

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

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Abstract: Nowadays environmental destruction directly affects the economic process of world countries. Erosion, ozone layer's becoming thin, pollution, increasing the number of dangerous flooding due to the destruction of settlements and climate changes altogether have a bad effect on people's lives.

While reserving environment and natural resources is among the most important human challenges in the turn of the new century, the necessity of improving the level of life standards in the developing countries still keeps its importance.

Environmental sustainability and development are two essential elements in development planning, and in order to enjoy sustainable development we should firm industrial development based on the concept of environmental sustainability. Some parts of environmental consequences and damages are the results of unclear regulations and their lack of administrative guarantee, so rereading legal considerations and making arrangement in this area seem to be necessary.

The process of globalization due to the lack of preparing essential provisions for compensating the results of its avarice at last leads to destroying environment and earth's natural resources and increasing poverty under the yoke of the world capitalism.

In this article, Iran's environmental challenges with respect to the concept of development and specially "sustainable development" have been discussed.

Keywords: Environment, Sustainable development, Developmental punishment, Globalization

1. INTRODUCTION

Human beings and other living creatures each affect their surrounding environment. It should be said that primitive human being's effect on environment was less by far and having an

unpolluted environment had provided him with a more secure place for living. The life of creatures in the earth due to the development of polluting industries and its lack of proportion with environmental relations, qualitative change of civilization tools as well as ignoring safe relations between human needs and the status of environment has experienced increasing dangers.

Nowadays destructing habitats directly affects the economic, political, and social process of world countries as its unfavorable effects on people's life are obvious.

Conserving the environment and the regional habitats has become the serious concern of governments, environmentalists, and those service and educational institutes involved in this matter.

Industry sector in this regard can be considered as an important element, as it can have a remarkable role in promoting life standards and this, in turn, has many good effects on the environment.

It is as clear as day that the central policy in development planning is the reasonable considering and compounding of these two elements: industrial development and environmental sustainability that in order to enjoy sustainable development creates industrial development based on the concept of environmental sustainability. In other words, at national level we should not just consider economic growth, but it is the way of fulfilling this growth that should be paid more attention.

The acceptable approach of modern development emphasizes on the concept of "sustainability" versus "unsustainability". We should bear in mind that development is a subject that should include all aspects and parts of a society and should not just hold the environment in its general term including renewable natural resources like jungles, pastures, water resources, and so forth that can be divided into

two parts, namely; natural environment and human environment .

II. THE DEFINITION OF ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME AND THE LEGAL STANCE OF ENVIRONMENT

Environmental crime is any action or neglecting an action that causes some serious dangers to the environment and puts human life at stake (Taqizadehe Ansari, 1998).

Based on their nature, environmental crimes generally are divided into two categories: (a) Perpetration of crimes against the animates of the human environments which include all species of plants and animals. (b) Perpetration of crimes against the inanimate elements of the environment including weather, soil, prey, and chemical pollutions (the same). The importance and the stance of the rights of the environment have appeared in the 50th principal of the constitutional law; as environmental issues are some ultra-sectional cases, all members of the society, especially organizations and institutes should try to preserve the environment so far as possible for them and don't do terrible damages to it by their activities.

The early regulations like Civil Act (passed in 1929), Prey Act (passed in 1957), and Prey and Fishery Act (passed in 1968) were just related to the natural environment; and the first comprehensive act partly including all aspects of the environment that lead to some changes in the structure of the Organization of Environment Conservation then was approved and Environment Conservation and Improvement Act (passed in 1975) is an instance of which (Mir Mohammad Sadeqi, 2002).

In addition, in the Act of First Development Program, in order to prevent environment pollutions and rendering caused damages, some special approaches had been considered like dedicating 1 out of 1000 of incomes from selling products of factories and workshops of the country to activities related to conserving the environment.

III. GLOBALIZATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGES

The process of globalizing the capitals and socio-economical benefits which is called "Globalization" due to the lack of providing essential provisions for compensating its damages will lead to increasing cultural, economical, social, and political gap between the developed countries and the developing ones.

The process of globalization in the conditions of structural differences resulting from industrial gap

not only increases social inequalities and intensifies the gap of mass poverty both in local and international level, but also aggravates environmental challenges and the crisis inside the society and outside it , specially in adjacent countries of world system(as Waller Stein has said).

The process of globalizing with respect to the economic, social, and cultural implications indicates of integrating local and national societies in international markets and unifying common cultural characteristics of all societies is interrelated with the new wave of reconstruction (Zahedi, 2004).

In this situation, the Third World nations become the rural margin (adjacent) of the world system and their little hope in changing stable economic and environmental structures comes in disappointment.

There is no doubt that the only ways of getting rid of this bitter and disappointing horizon include: expanding the global awareness, increasing the political culture of the world and environment moralities, considering and rereading environmental penalties as clear as possible, developing participatory democracies, and reinforcing the social capitals. Otherwise, the gap between the North and South poles or central and adjacent nations grows increasingly, so the perspective of the environmental challenges and crisis which arise from the world Neo- Liberalism will become bitter than what has been in the past.

IV. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ITS ASPECTS

Although there are many perceptions of the concept of the sustainable development, this perception is universally agreed upon that sustainable development is a process of development which first of all is "ecologically" favorite.

Lexically, " sustainable development" is a sort of development which can endure for a limited period, and the concept of sustainability often is regarded in terms of the renewable resources like jungles, marine resources, postures, soil and water, as well as the human force. (Zahedi, 2004). According to the definition of UNEP, sustainable development is a development which meets the needs of present generations without endangering the abilities of future generations in supplying their needs (the same). In the following figures we have " sustainable development" versus " unsustainable development" which their distinguish features are the quality of connection and the organic relation between resources and activities.

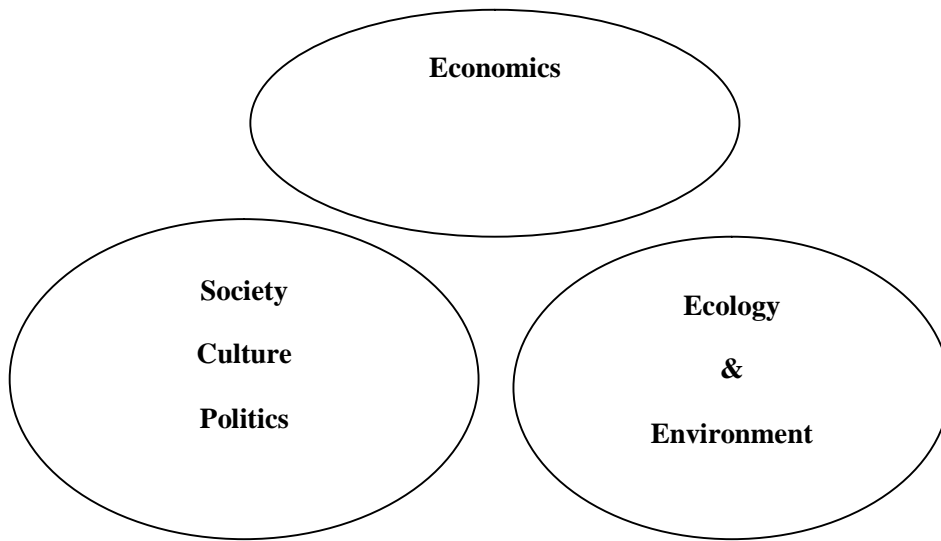


Figure1: Unsustainable Development

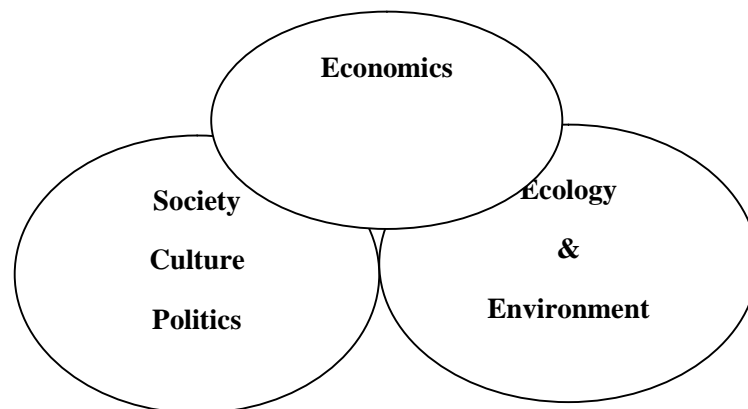


Figure 2- Sustainable Development

(Zahedi Mazandarani, 2004)

The term "sustainable development" which was introduced for the first time by the Commission of Bertalan in a report titled "Our common future" in 1987 indicates of this undeniable fact that the lessons of ecology can and should be used in the economic processes. These lessons include: strategic ideas of global environment conservation and creating a reasonable setting in which the claim of development is tested and challenged in promoting all aspects of life.

Macnon believes that: "Sustainable development means valid and efficient management and exploitation of the basic, natural, and financial

resources as well as human force for accessing to an accepted pattern of consumption along with using technical possibilities and suitable structures in order to meet the needs of the present and future generations in a continual and satisfactory way" (Macnon, 1996).

Another perception of this concept is an approach that causes the conservation of the function of the environment and protects from the traditional societies (Karami, 1996).

Sustainable development that causes the conservation of lands, water, genetic, plant, and animal resources

not only is not the destructor of the environment, but also is suitable technically, worthwhile economically, and acceptable socially (Husseini Iraqi, 1994).

The definition of FAO of sustainable development is composed of "maximal and sustainable output". It is evident that if we just consider the economic and environment conservation aspects in sustainability, sustainable development will become an anti-development tool. The aspect of sustainability in this definition according to Lahsae Zadeh (2005) and Lellah (1995) consists of social, environmental, and physical aspects, that to somehow come back to the sustainability of things, conserving the natural environment, and social balance through processes of growth and change in supplying reasonable needs of human beings.

Multidimensionality of the objectives is another aspect of this concept that includes: unity in aspects of human development, environment conservation, decreasing poverty, eliminating hunger and power inequality through empowering people and developing democracy and participation. The central point of the concept of sustainable development is "decreasing social inequalities" which so far has been ignored by older patterns of development.

The central and common approaches of most scholars in the field of sustainable development that are the results of international agreements of the Land Meeting (Riodojaniro, 1992), the International Meeting on Nutrition (1993), the Annual Meeting for Fighting Poverty (New York, 1994), the Annual Meeting of Studying Social Development (Copenhagen), and the Annual Meeting for Food (Rom, 1996) include engaging more masses of people, paying more attention to women and the young, expanding thought of freedom and democracy, and using new mechanisms in the process of development that led to the expansion of welfare and decreasing poverty; it should be said that this objective has not been accomplished by other patterns of development (Zahedi, 2005).

V. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: POTENTIALS AND HOPES

Karami (1995) believes that there are three thought schools regarding sustainable development: (a) A school which has economic relations and considerations based on which any approach that does not lead to increasing profit and efficiency is regarded unsustainable. (b) A school with environmental approaches; the focus of this school on sustainability is in terms of environmental security, so according to this approach any policy that results in environment destruction or pollution or interrupts its mechanism balance is supposed to be unsustainable. (c) A school which considers

conserving the resources of social environment and focuses on sustainability with respect to reserving social values. According to this approach any policy or activity that makes social environment imbalance is unsustainable (Karami, 1995) and (Lahsae Zadeh, 2005).

The UN considers the concept of sustainable development as involving the below aspects: (a) Understanding the effects of the development by using non traditional economic characteristics. (b) Making effort for creating local development with respect to the certain limitations of natural resources. (c) Helping poor and impoverished people, those who have to destruct the environment (Lahsae Zadeh, 2005).

The following cases are some outputs of several international meetings on the environment and environmental legal commissions regarding essential aspects of the environment: achieving social justice and equality, supplying vital needs of human beings, the correlation between environment conservation and development, changing the quality of the concept of growth, annihilating poverty, conserving natural resources of the world, trying to create ways of renewing resources, encouraging the increase of life standards, respecting human values, technological evolutions, and changing the development to a participatory process.

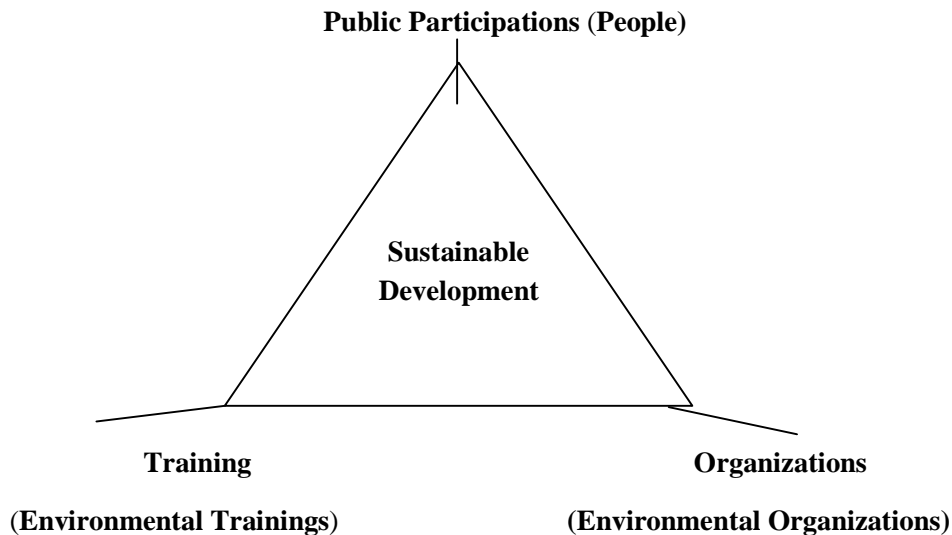
For regions such as Iran- which to somehow depend on agriculture livelihood- the concept of development is combined with the concept of "sustainable agriculture". Williams (1991) defines sustainable agriculture as "An agriculture that applies chemicals in a manner that neither destructs itself nor puts the ecosystem in danger". Although the interpretations of sustainable agriculture have focused on the overall stability of natural and biologic environment, the necessity of prolonging the process of production, protecting the quality of environment and increasing reserves of natural resources, sustainable agriculture generally includes the successful management of agricultural resources in order to meet changing needs of human beings from one hand and preserve the quality of the environment or to improve it from the other hand, and finally it leads to conserving natural resources (Lahsae Zadeh, 2005).

VI. WAYS OF ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

There is no doubt that a model of sustainable development is acceptable which considers environmental, economic, political, social, and cultural relations as a whole and arranges them in a synthetic and appropriate manner. It is a matter of fact that the process of development is a long, teachable, and participatory process which is the

reflection of civic actions and synthetic policies of social planning that requires the commitment of organizations, participation of civilians, and society-oriented political systems. The central element of mentioned cases is training, or better to say, environmental trainings that are conducted by

interested organizations and individuals to inform environmentalist groups. These trainings make groups and individuals aware of environment damages and outcomes. We can illustrate this process in the below triangle:



Having access to the objectives of sustainable development certainly requires directing overall policies of societies' organizations and institutions, so if the international and regional policies do not involve in this mechanism, accessing these objectives will rarely occur. Policies of these organizations, whether formal or informal, include the following matters: allocating specialized budgets, direct participation in environment conservation, strategic planning focusing on environment considerations, monitoring administration of policies inside and outside of the country by international organizations, resource protection, training, adjusting trade, changing the pattern of exploiting earth's resources, managing water resources, public health and housing, trash management-specially dangerous trashes -, population controlling, developing sustainable agriculture, and conserving the mountains.

Any civil aspect and appearance of development morality is not possible without public and specialized trainings. Training is the central element and intermediate chain of organizations and masses. Training can take place individually, in groups or masses (the same, p.410).

The process of training includes arranging appropriate instructions and considering them in educational programs, creating informational networks in those institutions which are involved in opportune transmission of information and

knowledge regarding sustainable development to policy makers and masses.

In areas like Iran with widespread and increasing ecologic damages from one hand and the lower levels of training and public and specialized skills from the other hand, the element of training and reinforcing it seems to be necessary. Such trainings should correspond with the level of environmental awareness and dependency of individuals. And finally, the ultimate element in development is public participation which is joined with "modern development " and "democratic development". Catching any sort of development without the presence of well-informed and interested groups and individuals, and justifying objectives for the existing groups of a certain social-biological environment is impossible. If participation has an elitist and group approach, achieving objectives of development is certainly impractical; so the only practical approach is mass, public, and widespread participation in which individuals have understood the importance of the case and get enough motivation for conserving available resources. This kind of participation includes establishing NGOs- what is seen in the Western Europe and the North America-, immediate participation in sustainable development, contributing national and international organizations involved in this matter, and finally training through media or group discussions. Anyway, the final approach of

gaining this objective is the direct engagement of the individuals of an environment in the ecologic development.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

The concept of sustainable development is the intellectual, democratic, reasonable, and human connection among three elements of human, resources (environment), and technology. If human and his green and environmental insights are the dominant agents of this process, we can expect a promising future for catching sustainable development owing to mass participations, responsible organizations, and public and specialized trainings. We are the civilians of a biological-social environment with agriculture livelihood, so the concept of sustainable development is joined with the concept of "sustainable agriculture". Any developmental or constructive project in countries like Iran, if does not focus on shares of future generations, safety and stability of environment, and the human aspect of this case, it will be an anti-development project which is found to be destructive and polluting.

Achieving the important and remarkable objectives of sustainable development requires involving the well-informed and interested groups in this process, enjoying all kinds of individual and group training, and asking help from international observer organizations such as: UN, FAO, and WHO.

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