



India's contribution towards achieving Sustainable Development: An Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable development is “development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. The right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations. As the world is progressing towards a healthy developmental phase where governments are promoting transnational trade across the border, the reality of depleting natural resources and global warming remains a matter of concern not only to India but also to the world in general. Where various international treaties and bilateral agreements towards achieving sustainable development have been signed and ratified by most countries, their implementation remains in vain.

This research paper highlights the historical development of treaties related to environmental protection and sustainable development with special emphasis on Paris agreement of 2015 and Brundtland report of 1987. The paper analyse India's progress towards the ratification and implementation of international treaties. India as the largest democracy and second most populated country in the world where the need for natural resources is in abundance has always centered its policies towards achieving sustainable development. The present government is introducing new policies like National Clean Energy Fund for the production of clean and green energy, National Mission to introduce electric vehicles to minimize pollution and its contribution towards generating renewable energy with special emphasis on boosting solar plant sector highlights India's seriousness towards achieving sustainable development goals within the stipulated time. Global politics should praise India's efforts and its policies towards achieving the aforesaid goals.

Origin of the concept of Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development is not a new concept. It came to be known as early as in 1972 in the Stockholm declaration. It had been stated in the declaration that: *“Man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being and bears a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generation.”*

But, the International Commission on Environment, which was led by the then-prime minister of Norway, Ms. G. H. Brundtland, gave the idea a clear definition in a report. The document, commonly referred to as the "Brundtland Report," was further debated under Agenda 21 of the UN Conference on Environment and Development, which took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 1992. The international community came to the consensus that eradicating poverty and gaining access to clean energy go hand in hand at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. The Brundtland report concluded that there was growing realization among national governments and multilateral institutions that it is impossible to separate economic developmental issues from environmental issues.

Principle 3 of the Rio declaration states that *"The right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations."* The main object behind the principle is to ensure that the present generation should not abuse the non-renewable resources.

International conferences on Sustainable Development

The first international conference to make the environment a top priority was the **United Nations Conference on the Environment in Stockholm in 1972**. The Stockholm Declaration and Action Plan for the Human Environment, as well as a number of resolutions, were all endorsed by the participants as guiding principles for good environmental management. The Stockholm Declaration, which set forth 26 principles, elevated environmental concerns to the top of the international agenda and signaled the beginning of a conversation between industrialized and developing nations about the relationship between global economic development, pollution of the air, water, and oceans, and human well-being.

The **United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)**, also known as the 'Earth Summit', was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992. This global conference, brought together political leaders, diplomats, scientists, from 179 countries for a massive effort to focus on the impact of human socio-economic activities on the environment.

The meeting in Rio de Janeiro brought attention to the interdependence and mutual evolution of various social, economic, and environmental aspects, as well as the necessity of action in other sectors for success in one area to be sustained over time. The main goal of the Rio "Earth Summit" was to define a comprehensive agenda and a fresh strategy for global action on environmental and development challenges that would help direct international cooperation and development policy

in the twenty-first century.

The "Earth Summit" came to the conclusion that everyone in the world, whether they were at the local, national, regional, or international level, could achieve the concept of sustainable development. It also acknowledged the necessity of integrating and balancing economic, social, and environmental considerations in order to meet our

demands and the viability of such an integrated approach.

RIO+20 Conference, 2012- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were developed at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development known as (Rio+20), held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2012. The purpose was to create a set of global goals, related with the environmental, political and economic challenges that we face as humanity. In this way, in 2015 the UN chose to transform the world and has promoted them as global goals of sustainable development for the period 2015-2030.

The SDGs are a commitment that seeks to address the most urgent problems of the world and they are all interrelated. They are a universal call to action to respond sustainably against the threat of climate change, having a positive impact in the way we manage our fragile natural resources, promoting peace and inclusive societies, to reduce inequalities and contribute to the prosperity of economies. The 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) have been chosen to transform our world.

The Role of Government in Sustainable Development

Growing populations and rapid economic growth significantly increase the demands for natural resources and infrastructure. It has become crucial for governments to find ways of managing these demands efficiently (Fiorino 2012). Governments need to regulate actions to protect the environment and at the same time facilitate economic growth. They should also establish a “steady-state” (Daly 1973), which implies a near-constant rate of energy and material that is compatible with the production and assimilative capacities of the ecosphere (Rees 2014:194). Governments, furthermore, must establish and adhere to international protocols, conventions, and treaties. In addition, governments should develop special support strategies and programs to foster sustainable development.

A further role of government is to ensure that its executive branch, is adequately competent, skilled and sufficiently capacitated to deal with issues of sustainable development. Governments need to design integrative strategies for sustainable development, which should combine social, economic, and environmental concerns in planning and management to work towards sustainability(cf. Dodds 2000).

India's efforts towards Sustainable Development

India has made steady progress towards achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in areas of health, energy, and infrastructure, as per the latest NITI Aayog SDG India Index which shows the strides taken by the country in social, economic, and environmental development over the past year. Since 2019, India's overall score across SDGs has gone up from 60 to 66 in 2021 due to nation-wide improvement in 'clean water and sanitation' and 'affordable and clean energy' respectively.

NO POVERTY- The absolute minimum needed for food, schooling, healthcare, electricity, and transportation is regarded as the official poverty line in India. In 2011, the Suresh Tendulkar Committee of the National Statistics Office estimated this line to be 27.2 rupees per day in rural areas and 33.3 rupees per day in urban areas, whereas the Rangarajan group of the Reserve Bank estimated it to be 32 rupees per day in rural area and 47 rupees per day in urban areas. Both of these definitions were less than half of the international poverty line of 1.25 USD per day. According to the World Bank, 2.9 percent of people were living on less than \$1.90 per day as of 2019. MNREGA and other job related schemes had assisted to decrease the circumstance of poverty.

ZERO HUNGER- Goal 2 strives to eradicate all forms of hunger, malnutrition, and the structural factors that contribute to it. This includes achieving the World Health Organization's targets of a 40% decrease in

stunting in children under the age of five and a 5 percent reduction in childhood wasting. In India, malnutrition is endemic. India is home to 24% of the world's malnourished, as well as 30% of stunted children under the age of five, whereas wasting affects 21% of children under the age of five. Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) schemes have helped decreasing sheer poverty.

Simply increasing the amount of food that farmers can produce is one of the first steps towards improving nutrition outcomes in a nation with a population of over a billion people and limited agricultural land. India had its first wave of agricultural intensification during the Green Revolution in the 1950s and 1960s. Agriculture yields of food grains have increased by more than fourfold from 1950–1951, reaching 2,070 kg/hectare in 2014–15, with significant variation between states.

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL BEING - India now has a life expectancy of 68.8 years, which is comparable to that of many developed countries. High rates of maternal and infant mortality are a severe drag on life expectancy. India has a neonatal mortality rate of 21.7 per 1000 live births and a child mortality rate of 28.3 deaths per 1000 live births, both of which are somewhat higher than the national targets established by the SDGs. India has been working hard to address all aspects and develop the country's health sector. The various initiatives of the Government include National Health Mission, Ayushman Bharat, PM Jan Arogya Yogna, Mission Indradhanush etc.

ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS -While much more progress remains to be made, a number of indicators pertaining to the status of women in India have moved in the right direction over the years. For instance, 68.4% of women were literate in 2015-16, as compared to 55.1% in 2005-06. Additionally, 53% of women were independently using a bank or savings account in 2015-16, which is a significant improvement from 15.1% in 2005-06. Numerous measures have been put in place for promoting gender equality. For example, the **Beti Bachao Beti Pado** initiative focuses on a comprehensive package of interventions for the girl child including those pertaining to education and protection. The Maternity Benefit Programs protects women from wage loss during the first six months after childbirth.

DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH -The objective is to minimize informal employment and the gender wage gap by 2030, as well as to achieve full and productive employment. India wants every citizen, male or female, including those with disabilities, to have a respected employment that boosts the GDP of the nation by the year 2030. The government has introduced a number of programs to increase employment possibilities, enhance skill development, and hasten economic growth for the general people in order to accomplish this goal. Among the programs are the **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, Start-up India, Skill India, and the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Program.**

India's new policies to achieve Sustainable Development

Boost in Electronic-Vehicle Sector - India is currently the fifth-largest vehicle market in the world and has the potential to become one of the top three soon. The Paris Agreement's global climate agenda is the driving force for the demand for electric vehicles (EVs). It aims to cut carbon emissions to reduce warming. Electric cars are defined as those that are powered wholly or primarily by electricity. Particularly environmentally favorable are electric cars. They use very little to no fossil fuels, have few moving parts that need upkeep, and incur very little operational costs. **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles (FAME) India:** As part of the program, 11 cities are receiving subsidies to introduce electric buses, taxis, and three-wheeleders. The aim was to drive greater adoption of EVs in India. **National Electric Mobility Mission Plan 2020:** By 2020, it aims to deploy 5 to 7 million electric vehicles nationwide, indicating the importance of government incentives

and collaboration between businesses and academia.

E-A MRIT – it intends to complement initiatives of the government on raising awareness on EVs and sensitizing consumers on the benefits of switching to electric vehicles. In the recent past, India has taken many initiatives to accelerate the decarbonisation of transport and adoption of electric mobility in the country.

National Clean Air Program (NCAP) - It is a comprehensive initiative to lower air pollution levels throughout the nation. It has produced and distributed the City Specific Clean Air Action Plans for implementation in 132 non-attainment and million-plus cities. These action plans concentrate on short-, medium-, and long-term measures that can be taken in a city to reduce air pollution from sources such vehicle emissions, road dust, burning of biomass, crops, rubbish, and municipal solid waste, landfills, building activities, and industrial emissions.

Namami Ganga Programme - Namami Ganga Program, is an Integrated Conservation Mission, approved as 'Flagship Program' by the Union Government in June 2014 with budget outlay of Rs.20,000 Crore to accomplish the twin objectives of effective abatement of pollution, conservation and rejuvenation of National River Ganga. These programs have helped Indian rivers water to be rejuvenated and helped in attaining sustainable development as clean and fit water is the right of the future generation as well. Main pillars were sewage treatment infrastructure, afforestation, river front development, and industrial affluent monitoring.

National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) - The government has launched the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) as part of its efforts to address, battle, and adapt to climate change. It consists of eight primary missions focused on solar energy, improved energy efficiency, habitat sustainability, water sustainability, Himalayan ecosystem sustainability, Green India sustainability, sustainable agriculture, and strategic knowledge for climate change. The initiative also includes the states and UTs. A State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC) has been created by 33 States and Union Territories that is in line with NAPCC's goals. India has promised to reduce its GDP-based emissions intensity by 33-35 percent by 2030.

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CONCLUSION

Though this is a true fact that economic/infrastructural growth and sustainable development can hardly be come in true harmony, but India, its people and government are working in line towards achieving this goal of sustainable development, for the better future of our coming generations. This is the ray of hope that we will be able to maintain the balance between economic development and natural resources and will follow the principle of intergenerational equity.

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