



Mohammed Chubado Abubakar
Adamawa State University, Mubi,
Faculty of Social Sciences,
Department of Political Science,
Adamawa State Nigeria.
+2348036053334

INDUSTRIALIZATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: INTERROGATING NEXUS BETWEEN TRADE AND ENVIRONMENT

ABSTRACT

Sustainable development calls for environmental sustainability, economic sustainability and socio-political sustainability. The concept of sustainable development is enshrined in a number of global and regional treaties, declarations, and reports such as the Brundtland Commission Report, the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Johannesburg Declaration and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and the 2000 Cotonou Agreement between African, Caribbean and Pacific States and the European Union (the Cotonou Agreement). The issues of sustainability and environmental effects of continuing industrialization have caused world leaders in the fields of politics as well as industry to pause and to examine the directions in which both politics and economics need to travel as we embark upon the Twenty-First Century. It has become increasingly evident that current practices cannot be permitted to continue without substantive and drastic changes both with regard to the dominant patterns of trade and consumptions. Though several studies have been conducted on the subject, this paper examines the relationship between trade as a human activity and the environment. In an attempt to highlight some of the contending issues in the politics of sustainability and identify the missing links, the paper also reviewed the efforts made so far in incorporating sustainability in our development paradigm. Haven identified some impediments to the implementation of the principles of sustainable development, this contribution also made some suggestions and recommendations arising from the observed effects of the current patterns of trade on the environment.

Introduction

As a society, we have recognized and understood the detrimental effect of our actions on the natural environment. In today's world, development is exploiting the world's natural resource reserves at alarming rates. Global concern over the state of the natural environment has been increasing enormously in recent years. This concern has materialized within national and local policy circles and culminated in a number of global initiatives such as the 1992 Earth Summit, 1994 Rio summit, 1997 Kyoto Summit, and more recently the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development;

***Corresponding Author:**

Mohammed Chubado Abubakar
Adamawa State University, Mubi,
Faculty of Social Sciences,
Department of Political Science,
Adamawa State Nigeria.
+2348036053334

all aiming at dealing with the environmental "crisis" of deepening poverty and worsening environmental degradation. The above developments brought a realization that since these issues transcend national boundaries, their solutions also lie beyond the reach of any single state. It became widely believed that an urgent international action is required to forestall a looming environmental catastrophe. The new concern suggested a point of interaction or a nexus between trade as a human activity and the environment. In emphasizing that the latter constraint the former, the global community also acknowledged that the former have spoiled the latter resulting in a series of problems.

In much of these initiatives, several conclusions have been reached as to the effect and the magnitude of the crisis and the solutions that can be adopted in order to alleviate the global situation. For instance, The Global Cities Covenant on Climate popularly known as "The Mexico City Pact" resolved to reduce local greenhouse gas emissions voluntarily; adopt and implement local climate mitigation measures designed to achieve voluntary reduction targets; develop local adaptation strategies to address the local impact of climate change; seek the creation of mechanisms that allow direct access to international funding for local climate actions; establish a *Global Cities Covenant on Climate* Secretariat; promote the involvement of civil society in the fight against climate change; advocate and seek partnerships with multilateral institutions and national governments on local climate actions; promote partnerships and city-to-city cooperation among others.

The intensification of development, globalization and neo-liberal economic restructuring policies that have gained popularity after the Cold War and have been adopted throughout the world, have resulted in capitalizing on the environment rather than on humans as a legitimate method of enhancing the process of development. As a result, countries embroil in a web of limitless over-consumption which, tend to put absolute priority on short-term profit making at the expense of the marginalized and the environment. The over-consumption of goods in the name of development, economic growth, and modernization has contributed the largest share to the degradation of the global environment. Even though development has had its benefits, (i.e. technology, high standard of living, and monetary wealth) its costs have been enormous. From air and water pollution, to the acid rain, decrease in bio-diversity, and global warming, the effects of the ideology of development on the environment have been disastrous.

Another dimension to the global environmental struggle is the issue of Environmental justice (EJ) which has become an important frame for understanding battles over environmental conditions and sacred sites on indigenous lands. Native Americans have long been a part of the US environmental justice movement, and indigenous peoples have used EJ language and organizing themes in other countries and regions as well.

These movements are part of a global process of native, tribal, and aboriginal consciousness-raising over the past 20 years, replayed from Canada and New Zealand to Peru and Nigeria.

The basis for such contentions is the assertion that man's survival depends on how he judiciously manages his physical environment. It also hinges on the idea of the welfare of man which embraces such things as non-polluted air, pure drinking water and proper exploitation of natural resources without leading to ecological imbalance which often results from unnecessary encroachment on wild life, reckless deforestation, industrial pollution, etc. As Johari will always argue, the current situation seems to suggest that "man has no option other than to seriously fight for the cause of the sustained quality of his environment and natural resources and (it must) be united and concerted at all levels-individuals, communities, villages, towns, districts, regions, national governments, intergovernmental and supra-national bodies" (2009: 507).

Consequently, the issue of sustainability became a global agenda in this century. The concept of sustainable development which became the new lexicon in development circles rejects the idea that environmental protection is a constraint on growth and trade simply because the economic development of a country is necessary. It came to see development as a process capable of meeting the needs of both the present and future generations. The concept of *sustainable development* is enshrined in a number of global and regional treaties, declarations, and reports such as the Brundtland Commission Report of 1972, the Rio Declaration on Environment, Agenda 21, the Millennium Development Goals [MDGs], the Johannesburg Declaration and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and the 2000 Cotonou Agreement between African, Caribbean and Pacific States and the European Union [the Cotonou Agreement].

In addition to establishing the nexus between trade as a human activity and the quality of the environment, this paper will also attempt an overview of the contending issues in the international politics of sustainable development. Suggestions will also be made as possible solutions to the problems militating against the implementation of Agenda 21 which embodies the principles of sustainable development.

Methodology

This study used secondary data from text books and several article in accredited journals of environmental and sustainable development as well as other social sciences. Several electronic copies of reports of international conference and commissions such "Our Common Future" the report of World Commission on Environment and Development 1987, the 1994 Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization, the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs, the 2001 Doha Ministerial Declaration, the 1992 report of the Rio Earth summit, the United Nations Millennium Declaration, the Mexico City Pact, Report

of the U.N World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21. Other international Conventions and Agreements as well as scholarly views on the effects of trade on the environment were also consulted. The choice of sources was informed by the authenticity of data targeted at a qualitative analysis of the information obtained.

The Research Problem

In 1972 in Stockholm, world leaders met and agreed on the urgent need to respond to the problem of environmental deterioration. Twenty years later (1992), at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, the same world leaders emphasized that the protection of the environment and social and economic development are fundamental to sustainable development, based on the Rio Principles. To achieve such development, a global programme entitled Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, were adopted and to which participants reaffirm their commitments. The Rio Conference was a significant milestone that set a new agenda for sustainable development at the global level.

Between Rio and Johannesburg, the world's nations have met in several major conferences under the auspices of the United Nations, including the International Conference on Financing for Development, as well as the Doha Ministerial Conference. These conferences defined for the world a comprehensive vision for the future of humanity. The World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 which brought together a large number of political leaders and civil society activists in a constructive search for a common path towards a world that respects and implements the vision of sustainable development, participants confirmed that though significant progress has been made towards achieving a global consensus and partnership among all the people of our planet on the relevance of sustainability, very little has been achieved in terms the implementation and eventual solution to the existing environmental degradation.

Despite all these efforts, environmental protection, poverty eradication, the need to change consumption and production patterns which are essential ingredients for sustainable development remains elusive while the ever deteriorating environment poses a major threat to global prosperity, security and stability. As the dominant patterns of trade and consumptions remained unaltered the global environment continues to suffer. Loss of biodiversity continues, fish stocks continue to be depleted, desertification claims more and more fertile land, the adverse effects of climate change are already evident, natural disasters are more frequent and more devastating, air, water and marine pollution continue to rob millions of a decent life.

Research Questions

Sequel to the above problem, this paper will look at the following questions: to what extent and in what ways does trade as a human activity affects the environment? What are the problems or issues militating against the attainment of environmental protection for sustainable development? What are the efforts made towards addressing the problems and why did they failed?

Theoretical Framework

Several theories have been propounded in explaining the relationship between human activities (including trade) and the physical environment. This work will essentially use the ‘environmentalist theory (also known as ‘social physics’ or ‘geographical determinism’) from which the concept of sustainable development emerged to explain or discuss some of the most contending issues in contemporary international politics. The environmentalist theory of development begins with the following assumptions:

- i. that all living creatures exists in a certain environment;
- ii. That there is an inextricable relationship between all biological organisms (including man) and the environment on which they survives;
- iii. That whereas the environment conditions or determines the behaviour of its inhabitants in many important respects, the inhabitants in turn, also affects the environment in a number of ways;
- iv. That while it appears that the inhabitants cannot survive without constantly altering the environment, the later (environment) may remain given or constant without the influence of the former (the inhabitants); and
- v. Consequently, the theory assumes that the relationship between the two is such that both are interdependent and intertwined.

A critical look at the above assumptions reveals that the human physical environment is characterized by so many possibilities depending on human activities (one of which is trade). It also suggests that man being the master of his interest and to a greater extent, his environment, has the ability through deliberate actions, to not only alter his existing possible condition but also produce new possibilities. Considering its assumptions on their own merit, the environmentalist theory will explain the relationship between trade as a human

activity and the environment as thus: Man being a creature cannot survive in a vacuum but rather on an environment; that in as much as man depends on the environment for survival, his relationship with it is inextricable; and that trade being man's instrument of survival, has both positive and negative consequences on the environment.

Whereas the tendency to use geographical factors to explain human social behaviour and conditional outcomes is very old, the application of new scientific techniques to geographical enquiry in relation to its impacts on the diversity of life has brought in a new awareness on the shortcomings of the concept of development. This has recently resulted in a global attempt to replace the old concept of development with a perceived better concept of sustainable development which integrates the ecosystem with all others aspects of state, regional and global development (Johari, 2009; Rourke, 2005; baylis & Smith, 2001).

Conceptualization

Trade

This paper conceives trade from the perspective of free trade as being promoted by such intergovernmental organizations as the World Trade Organization. Consequently, in addition to the freedom for individuals and corporate entities to explore natural resources to produce commodities, it also connotes the exchange of those commodities across political boundaries without restrictions such as tariffs, quotas, or foreign exchange controls. The free trade policy contrasts with protectionist policies that use trade restrictions to protect or stimulate domestic industrial development. The concept was first articulated by the 18th century Scottish economist Adam Smith who argued in his analysis of the *wealth of nations* in 1776 that trade flourishes best when it is left entirely free from government interference. The concept contends that everyone in the world will be better-off if each nation eliminates tariffs and other barriers to the free flow of products across borders.

Under recent free trade agreements such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) 1994, the barriers to trade has been expanded to include domestic regulations, public health and human rights measures as well as environmental protection laws which obstruct business activities. The concept actually implies no protection at all for smaller and poor nations' infant industries from competition from giant corporations. Therefore, in a nutshell, the concept of free trade as conceived by this paper encompasses the following:

- i. International trade of goods without tariffs and other trade barriers such as quotas on imports;

- ii. International trade in services without restrictions;
- iii. Free movement of capital and labour across borders;
- iv. The absence of other trade ‘distorting’ policies such as subsidies that gives domestic firms or factors of production some advantages over foreign ones; and
- v. The enforcement of property right in all states.

Environment

For the purpose of this study, the environment is conceived as the aggregate of all those external conditions and influences (land, sea, the air, mountains, the forest, etc) affecting the life and development of all living organisms including man. Consequently, environmentalism represents the tendency of stressing the importance of the physical, biological, psychological and even the cultural environment as a factor determining the behaviour of living organisms including human beings.

Sustainable development

The idea of sustainable development generated some debate. In 1972 the Club of Rome published *Limits to Growth*, a highly controversial report which assumed a certain relationship between population growth, industrialization, pollution and the depletion of natural resources. It became controversial because it predicted dire consequences if economic growth were not slowed down. The report gave birth to a number of uncoordinated political movements advocating for zero or even negative growth. While it was criticized by Northern or developed countries for not take into account technological innovations, it was also criticized by Southern or less developed countries because it advocated abandonment of economic development. In the end, the report reinforced the concept that the environment and the economy are irreconcilable (Caccia, 2001).

Reconciling the environment and economic development was first discussed at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, in Stockholm in 1972. At that time, both Northern and Southern countries were skeptical of environmental protection because they thought it was a threat to their prospects for development. As a result, little conceptual progress was made on this problem for more than a decade until, in 1987; the term “sustainable development” was introduced in *Our Common Future*, a report published by the World Commission on Environment and Development, also referred to as the Brundtland commission

report. It defines sustainable development as: "...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (United Nations, 1987).

The *idea* of sustainable development has been adopted by many institutions and experts as a desirable goal, governments, the U.N. family, the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), environmental organizations, civil society, etc, the debate continues as to its actual meaning. The meaning of sustainable development continues to evolve. Whereas donor agencies consider sustainability as the tendency to continue outside funding while corporate entities seems to be appropriating it for their economic gains, most environmentalists by holding on to the original conception, place resource conservation at the center of sustainability, focusing on the idea that economic development should not occur at the expense of the environment, and that current utilization of resources should not compromise its availability for subsequent generations.

Sustainability from a broader environmentalist perspective however, integrates into the concept the entire ecosystem, including human, social, and cultural components, biological and natural systems, and economic structures and activities. From that understanding, the term tends to promote a framework that would integrate the environment, government, and business or trade, in a single process of development, focusing on the present but respecting the needs of future generations as Fergus and Rowney (2005) also posited. Consequently, while many writers, public speakers and officials still holds on to the orthodox and conventional notion or definition advocating that sustainable development must be seen as a balance between the economy and the environment. This study sees the conventional definition as grossly inadequate especially in the face of the current environmental predicament in many parts of the world.

The inadequacy of the balance or reactionary approach is represented by the following facts: it sees the economy as an entity separate from the environment and consequently retains the idea of relegating and subjecting everything including the environment to the market. In fact this study sees the conventional conception with a suspicion of being imbued with neo-liberal values whose persuasion resulted in the present situation. "... (Before now) an illusion is propagated that economic development will ultimately benefit all. A euphemism called sustainable development is nowadays used to cover-up reality, which is not more than crisis management (Wiencke, 2002: 7).

Therefore, this contribution believed that the concept of sustainable development is suffering from the problem of constructionism. The conventional interpretation of the concept has been deliberately crafted in

such a way as to maintain the present resource exploitation patterns, structures and systems despite their contribution to the problem. Obnoxious WTO rules and conventions (including the ones guaranteeing a non-environmental barrier) such as the Sanitary and Physio- Sanitary Measures and even *Article XXI* (Security Exceptions) of GATT remains intact despite their negative consequences. These rules give both individuals and corporate entities a blank check to explore natural resources in any part of the world in the best way that suits their formula and technologies. In order for humanity to achieve genuine environmental sustainability, this paper is of the opinion that some aspects of the current idea and concept of free trade as championed by the WTO, needs to be deconstructed to allow for a greater state intervention to protect the environment from the negative consequences of excessive corporatism.

Therefore, the paper conceived sustainable development to involve the process of moving away from, or dismantling all non-sustainable systems, conventions and patterns of human activities in order to achieve equilibrium between natural resources and their usages as well as a non-disastrous relationship between biological organisms and their environment. The paper also tends to argue that as a concept, Sustainable Development is concerned with the integration of three main areas: environmental sustainability, economic sustainability, and socio-political sustainability. The idea of sustainable development brings together environmental issues, development and socio-political issues.

Biodiversity

The paper adopts Miller's (1996) conception of biological diversity as the variety of different species, genetic variability among individuals within each species, and variety of ecosystems. This includes all animals, organisms and plants, in other words everything that can be called *LIFE*. The above also corroborates the World Bank (2003) which states that "Biodiversity (is) the variability among living organisms from all sources, including land based and aquatic ecosystems, and the ecosystems of which they are part. These include diversity within species, between species, and of ecosystems. Diversity is the key to (the sustainability of the) Earth..."

Discussion

An Overview of the Politics of Sustainable Development

Despite the worldwide debate surrounding issues regarding sustainable development and sustainability, very little concrete results are available. The degradation of the natural environment, the air, and water is continuing. This is the outcome of not changing from the current non-sustainable human activities, which are based on particular economic and political systems as well as patterns of resource exploitation originating

in the North. The situation is aggravated in the Third World. In sub-Saharan Africa for instance, the operations of Multi-national Corporations in collaboration with state officials provide a particular challenge in the promotion of biodiversity and sustainability. The WSSD in 2002 showed that hardly anything tangible has been achieved in the practical implementation of “sustainable development” since Rio 1992. This indicates a problem with the understanding and comprehension as well as the implementation of the concept. The United Nations also seem to have recognized this hence the organisation of another conference on sustainable development tagged Rio+20 hosted by Brazil in 2012.

Effects of Trade on the Environment

Environmental Pollution and Degradation

States in Europe, Asia, Latin and North America, Africa and other parts of the world, for centuries, has been endowed with a great amount of natural resources. The development process via the instrumentality of trade as a human activity is supposed to transform these natural resources into different uses that benefit man. However, history and especially recent experiences indicate that the developments that occurred in these countries resulted in some catastrophic consequences despite its tremendous positive sides. Land use activities such as agriculture, housing construction, transportation, industrialization e.g. extraction of mineral or oil, and commercialization are normally undertaken in order to improve the life of man. However, these activities have serious consequences if not carefully planned and implemented.

The direct effects of contemporary pattern of trade and consumptions on the environment (as per current experience) can be classified as follows: (i) Loss of tropical forests and other habitats critical for biological diversity; (ii) Desert encroachment or unnecessary deforestation via unsustainable agricultural practices; (iii) Environmentally unsound energy production and use which increases the rate of deforestation due to the dependence on firewood as the main source of energy; (iv) Industrial pollution of the sea and farm lands through the dumping of industrial waste as well as spillage in the course of operation such as the recent oil spillage in Texas USA; (v) Contamination of rivers and other sources of water through human actions; (vi) Depletion of the ozone layer thereby contributing to global warming.

The Nigerian Example

A scholarly view on environmental and socio-economic impact of oil mining in Riverine areas of Nigeria (Angaye, et al 1980) suggest that “although petroleum has created economic boom for the entire nation, it has also led to environmental and socio-economic problems for the entire nation and, that the inhabitants of the ecological zones of the Riverine areas of Nigeria where petroleum is produced are the most obvious

victims of environmental and socio-economic hardship that oil mining and spills have produced daily in the country”.

Oil wealth enriches Nigeria as a country, but it has not alleviated the poverty and deprivation in the oil-bearing areas of the Niger Delta. Oil exploitation, through environmental degradation, depleted the fishing and farming output, resulting in the subsequent loss of income base, thereby accentuating poverty, which in turn created divisive tendencies leading to endemic social conflict. In the process of extracting oil in the past five decades, ecological devastation, on the one hand, and neglect arising from crude oil production, on the other hand, has left some parts of the Niger Delta desolate, uninhabitable, and poor. One fundamental problem that faces the oil producing areas today is the degradation of its environment. The fact is incontrovertible that the environment of the Niger Delta has been intensely polluted with tragic consequences for the economy of the people and the totality of the quality of life. (Babatunde, 2010). The struggle for resource control by communities in the oil-producing areas in the Niger Delta assumed a central position in the discourse on the national question, ethnic minority politics and environmental degradation in Nigeria from the early 1990s

Some Efforts towards Environmental Sustainability

The history of the world is characterized by several efforts at achieving sustainable development. Notable among includes the following: The 1963 African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, implying the idea of sustainability, states in its Preamble that, “The utilization of natural resources must aim at satisfying the needs of man according to the carrying capacity of the environment.”

The Stockholm conference: In 1972, the United Nations held its first Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm, Sweden. That gathering "was the first occasion on which the political, social, and economic problems of the global environment were discussed at an intergovernmental forum with a view to actually taking corrective actions." In addition, "It intended to launch a new liberation movement to free humans from environmental perils of their own making, The meeting heightened immeasurably the consciousness of environmental concerns and led to the establishment of the United Nations program for environmental protection.

The 1980 World Conservation Strategy is one of the key documents, argued to have explicitly dealt with environment and development (Voigt September 2006). The World Conservation Strategy emphasizes three objectives: (i) maintenance of essential ecological processes and life support systems, (ii) preservation of genetic diversity, and (iii) preservation of the sustainable utilization of species and ecosystems (World

Conservation Strategy). Later, in 1983, the World Charter for Nature, which succeeded the World Conservation Strategy, strengthened the link between environment and development where under Principle 4, it states that the:

“Ecosystems and organisms as well as the land, marine, atmospheric resources that are utilized by man, shall be managed to achieve and maintain optimum sustainable productivity, but not in such way as to endanger the integrity of those other ecosystems or species with which they coexist”

The 1987 Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), commonly known as ‘Our Common Future’ or the ‘Brundtland Report’ named after its chair Gro Harlem Brundtland (the former Prime Minister (1981) and the Minister of the Environment (1974-1979) of Norway), applied the concept of sustainable development to addressing challenges of environmental degradation and social and economic development by recognizing that economic and environmental goals are inextricably linked (WCED 1987). The concept of Sustainable Development took a central stage at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, and it forms the central part of the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 (Preamble, Agenda 21). Consequently, environmental sustainability is one of the ten Millennium Development Goals.

The Rio convergence: A generation after Stockholm, at the call of the United Nations General Assembly, the nations of the world once again converged at the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 3rd -14th June, 1992. Among the principal purposes of that gathering were: The establishment of concrete strategies that would ensure broad-based environmentally sustainable development; (and) forming foundations for global partnerships between the developing and the industrialized worlds while focusing on mutual needs and common interests of both thus, ensuring a healthy future for the planet.

Two specific results of this conference were Agenda 21, “a comprehensive plan of action to be taken globally, nationally and locally... in every area in which human (development) impacts on the environment,” and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (U.N., Agenda 21). This summit meeting concluded that

“...nothing less than a transformation of our attitudes and behaviour would bring about the necessary changes... The message reflected the complexity of the problems facing us: that poverty as well as excessive consumption by affluent populations place damaging stress on the environment.”

There can be no question but that

“...governments recognized the need to redirect international and national plans and policies to ensure that all economic decisions fully took into account any environmental impact” (U.N. Earth Summit Report).

In addition to recognizing the correlation between industrial development and the increase of radioactive gases in the atmosphere, the 1992 Rio summit also suggested that development in terms of industrial machinery is one of the major causes of the environmental crisis (Aadrwal and Narain, 1995). The Rio Declaration on the Environment and Development, for instance, recognizes that development in terms of modernization and economic growth has to be sustainable to avoid exploitation of humans and the environment. The Rio Summit recognized

“the different contributions to global environmental degradation in which states have common but differentiated responsibilities in view of the pressures their societies place on the global environment and of the technologies and financial resources they command” (The Rio Declaration, 2002: 87).

In other words, although the environmental crisis is a global one, different stakeholders (or countries) have different responsibilities and concerns in the environmental debate. Equally important in the Rio Summit is the impact that capitalism has made on the environment. The global capitalist model of development as the remaining dominant economic model in the world exhausted the world's natural resources in the name of scarcity and the right to free trade. Part of the objectives of Rio was to demonstrate how sustainable development issues could be integrated into planning and implementation. As stated earlier, to do this, and help guide countries in the process, a 40 chapter 800 page Agenda 21 document was developed and adopted. Underlying Agenda 21 is the notion that humanity has reached a defining moment in its history.

“We can continue our present policies which serve to deepen the economic divisions within and between countries; which increase poverty, hunger, sickness and illiteracy worldwide; and which are causing the continued deterioration of the ecosystem on which we depend for life on Earth.”

“Or we can change course. We can improve the living standards of those who are in need. We can better manage and protect the ecosystem and bring about a more prosperous future for us all. No nation can achieve this on its own, (but) together we can — in a global partnership for sustainable development.” (Preamble, Agenda 21).

However, this is a non-binding document, which shows how sustainable approaches can be built into all facets of life, all sectors of society, at all levels, for all habitats and ecosystems and be part of all current and

important issues and challenges. Although it essentially called for a paradigm shift – a new way of approaching and managing things, one in which money issues, people issues and ecological issues are all carefully considered with their mutual long-term best interests in mind, countries and especially corporations are not compelled to implement. In December of that same year, the U.N. General Assembly created the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) with a mission to monitor and report on implementation of the Rio agreements at the local, national, regional levels.

The Johannesburg Summit: A decade later, the world converged again in South Africa in what is known as the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) to review and further discuss the Rio Agenda 21. On May 14, 2002, his wife, Nane Annan, in the annual Environmental Lecture of The American Museum of Natural History in New York City, noted that:

“...the model of development that has brought to us so much has also exacted a heavy toll on the planet and its resources. It may not be sustainable even for those who have already benefited, let alone for the vast majority of our fellow human beings, many of whom live in conditions of unbearable deprivation and squalor and naturally aspire to share the benefits that we enjoy”.

Utilizing the acronym “WEHAB”, Mrs. Annan identified five specific areas of concern: “Water; Energy; Health; Agriculture and Biodiversity.” (Annan Nane, 2002).

The WSSD recognized that the UNCED, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, provided the fundamental principles and the programme of action for achieving sustainable development. Therefore participants strongly reaffirm their commitment to the Rio principles, the full implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21. World leaders also commit themselves to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration and in the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and international agreements since 1992.

To this end, participants further committed themselves to undertaking concrete actions and measures at all levels and to enhancing international cooperation. These efforts were also to promote the integration of the three components of sustainable development; “economic development, social development and environmental protection” as interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars. Poverty eradication, changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development are overarching objectives of, and essential requirements for, sustainable development as also concluded by the summit.

In addition, the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) states that biodiversity plays a critical role in overall sustainable development (Paragraph 44, the Plan of

Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development). Furthermore, several regional laws have also recognized the concept of sustainable development. For example, it is one of the objectives of the European Union to promote the sustainable development of not only EU Member States, but also the sustainable development of the Earth (Article 3(5), EU Treaty). The EU Sustainable Development Strategy SDS requires the inclusion of sustainable development in all of the EU's external policies, including multilateral and bilateral development cooperation. Specifically, the EU SDS requires investments through the European Investment Bank and the EU-Africa Partnership for infrastructure to support sustainable development objectives.

The Cotonou Agreement explicitly endorsed sustainable development as an essential aspect for promoting the agreement's full implementation (Article 1, the Cotonou Agreement). From the African countries' perspectives, under Article 3(j) of the African Union Constitutive Act, one of the objectives of the African Union is the promotion of sustainable development at the economic, social and cultural levels

The Rio+20 Conference for Sustainable Development: Twenty years after the first Rio conference, world leaders re-converged in Rio in 2012 to reassess the implementation of Agenda 21 and identify challenges. The conference report tagged "our common future" identified inadequate political commitment as the major obstacle to all the objectives of sustainable development globally.

Obstacles to the Implementation of the Environmental Objective of Sustainable Development

Despite the numerous regional and intergovernmental efforts described above, the objective of attaining environmental sustainability is far from being achieved. This paper endeavored to identify some of the obstacles to the successful implementation of the principles of sustainability as embodied in the U.N. Agenda 21:

Ideological constraint

One of the obstacles to achieving sustainable development is the view of nature as a commodity which is based on the Kantian and "Western" linear concepts of the Enlightenment which deeply argues that because of human rationality and free will, humans by nature are anti-nature beings (par excellence) and must revolt against nature and free themselves from it thereby becoming authentically human. The theories of Enlightenment are deeply rooted in the utilitarian, western worldview and beliefs of how cultures relate, know, and define their environment.

Several studies corroborated that there is a link between the ideology of development and the deteriorating condition of the environment especially in developing countries (Gottlieb, 1996; Botafogo, 1985; Nyang'oro, 1996; Neale, 1986). Gottlieb (1996) argues that development is responsible for environmental degradation. The "hyper growth" of the West and the destruction of nature in the Southern countries, in Gottlieb's view, is a result of Western economic imperialism whereby the ideology of development and its industrial and capitalistic emphasis are used to exploit the environment at any cost (environmental or otherwise). In this tradition, nature is seen as a commodity or property to be exploited and partitioned into commercial holdings. Therefore, while its instrumental usefulness in producing goods is seen as essential for development and progress, its value is unfortunately, measured in terms of dollars. This monetary analysis of nature has reduced it to a quantitative object neglecting its quality.

In the Third World countries, especially in Africa, the exigencies of global competition, economic growth and modernization are adopted by African governments to enforce policies that put absolute priority on limitless corporate and transnational profit making at the expense of the local needs of the people and their environment. These policies shift resources and profit from local communities and redistribute income and property to foreign and local elites. This paper believes that the dominant ideology of production is at conflict with the principles of sustainable development and therefore constitutes a problem to its implementation.

Insincerity of the corporate sector

Another issue associated with the implementation of sustainable development policies pertains to those who advocate that it must be seen as a “**balance**” between the economy and the environment that are mainly found in corporate sector. The corporate world hardly adheres to the **precautionary approach** found in international conventions such as the Vienna Convention of 1985 and the 1987 Montreal Protocol where parties formally stated their determination to adopt precautionary measures to prevent emissions of ozone layer depleting substances. Since 1987, the precautionary principle has been enshrined in many international agreements: the Second North Sea Declaration, the Framework Convention on Climate Change, The Maastricht Treaty of the European Union, the Helsinki Convention, and the Biosafety Protocol to mention a few.

The politics of the scientific proof

The 1992 Rio Declaration of the UN Conference on the Environment explicitly stated that

“In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.”

In essence, what the precautionary principle really means is better safe than sorry. If you have a body of evidence pointing to serious irreversible damage to human health or the environment, you should take preventive measures rather than wait for full scientific certainty. But the precautionary principle is looked upon by the corporate community with suspicion and even disdain. What it wants instead is full scientific proof that their products are causing harm before regulatory steps are taken.

Political time frame

The political time frame, in terms of the period for each regime is a constraint. Democratic governments tend to plan and decide with the next election in mind and the prospect of being re-elected. It is difficult for governments to make decisions which would be perceived as politically damaging at the next election. Therefore, difficult decisions are often postponed or modified in order not to offend an electorate. The public must bear some of the responsibility for this situation, as voters are well known for their short memories and also for their desire to see immediate results from policy decisions. Yet, sustainable development, by definition, requires medium and long-term planning and as such poses a significant problem for those who want to get re-elected.

Plurality of state departments

The structure of government, which consists of several departments or ministries performing closely, related roles. You have the ministry for Environment protecting the environment; department of Natural Resources in some states protecting the interests of those engaged in the exploitation of natural resources as well as a ministry of Agriculture which protects the farming industry. Their roles often come into conflict with each other and must compete for the attention of the decision-makers. Each is pursuing its specific mandate without an overarching assignment

International agreements

As stated earlier in the paper some of the international conventions and especially some WTO rules concerning free trade have become unsustainable and are creating room for manipulations especially by the corporate sector. The increasing constraint imposed on a national government when it signs an international agreement also in some cases constitutes a problem. The international context in which we operate places obligations on national governments to adapt to international standards. However, there are from time to time, differing national realities with which such international agreements need to be reconciled.

Corruption by Agency Officials

Other problems hindering the implementation of sustainability principles includes corruption on the part of some corporate organizations and, or in collaboration with state officials; lack of awareness on the part of the public especially the rural poor about the dangers of some of their practice as well as the poor level of technology in poor nations.

Conclusion

Generally one of the greatest discontents for those who worked hard for a meaningful agreement at the Earth Summit in 1992 has been the general lack of political commitment from government, institutions and civil society for the implementation of sustainable development especially, its environmental component. The failure to adequately protect environment and support social welfare is largely due to a lack of coherent, forward-looking and integrated global-local frameworks for sustainable development. Many participants continue to observe that the environmental governance regime is yet to sufficiently address the weaknesses, imbalances and inequities in global governance systems which, having developed in an ad hoc manner, have indeed left many gaps. The global sustainable development partnership has collapse due to lack of political will. The international community must now consider how the existing institutional machinery can be strengthened and better coordinated to ensure that it can confront the sustainable development challenges. The idea of International Environmental Governance (IEG) must be taken serious.

Suggestions/recommendations

This paper recommends the use and strengthening of the global governance system. This need was identified at the WSSD in 2002 by world leaders. But unlike others, this contribution is arguing for a relative deconstruction of the existing structures because as the nature of sustainable development becomes more complex, new mechanisms may be needed to set common goals, priorities and actions. From the standpoint of practice and program implementation, both the conception and implementation of sustainable development agendas require active assent and engagement at the individual and household levels. Building fundamental human and community capacity should therefore, be an integral part of sustainability. If empowered, communities are better able to identify and analyze problems, evolve strategies and solutions, interact with municipal authorities, and assume responsibility for implementation, and through this method they can contribute their share in the global partnership towards environmental sustainability.

Reference

- Aadrwal, A & Narain, J. 1995. "Global Warming in an Unequal World: A Case of Environmental Colonialism", In Conca, K., Alberty, M. & Dabelko, G. (Eds.). Green Planet Blues: Environmental Politics from Stockholm to Rio. West view Press: Stockholm
- Angaye, et al (1980) Proceedings Of the 1983 International Seminar On Petroleum And The Environment NNPC. Lagos. 1983.
- Annan, K.: 2002, 'From Doha to Johannesburg by Way of Monterrey: How to Achieve, and Sustain, Development in the 21st Century.' London, Lecture at the London School of Economics and Political Science, 25 February 2002. www.johannesburgsuniiit.org/html/documentsZsg_speech_london_2502.doc.
- Annan, N.: 2002, 'Towards a Sustainable Future.' New York, Annual Environmental Lecture, the American Museum of Natural History, 14 May 2002. www.johannesburgsunnniit.org/html/niedia
- Babatunde, A. "The Impact of Oil Exploitation on the Socio-economic Life of the Ilaje-Ugbo People of Ondo State, Nigeria" Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa, Volume 12. No. 5, 2005, Clarion Pennsylvania.
- Boff, Leonardo. 1995. Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm. Orbis Books: Maryknoll,
- Botafofo, Jose G. 1985. "Development and Environment: A Reply to the Ecologist". The Ecologist vol.15, No.5/6
- Chenje, Munyaradzi and Johnson Phyllis. 1996. "The State of the Environment in Southern Africa". Third World Quarterly. Vol. 17 (1),
- Dibua, J. I. "Citizenship and Resource Control in Nigeria: The Case of Minority Communities in the NigerDelta" Africa Spectrum, Vol. 40, No. 1 (2005), Institute of African Affairs, Hamburg, Germany.
- 'Earth Summit Betrayed.' From Rio to Jo'burg. Friends of the Earth, September 2002. www.rio-plus-10.org/en/info/rio+10/129.php.
- Fergus, A. H. T. and Rowney, J. I. A. "Sustainable Development: Lost Meaning and Opportunity?" Journal of Business Ethics, Vol. 60, No. 1 (Aug.2005),
- Frank P. LeVeness and Patrick D. Primeaux, "Vicarious Ethics: Politics, Business, and Sustainable Development" Journal of Business Ethics, Vol. 51, No. 2, Promoting Business Ethics (May, 2004) Kluwer Academic Publishers, Netherlands.

- Gebreselassie, T. A. "The Idea of Sustainable Development, to Reconcile the Environment and the Intellectual Property Protection of Plants" *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, Volume 12. No. 5, 2005, Clarion Pennsylvania.
- 'Get the Business reaction.' Business Action for Sustainable Development, Johannesburg: Press Release, 31 August 2002. www.basd-action.net/docs/releases/20020903a_basd.shtml.
- Gottlieb, Yosef. 1996. *Development, Environment, and Global Dysfunction: Towards a Sustainable Recovery*. Delray Beach: St. Lucie
- Justice, and Community Capabilities" *Global Environmental Politics* 10:4, November 2010, The Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- Neale Caroline. 1986. "The Idea of Progress in the Revision of African History, 1960-1970" in B. Jewsiewicki and D Newbury (Eds.) *African Historiographies: What History, for Which Africa?* Sage Publication: London,
- Nyang'oro, Julius. E. 1996. "Africa's Environmental Problems" in Gordon, A. A and Gordon, D.L. *Understanding Contemporary Africa* (2nd Edition.) Lynne Rienner Publishers: London
- Odunlami, T. (2004): *Nigeria: Corruption Notebook*. New York, Center for Public Integrity, <http://www.publicintegrity.org>
- Oguntimehin, G. (2004): *Governors Indeed Siphon Money Abroad - Ribadu: Vows to Tackle all Forms of Money Laundering*. Daily Times, Lagos, Nigeria, 29 June
- Peter P. Rogers, K. F. J., John A. Boyd (2008). *An Introduction to Sustainable Development*. UK and USA, Earthscan
- Schainberg, Allan, and Gould, K.A. 1994. *Environment and Society: The Enduring Conflict*. St Martins Press: New York,
- Schlosberg, D. and Carruthers, D. "Indigenous Struggles, Environmental
The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. 1992. Accessed at <http://www.sdinfo.gc.ca/docs/en/rio/default.cfm>
- United Nations, Department of Public Information. Johannesburg Summit 2002. 'Press Summary of the Secretary-General's Report on Implementing Agenda 21.' New York: DPI/2244, January 2002.
- United Nations, Department of Public Information. 'The Earth Summit.' New York. 23 May 1997. www.un.org/geninfo/bp/enviro.html.
- United Nations, Division for Sustainable Development. 'Agenda 21.' 16 April 2001.

- United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Commission on Sustainable Development. 'Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Application and Implementation, Report of the Secretary General.' New York: 10 February 1997. E/ CN/. 17/1997/8.
- United Nations, General Assembly. 'United Nations Millennium Declaration. New York: 55th Sess., Agenda item 60 (b). 18 September 2000.
- Voigt, C. (2006). Sustainable Development as a Principle of Integration in International Law, Resolving Potential Conflicts between the WTO Law and Climate Change Mitigation Measures. Faculty of Law. Oslo, University of Oslo
- WCED (1987). Our Common Future. New York, The World Commission on Environment and Development.
- WTO (2001). The Doha Ministerial Declaration. World Trade Organization.
- WTO (1994). The Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization.