



## **THE EVOLUTION OF THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE: THE TRANSITION TO POLITICS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

### **KÜRESEL ÇEVRE YÖNETİŞİMİNİN EVRİMLEŞMESİ: SÜRDÜRÜLEBİLİR KALKINMA POLİTİKASINA GEÇİŞ**

**Yrd. Doç. Dr. Fikret MAZI**

[fmazi@adiyaman.edu.tr](mailto:fmazi@adiyaman.edu.tr)

Adıyaman University, Department of Public Administration

#### **Abstract**

The environment is not being governed by only the nation states anymore. Indeed, environmental governance is a holistic discourse in which various actors engage. The 21<sup>st</sup> century has been witnessing an ever incessant environmental impairment and there is more need for cooperation. The natural resources are depleted; air, water and land are getting more contaminated. The human being is heedlessly terminating the environment and shaping the global environmental discourse within an economical basis. The economic and industrial competition between developing (Southern) and developed (Northern) countries is metamorphosing the whole global environmental governance into something that seems to be for the cause of environment but which actually is after struggle in order to gain more. This being the core context of the discussion herein, the article will both investigate the evolution of the global environmental governance system and trace back how the environment has been left behind the stage and within the framework of development.

**Key Words:** Global Environmental Governance, Evolution, Sustainability, Politics

#### **Öz**

Çevre artık sadece ulus devletlerce yönetilmemektedir. Aslında, çevre yönetişimi farklı aktörlerin katıldığı bütüncül bir söylemdir. 21 yy. güçlü bir çevresel tahribata tanıklık etmektedir ve işbirliğine daha fazla ihtiyaç duyulmaktadır. Doğla kaynaklar tükenmekte; hava, su ve kara gitgide kirlenmektedir. İnsanoğlu çevreye sürekli zarar vermekte ve çevresel söylemi ekonomik bir tabanda şekillendirmektedir. Gelişmekte (Güney ülkeleri) ve gelişmiş (Kuzey ülkeleri) olan ülkeler arasındaki ekonomik ve endüstriyel rekabet küresel çevre yönetişimini, aslen çevreyi gözeten bir süreç gibi gösterse de temel mücadele daha fazla kazanç elde etmek adınadır. Buradaki tartışmanın temelini oluşturacak durum budur. Makalede hem küresel çevre yönetişiminin evrimi ele alınacak hem de çevrenin nasıl perde arkasına atıldığı ve kalkınma çerçevesine yerleştirildiği irdelenecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Küresel Çevre Yönetişimi, Evrim, Sürdürülebilirlik, Politika

## INTRODUCTION

The word 'governance' is a multi-sided one which is used in connection with contemporary social sciences, mainly economy and politics. Today, environmental governance is no doubt partly grounded in the discipline of political science -in an analysis of the role of states, global institutions, the global political economy, global power, norms and ideology as well as in the theories of international regulations (Dauvergne, 2005: 8). The overall need to integrate environment into economy and politics has indicated that the idea of 'traditional/ local/national government is incapable in scope to deal with matters that extend over the borders. Based on this analytical framework, it can be argued that global environmental governance is a comprehensive concept in that it takes in several kinds of organizations, associations, instruments for policy and decision making, supportive financial mechanisms, regulations, laws, state and non-state institutions and rules all of which simply help to protect environment from deterioration (Mitchell, 2002:430-5; Fisher and Green, 2004:66) Therefore, environmental governance implies more than interactions among states and intergovernmental politics. One face of the reality being this, the study will unfold the curtain as to see what has been boiling up behind the scene. Numerous studies have focused on the mainstream truth that participation at all scales and levels has increased within the last thirty years. Nevertheless, even if this fact has triggered most of the problems it will not be taken as the focal point of interest as to why we cannot reach up to the standards defined in multi-participatory global agreements or conventions.

The agencies beneath the environmental problems we have are neither the multilateral, fragmented, overlapping agreements nor the insufficiency of law. The fundamental underlying ground for the unwanted situation today is related to the two sides of the global environmental coin: one being the North (representing developed countries), the other being the South (representing developing countries). Their expectations from global governance have been different at times sometimes even colliding and conflicting with each other. This study will trace the emergence of global environmental governance and will touch upon repercussions of industry and the North-South conflicts over this discourse, therefore stating the most basic flaw of today's GEG (Global Environmental Governance) system which can be identified as environment's remaining under the shade of sustainable development (Kanie, 2007:3; O'Neill, 2007: 17). Particularly after the Second World War, when the European block underwent an economical collapse, the concern for raising standards for both the present and future generations pervaded the whole strategy planning schemes. Actually

coinciding with the beginning of the second wave of globalization<sup>1</sup>, global environmental governance was prompt to be mould in line with a desire to construct an economically sound system.

Drawing on the three main global conferences<sup>2</sup> the study will argue for the fact that global environmental governance, particularly after The Rio Conference on Development, underwent a reversal implying the priority should be paid to development rather than environment.<sup>3</sup> The article will discuss how the global environmental agenda was shaped within the framework of North-South interactions and the concept of sustainable development. After the assertion that the economic differences between the two sides make the global discourse even more subtle, some modest proposals will be made so as to level out the gaps within the global environmental community.

### **GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE: A GENERAL ASSESSMENT**

The early 1970s, when it was clearly perceived that nature and environment were under sheer danger on account of humanity's aggressive industrial behavior, brought forth the idea that if the negative effects were not minimized, then it would mean that a danger was imminent at the door. Indeed, environmental problems have posed a threat for humanity for nearly three decades. However, the way how the contemporary world perceive these problems and the range of them have altered relatively to the beginning. This environmental awareness has finally called for a collective action involving local communities, civil (non-governmental organizations) organizations in addition to officially operating national and international legitimate and responsible bodies. So, an aura of ultimate interdependence has emerged in the global arena. In the context of increasing global, ecological, economic, and political interdependence, international organizations have evolved from simple mechanisms for state cooperation to central actors in world politics and active agents of global change (Ivanova, 2005:5).

Besides, the increase of participants ranging from private actors to networks of scientists and specialists in multilateral agreements and organizations surely added up vitality for the resolution of environmental problems in the global spectrum; but on the other hand,

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<sup>1</sup> The first one is regarded as being after the First World War.

<sup>2</sup> Stockholm:1972; Rio:1992; Johannesburg:2002

<sup>3</sup> Although the Southerners were initially skeptical about the global environmental enterprise, they have come along way from being the vigorous contestants that they were three decades ago. Although slow, halting, reluctant and still incomplete, this transformation has been a fascinating evolution which has not only changed the views of global environmental discourse, most significantly by turning what used to be global environmental politics into what is now the global politics of sustainable development(Najam, 2005:3003-4).

this created problems like duplication of work, waste of time and even authority problems. (Andresen, 2001:19; Esty and Ivanova, 2002:3-5; Najam et al., 2006:12-13). Therefore the process of global environmental governance formation can be claimed to have followed a binary trend, one which can be viewed as positive on grounds of more self awareness, participation, agenda building and implementation; the other which can be viewed as negative on grounds of inefficiency, unbinding power and continuing rivalry between the North and the South for the sake of more domain or sovereignty.

According to Ivanova's (2005) and O'Neill's (2007) rhetorical approaches, UNEP is/seems to be the anchor institution for the global environment. As it is the main governing body, nearly all multilateral agreements are being carried out by it. However, the ever increasing number of these agreements and new institutional formations has posed a new challenge for the UNEP's dominant aspect in this field. Actually, one of the conclusions that can be drawn out of the UN Task Force on Human Settlement and Environment was that institutional fragmentation<sup>4</sup> and loss of policy coherence as a result of the number of separate environment-related intergovernmental processes had resulted in a loss of effectiveness in the work of the United Nations in the area of environment (UNEP, Environment and Human Settlements Report A/53/463).<sup>5</sup> The increasing number of UN institutions at the same time made it difficult to coordinate and implement decisions, decreasing the credit of UNEP. If ambitious goals are not followed up in practice, it will serve to discredit UNEP, giving support to those who dismiss these institutions as mere 'talk-shows' without practical significance (Andresen, 2007:319) This loss of effectiveness in direct action is also closely related to a decline in legitimacy and fragmentation of authority. As one of the causes solidifying North-South conflict, legitimacy of the global environmental institutions creates tension regarding the reliability of the whole process.

Pellizzoni (2004: 560) maintains that the declining legitimacy of political, economic and scientific institutions to which governance reacts is crucially related to a reduction in the effectiveness of policy action. So, there is a still wide policy-implementation gap between ongoing environmental degradation and the environmental agreements that have been agreed upon and the compliance record that can be noted for them (Brühl and Simonis, 2000:3 ). As I have acknowledged previously, environmental agreements dominantly pursue opportunistic

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<sup>4</sup> Fragmentation refers to the implications of increased specialization and diversification in international governance arrangements, including the overlap of substantive rules and jurisdictions(Asselt, 2007:2)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.unep.org/pdf/A-53-463%20Environment%20and%20Human%20Settlements.htm>

ends for both the North and the South and therefore implementations of reconciled environmental policies lag behind the pursuit of industrial goals.

All these lining up together, ecological and environmental degradation on account of increasing exploitation, industry and free marketing has triggered action at the global scale. The first of these actions was the Stockholm Conference on Human Environment, which apparently dealt with environmental degradation. Then, there were the Rio and Johannesburg Summits respectively, which will particularly be paid attention as they are the mostly referred watersheds in global environmental governance and political transformation from environmental protection to sustainable development. After the evolution analysis is completed, original proposals will be articulated related to the basic causes of the system inefficiency due to North-South conflict.

### **GEG (GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE) FROM THE 1970'S ONWARDS**

The beginning period of environmental discourse -which is generally accepted as the 1970s- was unorganized, the treaties and agreements being sporadic and fixed in content. This is not a wholly bad criticism in fact because this period was actually the time which helped states and dependently operating bodies to see that intensifying interdependence among nations was inevitable and coordinated action of vital importance.

The label of the 19<sup>th</sup> century being economy, states also discovered that welfare within the borders required an intertwined set of collaboration with the other states so that they would not undergo a dilemma between internal welfare and trans-boundary environmental problems because of pollutants, emissions and so on, which, in the longer term, could diminish life quality. Nevertheless, it was understood that environmental problems could not be solved independently and this perspective brought forth the idea of a holistic environment in which the borders did not have any sense and the prototypic environmental cooperation occurred (Roch, 2003:14-18).

The environmental challenges we now face clearly illustrate the extent of interconnectedness of the earth's ecological as well as economic systems. These problems demand collective action on a global scale, yet there is no established and effective forum where parties can engage in a sustained and focused dialogue, identify priorities, and devise action plans for tackling environmental concerns with worldwide implications (Esty and Ivanova, 2002: 2). Furthermore, the struggle to remain sovereign and pursue individual gains

constitutes two distinct groups as developed and developing countries, thereby perpetuating the impairment of the world. The developing countries which will from now on be generally referred as “the South” expects to be donated while the developing countries which will from now on generally be referred as “the South” expects to benefit from their resources. While the North pays attention to green politics, the South’s agenda is more related to development and finance oriented (Fisher and Green, 2004: 68).

Even though all the attempts and endeavors to protect the environment may be considered as useful (Green and Thouez, 2005: 6-7), it seems almost impossible to save the planet from dying and environmental worsening keeps going on. As to what is well documented in the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment the changes that have been made to ecosystems have contributed to substantial net gains in human well-being and economic development, but these gains have been achieved at growing costs in the form of the degradation of many ecosystem services, increased risks of nonlinear changes, and the exacerbation of poverty for some groups of people. These problems, unless addressed, will substantially diminish the benefits that future generations obtain from ecosystems<sup>6</sup>.

### **THE EVOLUTION OF GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE**

Local and regional economies followed a trend of neo-liberalization in which the resources and land and marketing concepts underwent dramatic changes. For a good part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, state intervention in land use planning, resource management, and nature conservation was motivated primarily by national development goals, including a desire to ensure the territorial economic integrity of the nation state (Jonas and Bridge, 2003: 958). The decade after the 1990s embodied a reversal of this nation-state authority into a globally driven market system in which the scheme from raw material collection to marketing was outlined by global standards. This being the case, two important consequences arose. The first one was the formation of new liberal commercial entities and entrepreneurs. Whereas, the second direct result of this shift was not so good in that it accelerated the rate the environment was exploited.<sup>7</sup> This disruption or evolution of settled economic construction paved the way for the unfolding of relations of governments, states, entrepreneurs and so on more and more, which laid down the need to ‘economize’ nature. Though different causes are referred as to

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<sup>6</sup>Overview of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment accessible at <http://www.millenniumassessment.org/en/About.aspx#2>

<sup>7</sup>The widespread automation after the 1980s abolished the need to rely on human power. If 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century decreased this need, 20<sup>th</sup> century abolished this need, leading to a shift toward rivalry for the exploitation of natural resources, not the human itself. This is certainly a generalization but well summarizes the global discourse.

what triggered a fast twist of the GEG system, the basic two causes- that is to say liberal economy, increasing industrial behavior- still remain intact and the GEG system is undergoing development within this framework. For purposes of practicality, the discussion here will involve the last three decades chronologically.

### **STOCKHOLM CONFERENCE: THE FIRST GLOBAL AGENDA SETTING**

Triggered by increasing scientific evidence of human-induced environmental degradation and a concurrent wave of growing environmental awareness in the industrialized nations of North America and Western Europe, the conference was an attempt to turn the environment into a more 'global' issue, particularly by more meaningfully incorporating the developing countries of the South into the emerging global environmental discourse (Najam and Cleveland, 2003:125). In 1972, 113 countries met in Stockholm for the United Nations Conference on Human Environment and it was the first time in history when the relation between development and environment was somehow addressed and a global agenda on how to protect the environment was settled. The environment was as expected put before industry and it was asserted that economy with an unclean environment would not sustain. This declaration comprised of three separate units which were the action plan, some recommendations and a conference. To notify once more, the action plan was the first global level action plan and it paved the way for addressing global scale environmental problems.

As for the approach of the South to the Conference, there was somehow an aura of contestation and reluctance as they were not ensured about their economic and social developments. This was the first step of the 'global conferences' process and development was a phenomenon that was briefly touched upon and mentioned at the global level, without addressing the specific situation of the developing countries. That there was a gap between the North and the South was accepted<sup>8</sup> but there was not even a small reference to cooperation between the two. However, what the South wished -at least for the first step- was to increase its influence over the global discourse. Logically, without having influence, it would not be possible to have a share in coordination of and cooperation in the treatment of global environmental issues (Najam and Cleveland, 2003; Najam, 2004).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Up until the 1820s, there was little income disparity between countries. However, at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, the economic climate began to change and populations and income per capita increased dramatically in the North (Lobb, 2005)

<sup>9</sup> As viewed by Najam (2005) the South perceived itself as a collective of countries that considered themselves to have been disempowered, marginalized and disenfranchised by the international system.

During the Stockholm process, the South was more or less perceived as a participating and negotiating collection of countries. Actually, their having no more dominion than this and being treated just as a passive side shaped the ensuing North-South relations and therefore, the South, concentrating on the point of legitimacy most, sought ways to articulate itself even more at later conferences and conventions. The aim of the two parties being different, this conference is viewed by Prizzia (2007) as somewhat ineffective and more interested in identifying trade-offs instead of promoting harmony between the two. Moreover, what contributed to its ineffectiveness was the fact that environmental protection and the need for development, especially in developing countries, were seen as competing needs and thus were dealt with in a separate, uncoordinated fashion (Prizzia, 2007:20).

Still, in terms of content the Stockholm Conference was favored because poverty was viewed as undesirable and industry was depicted as the basic reason of environmental depreciation. Even if it was not clearly acknowledged that the North and South should collaborate, the very distinction between them was outlined, giving a chance to the Southerners to articulate their position as a non-industrial, lagged collectivity which needed assistance from the North and which did not have to account for the depreciation and had to evaluate the experiences of the industrial North so as not to cause the same adverse impacts on the environment.

The Founex Report (1971) also emphasized the impact of industry on environment and by clearly acclaiming that these impacts are trans-boundary, it implicitly appealed for help (especially help with the funds) so as to control environmental worsening. Nevertheless, the fact that the South was economically far behind the North was still unaddressed, making Southerners skeptical about the reliability of the North even at the beginning.

To a large extent, the current concern with environmental issues has emerged out of the problems experienced by the industrially advanced countries. These problems are themselves very largely the outcome of a high level of economic development. The creation of large productive capacities in industry and agriculture, the growth of complex system of transportation and communication, the evolution of massive urban conglomerations, have all been accompanied in one way or another by damage and disruption to the human environment. Such disruptions have indeed attained such major proportions that in many communities they already constitute serious hazards to human health and wellbeing. In some ways, in fact, the dangers extend beyond national boundaries and threaten the world as a whole.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The complete report can be accessed at

This politics of opposition was even effective in the following global environmental discourses as the South's perception of all that was turning around was a Northern agenda set up to mitigate the impacts of industry on environment. It can be alleged that the starting point for the politics of sustainable development was this very opposition by the South, questioning the legitimacy of the global environmental agenda as it was then conceived (Najam, 2005:309).

Although there are prevalent criticisms about the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Stockholm Conference, it brought forth important outputs. For instance, environmental law in the 1980s was shaped according to the Stockholm Conference. In addition to this initiative characteristic, the theoretical account for international environmental law was formed as well as UNEP, the main body to coordinate global environmental governance. What was actually aimed through this coordinating body was the creation of a coherent and extensive governance system. It also organized and supported many international resources with its 'modest' resources, helping to build an international environmental agenda (Meyer-Ohlendorf, 2006: 25).

It is already mentioned that the Stockholm Conference is the most important turning point for the global environmental agenda setting. We know that there were some international agreements for the environment well before the Stockholm Conference. So what difference was brought about by this conference? Environment was from then on was not what a few scholars or elites dealt with. Rather, it was the concern of all humanity and was integrated into the international political agenda. If the fact that it is a 'first' is taken into consideration, participation by 113 states is quite remarkable. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were also granted a seat, which indicates the presence of a multilateral discussion forum. All these treated with consideration, the Stockholm Summit was a watershed (Andresen, 2007) and the first intermediary in the molding of North-South inter-relations.

### **“BREEDING” GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFORTS: GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL FACILITY**

The post 1980s witnessed a proliferation of global attempts to protect the environment. Of these, setting up of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) in 1991 was particularly significant on account of the fact that it was an overt example of a global-scale

program aiming to guarantee cooperation for funding environmental attempts, especially of the Southern countries. The GEF was hence designed to make it financially possible for developing countries to incorporate global environmental considerations alongside national development priorities (Sjöberg, 1999:6). Besides, it aimed to relieve the South's tension related to legitimacy of their share in the global environmental and legal domain.

The restructuring of the GEF was a transition within that organization of the North's power from compulsory to institutional.<sup>11</sup> This transition resulted in an organization that is perceived as more legitimate by the South (Rutledge, 2006:3-9). Within this line of thinking, it can be alleged that the North perpetuated its dominance and conserved its authority over the South as the donor collective. This is perhaps another vein of thought but the apparent idea to finance Southern development genuinely decreased the fears of the South about being marginalized and disenfranchised, therefore showing more obedience to the North.

While the North is understandably averse to any mention of 'compensation' for its environmentally irresponsible behavior in the past, the result of distancing financing from the goal that it is directed towards is rather perverse. From the North's perspective, there is no compulsion to actually deliver on promises made nor any grounds for insisting on proper utilization; after all, this is merely charity and charity cannot be accounted for or be accountable (Najam, 2002:156). Thus, it was decided that all participants should be contributors in some measure to the facility, thereby bridging the division and underscoring the essence of the GEF: collective self-help without connotations of charity (Sjöberg, 1999:6).

Actually, the South has reconciled on this matter without delving into a conflict with the North as can be understood from the fact that they acknowledge that if it were not the financial help of the North, they would not be interested in trans-boundary environmental issues and sustainable development (Streck, 2001:72). Hence it is obviously seen that the South has turned the GEF into a pre-requisite mechanism of participation to global environmental governance.

The foundation and evolution of the GEF as the second crucial step in establishing the global environmental agenda is effective in the function-definition of the global

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<sup>11</sup> The scholars divide the evolution of the GEF into two as the Pilot Phase(1991-1994) and the Consolidation of the Maturity Phase(1994-up to present) (See Sjöberg, 1999; Chazournes, 2003). There was actually not a break but a linkage between the two phases, but the linkage between the two phases was highly solid. The foundation of such a mechanism had advantages for both parties. What only changed from the first phase to the second phase was that the facility was more organized, structured and the functions more clear.

environmental discourse. In other words, it defines the responsibility of the North to role as a donor and the South to participate in the global environmental protection process. Even if this role is sometimes defined differently by the authorities as coordinating the finance mechanisms for global environmental protection, there are surely opportunistic goals for both the South and the North in the pursuit of a global funding mechanism.

### **THE CULMINATION POINT: THE RIO CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT**

Exactly twenty years after the first meeting the UNEP convened for the second time to scrutinize environmental matters in a more comprehensive fashion under the name informally known as The Earth Summit. The summit was referred to as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), in Rio de Janeiro, on 3-14 June 1992, and it principally focused on environment and sustainable development. This mention of 'sustainable development' created an observable shift in how the South perceived the global environmental agenda (Adede, 1992: 90-5). The fact that the word 'development' was officially posited in the agenda with the title the 'United Nations Conference on Environment and Development' was the factor that made the Southerners more willing to enroll in the agenda. As sustainable development was deemed as the backbone of the Rio Conference, a separate commission called Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was founded. So, twenty years after the official start of the global environmental discourse, the shift in the aim of global environmental system was officially declared by the constant mentioning of the priority of development and economy over nature. Environment was not the aim but the very means of achieving high standards in development, an idea which was being supported by large-scope communities, parties and groups.

What's more, the number of head of state participants, which was 104 in the ensuing Johannesburg Summit, was 117. The NGO participation also cannot be ignored. The participation of head of states was directly effective in the establishment of national environmental ministerial forums.

This conference sought to provide a balance between environmental protection and industrial advancement with 2400 representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which implied an aura of more local and international participation. What also made it distinctive was the fact that it additionally touched upon the climate change and loss of biodiversity, which were consequently embodied in the United Nations Framework

Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity successively. Adopting the view that the world is a global common, this summit called attention to the symbiotic connection between economy and natural resources and to halt overexploitation of these resources. This call arose awareness in all walks of societies from governors to civil men, from North to South in order to pursue co-efficient and coordinated policies guaranteed within a concrete environmental law. This summit may be regarded as the defeat of environment to economy as economy was perpetually mentioned even if it lay down how considerable the share of environment is in sustaining human life.

Actually, the basics of this summit were already well established in the Stockholm Conference. The 37<sup>th</sup><sup>12</sup> and 38<sup>th</sup><sup>13</sup> items of the Brief Summary of the General Debate in the Stockholm Conference<sup>14</sup> pre-articulated the fact that economy and environment were intertwined. Therefore, particularly developing countries, lacking vitality and enthusiasm to deal with environmental issues, were more entangled in the idea of ‘sustainable development’ because they could have a chance to burden their expenses on more affluent countries. Although their hopes were a little bit of exaggerated, they still had opportunities to increase their share of say in the global environmental politics.

This phase of the global environmental protection process, which is generally viewed as the peak, was still subject to skepticism by the South because they were still unsure about the guaranty of sustainable development even if their participation had increased. Moreover, the North and The South, even if seeming to be in collaboration for sustainable development, had different expectations as to what the new conference should bring about. One finds that the North’s primary concerns tended to be about whether these institutions and instruments would work and result in demonstrable improvements to the global environment, while the cardinal concerns of Southern governments, scholars and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) tended to ask questions about the fairness and justice of the proposals, especially in terms of their focus on developmental aspects (Najam, 2005: 310)

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<sup>12</sup> The concept of “no growth” could not be a viable policy for any society, but it was necessary to rethink the traditional concepts of the basic purposes of growth.

<sup>13</sup> The vast benefits which the new technological order had produced were undeniable, but man's activities had created serious imbalances. Not only each society but the world as a whole must achieve a better balance among the major elements that determined the level and quality of life it could provide for its members-population and its distribution, available resources and their exploitation, and pressures placed on the life systems that sustained it.

<sup>14</sup> Also see other items at

<http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=97&ArticleID=1497&l=en>

Nevertheless, despite remnant fears of legitimacy, Southerners were more fond of the sustainable development concept as the surrounding conferences and other legal documents were declaring that the South's developmental aims should be fulfilled and the UNCED was not a repetition of the previous ones (Najam,2005:311) but an enlargement of the content so as to include development. For instance, the Brundtland Report was not so meaningful in the eyes of the Southerners when it was published in 1987 because they were doubtful about its coming into effect. However, the recurrent mentioning of the themes of development and cooperation within and surrounding the Rio process turned the whole agenda into a more incredible and reliable one in the eyes of the Southerners.

Rio Convention has got two significant outputs: Agenda 21 and CSD. It is not significant in the sense that it delivered these results directly. Instead, what was beforehand planned and discussed was accelerated via the Rio Summit and the aims were consolidated within certain bodies, increasing their credibility. So, what was implicitly planned by the Northerners beforehand was put into power via the Rio Summit's Agenda 21 and CSD.

### **THE DISILLUSIONMENT OF THE JOHANNESBURG SUMMIT**

Three or five years after the Rio Summit, the vividness of global environmental governance began to fade out. Agenda 21 was not conformed truly, and the Johannesburg Summit was convened in order to strengthen the implementation of policies. Whereas, the scheme of the summit was not clearly established, which can be inferred from the baseless and unrealistic implementation dreams. Furthermore, even though there was still an implementation gap related to the previously accepted norms, this summit just increased the width of accepted norms by referring to health, agriculture, energy production and consumption and so on.<sup>15</sup>

What also can be enumerated as the grounds for disillusionment relates to the fact that there were only 21.000 participants although more was expected. The UN official website registry of past meetings and conventions, however, claims a participant number of tens of thousands of participants<sup>16</sup> including representatives both legal and non-legal, from young people to state officials.

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<sup>15</sup> "We have not yet fully integrated the economic, social and environmental pillars of development, nor have we made enough of a break with the unsustainable practices that have led to the current predicament". (The UN general secretariat Kofi Annan, The Johannesburg Summit, Brochure 12)

<sup>16</sup>The UN website lists the participants as thus.... Therefore, in addition to governments, there was active participation at the Summit by representatives from business and industry, children and youth, farmers,

And the WSSD was ineffective in policy implementation even though it was assertive in its name. The environmental concerns had been so much neglected and the issue had been so much turned into North-South inter-politics that many environmental activists and writers degraded the event by naming it as ‘Rio Minus Ten’( See Conca, 2005:122).

Yet, the agenda was not full of negative aspects. The idea of sustainable development was extended onto the social platform and for the first time the notion of equity was paid so much attention.<sup>17</sup> As well as this, the trend of increasing number of green NGOs went on in this summit too.

As for the South, even if there was disillusionment about the implementation of the pre-set agenda of the Rio Summit, their doubts of legitimacy had already faded to large extent. This time the name being the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), the content was concentrated solely on development and from then on the South was interested in matters of implementation of the policies. Being quite eager to take part in the WSSD, the South was focusing on the possibilities that could make the system far more effective while differences in the expectation of both parties were still prevailing. To be more explicit, the South was strictly deeming economical and social improvement as important while the North was focusing on the ecological aspects.<sup>18</sup>

Briefly speaking, the global environmental discourse completed the transition process together with the WSSD. What started out to be as UNCHE did not only undergo a semantic change by turning into WSSD but also witnessed a change of policy, roles and aims. The fact that environment was now under the shade of sustainable development and developmental steps were contaminating the environment ever more were among the negative outcomes of this tripartite political transformation<sup>19</sup> and the ever increasing gaps between the North and the South.

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indigenous people, local authorities, non-governmental organizations, scientific and technological communities, women and workers and trade unions. [http://www.un.org/jsummit/html/basic\\_info/basicinfo.html](http://www.un.org/jsummit/html/basic_info/basicinfo.html)

<sup>17</sup> “We need to build a system, a set of rules, or a framework that will help make globalization a more positive force for improving all people’s lives. This new environment must promote equity and involve greater international cooperation, particularly in the areas of finance, capacity building, technology transfer, debt relief and trade.”-Nitin Desai United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs (The Johannesburg Summit, Brochure 12).

<sup>18</sup> The North was focusing more on ecological aspects because they were aware of the fact that much of the degradation was caused by their activities.

<sup>19</sup> The UNCHE(Stockholm), UNCED(Rio), WSSD(Johannesburg)

## CONCLUSION

What seemed to be practical solutions to the environmental matters of the 1960s and 1970s can unfortunately not compete with the devastating speed of environmental degradation today. Obviously, a political body that has been formed within the context of forty years ago remains yet insufficient of resolving today's highly complicated social, political and particularly economic issues. As the most basic reason why we cannot manage the environmental problems efficiently, the political transformation from global environmental politics to economy based North-South diplomacy explains the cause of progressive environmental degradation. Hence, the unyielding nature of environmental management does not stem from the system's fragmentation or lack of implementation as many have touched upon. Rather, the economical status is determinant in who legislates and who yields, creating a space of mono-lateral politics in which there is an implied possibility of power and gains struggle.

Now that the root cause is defined as the North-South conflict and differences in level of prosperity, I have a few proposals which will fill in these gaps and therefore may help to build the pre-requisite structure for the global environmental governance in which the two parties have equal rights and responsibilities.

### **Investing in Human Resources**

If multi-lateral environmental governance is to be achieved, first of all it should be ensured that all the sides have equal share in the process. In other words, if the North is the determinant party over the whole scheme, then multi-partite governance cannot be talked of. It is true that today the global environmental discourse is somewhat a Northern agenda focusing on the mitigation of industrial impacts on environment. Even if the concept of sustainable development exists, it only remains within the boundaries of Northern goals. One of the basic assumptions behind this fact lies in the truth that the Southern human resource capacity is not as endowed as of the North's.

If the available human resources in the South are utilized and brought up well in terms of education, politics, language, decision-making, assessment and cooperation then a genuine multi-partite discourse will emerge and the participants will handle environmental issues not with their face values but with long term impacts. Actually, human resources have been more important in recent years but this is still within the context of Northern perspective. If the utilization of human resources is achieved, the capacity and experience to handle

environmental issues will be made ready within the national borders and there will be more active engagement in the global environmental process. Furthermore, the necessities can be firstly determined by the utilized academicians, scientists, civil representatives at the local level and then carried onto the global agenda.

### **Increased Communication between Nations and the Supra-National Bodies**

The dissemination of knowledge, reports, and decisions holds an important place in making of the global environmental discourse more systematic and efficient. For instance, the North is more determinant in the global environmental discourse and the South generally follows this agenda. If the South were equally dominant in process shaping, then the communication would stand on an equal basis. The United Nations in some sense is also a Northern entity whose perspective is mainly shaped by the North; so, communication of the dates, resolutions and decisions to the South and the general public remains somehow limited.

### **Language**

The language of global environmental discourse being English, the Southern participants cannot always explain themselves clearly. Even if the representatives and the diplomats have limited linguistic problems, the participation at the local and national level is strictly limited by the language factor. For instance, a local environmentalist in Turkey may have difficulty in following the agenda of the global discourse so long as there are problems in communication. Therefore, more languages should be both verbally and orally included in the global discourse, paving the way for the comprehension of the whole environmental discourse. Although there are six official UN languages, delegates and civil society representatives who are unable to communicate in English are often left out of the behind the scenes negotiating and lobbying that are crucial to the decision making process (Fisher and Green, 2004). If the global community pays attention to this “filling in the gaps” strategy within the three basic concepts I addressed here, what seemed to be unsolvable matters of the discourse for many decades can -even if gradually- be managed.

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