

Current Trends and Debates on Environmental Conventions and Policy Implications: Analytical Survey of International Environmental Conventions

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Abstract

Increase in global warming will result in dramatic rise in all kinds of disease, and other life hazards. The purpose of this paper was mainly focused on the assessment of the current trends and debates of environmental conventions and policy implications that are existing at the international level. The result showed that alarming changes in ecosystems, agriculture, sea level rise, ocean acidity, food insecurity, lack of access to fresh water, and absence of rainfall are from the major consequences of changes in climate that leads millions of people, and animals to death and migration from their village. Thus, the issue of climate change seeks to offer policies that would enable people along the globe to live better, happier, longer and more fruitful life.

Keywords: Environment; Environmental conventions; Debates; Policy; Migration

Introduction

General overview of world climate change

Climate change is one of the most serious challenging problem of human beings in the era of twenty-first century in which varieties of economic and socio political competitions are accelerated between nations to fulfill the demand of their population growth. Global temperature is highly increasing because of the accumulation of carbon dioxide and greenhouse gases in the atmosphere because of manmade activities (Recommendations of the International Climate Change Taskforce 2005). Our planet's air temperature has raised by about 0.80C since 1900. Climate change means not only changes in global average temperature, rather changes in atmospheric circulation, in size and patterns of natural climate variations. Human beings are responsible to take the lion share of climate change hazards (The Royal Society and Us National Academy of sciences 2010).

Desertification, rising of sea level, drought, absence of pure drink water, and lack of daily nutrition are from the main consequences of climate change that will force millions of people to migrate from their village over the coming century. For instance, the preliminary predictions indicate the total number of people in danger as a result of sea level rise in Bangladesh could be 26 million, in Egypt 12 million, in china 73 million, in India 20 million, and elsewhere 31 million, making an sum total of 162 million. At The same time, at least 50 million people could be at risk through increased droughts and other climate displacements, or dislocations [1].

The development of international environmental laws

During the period of 1900-1971, though there were few international agreements of environment, but they mainly focused boundary waters, navigation, and fishing rights. They did not consider about pollution related issues. There were also some agreements

aimed at protecting fauna and flora in specific regions in the years of 1930s and 1940s. In the periods between 1950 and 1970, two additional environmental problems were becoming under a concern of countries. These are: Marine pollution from oil and damage from civilian use of nuclear energy. And environmental concern became broadened to the globe members. For instance, African convention on the conservation of nature and natural resources had took place in 1968. The evolution of international environmental law can be classified in to three main categories: from 1900-1972; from 1972-1992, and from 1992-2012. Accordingly, these periods are demarcated by two international conferences. These conferences are: The Stockholm conference of United Nations in 1972 on the human environment, and the 1992 Rio de Janeiro conference on environment and development. The objective of this study is to analyze trends, debates, implementation status and current policy implications of global environmental conventions [2-5].

Literature Review

Unlike that of the middle of 20th, the issue of climate change and environment in general is the concern of every human being of this globe with regardless of his/her color, religion, boundary, educational background, culture, and political interests. The number of rules and principles that designed to solve the problem of climate change are changed and modified time to time. There is a shift of debate on global environmental change from biophysical dimensions to a focus on societal process, because it is difficult to think society without the presence of environment. So, the discourse of climate change is become from general to particular.

There are four major discourses over global environment issues: deforestation, desertification, biodiversity use, and climate change. Though there are policies of environment, but how they are illegible with local context is a very important point, because, policy making institutions are distanced from the resource users and local scale environmental management. Global discourses are often based on shared myths and beliefs, and political prescriptions that are not applicable with local realities [6].

How to bring sustainable development; How it is possible to think about it at the expense of ozone layer depletion, water pollution, deforestation, and use of chemical fertilizer; How it is possible to feed billions of people without expansion of industrial technology advancements? I think all these things are from the great headache and debates of scholars on the today's world.

Human beings are at the center of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature. Health is our most basic human right and one of the most important indicators of sustainable development. We rely on healthy eco systems to support healthy communities and societies. Well-functioning ecosystems provide goods and services essential for human health. These include: nutrition and food security, clean air and fresh water, medicines, cultural and spiritual values, and contributions to local livelihoods and economic development.

Survey of environmental conventions

There are different climate change conventions that are ratified between governments of world countries. Accordingly, from these conventions, I would like to focus on the 1972 Stockholm convention which given a base for the next conventions, The 1992 Rio de Janeiro convention, the 1998 Kyoto protocol convention, the 2009 Copenhagen convention, the 2015 Paris convention, and the 2016 Marrakesh convention [7].

The 1972 united nations stockholm conference on human environment

This agreement was the historic, because countries across the globe came together to assess and mitigate environmental problems for the first time. This conference was held in Stockholm, Swedish with the central attention to solve challenges related to economic development and environmental protection. Especially, the conference had stressed as the developing countries need the attention of international community to protect environment at the expense of their development. The Stockholm conference resulted in declaration on human environment, and action for the human environment by attempting to set agenda for the world action in response to environment and development challenges (MacDonald 1998). It has about 26 principles.

Rio conference on environment and development (1992)

Countries across the globe were met in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil to calibrate and commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the 1972 Stockholm conference on human environment. The main message that obtained from this conference was environment and development were the two inseparable things and concern of all nations regardless of their stage of economic development. The issue of sustainable development has clearly defined by the World Commission on Environment (Brundtland Commission). Our common Future, the title of the commission's report defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs" [8].

Different environmental principles were formulated as a result of this conference. And it acknowledged that human beings are entitled to live a healthy and productive life in friendship with nature.

According to United Nations (1992), participants of the Rio conference were agreed: The Earth's climate and its negative consequences are a common threats, and concerns of all human beings; ecosystem in general and humankind in particular are suffering from warming of the earth surface as a result of emission of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere, and the largest share of greenhouse gases has produced by developed countries as compared to the developing countries; the nature of global climate change requires the cooperation of all nations with different responsibilities, and capabilities with respect to their economic and social contexts, and recognizing that states should have a sovereign right to develop environmental policies and principles, can exploit their own resources without affecting of their environment in accordance with United Nations' Charter, and it acknowledging that all countries, particularly developing countries need an opportunity of resources to achieve a sustainable social and economic development.

To summing up, the 1992 Rio declaration on environment and development by United Nations has been consists of 27 principles. So, let me put about eleven of them as they are: Human beings are at the center of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature. States have, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and developmental policies, and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. The right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations. In order to achieve sustainable development, environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it. All States and all people shall cooperate in the essential task of eradicating poverty as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, in order to decrease the disparities in standards of living and better meet the needs of the majority of the people of the world. The special situation and needs of developing countries, particularly the least developed and those most environmentally vulnerable, shall be given special priority. International actions in the field of environment and development should also address the interests and needs of all countries. States should co-operate to strengthen endogenous capacity-building for sustainable development by improving scientific understanding through exchanges of scientific and technological knowledge, and by enhancing the development, adaptation, diffusion and transfer of technologies, including new and innovative technologies. Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development. Indigenous people and their communities, and other local communities, have a vital role in environmental management and development because of their knowledge and traditional practices. States should recognize and duly support their identity, culture and interests and enable their effective participation in the achievement of sustainable development. States shall resolve all their environmental disputes peacefully and by appropriate means in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations [9,10].

The 1997 Kyoto protocol convention/declaration

The main objective of this convention was to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere to prevent certain life risks that are resulted from ozone layer depletion, and then warning. This convention has a total of 28 articles from which about nine of them are focused on reduction of greenhouse gases that released by the states. Whereas articles 10 to 12 state the co-operation among the signing parties and their financial contributions; articles from 13-23 discuss about the institutional arrangements of the Kyoto Protocol; articles from 24 to 27 argue about the joining, and withdrawal conditions in to, or from the membership of the Kyoto protocol; and article 28 states about the six languages in which the convention is written, respectively.

The convention stressed that, historically, the great share of greenhouse gases emission has produced by developed countries as compared to the developing ones. So, the developed countries should be must agree to assist the developing nations financially so as to implement certain environmental policies and to bring sustainable development. The Kyoto climate change convention was ratified with the absence of USA, a country from which about 36.1% of carbon dioxide emission has produced to the air from. The reason why the USA was refused to sign the Kyoto Protocol is that president George W. Bush opposed why China and India the most contributor of carbon dioxide emission was left in the list of developing countries to be given such payments from the developed nations. In other words, Bush claimed that as any other of developed nations, these two countries are expected to share the payment since they cause serious harm to the USA economy. As any of the above preceding conventions of climate change, the Copenhagen accord of (2009) was gave much of its emphasis on how to solve the problem of climate change that accounted the life pass of human beings over the globe, ant it was ratified between 191 countries (United Nations Frame work convention 2009) [11].

Accordingly, the convention main objective of the convention was to stabilize the emission of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere by reducing of the global temperature to less than two degrees Celsius. This convention has a total of 12 principles. The main themes of the convention are to: adopt a comprehensive environmental problems solutions program, to give a special emphasis to the development of developing nations by providing of a special technical and financial support in order to solve their socio- economic problems, reduce emission from deforestation and forest degradation, allocate about 30 billion US dollar to support the developing nations in achieving of the Copenhagen green climate revolution fund that encourage forest investments, and technology transfer(Takes note of the Copenhagen Accord of 2009).

The paris climate change convention (2015)

The guideline December 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change gives a framework for meaningful improvement on climate mitigation. About 186 countries submitted emission minimization promises covering about 96% of global greenhouse emission to the atmosphere. Unless the problem has to be solved at its earlier age, change of world climate can highly affects those developing countries, particularly those developing countries who are dependent up on agriculture. The agreement highly encouraging carbon trade activities by developing countries. On this agreement, economically advanced countries are expected to give a roadmap by allocating of 100 billion US dollars to

adopt and mitigate climate change problems in developing countries by 2020.

According to the data obtained from the document of United Nations' Framework Convention on Climate Change (2015), all the following points are included under the Paris convention on climate change: This Agreement has a total of 28 articles. It is written by five different languages: Arabic, English, Russian, Chinese, and Spanish. The main aim of this convention is to capacitate the world response to the hazards of climate change, in the context of poverty reduction through achieving of sustainable development, through fostering of climate resilience, reduction of greenhouse emission, and then by reducing of warm temperature below.

The Convention claim that developing countries, and those of island states prepare and submit strategies, plans, and actions to reduce greenhouse emissions development presenting their unique situations. The communication term of this agreement will be run at the interval of every five years between the signatory parties. Investments like, and/or policies for sustainable management of forests, reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation will be gate special emphasis and positive incentives that enabling activities implementation by public or private groups authorized by a party. It is to mean that the convention encourages the participation of public and private sectors to environmental conservation.

It gives also attention to sharing information, good practices, science, appropriate planning, policies, assessment of climate change impacts, and vulnerability, problem prioritization, early warning systems, emergency preparedness, comprehensive risk management, resilience of communities, livelihoods, ecosystems, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in relation to adaptation actions, and strengthening of institutional arrangements.

In a nutshell, the convention revealed that developing countries shall provide financial resource for developing countries' parties. Paris agreement shall undertake its first stock-take, or the state of identifying all good achievements during implementation in 2023. The convention allows the withdrawal of parties after submitting of written notification to the depository.

Marrakech climate change convention (2016)

This convention was held in Marrakech, Morocco on November 2016. About 200 nations were attending this conference, the proclamation for our climate and sustainable development, and all participating member nations collectively stated again clearly their commitment to climate action that found under the Paris convention in November 2015. The proclamation stated that it is a duty of all nations to respond the global warming that increases from time to time at alarming rate. The main intention of this proclamation was to encourage rapid entry in to the force of Paris agreement, which claims nations solidarity with those countries must vulnerable to the impacts of climate change (CHANAKYA IAS Academy 2016; Council of the European Union 2016).

This convention stressed that everybody, particularly developed nations are expected to strengthen and support efforts to eradicate poverty, ensure food security, and to take certain types of actions on challenges related to agriculture. Marrakech Action Proclamation declared that "Our climate is warming at an alarming and unprecedented rate and we have an urgent duty to respond". Accordingly, all countries are must to cooperate to reduce carbon emission to the atmosphere and to lessen global average temperature

to 2 in this century (CHANAKYA IAS Academy 2016; Council of the European Union 2016).

According to the Council of European Union (2016), there is joint declaration on renewable energies in Africa under the frame Work of United Nation convention on climate change meeting in Marrakech. Accordingly, the joint agreement between Europe and Africa recognizing: the importance of energy for economic growth, for sustainable, and inclusive development, including to solve migration related problems, Africa's urban and rural electrification with regard to ensure the quality of basic social needs such as health and education, particularly for those vulnerable groups. The declaration also recalling the sustainable development paradigm of the Addis Ababa Agenda, with governance at the core, and the importance of evidence policies. The convention also encourages the participation of civil society and other stakeholders up on energy access agenda. To summing up, the Marrakech convention stressed that developing countries will set up, instead of waiting for industrial nations to work hardly on climate change issues. From all the above discussions, it is possible to conclude that the issue of climate change is how much serious problem to the current society along this globe. The problem is universal, but the impact is too serious up on the developing nations since their life is based up on agriculture that requires the presence of favorable climate condition. Currently, most of the factors of environmental hazards are produced by developed nations because of the expansion of industries' technology, and high emission of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere.

The issue of greenhouse gases is not the sole factor to the occurrence of global warming, and/ or climate change in general. Rather deforestation, land degradation, absence of integrated environmental policies and management strategies, and over exploitation of natural environment are the main causes of world climate change. Whatever the issue is, human beings in particular, and biodiversity in the nature in general are suffered from the problems of climate change (drought, migration, diseases, death, ...etc.).

The conventions strongly stated that sustainable development is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs", or human beings are at the center of concerns for sustainable development. This implies that, any development that failed to consider the issue of humanity, and environment is unacceptable. Thus, the policy implications of these convention is that, to create a moderate climate condition, we need to have a serious, and comprehensive climate policies that benefited population of this globe in equal way.

It requires a very serious and mutual support with regardless of color, ethnicity, religion, political interest, and cultural diversities. Accordingly, we need to give an emphasis to reduce greenhouse emission, deforestation, and designing of an appropriate environmental policy with respect to our living condition, and indigenous knowledge of nature conservation. In a nutshell, all of the above conventions aimed at creating of a green climate to the world's population. To do this giving an equivalent emphasis for both environment and society is the most important thing since the two are inseparable. After all, the developing countries are required to pay their critical attention to solve climate problem than ever before. The overall strength of these environmental conventions is that they have given an ultimate emphasis for the protection of our living environment from manmade damage. To specify more, the conventions are: promote sustainable development, cooperation,

support the development of developing countries, pay an attention for the reduction of greenhouse gases emission, promote green economy, look for knowledge, experience, and technology transfer, stand to provide financial support to encourage environmental policies, programs, projects, and plans of developing countries, focused on ecosystem conservation, sustainable development, encourage wise use of natural resources...etc. It was the first international intergovernmental conference to focus on problems of environment, laid foundation for later acceptance of the concept of sustainable development at Rio 1992 United Nations climate conventions, because of this conference country started to establish intergovernmental, and nongovernmental organizations focused on environmental protection, given a base for the formulation of international environmental law and policies.

The following multilateral agreements are linked with Stockholm conference of 1972: Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution by dumping of wastes and other matter, Convention for the Protection of World cultural and Natural Heritage, and Convention on International Trade Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. These agreements are used as the three pillars of International Environmental Laws that are used to protect transboundary pollutions and environmental destruction during war time. Principle 1 of this agreement stated that human beings have a right to freedom, equality, adequate conditions of life, and to live in the quality environment. This convention had laid a base for the establishment of Brundtland commission in 1987 on environment and development issues. As a result of Stockholm convention, global awareness of environmental issues raised at alarming rate, and it represented a first conventions of all by giving of an attention on global human impact on the environment, principle eight of the Stockholm declaration could differentiate economic and social development. It is human centric. Like that of the Stockholm convention, the Rio 1992 climate convention is also recognized human beings are at the center of sustainable development. It encourages participation indigenous community to mitigate climate problems, it favors private, and women participation in natural conservation, the issue of sustainable development had been given a special emphasis up on this conference, and it given an attention for trade and environmental security.

Conclusion

In a nutshell from these points it is possible to conclude that Alarming changes in ecosystems, agriculture, sea level rise, ocean acidity, food insecurity, lack of access to fresh water, and absence of rainfall are from the major consequences of changes in climate that leads millions of people, and animals to death and migration from there village unless it should be managed prior to reach at its pickiest level. Increasing in greenhouse gases emission to the atmosphere, deforestation, absence of responsibility, and extreme population growth are from the main causes of climate change that brings world countries to gather to have a common climate convention. Reducing the emission of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere, focusing on green economy, mutual support, and taking common, but different responsibilities are from the proposed solutions of climate change.

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