



## "Eco-Sustainability: Driving Sustainable Development Forward"

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### **Abstract:**

Without embracing environmental sustainability (ES), the global concept of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) cannot be fulfilled today. As a crucial part of SDGs, ES can help nations fulfil Agenda 2030. The world, and developing countries in particular, are currently dealing with a number of environmental problems, including carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions, hazardous pollution, climate change, global warming, floods, droughts, deforestation, excessive and insufficient rainfall, shortages of food, water, and other natural resources, misuse and overuse of natural resources, and biodiversity loss. All of these factors cause irreparable harm to our natural ecosystem and have a major detrimental impact. According to our research, unsustainable socioeconomic expansion is causing environmental degradation to worsen internationally. In this study, we look at how the aforementioned environmental issues still exist in many nations worldwide, even though the UN has taken significant steps to involve member nations in defending the planet. According to our research, careless human behaviour mostly obstructs the advancement of sustainable development, which is vital for both present and future generations. This article makes the case that in order to support comprehensive, sustainable development, all nations must adopt the environmental sustainability strategy.

**Keywords:** Environment Protection, Natural Resources, Sustainable Economic Growth, UN Agenda.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Integrating environmental sustainability, a necessity for sustainable development, mitigates the potential negative environmental externalities of climate change (Opoku et al., 2022). Several scientific research reveal that unsustainable socioeconomic development activities cause massive environmental harm. The natural environment is deteriorating in a variety of ways, including the emission of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), the generation of various sorts of pollution around us, the overconsumption of natural resources, the destruction of forests, deforestation, the loss of species and biodiversity, droughts, heatwaves, floods, rising sea levels, and food insecurity. Many scientists have warned that the world is gradually moving towards environmental collapse as a result of unsustainable human activities, which may trigger the extinction of natural biodiversity and the loss of human life. The CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are the effect of climate change and global warming. Many lower-lying countries may have been flooded by seawater as temperatures rise around the world. However, under the Paris Agreement of 2016, member countries agreed to keep global temperatures below 2 degrees Celsius.

The world's population is rapidly growing, narrowing our globe in every aspect. The expanding population generates more manufactured goods, which emit more greenhouse gases, deplete groundwater, and cause topsoil loss. The loss of forests endangers wild animal habitats and poses serious concerns to biodiversity. Furthermore, unsustainable energy consumption adds to the depletion of natural resources. Furthermore, inefficient legislative tools, a lack of long-term strategies to avoid and control environmental problems, and a lack of interest in conservation initiatives all contribute to the deterioration of environmental conditions. There is a significant distinction between environmental sustainability and socioeconomic development in terms of sustainable development (O'Neill et al., 2018; Spangenberg, 2017; Weber and Weber, 2020).

The great economic boom over the past few decades has resulted in a number of environmental issues. Environmental challenges are particularly serious in emerging developing countries. Although economic prosperity has helped to alleviate poverty and improve social conditions, unsustainable development frequently attempts to destroy the environment, resulting in significant biodiversity and ecosystem losses. Initially, many countries should have prioritised environmental sustainability. Today, the globe has taken action to conserve the environment, biodiversity, and ecosystems. Many nations have periodically passed domestic laws, rules, and regulations to improve environmental quality while also conserving and preserving ecosystems in accordance with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Agenda 2030.

As a result, there is no choice to implementing environmental sustainability policies at all levels for the sake of both the population and the earth. In this article, we seek an answer to the question of how the environmental sustainability principle and global sustainable development goals might be combined to achieve common goals for the welfare of our beloved planet. This research seeks to analyse the significance of environmental sustainability in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

## METHODS

The paper used data from existing works of literature, UN documents, resolutions, and reports. The 1972 report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) was used to better comprehend the notion of sustainable development in relation to economic improvement. The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED)'s 1983 resolution was examined, paving the way for the well-known "Our Common Future" report. The 1987 UN Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development was evaluated, with a focus on the sustainable growth of the economy and natural resources. The UN Agenda 21 and Agenda 2030 were expressly used in this study to assess the environmental sustainability strategy to achieving SDGs.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Integrating environmental sustainability and debating sustainable development is important in today's world. Environmental sustainability and sustainable development are inextricably linked. Indeed, safeguarding the environment and biodiversity is now regarded as an essential component of socioeconomic development. International environmental law's principles, accords, treaties, and declaratory documents promote sustainable development (Magraw 2006). The 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) expressed worry over developing countries' environmental implications. The UNCHE Conference focused on environmental and sustainable development concerns. The Conference urged states to collaborate with the people to protect and conserve the human environment. Recognising the Stockholm Declaration, which prioritised global environmental challenges, especially economic growth and its ensuing environmental effects on underdeveloped nations, was the main result of this conference. The Stockholm Declaration's fifth principle promotes the sustainable use of non-renewable resources and their preservation for future generations, whereas principle four shows that humans are accountable for the protection and prudent management of wildlife and its ecosystems (UNCHE, 1972).

As the 80th century begins, the world's population, economy, and environmental issues are all growing. A 1983 General Assembly decision created the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (UN, 1983), and the Commission's 1987 report "Our Common Future" evaluated the state of the world's environment. The analysis found that the primary causes of environmental degradation and the acceleration of global resource consumption were enormous population increase and technological innovation. According to the report, national and international organisations have not been able to effectively address the issues of ensuring equity for future generations. Inequalities in the acquisition of resources are the cause of a greater number of issues. Therefore, for sustainable economic growth, fairness and environmental sustainability must be incorporated.

The United Nations resolution of 1987 outlined several ways to address environmental issues and their relationship to other global issues. These include: safeguarding natural resources from war conflicts; ensuring sustained economic growth worldwide while simultaneously improving the state of the environment; eradicating mass poverty, which is the primary cause of environmental degradation, and guaranteeing that everyone has an equal share of environmental resources; improving and managing environmental constraints for sustained economic growth worldwide; integrating environmental goals and actions into national developmental policies; integrating and coordinating environmental considerations into sectoral policies and programs to achieve sustainable development; holding those responsible for environmental degradation accountable and helping to improve the situation; safeguard the wild species and adopt flexible environmental coping strategies with mass level awareness creation (UN, 1987).

The 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit's results prompted world leaders to ratify the Convention on Biological Diversity in order to address current demands and guarantee a sustainable and healthy planet for future generations. Article 1 of this international legal document mandates that biological diversity and its constituent parts be conserved, used responsibly, and the benefits be distributed equitably. Humans have the right to live healthy, productive lives in harmony with nature, according to the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. In accordance with national environmental laws, states are allowed to utilise their natural resources within their borders without endangering the environment or having a negative impact on areas outside of their borders. The Rio Declaration also places a strong emphasis on passing environmental legislation that works and meeting the environmental and developmental demands of present and future generations. The Declaration goes on to say that states should give indigenous people and other local minority groups with traditional knowledge and skills adequate support and cooperation in managing the environment. The 1992 Dublin Statement on Water and Sustainable Development calls for an end to the abuse of freshwater and land resources, acknowledging the threat to the environment and sustainable development. The Conference Report calls for immediate action at all levels and emphasises pollution, droughts, floods, and excessive consumption.

In order to achieve sustainable socio-economic development, the report outlines four guiding principles: empowering women at all levels of water management, recognising the importance of water resources, making water affordable for all, and raising awareness of successful water management among users and policymakers. It was anticipated that putting this advice into practice would alleviate poverty, lessen the number of people killed and property damaged by natural catastrophes like floods and droughts, conserve and reuse water in the industrial and agricultural sectors, including by putting the "polluter pays" principle into practice; Sustainable urban development requires a sufficient supply of water; innovative strategies, such as rainfed agriculture, can help conserve water. Implementing integrated river basin management not only protects aquatic ecosystems but also safeguards the people who depend on them from devastating fisheries, agriculture, and grazing. Integrated management plans must be endorsed in order to resolve

disputes over transboundary river or lake basins with the aid of international agreements. Additionally, governments must be strengthened in their capacity building regarding institutional arrangements, legal arrangements.

The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development: Agenda, 21 of chapter 10 focusses on the sustainable management of land resources through an integrated strategy because of the increasing economic and human activities on land resources. Additionally, Agenda 21 discusses the role and functions of trees, forests, and woodlands in preventing deforestation; protecting delicate ecosystems from drought and desertification, such as arid lands, deserts, mountains, wetlands, islands, and coastal areas; promoting sustainable agriculture and rural development for the world's expanding population; conserving biological diversity and using biological resources sustainably to advance human development; rationally use and development of the oceans and seas and their resources and imply an integrated approach to manage water resources sustainably (UN Conference on Environment & Development, 1992).

The 1995 Copenhagen Declaration called for nations to ratify the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in order to lessen the consequences of drought in fewer rainy countries or regions and to fight desertification. According to paragraph six of the Copenhagen Declaration, "Equitable social development that recognises empowering the poor to utilise environmental resources sustainably is a foundation for sustainable development," which highlights holistic and equitable social development. We also acknowledge that social development and social fairness cannot be maintained without widespread and steady economic growth in sustainable development. (The 1995 Copenhagen Declaration)

Reducing human influences on the environment and advancing the preservation of natural habitats are the goals of environmental sustainability. Assuring sustainable development is the main objective of Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 7. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing group efforts for conservation, forest management, and sustainable development, fully implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity and Convention to Combat Desertification to address drought and desertification, and putting sustainable water management techniques into place to lessen unsustainable exploitation are all covered.

Fostering sustainable consumption and altering unsustainable production practices in accordance with the Rio principles are essential for global sustainable development, according to the 2002 UN Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. It calls on nations to increase their understanding of sustainability while using resources and carrying out production procedures. Additionally, it recommends stopping environmental deterioration in the name of unsustainable economic expansion. The plan promotes the integrated and sustainable management and conservation of our natural resources, acknowledging the significance of ecosystems for human existence, the economy, and sustainable development. At the same time, it calls for strengthening collaboration to reduce air pollution, acid deposition, and ozone depletion at the local, national, regional, and international levels and implementing efficient policies with target settings to stop the destruction of natural resources. Sustainable forest management will increase food, water, and inexpensive energy while lowering deforestation, biodiversity loss, and resource degradation.

The 1992 Rio Conference is reflected in the 2012 Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD). The implementation of the green economy tool for sustainable development was agreed upon by the conference parties (Bartelmus, 2013). The governments were invited to reaffirm their political commitment to sustainable development in the non-binding text "the future we want" that was delivered to the conference (Mahbub, 2016). It requires comprehensive and integrated strategies to meet sustainable development goals. These strategies will pave the way for humanity to preserve harmony with the natural world and rebuild the ecosystem. Additionally, it reiterates the need to strengthen global environmental governance in order to promote sustainable, balanced growth.

"Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" was released by the UN in 2015. There were 169 targets and 17 goals in the UN's Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. The Agenda 2030 outlines the following goals for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas, and marine resources: reducing all forms of marine pollution by 2025; managing and protecting marine and coastal ecosystems sustainably by 2020 for a healthy and productive ocean; restoring fish stocks by 2020, effectively regulating illegal, unregulated, harmful, and overfishing, and ceasing to provide subsidies that hinder fish production; conserving coastal and marine areas as low as 10 percent by 2020 in accordance with domestic and international law; and advancing scientific understanding for ocean well-being and marine biodiversity.; speed up the conservation process of oceans and their resources and sustainably manage them according to international Law of the Sea.

The UN agenda 2030 advocates for the conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of mountains, forests, wetlands, and drylands in accordance with international agreements by 2020 in order to safeguard, conserve, and promote terrestrial ecosystems, sustainable forest management, and stop land degradation and biodiversity loss; takes the necessary steps to protect natural habitats, address biodiversity loss, and prevent the extinction of endangered species by 2020; ensures equitable use of genetic resources; takes strong action to stop the illegal wildlife trade; protects the land from desertification and restores degraded land and soil by 2030; conserves mountain ecosystems and their biodiversity by 2030; sustainably manages forests, stops deforestation, and increases afforestation and reforestation worldwide by 2020; lessen the negative effects of invasive alien species on ecosystems on land and in water.

for a holistic development integrate ecosystems and biodiversity values into national level; increase global cooperation for wildlife poaching and trafficking and increase sustainable livelihoods for the local communities (UN, 2015).

Transparency, public involvement, access to justice, environmental impact assessment, and other procedural mechanisms are all elements of international environmental law (Mahbub, 2016). In order to properly execute laws and regulations pertaining to sustainable development, these tools aid in a better understanding of the interactions between humans and nature (Magraw & Hawke, 2007). The function and significance of these tools in national and international

decision-making are noteworthy. A safe, productive, healthy, and sustainable environment for everyone—especially the weaker and less developed segments of our society—is the focus of environmental justice. Due to millions of people's direct and indirect reliance on forests, wetlands, pasturelands, carbon sinks, biodiversity reservoirs, and marine resources, it is imperative that equitable benefits be provided for a stable and sustainable development.

## CONCLUSION

It is essential to maintain an ecologically sustainable society for the benefit of both the current and future generations. Environmental sustainability preserves natural resources for future generations and contributes to the creation of a healthy planet for present ones. In order to address the expanding global population's food shortage, we can restore the destroyed resources. Furthermore, the objective of sustainable development can be achieved by guaranteeing environmental sustainability. The fact that many nations, particularly emerging ones, are pursuing green environmental policies is greatly encouraging.

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