

The concept of sustainable development in the context of the European Year for Development 2015

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Abstract

The term of sustainable development enjoys at global level of the support of international institutions, governments, businesses, and civil society. The nearly universal approval of sustainable development as a guiding principle is, in part, due to its importance. Sustainable development is also a prominent component of the MDGs, which have been widely endorsed by national governments and the world's foremost development organizations since they were adopted at the Millennium Summit in 2000. Recent, the United Nations adopted a new global development agenda as a follow-up to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The new 17 Sustainable Development Goals integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development, covering areas such as poverty, inequality, food security, health, sustainable consumption and production, growth, employment, infrastructure, sustainable management of natural resources, oceans, climate change, but also gender equality, peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice and accountable institutions. These Goals describe a global agenda, including some global public goods that cannot be implemented by any country on its own. In 2015, the European Union has decided to focus on "Development". This is the first ever European Year to deal with the European Union's external action and Europe's role in the world. The purpose of the European Year of Development 2015 is to show the EU's commitment to eradicating poverty and of sustainable development in worldwide. Through this motto "Our world, our future, our dignity", the European Union aims at raising awareness among its citizens and

stakeholders and fostering more involvement in development cooperation.

Keywords: assistance, cooperation, development, governance, solidarity.

In scientific literature, the concept of sustainable development embraces the so-called triple bottom line approach to human wellbeing. Almost the entire world's societies acknowledge that they aim for a combination of economic development, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion, but the specific objectives differ globally, between and within societies (Sachs, 2012: 2206).

From a theoretical standpoint, the notion of sustainable development evolved between 1972 and 1992 through a series of international conferences and initiatives (Drexhage J. & Murphy D., 2010: 7). Beginning with the Stockholm Declaration of 1972, there has been a steady development of national and international declarations relevant to sustainability. Finding the balance between state sovereignty and transnational responsibility was crucial to the success of the Stockholm talks and continues to play a fundamental role in negotiating global environmental governance regimes (Norman E. & Carr D., 2009, PP. 406-411).

Several years later, the World Commission on Environment and Development publishes "Our Common Future", also known as the Brundtland Report. This document contains the classic definition of sustainable development respectively: "*the development is the one which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*". According to Max Cantor, this definition recognizes the importance of the viability of all three developmental systems in promoting the sustainability of overall development, and the success of one development system cannot come at the expense of another.

In 1992, a historic meeting of governments, business organisations and civil society organisations laid down a commitment to achieve sustainable development, named the "Rio Declaration". But it wasn't just any declaration; it heralded a whole

new paradigm that embraced integrating economic growth, social equality and environmental sustainability (Miyazawa I., 2012). We are talking about the first "Earth Summit" or United Nations Conference on Environment and Development took place in Rio de Janeiro. Along with the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, the "Earth Summit" led to agreement on two legally binding conventions: on Biological Diversity and the Framework Convention on Climate Change (Doran , 2002: 4).

At the beginning of the new millennium, world leaders gathered at the United Nations with the occasion of Millennium Summit in order to shape a broad vision, to fight poverty eradication and to establish out a series of targets, with a deadline of 2015. These have become known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They focused on the efforts of the world community to achieve significant, measurable improvements in people's lives. The eight MDGs listed below have been commonly accepted as a framework for measuring development progress:

- Goal 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
- Goal 2. Achieve universal primary education;
- Goal 3. Promote gender equality and empower women;
- Goal 4. Reduce child mortality;
- Goal 5. Improve maternal health;
- Goal 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
- Goal 7. Ensure environmental sustainability;
- Goal 8. Develop a global partnership for development.

The second world Summit of United Nations on Sustainable Development was held at Johannesburg in 2002. A major objective of this event was to set out strategies for greater and more effective implementation of Agenda 21, negotiated at Rio with ten years ago (Hens & Nath , 2003: 7-39).

At 40 years after Stockholm Declaration and 20 years after the Earth Summit from Rio de Janeiro, the global community created an agreement on "greening" world economies through a range of smart measures for clean energy, decent jobs and more sustainable and fair use of resources.

In the last period, the international development debate has been dominated by two trends that seem at first to be heading in a similar direction. These are on the one hand the agenda of reducing poverty in developing countries in its various dimensions that found their expression in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). On the other hand, there is the idea of sustainability which generated a parallel concept to the MDGs: the so called Sustainable Development Goals (Loewe , 2012: 1).

Recently, at the Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015 at New York, 193 world leaders expressed their commitment to these 17 Sustainable Development Goals (*Sustainable Development Goals and the Agenda 2030*, 2015: 1-2):

- Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere;
- Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture;
- Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages;
- Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all;
- Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls;
- Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all;
- Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all;
- Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all;
- Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation;
- Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries;
- Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable;
- Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns;

- Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts;
- Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development;
- Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss;
- Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels;
- Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation.

The 17 SDGs are intended to cover all countries and focus on five key elements: people, planet, peace, prosperity, and partnership. These goals are contained within a final outcome document adopted at the Summit called "*Transforming our World. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*". This agenda gives equal weight to means of implementation, including how meeting the goals will be financed, and a revitalisation of the global partnership for development which was launched under the MDGs – but which is widely accepted to have been only partially successful (Lunn et al., 2015: 4). At the same time, debates continue on a binding international climate action agreement to be reached at the 21st Conference of the Parties on Climate Change in Paris in December 2015 (Kharas et al., 2014: 30).

Developed countries also continue to have a major responsibility to help developing countries in their own transition to sustainability through Official Development Assistance (ODA), international development policies, global cooperation and other means (Osborn et al., 2015: 3). But this year, 2015, provides the international community with an unprecedented opportunity to chart a more inclusive and sustainable future for all. Research shows that achieving a sustainable, low-carbon and climate-resilient development pathway can bring greater stability, equality and can eradicate poverty. Sustainable development is a universal agenda and all countries will need to finance and implement sustainable development policies and

actions (*Global Forum on Development Post-2015 financing for sustainable development* 2015, p. 5).

Furthermore, 2015 is the European Year for Development. This year was chosen for two reasons: the MDGs were to be reached by 2015 and it also marks the beginning of a new era of development co-operation since the debates about the design of the Post-2015 Development Agenda are supposed to culminate into Sustainable Development Goals (*Sustainable development in the European Union, 2015 monitoring report of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy*, 2015, p. 285).

The European Year for Development 2015 is supposed to improve the coordination between the European Union and Member States via a mandatory mechanism proposed by the European Parliament for enhancing Policy Coherence for Development. The European Year for Development 2015 consists of various events and actions (awards, school contests, advertising campaigns, debates, sport events, etc.) taking place at European and national level, under national work programmes, with the involvement of civil society organisations and other stakeholders (*The European Year for Development*, 2015, p. 1.)

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