**Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development: Prospects and Challenges of Growth Strategy**

‘A healthy environment is essential to sustainable development and a healthy economy’.

Global governance is concerned with issues that have become too complex for a single state to address alone. One such issue is globalization that offers extensive opportunities for worldwide development, yet not progressing evenly. Globalization is a phenomenon that has power to change the world and the only tool which can regulate it is governance. Globalization is being supported by international policies and institutions, but international organizations, economic institutions, environment and development bodies lack the authority as well as will to manage the global market for sustainable development. Developing countries are benefiting from globalization but face new challenges. Anxiety about globalization also exists in advanced economies which view condition of environment into the developed world as a symptom of a challenge. Are things getting better or worse? Some economic growth is good while some might effect the environment. Environmental degradation has become a serious impediment to economic development and the alleviation of poverty in the developing world.

Environmental security covers food security, energy security, economic security and the access to fundamental natural resources, which leads to the concept of human security. Thus, human security involves environmental, economic, food, health, community, political and personal aspects, a concept that suggests security should focus on individual centric threats. There are physical limits to how efficiently humans can use resources. Rapid and wasteful use of resources with too little emphasis on pollution prevention leads to environmental degradation. Failure of policies that encourage sustainable growth ruins the environment. The thought of the commons is that if I don’t use the resource someone else will. The little bit I use or pollute is not enough to matter. However, when a system crosses a threshold, a very small change in economic activity can have enormous impacts. To analyse this chain of action and reaction, three systems - food, energy and waste need to be focused. Reducing food waste in both developed and developing countries would reduce the need to increase food production. Mankind can produce any luxury, cars, smart phones and skyscrapers more efficiently even though these efforts require material inputs.

There is no real international actor, no global level democratic institution, which is supposed to take care of the issues caused by globalization. The most serious environmental problem is the corruption in governments, businesses and bad economic policies. In trade and environment disputes, environmental concerns are at a disadvantage. The global environment including the threat of climate change is a common concern for humanity which requires urgent action and creative thinking. Poor farming techniques including soil erosion, overuse of pesticides, livestock wastes etc. harm the environment. Need of the hour is to embrace policy changes to build strong economies and a stronger world financial system to produce environment friendly rapid growth. Focus should be on translating the benefits of globalization into better opportunities and green environment for all. The paper underlines the current international system to focus on the ambiguous effects of globalization. Environmental challenges are an important part of these unpredictable effects of globalization. The paper intends to analyze the relationship between globalization and the environment in the larger context of international economic and political relations, as the environment has become a key area of international concern. It also examines the connection between economic growth and the environment with special reference to India’s environmental policy in managing the provision and use of natural assets.

The problem’s transnational nature contributes to the challenge of creating positive coalitions for change. Promoting longer-term prosperity through inclusive green growth will help developing countries sustain and strengthen their development through appropriate measures. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is the platform where multilateral and binding agreements are made, but this does not require that everything be done there. Agreements such as the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) designed to facilitate global markets will undermine national efforts to impose environmental protections. New ideas such as 3 R’s (reuse, reduce and recycle) of pollution control should not be shot down due to any political sensitivity as they not only address the ever-growing gap between what the science demands and what governments are willing to deliver, but also offer an opportunity to step back, assess the results, and create new agreements that drive greater change. Leaders welcomed the creation of the G-20 study group on climate finance and supported the operationalization of the Green Climate Fund. Yet whatever mix of these approaches is used to stimulate the global economy towards more sustainable development, it will have little chance of success until the United States takes a leadership role in pursuing global environmental protection.

**Sustainability Analysis**

The world is currently exploring the concept of sustainable development. It has become one of the most frequently used concepts in academia. Sustainable development is defined as combination of economic growth, social stability, and environmental protection. It’s an approach that permits improvements in the present quality of life at a lower intensity of resource use, thereby leaving behind for future generations an enhanced stock of natural resources and other assets (The World Commission on Environment and Development 1987). Since sustainable development includes long standing, high priority objectives like economic growth and poverty eradication, scarce resources both natural and man-made must be used as efficiently as possible. The ecological footprint is a measure of human demand on the earth’s ecosystems, the amount of natural capital used each year. The footprint of a region can be contrasted with the natural resources it generates.

Going green with climate and growth i.e., promoting longer-term prosperity through inclusive green growth and to fight against climate change promote sustainable development. The global risks are ecosystem-based, for instance, extreme weather events; natural disasters; climate change; water crises; biodiversity loss; man-made environmental disasters include - food and water supply crises, rising greenhouse gas emissions, climate change adaptation, extreme volatility in energy and agriculture prices, food shortage crises whereas non-ecosystem-based risks include financial failure, income disparity etc. The causes of environmental degradation arise from human activity other than natural disasters. The world is connected; low-income countries need sustainable growth whereas high-income countries need to reduce ‘bad’ consumption. The countries based on the stage of development require different economic incentives. The problem is how to transform the present unsustainable global development toward sustainable development.

The means of production and consumption need to change. ‘Green’ tax reform stimulates eco-technology. The ecological economics refers to the economic activities that depend on well-functioning social and ecological systems which play a key role in identifying options for efficient natural resource management that facilitate sustainable development. It is an essential bridge between the traditional techniques of decision making and the emerging environmentally sensitive approach. Environmental economics helps to incorporate ecological concerns into the conventional framework of human development whereas international environmental politics is the study of the cooperation and conﬂict among governments that surround environmental degradation, natural resource use and other human generated impacts on the Earth and the efforts to address them (Mitchell 2010).

In the contemporary period, protecting the global environment has emerged as one of the major challenges in international relations. A number of global, regional and bilateral environmental treaties and agreements have been negotiated and signed. Governments of different countries have endorsed dozens of comprehensive action plans. Agenda 21 set forth a blueprint for implementing sustainable development. The result is an increasingly complex and rich body of international environmental law and policy. This provides a broad framework for moving toward a more environmentally sustainable future. However, these treaties, action plans, and other instruments have not reversed global environmental decline. Every environmental indicator either in developed county or the developing country is worse today than it was at the time of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED or the Earth Summit) held in Rio de Janeiro known as Earth Summit.

**Climate Change and Sustainable Development: The Connections**

The environment is a multidimensional phenomenon. The Earth’s climate is changing, with severe consequences for human beings. The global economy faces significant environmental challenges, from averting dangerous climate change, a global problem that exacerbates disasters and disrupts national economies to halting biodiversity loss. Climate change has caused the warmest decade, the ozone layer continues to deteriorate, species extinction is at the highest rate, fish populations are crashing, and toxic chemicals are accumulating in every living organism. Warnings about ecological breakdown, alarming rate of soil depletion, deforestation, the collapse of water animals and other noticeable changes in food chain have become omnipresent. These crises are being driven by global economic growth, and its accompanying consumption, which is destroying the earth’s biosphere. Development strategies and programs which do not take adequate account of the state of critical resources including forests, soils, grasslands, freshwater, coastal areas and fisheries will degrade the resource base upon which future generation and growth is dependent. In 2018, the South African government faced the prospect of its largest city Cape Town running out of water. The government announced “day zero” – a moment when dam levels would be so low that they would turn off the taps in Cape Town and send people to communal water collection points. This apocalyptic notion prompted water stockpiling and panic, and raised the civil unrest.

Scientists are experiencing changing weather patterns, rising sea levels, and extreme weather events. Greenhouse gas emissions from human activities continue to rise with large differences between countries. According to NASA, globally averaged temperatures in 2017 were 0.90 degrees Celsius warmer than the 1951 to 1980 mean (Millennium Post). 2016 was the third consecutive year in which temperatures were more than 1 degree Celsius above late nineteenth-century levels. Each one degree Celsius of temperature increase in global mean temperature is estimated to reduce average global yields of wheat by 6%, rice yields by 3.2%, and maize yields by 7.4%. Absolute sea level has risen at an average rate of 0.06 inches per year from 1880 to 2013 ([World Agriculture: Towards 2015/2030 - An FAO perspective](https://www.google.co.in/url?q=http://www.fao.org/3/y4252e/y4252e06b.htm&sa=U&ved=0ahUKEwjv6czRxrXhAhVG6nMBHfIcD0QQFggbMAI&usg=AOvVaw3gm5939AhWxSCSuKn4GqQ8)). Since 1993, average sea level has risen at a rate of 0.11 to 0.14 inches per year—roughly twice as fast as the previous trend. Global emissions of carbon dioxide (CO2) have increased by almost 50% since 1990 with emissions increasing more quickly between 2000 and 2010.

It is difficult to define sustain and durable economic growth in the context of the natural environment. As the economy is emerging in the contemporary world, attention is shifting on how best to return it to sustained economic growth. As the saying goes on, it is impossible to create something from nothing. All economic products result from the use of resources provided by nature. It is essential to support factors that affect people’s well-being, from health and employment to education and quality of life, and to help the government deliver on a range of policy objectives including economic, social, and environmental sphere. The failure of the international society in addressing environmental problems such as climate change reflects the need for a reform in the international institutions of the UN system or the creation of new ones, eminently global-oriented based on long-term issues.

**Climate Change and International Relations: Route to Cooperation**

Climate change poses an existential threat to the planet. India is the third highest emitter of carbon-dioxide and is responsible for 609% of global emissions (SDG 13: Climate Change). India has the highest ecological foot print per capita. However, the emissions intensity of India’s GDP reduced by 12% between 2005 and 2010. In October 2015, India made a commitment to reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by 20-25% from its 2005 levels by 2020 and by 33-35% by 2030 (Govt. Report 7 Jan 19). India is on track to meet its global climate action pledges - both its Copenhagen and Paris commitments. India is integrating climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning. The Government of India also adopted a [National Action Plan on Climate Change](https://emea01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fenvfor.nic.in%2Fccd-napcc&data=02%7C01%7C%7Cf65353cd59224b1dbb5608d627762472%7Cb3e5db5e2944483799f57488ace54319%7C0%7C0%7C636739785692258104&sdata=RPcJz5bBgBqRuJjmr2eHtr1S5y3Bcdp0XoQ1t6XI5uw%3D&reserved=0) to address this issue as well as a [National Mission for Green India](https://emea01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.envfor.nic.in%2Fmajor-initiatives%2Fnational-mission-green-india-gim&data=02%7C01%7C%7Cf65353cd59224b1dbb5608d627762472%7Cb3e5db5e2944483799f57488ace54319%7C0%7C0%7C636739785692268114&sdata=o3H8oL989UbXbgOdau%2F2oF7od8v1OrIgutB%2B%2B9U1RFA%3D&reserved=0). The national schemes are complemented by programmes on solar energy, enhanced energy efficiency, sustainable habitats, water, sustaining the Himalayan ecosystem, and to encourage strategic knowledge for climate change. The target is to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.

The Indian government is improving education, awareness-raising, human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Solar capital provides 99% of our energy we use on earth. A major push towards renewable energy in recent years has propelled India to become the fifth largest producer of solar energy and the sixth largest producer of renewable energy worldwide. Indian Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narendra_Modi) along with French President [François Hollande](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fran%C3%A7ois_Hollande) laid foundation stone of International Solar Alliance (ISA) creating an alliance of solar-rich countries. They inaugurated the interim Secretariat of ISA at National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE) in Gurgaon on 25th January 2016 (Press Information Bureau 2016). Prime Minister Modi was recognized for his initiative together with French President Emmanuel Macron – to champion the International Solar Alliance, a global partnership that aims to scale up solar energy in ‘solar-resource-rich countries’ and reduce humanity’s dependence on fossil fuels. The Prime Minister has set a very ambitious target for India to reduce its carbon intensity, committed to moving the country to a lower carbon renewable energy in future. UN Environment has bestowed the United Nations' highest environmental honour ‘Champions of the Earth Award’ upon Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 3 October 2018 for his leadership in the fight against plastic pollution in India, and his unwavering commitment to tackling climate change around the world. India has made an effort to ‘Beat Plastic Pollution’– including an ambitious pledge to eliminate all single-use plastic in the country by 2022. UN Environment announced a long-term partnership with the Confederation of Indian Industry to reduce plastic waste to fight against pollution. Through the launch of an ‘un-plastic’ initiative, the partnership will explore new ways to offer the private sector the chance to turn an environmental challenge into new opportunities to explore new markets. Indian sustainable policy implementation and green grassroots initiatives have flourished, with forty million new cooking gas connections and over three hundred million LED bulbs being installed across the country. Through a number of policies, including LED lighting, clean cook stoves and solar expansion, India is moving towards a green economy, the economy of well-being. To quote the PM Modi, “We will never be able to tackle climate change without bringing climate into our culture. And this is why India is taking so much action for our climate.”

The relationship between economic growth and the environment is complex. The natural environment plays direct or indirect role in supporting economic activity. It contributes by providing resources and raw materials such as water, timber and minerals that are required as inputs for the production of goods and services; and indirectly, through services provided by ecosystems including carbon sequestration, water purification, managing flood risks, nutrient cycling etc. Several factors come into play, including the scale and composition of the economy particularly the share of services in gross domestic product (GDP) as opposed to primary industries and manufacturing and changes in technology that have the potential to reduce the environmental impacts of production and consumption decisions whilst also driving economic growth (Everett 2010: 7). Developing countries realise that poor management of the environment has become a significant barrier to development. The government should efficiently meet the challenges of development. In technical terms, the goal is to achieve “absolute decoupling” of GDP from the total use of natural resources according to the UN definition (Hickel 2018). Absolute decoupling occurs when the environmentally relevant variable is stable or decreasing while the economy continues to grow. Environmental resources should be consumed in a sustainable manner either by improving the efficiency of resource consumption or by adopting new production techniques. Countries should avoid breaches in critical thresholds beyond which natural assets cannot be replaced and can no longer support the desired level of economic activity. Existing commitments to avoid dangerous climate change exemplify the need for reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in the face of an expanding global economy. It has led to rising levels of employment and income remains a key factor in generating the necessary level of investment in technology and infrastructure to facilitate the shift to a low carbon and resource efficient growth path. Natural resources are, therefore, vital for securing economic growth and development for all generations.

Economic growth involves the combination of different types of capital to produce goods and services. These include - produced capital (machinery, buildings and roads), human capital (skills and knowledge), natural capital (raw materials extracted from the earth), carbon sequestration services provided by forests and soils, and social capital including organisations and institutions within communities. Natural capital is different from other types of capital because some elements of natural capital have critical thresholds beyond which sudden and dramatic changes may occur having diverse impact. Therefore, while natural capital is used to generate growth, it needs to be used efficiently in order to sustain it in the long run. This is very true in the context of non-renewable resources such as oil and minerals. At the same time, the rate of consumption of renewable resources, forests and fisheries, and of ecosystem services such as biodiversity and carbon sequestration must also be considered relative to their rate of replenishment.

UNEP defines green economy as the one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. Investment and demand for imports from developed countries have an important role in supporting economic growth and development across the world. The long-term trend in economic output has provided developing countries the opportunity to improve the quality of life and meet the environmental challenges.

To address climate change, 196 countries adopted the [Paris Agreement](https://emea01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.un.org%2Fsustainabledevelopment%2Fparisagreement22april%2F&data=02%7C01%7C%7Cf65353cd59224b1dbb5608d627762472%7Cb3e5db5e2944483799f57488ace54319%7C0%7C0%7C636739785692228084&sdata=SE5Obr5absgnCMma6i8tr8Q0THrMLsXn5i4UemzoL9I%3D&reserved=0) at the [COP21 in Paris](https://emea01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.un.org%2Fsustainabledevelopment%2Fcop21%2F&data=02%7C01%7C%7Cf65353cd59224b1dbb5608d627762472%7Cb3e5db5e2944483799f57488ace54319%7C0%7C0%7C636739785692228084&sdata=Puy8W%2BicLXsDB3UKt77ANTJTryIJxODrj%2FP%2B86B7Uxo%3D&reserved=0) on 12 December 2015 which came into force on 4 November 2016. In this legally binding and universal agreement, the countries agreed to work to limit global temperature rise to below 2 degrees Celsius, and to strive for 1.5 degrees Celsius. This agreement provides a pathway to limit global temperature rise. Implementation of the Paris Agreement is essential for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. On 2 October 2016 India formally ratified the Paris Agreement. On June 1, 2017, United States President [Donald Trump](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_Trump) announced that the U.S. would cease all participation in the [2015 Paris Agreement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paris_Agreement) on [climate change mitigation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Climate_change_mitigation). The US President stated that "The Paris accord will undermine the U.S. economy" (Wyatt 2017).

Since Rio conference, three empirical studies have arrived at the same troubling conclusion: Even under the best conditions, absolute decoupling of GDP from resource use is not possible on a global scale (Hickel 2018). A team of scientists in 2012 predicted what would happen to global resource use if economic growth continued on its current trajectory, increasing at about 2 to 3 percent per year. It found that human consumption of natural resources (including fish, livestock, forests, metals, minerals, and fossil fuels) would rise from 70 billion metric tons per year in 2012 to 180 billion metric tons per year by 2050. For reference, a sustainable level of resource use is about 50 billion metric tons per year—a boundary breached back in 2000. The team then reran the model to see what would happen if every nation on Earth immediately adopted best practice in efficient resource use. The results improved; resource consumption would hit only 93 billion metric tons by 2050 (Hickel 2019). In 2016, another team tested a different premise: one in which the world’s nations agreed to go above and beyond existing best practice. The researchers assumed a tax that would raise the global price of carbon from $50 to $236 per metric ton and imagined technological innovations that would double the efficiency with which we use resources. The results of two researches were almost exactly the same. The U.N. Environment Program tested a scenario with carbon priced at a whopping $573 per metric ton, slapped on a resource extraction tax, and assumed rapid technological innovation spurred by strong government support (Hickel 20).

In March 2019, the UN report stated that pollutants in freshwater systems will see anti-microbial resistance become the number one cause of death by 2050. The ‘Global Environment Outlook’ informed that if environment protections are not scaled up, Asia, the Middle East and Africa could see premature deaths by 2050. The report stated, “At present the world is not on track to meet the SDGs by 2030 or 2050. Urgent action is required now as any delay in climate action increases the cost of achieving the goals of the Paris agreement, or reversing progress and at some point, will make them impossible” (SDG Indicators 2018). It is still possible to limit the increase in global mean temperature to 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Nations are turning to renewable energy and other measures that will reduce emissions and increase adaptation efforts. Climate change is a global challenge that is not confined to national borders. Emissions anywhere affect people everywhere. This issue requires international co-operation to help developing countries move toward a low-carbon economy.

International relations study the conﬂicts that arise among states and the cooperative efforts states make to address such conﬂicts. The roots of the current crisis rest in the societal paradigm. Political will to implement policies and technologies at sufficient pace is lacking. A proper understanding of its mechanisms and key actors is outside the comfort zone of academics studying natural sciences and ecology. Although ecology highlights the existence of limits to growth and the local or global consequences of ignoring them, social sciences are necessary to diagnose the societal mechanisms at work and forces that prevent changing them. In other words, understanding human behavior and attitudes should be at the forefront of a conservation socio-ecology.

A holistic perspective on environmental insecurity is required. Since its creation, the Vice Presidency for Environmentally Sustainable Development (ESD) has placed the highest priority on the analysis of these issues. Within ESD, the Environment Department's work, has focused on the links between environment and development. Violence derived from environmental problems involves exploitation, discrimination, unequal social and economic structures (Murshed 2014), problems that create an atmosphere of political, cultural or religious violence, so that an approach to the environment by the human rights perspective seeks to ensure that the natural world does not deteriorate to the point in which internationally accepted rights, such as life, property, health, having a family, a private life, access to culture and drinking water are at risk. In this sense, environmental protection is an instrument to ensure all these rights. Environmental insecurity is associated with social injustice and inequality, which makes one think about the enhanced inequalities of globalization and, more specifically, of the overall economic policy (Schnurr and Swatuk 2012), something that reveals globalization is indeed a "double-edged sword." International Relations study the diplomatic and strategic relations between states, and the multiple dimensions of globalization, it can contribute to building solutions for the new challenges of the twenty-first century.

**Towards a Conclusion**

Environmental issues are capable to enhance the onset of conflict, but at the same time call for global cooperation and coordination. The world will witness a new global order based on environmental challenges. Ecological sustainability and just distribution cannot be achieved through market mechanisms, and both are prerequisites for efficient allocation. A stable climate and clean air are interlinked. Living beings rely on ecosystem services for survival, which mean that economic institutions must ensure their sustainable provision and just distribution. To conclude, a green economy is low carbon, resource efficient, socially inclusive and meeting some conditions with important messages of life - Earth is life-giving, its boundaries need to be respected; Society is foundational and should be nurtured; Diverse economy with innovative business should be supported; Market is powerful should be implanted; State is essential with ensured accountability; Economy should be shifted to the societal services such as education and yoga. The world must grow while simultaneously reducing impact on the natural world. As the Paris Agreement requires all parties to put forward their best efforts, the protection, preservation and the enhancement of the environment for the present and future generations is the responsibility of all states. As the world is more complex than ever before the solutions are economically, politically and socially complex. International trade should contribute to sustainable development. Everything we buy should be “Fair trade” and “Eco-labeled”. It can help promoting collective responses for problems that affect all and for which there is no solution unless the international community joins hand. Forge agreements among nations to act now for benefits later. "World leaders and governments have agreed that a transition to a Green Economy backed by strong social provisions offers a key pathway towards a sustainable 21st century" UNCSD 2012 (Rio+20).



‘Nature is the reason we are here.’

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