

## **Sustainable Development-Towards a Greener Tomorrow**

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### **Introduction**

Development involves a progressive transformation of economy and society. Sustainable development is a new concept of economic growth. Sustainable Development is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations. It is a process of change in which economic and fiscal policies, agricultural and industrial policies – all aim to induce development paths that are economically, socially and ecologically viable.

Development and Environment must go hand in hand. We owe a duty towards future generations, and thus for a bright today, a bleak tomorrow cannot be tolerated. Environmental problems and issues play a crucial role in this century. We cannot march towards a brighter tomorrow unless we understand and solve them.

The balance between environmental protection and developmental activities can only be maintained by strictly following the principles of “Sustainable Development”. This is a development strategy that caters to the needs of the present without negotiating the ability of upcoming generations to satisfy their needs. It is a guarantee to the present and a bequeath to the future. All environment related development activities should benefit people, while maintaining the environmental balance. The adherence to the ‘Sustainable Development’ principle is a sine qua non for the maintenance of the symbiotic balance between the Right to Environment and development.

The unbridled use of scientific and technological advancements has given mankind a free hand in exploiting natural resources without having regard to ecological consideration. This over exploitation is resulting in eco imbalances and environmental degradation. The risk of irreversible damage to our natural system is posing a serious threat.

The Stockholm Declaration on Human Environment proclaimed that man is both creator and destroyer of his environment. In our times man’s capability to transform his surrounding, if used wisely can bring people, the benefits of development and opportunities to enhance the quality of life. Wrongly or heedlessly applied, the same power can do incalculable harm to human beings and human environment.

Sustainable Development cannot and will not be achieved in a world ridden by poverty. Economic growth and development obviously involve changes in the physical eco system. So, development in order to be sustainable needs to have an integration of economics and ecology in all decision making levels.

The concept of Sustainable Development contains within it two key concepts:

- a) The concept of needs and in particular the essential need of the world's poor to which overriding priority should be given.
- b) The idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.

According to the Brundtland Report, critical objectives for environment and development policies that follow from the concept of Sustainable Development include -reviewing growth, changing quality of growth, meeting essential needs for jobs, food energy, water and sanitation, ensuring sustainable level of population, conserving and enhancing the resource base, reorienting technology and managing risk and merging economics and environment in decision making. Thus in the broadest sense Sustainable Development aims to promote harmony among human beings and between humanity and nature.

If we want to build a "Greener Tomorrow" the following principles of sustainable Development needs to be followed.

**i) Inter-Generational Equity-**

The concept of inter-generational equity is the right of each generation of human beings to benefit from the cultural and natural inheritance of past generations as well as the 'obligation' to preserve such heritage for future generations. Inter-Generational equity requires conserving the diversity and quality of biological resources and of renewable resources such as forests, water and soils for future generations.

The natural resources of the Earth, including the air, water, land, flora and fauna and specially those representing samples of natural ecosystems must be safeguarded for proper utilization in the present, and for the benefit of the future.

**ii) Use and Conservation of Natural Resources-**

For the benefit of future generations, present generation should be modest in their exploitation of natural resources. There is a common heritage of mankind and this requires legal protection by the international community. Environment and natural resources of the people under oppression, domination and occupation has to be protected. Further, to achieve sustainable development and a high quality of life for future, Countries should reduce and eliminate unsustainable pattern of production and consumption.

**iii) Protection of Environment-**

Development is essential for progress, but there has to be a proper balance between developmental activities, and the protection of the environment. Without adequate environment protection development is undermined and without development resources will be inadequate for needed investments. The society has to prosper, but not at the cost of environment.

The environmental problems can and do undermine the goals of development in many ways. For example pollution free water and air is itself a part of improvement that development attempts to bring. If the benefits from the rising

income are offset by costs imposed on health and the quality of life by pollution, this cannot be termed as development. Moreover, environmental damage can destabilize future productivity and thus it can affect sustainability.

We have to remember that environment is not a separate sector, distinct from industry, agriculture and energy. Hence, environment protection must become an integral part of the decision making at all levels.

**iv) The Precautionary Principle-**

The Precautionary Principle suggests that where there is identifiable risk of serious or irreversible harm, for example extinction of species, widespread toxic pollution etc., then it may be appropriate to place the burden of proof on the person or entity proposing the activity that is potentially harmful to the environment.

In case of doubt, protection of environment should have precedence over economic interest. Precautionary principle requires anticipatory action to be taken to prevent harm to the environment.

Mankind needs to understand that development and protection of environment are not enemies. Precautionary measures actually means that developmental activities should take place only if it is done without degrading the environment or at least minimizing the adverse effects by applying stringent safeguards .

**v) The Polluter Pays Principle-**

The Polluter pays principle means that the absolute liability for harm to the environment extends not only to compensate the victims of the pollution, but also the cost of restoring the environment to degradation. Thus it includes environmental costs as well as direct costs to people and property. The polluter should be liable to pay the cost to the individual sufferers as well as the cost of reversing the damaged ecology. Remediation of the damaged environment is a part of the process of having a “Greener Tomorrow” for future generations.

The action programme on the environment needs to keep the following under consideration.

- a) Preventive actions should be preferred to remedial measures.
- b) Environmental damage should be rectified at source.
- c) The polluter should pay for the costs of the measures taken to protect the environment.
- d) The environmental policies should form a component of other policies.

We can build a good environment in coming times only when the responsibility to repair the environmental damage is that of the polluter. However this principle does not mean that the polluter can first pollute and then pay for it.

**vi) Obligations to assist and cooperate-**

The environmental problem is not the problem of an individual or even that of a country. It is in fact a global issue and it can be tackled only with the assistance and cooperation of every one.

The Rio Declaration provides that the States should cooperate to strengthen indigenous capacity – building for sustainable development by improving scientific understanding through exchanges of scientific and technological knowledge and by enhancing the development, adaption, diffusion and transfer of technologies, including new and innovative technologies.

Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at relevant levels. Further people and States need to cooperate in good faith and in a spirit of partnership in the further development of international law in the field of Sustainable Development.

**vii) Eradication of poverty-**

The Sustainable Development has to address the problem of a large number of people who live in extreme poverty and who cannot satisfy even their basic needs. At the Stockholm Conference in 1972, our former Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi had said, “Of all pollutants we face, the worst is poverty. “

Poverty reduces people’s capacity to use resources in a sustainable manner and hence it intensifies pressure on the environment. Most of the Developing countries, including India, are under the stress of poverty. Thus, in order to save the future for humanity, growth must be revived in Developing countries because that is where the links between economic growth, the eradication of poverty, and environmental conditions operate most directly. The key to achieve sustainability is to break the vicious circle of poverty.

**viii) Financial assistance to Developing Countries-**

The people in the developing countries strain their natural resources and over exploit them to meet their basic needs. The developing countries also donot have the finances and modern technology to follow the path of development which is sustainable. Therefore, the financial assistance and transfer of technology from the developed nations to the developing nations is a must if want to achieve the goal of sustainable development and environmental protection.

Some of the salient principles of Sustainable Development have been identified. But the real task which lies ahead is that of implementation. For this we need the political will of the North and the South to act in coordination to protect this planet Earth from further deterioration.

The world has to develop, but development should equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations. The concept of “inter-generational rights” emphasizes that we should maintain ecosystems and ecological processes essential for the functioning of the biosphere. We should preserve biological diversity, and should observe the principle of optimum sustainable yield in the use of living natural resources and ecosystems.

As far as non-renewable resources, like fossil fuels and minerals are concerned, their use reduces the stock available for future generations. But this does not mean that resources should not be used. The rate of depletion, should take into account the criticality of that resource, the availability of technologies for minimizing depletion and the likelihood of substitutes being available. Sustainable development also requires that the adverse impacts on the quality of air water and natural elements are minimized so as to sustain the eco system's overall integrity.

In essence Sustainable Development is a process of change in which the exploitation of resources , the direction of investments, the orientation of technological and institutional change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations. Human beings should be at the center of concerns for sustainable development. The present as well as the future generation is entitled to a healthy and productive life. The idea here is that for the benefit of future generations, present generation has to be modest in the exploitation of natural resources.

A point has been reached in History where we must shape our actions throughout the world with a more prudent care and be vigilant towards their environmental consequences. Defending and improving the environment for the present and future generations,has to be an imperative goal for mankind—a goal to be pursued together by humanity, in harmony with the established and fundamental objectives of peace and worldwide economic and social development.

We have to be committed to build a humane, equitable and caring global society cognizant of the need for human dignity for all. We need to undertake collective responsibility to advance and strengthen the inter dependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development.

We have inherited this planet from our parents, and we have to save it for our future generations. We have to protect their tomorrow. The responsibility lies with us. If we remember this golden rule, then we will not only have a greener tomorrow but a brighter one too.