

Green Governance: Sustainable Human Development

“the removal of barriers to free trade and the closer integration of national economies”.

“I have been a strong critique of some of the extreme reform strategies such as ‘shock therapy’ that have failed so miserably in Russia and some other countries of the former Soviet Union” (P.XI)

The IMF’s policies, in past have based on the outworn presumption that markets, by themselves , lead to efficient outcomes, lead to allow for desirable government interventions in the market measures which can guide economic growth and make everyone better off” (P.XII)

“Decisions were made on the basis of what seemed a curious blend of ideology and bad economics dogma that sometimes seemed to be thinly veiling special interests” (P.XIII)

Globalisation has stimulated the relocation of industry from the land, and ever-rising levels of consumption, along with associated emissions of effluents and waste.

While often generalising greater income for poorer countries exporting basic goods to developed country markets, ever-faster trade can also have adverse environmental consequences, by disrupting local ecologies and livelihoods.

Whatever the ecological balance sheet of globalisation, the resources on which human beings depend for survival, such as fresh water,

a clean atmosphere, and a stable climate, are now under a serious threat.

Using the term “governance” –as distinct from government- implies that regulation and control have to be exercised in the absence of central government, delivering the kinds of service that a world government would provide it were to exist.

Before the era of globalisation there were two traditional environmental concerns

- (1) conservation of natural resources
- (2) damage caused by pollution
- (3) discharges from oil tankers.

In 1968 the UNGA agreed to convene what became the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) to focus

government attention and public opinion on the importance and urgency of the question.

New forms of transnational pollution such as (a) acid rain were causing concern alongside dawning scientific realisation that some environmental problems – (a) the thinning of the stratosphere ozone layer and the possibility of climate change-were truly global in scale.

the 1992 UNCED or Earth Summit was at the time of the largest international conference ever held.

The most serious arguments at UNCED were over aid pledges to finance the environmental improvements under discussion.

As scientific understanding expanded, it was becoming a common place, by the 1980s, to speak in terms of global environmental change, as most graphically represented by the discovery of “ozone hole” and creeping realisation that human activities might be endangering global climate.

The failure of established political parties to embrace these issues effectively encouraged the birth of several new high profile NGOs

- (a) Friends of the Earth
- (b) Greenpeace
- (c) World Life Fund for Nature

alongside more established pressure groups
such as

- (1) the US Sierra Club
- (2) the British Royal Society for the
Protection of Birds.

The pursuit of power, status, and wealth is rarely absent from international deliberations. This is often neglected in discussions of international environmental cooperation.

Trans boundary Trade and Pollution Control

When animals, fish, water, air pollution cross national frontiers, the need for international cooperation arises.

The regulation of trans boundary environmental problems is the longest-established function of international cooperation, reflected in hundreds of multilateral, regional and bilateral agreements providing for joint efforts to manage resources and control pollution.

Prominent examples of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) include the 1979 Long-Range Trans-boundary Air Pollution Convention and its various protocols and conventions governing such things as the cross-border movement of hazardous waste and chemicals.

One norm /Principle states that where there is a likely hood of environmental damage, banning an activity should not require full and definitive proof.

Another norm is that governments should give “prior informed consent” to potentially damaging imports.

1972 Stockholm Conference produced its “principle 21”, which combines sovereignty over national resources with state responsibility for external pollution.

It is different from “Agenda 21” issued by the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, a complex 40-Chapter document of some 400 pages that took two years to negotiate in UNCEDs preparing committee.

It was derided but this internationally agreed compendium of environmental “best practice” subsequently had a wide impact and remains a point of reference.

For example: many local authorities have produced their own local agenda 21s.

Finally, there is the global atmosphere.

The commons all have an environmental dimensions, as resources but also as “sinks” that have been increasingly degraded. The fish and whale stocks of the high seas have

been relentlessly over-exploited to the point where some species have been wiped out and long-term protein sources for human beings are imperilled.

The ocean environment has been polluted by land-based effluent and oil, and other discharges from ships.

It has been a struggle to maintain the unique wilderness of the Antarctic in the face of increasing pressure from human beings and even outer space now faces an environmental problem in the form of increasing amounts of orbital debris left by decades of satellite launches.

Similarly, the global atmosphere has been degraded in a number of highly threatening ways, through damage to the stratosphere

ozone layer and most importantly, by the enhanced green house effect now firmly associated with changes to the earth's climate. This is often characterised as a "tragedy of the commons".

Where there is unrestricted access to a resource that is owned by no one, there will be an incentive for individuals to grab as much as they can and if the resource is finite, there will come a time when it is ruined by over-exploitation as the short-term interests of individual verses overwhelm the longer-run collective interest in sustaining the resource.

In 1985, a British Antarctic Survey balloon provided definitive evidence of serious thinning of the stratospheric ozone layer.

A diminishing ozone layer is a global problem par excellence, because the layer protects the earth and its inhabitants from the damaging effects of the sun's ultraviolet radiation.

A framework convention was signed about the issue in 1985, followed in 1987 by the Montreal Protocol, imposing international controls over ozone-depleting chemicals.

Climate Change

There were still serious disagreements over the likely hood that human-induced changes in mean temperatures were altering the global climate system.

The green house effect is essential to life on earth. Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere insulate the earth's surface by tapping solar radiation.

Before the Industrial Revolution, Carbon Dioxide concentration in the atmosphere were around 280 parts per million and have since grown continuously (to a 2011 figure of 391 ppm) due to burning of fossil fuels and reductions in some of the "sinks" for carbon dioxide-notably forests.

Methane emissions have also risen with the growth of agriculture.

The best predictions of the IPCC are that, if nothing is done to curb intensive fossil fuel emissions, there will be a likely rise in mean

temperatures of the order of 2.4-6.4 degree C by 2099.

The exact consequences of this are difficult to predict but (1) sea level rise and (2) turbulent weather are expected.

According to international consensus, the avoidance of dangerous climate change requires that global mean temperatures should not increase beyond 2degree C. (That equates to keeping atmospheric CO2 concentrations below 550 ppm).

In the first decade of the 21 century, unusual weather patterns, storm events, and the melting of polar ice sheets have added a dimension of public concern to the fears expressed by the scientific community.

CFCs (Chlorofluorocarbons) are in themselves green house gases and the international legal texts on climate make it clear that controlling them is the responsibility of the Montreal Protocol.

The 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) envisaged the reduction of green house gas emissions and their removal by sinks, hoping that a start could be made by including a commitment from the developed nations to cut their emissions back to 1990 levels by 2000.

