavy weapons and explosions. The use of munitions, bombs and other military materials can cause pollution that will affect human and animal health and agricultural production long after the conflict is over. All these examples show that ecocide is a global problem, with impacts not only on local communities, but also on the entire planet.

Ecocide refers more to the creation of a dangerous situation than to the achievement of a specific result. It means committing an act in the full knowledge that there is a significant likelihood of serious, widespread or long-term damage to the environment. Accordingly, the crime of ecocide is defined as a formal rather than a substantive offence. There were considerations as to whether the definition should include an explicit reference to climate change. In the end, however, it was decided that a better approach would be a general formula, which is likely to be supported by the majority of states. It is worth noting that the absence of a direct reference to climate change does not exclude the possibility of liability based on the interpretation of a particular case.

Ecocide has the potential to become the first crime that would not be directly related to harm to people. In this case, protection would cover not only the individual, but also the natural environment, which means that harm to people would not be a necessary condition for initiating criminal proceedings. It is important not to limit the concept of ecocide to issues related to human rights; it is worth adopting a broader perspective and considering it in the context of "laws of nature" and "laws of the ecosystem". The introduction of criminalization of ecocide could be a new, practical

legal tool, enabling real prosecution of those responsible for environmental destruction on a global scale. In this way, ecocide gains the status of a crime that not only protects people, but also takes care of the future of our planet, opening the way to a more comprehensive approach to the protection of ecosystems and natural resources. According to the latest study, 72% respondents from G20 countries (except Russia) and four non-G20 countries: Austria, Denmark, Kenya and Sweden, support the criminalisation of actions by governments or corporations that cause serious, long-term and often irreversible damage to nature and climate, referred to as “ecocide.”<sup>11</sup>

A conflict of interest between compliance with environmental protection regulations and the pursuit of profit maximisation can lead to a situation in which actions contribute to ecocide. In this context, penalising ecocide becomes an important step towards protecting ecosystems and responsible management of natural resources. Developing a draft definition of ecocide is not only a legal step, but also a social one that can influence a change in the approach to environmental protection.

### 3. THE CROSS-RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ISSUES OF ECOLOGICAL SIN AND ECOCIDE IN THE LEGAL CONTEXT

In the context of ecological sin, ecocide can be seen as an extreme manifestation of this sin. Ecological sin consists of an action or omission that leads to the degradation of the environment and, consequently, to the destruction of the basis of life for future generations. Therefore, criminalizing ecocide can be an important step towards correcting the moral and ecological mistakes of the past and building a more sustainable future in which environmental protection is a priority and not an obstacle to achieving profits. The crime of ecocide and ecological sin are two concepts that can be analyzed together in the legal context, although they come from different disciplines. Ecocide has its roots in the concepts of international law and human rights, while ecological sin stems from the tradition of ethics and theology, especially Christian ethics. However, both terms refer to the deep responsibility of humans for the destruction of the natural environment and its consequences for humanity.

Although ecocide is not yet formally recognized as a crime in international law, there are increasingly voices saying that it should be included in the list of the most serious crimes, alongside war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity. Contemporary international law is striving to recognize the crime of ecocide as a violation of global ethical and legal norms. Such

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<sup>11</sup> See <https://klimat.rp.pl/klimat-i-ludzie/art41097641-ekobojstwo-bedzie-przestepstwem-mieszkancy-najbogatszych-panstw-swiata-zgodny> [accessed: 07.10.2024].

action would be an expression not only of the protection of natural resources, but also of responsibility towards humanity, because environmental degradation can lead to catastrophic social consequences, such as climate migration, hunger, or deterioration of health conditions. From a legal point of view, introducing ecocide as an international crime would mean the need to develop precise legal definitions and mechanisms for prosecuting the guilty, both at the level of states and international corporations.

Although ecological sin is a theological concept, it is also beginning to play a role in the legal context, especially in countries where religion plays a significant role in shaping law and public morality. In the context of Catholic social teaching, ecological sin is understood as a violation of the order of creation, which has its moral, social and legal consequences. In the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis speaks of the need for a new form of law and morality that would include care for the "common home". In this context, law should be a tool that protects not only humans, but the entire creation – plants, animals and ecosystems. Introducing the category of ecological sin into the legal discussion, although derived from religious tradition, can be an important step towards expanding the concept of legal responsibility. An ethical imperative is at work here: failure to protect the environment, degradation of nature, or massive waste of natural resources can be considered a violation of the basic principles of justice, and thus an offense that should be prosecuted and punished. Although ecological sin and ecocide have different foundations and motivations, both concepts indicate the need for systemic changes in law. Environmental protection is no longer just a matter of regulations concerning the protection of nature or industry – it becomes a matter of fundamental human rights and future generations. In international law, the debate on ecocide as a global crime is a step towards understanding that environmental violations are a crime not only against nature, but also against all human existence.

## CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions drawn from the analysis of the crime of ecocide in the context of ecological sin and its legal implications indicate the complexity of the problem, which affects both the area of ethics and international legal regulations. Currently, although ecocide has not yet been formally recognized as a crime by international legal institutions, its recognition seems increasingly necessary from the perspective of global responsibility for environmental protection. Actions aimed at introducing this category into the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court may in the future constitute a step towards developing effective mechanisms of responsibility for the mass destruction of nature. On the other hand, the concept of ecological

sin, which comes from religious and ethical tradition, enriches the debate with the moral dimension of responsibility for the environment. Ecological sin refers not only to material damage caused to ecosystems, but also to the inappropriate attitude of man towards the natural world and his responsibility towards future generations. John Paul II and Pope Francis emphasized that the destruction of the environment is a moral offense against justice and intergenerational solidarity. From a religious-ethical perspective, environmentally damaging activities are not only a violation of the laws of nature, but also a disregard for the divine plan of creation.

The combination of these two perspectives – legal and ethical – leads to the conclusion that effective environmental protection requires an integrated approach that includes both legal regulations and moral obligations. International law, in attempting to protect nature from mass destruction, should draw on ethical foundations that emphasize human responsibility not only towards contemporary societies, but also towards future generations and the entire creation. In this context, both the crime of ecocide and ecological sin play a key role in shaping new norms that can respond to global ecological challenges. Introducing the concept of ecocide into the international legal system could strengthen the tools of environmental protection, while at the same time emphasizing the moral importance of protecting the Earth. In the future, international law will have to further integrate issues of environmental protection with the broadly understood responsibility for the effects of human actions, taking into account both the perspective of intergenerational justice and the protection of ecological harmony.

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