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# UNIT 2 ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMMES

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## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- define sustainable development and Identify historical markers;
- elucidate Brundtland Commission Report;
- explain objectives of Stockholm conference on Human Environment;
- describe the earth summits and their outcomes;
- explain the final outcome document of Rio+20-The future we want;
- learn history of Habitat conferences; and
- explain the important perspectives from the global discourse: North South Debates.

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## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

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At any level of development, human impact on the environment is a function of population size, per capita consumption and the environmental damage caused by the technology used to produce what is consumed. There is little doubt that the Earth's environment is changing on all scales from local (e.g. air, soil, and water pollution), to regional (e.g. acid deposition and land degradation) to global (e.g. climate change and loss of biodiversity). These changes are to a large measure due to human activities, and undermine efforts to alleviate poverty and adversely affect water resources, human health, agriculture, forestry, fisheries and ecosystems.

We know that in 2011 the world population surpassed the 7 billion mark and, according to most commonly quoted population projections, published by the United Nations Population Division, 2011, the world population will grow to over 9 billion by mid century. To improve the well being of a large and growing world population, while ensuring the sustainable use of essential but limited natural resources, is one of the greatest challenges we face today. The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) recognized 20 years ago that the environment, economic and social issues are interlinked. It recommended that the three be integrated into development decision making. In defining sustainable development, the Commission for both intra and equity development that meets not only today's human needs but also those of more people in the future. In the following sections we will learn about the various environment and sustainability programmes and their outcomes, to have a better understanding of environment and sustainable development.

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## 2.2 ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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In 1962 Silent Spring was published, a book many consider a turning point in our understanding of the interconnections between the environment, economy and social well-being. In the decades that have followed, many milestones have marked the journey toward sustainable development. Sustainable

development is intended to encompass environment, economy, and social issues; but is often compartmentalized as an environmental issue. In its early manifestations, sustainable development was largely a green agenda, or bringing environmental considerations in economic development. Sustainable development focuses on improving the quality of life for all of the Earth's citizens without increasing the use of natural resources beyond the capacity of the environment to supply them indefinitely. It requires an understanding that inaction has consequences and that we must find innovative ways to change institutional structures and influence individual behavior. It is about taking action, changing policy and practice at all levels, from the individual to the international. The primary focus of sustainable development has been on critical challenges posed by various environmental problems. The major environmental problems or concerns related to sustainability including the depletion of non-renewable resources, increase in non biodegradable wastes, decline in biodiversity, and so on imply how the current mode of development may threaten the future generations and why development policies and practices have to be sustainable.

### 2.2.1 Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development is based on the premise that efforts to improve the economic and social conditions of present generations through development activities should not compromise the ability of future generations to do so. Sustainable development is a fluid concept and various definitions have emerged over the past two decades. Despite an on-going debate on the actual meaning, a few common principles tend to be emphasized.

- 1) The first is a commitment to equity and fairness, in that priority should be given to improving the conditions of the World's poorest and decisions should account for the rights of future generations.
- 2) The second is a long-term view that emphasizes the precautionary principle, i.e., "where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation" (*Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*, Principle 15).
- 3) Third, sustainable development embodies integration, and understanding and acting on the complex interconnections that exist between the environment, economy, and society. This is not a balancing act or a playing one issue off against the other, but recognizing the interdependent nature of these three pillars. It is generally accepted that sustainable development calls for a convergence between the three pillars of economic development, social equity, and environmental protection.

### 2.2.2 Sustainable Development: Historical Markers

One of the first key publications looking at the ability of the earth to sustain its population was 'An Essay on The Principle of Population' written in 1798 by Thomas Malthus about which we have already discussed in Unit 2 Block 1. In 1968 Garret Hardins publicised 'The Tragedy of the Commons', which considered the problem again of overuse of natural resources. This article highlighted the need for a moral stance to maintain public resources and

reported that technological advances were no longer enough. The tragedy of the commons evolves when individuals use a public good, but do not pay for the full cost of it. Before the 1960s there was not public widespread knowledge of the environmental and conservation issues being faced in the world. It is reported that the public concerns raised in the 1960s were one of the main reasons for the 1972 United Nations conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm.

A brief year wise list of important events of the historical markers of Sustainable Development is given below:

- 1968 - The Club of Rome
- 1972 - The release of The Limits to Growth
- 1972 - The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment
- 1984 - The World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission)
- 1987 - The release of Our Common Future
- 1992 - The Earth Summit
- Rio Declaration on Environment and Development
- Agenda 21
- 2002 - The World Summit on Sustainable Development
- 2012- Rio +20

### 2.2.3 Few Definitions

Over the last 25 years, sustainable development has been defined in many ways; however the most common definition is from ‘Our Common Future’, also known as the Brundtland Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. The report, published in 1987, defines sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”(WCED). Sustainable Development (SD) implies economic growth together with the protection of environmental quality, each reinforcing the other. Sustainable Development, thus, is maintaining a balance between the human need to improve lifestyles and feeling of well-being on one hand, and preserving natural resources and ecosystems, on which we and future generations depend.

“Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (**Brundtland Report (1987) ‘Our Common Future’**)

SD may also be defined as .

“To improve the quality of life while living within the carrying capacity of ecosystems” **IUCN (The World Conservation Union), 1991**

The Swiss 'Monitoring of Sustainable Development Project' MONET (BFS, BUWAL & ARE) in 2001, proposed the following definition:

'Sustainable development means ensuring dignified living conditions with regard to human rights by creating and maintaining the widest possible range of options for freely defining life plans. The principle of fairness among and between present and future generations should be taken into account in the use of environmental, economic and social resources. Putting these needs into practice entails comprehensive protection of bio-diversity in terms of ecosystem, species and genetic diversity, all of which are the vital foundations of life.'

**MONET, 2001**

There's another definition given by the famous Robert Prescott Allen, who has founded and chaired several influential IUCN-The World Conservation Union projects and has 18 years experience evaluating and advising development strategies on four continents.

Sustainability is just another way of saying "the good life" as a combination of (a) a high level of human well-being, and (b) the high level of ecosystem well-being that supports it.

**Allen Prescott**

The main features that all the above definitions have (either explicitly or implicitly) are as follows:

- A desirable human condition: a society that people want to sustain because it meets their needs
- A enduring ecosystem condition: an ecosystem that maintains its capacity to support human life and others
- A balance between present and future generations; and within the present generation.

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### **2.3 INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENT TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT- ENVIRONMENTAL CONFERENCES**

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The following section will deal with the important environmental conference that related to sustainable development. The major conferences and programmes covered in this section includes the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm, Sweden from 5 to 16 June 1972; The Brundtland Commission. report- 'Our Common Future', 1987; The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development; Earth Summit, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1992; World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, South Africa; the Millennium Development Goals, 2005; Rio+20 Conference and two Habitat conferences.

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## 2.4 STOCKHOLM CONFERENCE-THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

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The Stockholm Conference, also known as The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was held in Stockholm, Sweden from 5 to 16 June 1972. It considered the need for a common outlook and principles to inspire and guide the people of the world for the preservation and enhancement of the human environment. Probably for the first time issues of an ecological nature were added to the roster of international concerns. One of the key results of this historical meeting was the adoption by participants of a declaration of principles and action plan to fight pollution. The Conference approved establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to provide continued leadership and coordination of environmental action. It was further to this meeting that the United Nations Environment Program was founded. At the same time, the Club of Rome published the report Limits to Growth. Limits to Growth are one of the first documents of importance to be published about the ecological limits to economic and demographic growth. It exposes the results of mathematical simulations conducted on demographic and economic growth correlated with the exploitation of natural resources. The report presents forecasts up to 2100.

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## 2.5 THE BRUNDTLAND COMMISSION

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The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) was convened by the United Nations in 1983. Chaired by Ms. Gro Harlem Brundtland, it was also called the Brundtland Commission. The commission was created to address the growing concern “about the accelerating deterioration of the human environment and natural resources and the consequences of that deterioration for economic and social development.” The UN General Assembly recognized that environmental problems were global in nature and determined that it was in the common interest of all nations to establish policies for sustainable development. The report of the Brundtland Commission, ‘Our Common Future’, was published by Oxford University Press in 1987.

At the close of the Commission’s work, Ms. Brundtland had the following to say about the mandate:

“When the terms of reference of our Commission were originally being discussed in 1982, there were those who wanted its considerations to be limited to “environmental issues” only. This would have been a grave mistake. The environment does not exist as a sphere separate from human actions, ambitions, and needs, and attempts to defend it in isolation from human concerns have given the very word “environment” a connotation of naivety in some political circles. The word “development” has also been narrowed by some into a very limited focus, along the lines of “what poor nations should do to become richer”, and thus again is automatically dismissed by many in the international arena as being a concern of specialists, of those involved in questions of “development assistance”.

(Gro Harlem Brundtland, in the foreword to *Our Common Future*, 1987)

An important footnote is that the work of the World Commission on Environment and Development were marked by two major environmental and human catastrophes that today are a part our history: the catastrophe in Bhopal, India (1984), caused by a toxic gas leak at a pesticides plant and resulting in the death of thousands of people and injury of thousands of others, as well as the explosion of four reactors of the Chernobyl nuclear plant in the Ukraine (1986). Radioactive fallout from this accident had and will continue to have negative effects on the health of affected populations and ecosystems.

The Commission's work led to the release in 1987 of the report 'Our Common Future', also called the Brundtland Report.

### 2.5.1 Mandate of the Commission

The Commission's mandate was mainly to recommend means to the international community to preserve the environment through improved cooperation between developing nations and so-called developed nations, while considering existing relationships between people, resources, environment and development. The purpose of the Commission's work was to draw up a profile of environmental issues and, finally, develop an action plan defining the objectives of the international community in matters pertaining to development and environmental protection.

#### Box 1: The Brundtland Commission's Mandate

- 1) Re-examine the critical environment and development issues to formulate realistic proposals for dealing with them.
- 2) Propose new forms of international cooperation that will re-orientate policy and events in the direction of needed change.
- 3) Raise the levels of understanding and commitment to action of individuals, voluntary organizations, businesses, institutes, and governments.

Source: WCED 1987

### 2.5.2 1987 - The Release of Our Common Future

The 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission) report, *Our Common Future*, was an important turning point in environmental discourse.

- 1) It placed sustainable development—"development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"—high on the political agenda.
- 2) It marked the beginning of a real search for alternative models to development, and strategies and tools to charter development paths that are sustainable.
- 3) It inspired many initiatives at global, regional, national, and local levels, including the 1992 ground-breaking United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), and National Strategies for

Sustainable Development (NSSD), as well as local, participatory conservation and sustainable use projects based on principles of fairness, equity, and benefit sharing.

- 4) It stimulated research and the development of policy-relevant scientific information that supports the knowledge-policy-action outcome transition.

The Brundtland Commission warned that:

- 1) Development trends were increasing the number of poor and vulnerable people and simultaneously degrading the environment.
- 2) Environmental change was radically threatening development opportunities and eroding the environmental resources on which development is based.
- 3) Addressing poverty and equity is a prerequisite for a sustainable future because “a world in which poverty is endemic will always be prone to ecological and other catastrophes.”
- 4) It is futile to attempt to deal with environmental problems without a broader perspective that encompasses economic, social and political factors, including those that underlie world poverty and global inequality.

In looking to the future, Our Common Future offered, not a blueprint for change but, a framework for enlarging cooperation. It urged an approach to environment and development problems that treated them as interlocked and shared challenges which attempts to maintain social and ecological stability through old approaches to development and environment protection will increase instability.

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## 2.6 EARTH SUMMIT, 1992

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The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, also known as the Earth Summit was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil from June 3 to June 14, 1992. In this conference, about 178 governments participated, including the heads of 118 States or Governments. The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was created in December 1992 to ensure effective follow-up of UNCED, to monitor and report on implementation of the agreements at the local, national, regional and international levels.

Bringing together nearly 200 government representatives and a large number of NGOs, the Earth Summit gave rise to the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, a key document reaffirming an international commitment to the principles of sustainable development. Further to this meeting, international institutions were set up to realize the commitments made by the nations in attendance. Among these institutions, the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development since 1992 has promoted the principles and practices associated with sustainable development at the international level.

### 2.6.1 Five Agreements Signed during the Conference

Five agreements were signed during the conference. These are listed as follows:

- The *Framework Convention on Climate Change* that introduced measures designed to reduce the threat of global warming.



- The *Convention on Biological Diversity* which put forward proposals aimed at preserving The Earth's biological diversity through the protection of species and ecosystems.
- *Agenda 21* – this was an action plan, aimed at introducing sustainable development, which it is hoped would guide government policies throughout the world over the forthcoming decades.
- The *Rio Declaration* includes 27 principles which was believed would guide action on development and the environment.
- Finally, the *Forest Principles* emphasizing the right of states to exploit their own forest resources while advocating general principles of sustainable forest management.

In addition, two legally binding Conventions aimed at preventing global climate change and the eradication of the diversity of biological species were opened for signature at the Summit, giving high profile to these efforts:

- 1) The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
- 2) The Convention on Biological Diversity

### 2.6.2 Agenda 21

Agenda 21 is a comprehensive plan of action to be taken globally, nationally and locally by organizations of the United Nations System, Governments, and Major Groups in every area in which human have an impact on the environment. Agenda 21 addresses front-line global problems, which are grouped together under 39 themes involving social and economic development, environmental protection, resource management, participation of civil society in the decision-making process and the means to implement sustainable development. Adopted by 179 nations, the program is a world class reference document. The number 21 refers to the 21st century.

Agenda 21 addresses today's pressing problems and aims to prepare the world for the challenges of the next century. It contains detailed proposals for action in social and economic areas (such as combating poverty, changing patterns of production and consumption and addressing demographic dynamics), and for conserving and managing the natural resources that are the basis for life — protecting the atmosphere, oceans and biodiversity; preventing deforestation; and promoting sustainable agriculture, for example.

The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development supports Agenda 21 by defining the rights and responsibilities of States regarding these issues. Among its principles:

- 1) That human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature;
- 2) That scientific uncertainty should not delay measures to prevent environmental degradation where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage;
- 3) That States have a sovereign right to exploit their own resources but not to cause damage to the environment of other States;

- 4) That eradicating poverty and reducing disparities in worldwide standards of living are “indispensable” for sustainable development;
- 5) That the full participation of women is essential for achieving sustainable development;
- 6) That the developed countries acknowledge the responsibility that they bear in the international pursuit of sustainable development in view of the pressures their societies place on the global environment and of the technologies and financial resources they command;
- 7) The Statement of Forest Principles, the non-legally binding statement of principles for the sustainable management of forests, was the first global consensus reached on forests;
- 8) That all countries, notably developed countries, should make an effort to “green the world” through reforestation and forest conservation;
- 9) That States have a right to develop forests according to their socio-economic needs, in keeping with national sustainable development policies; and
- 10) Specific financial resources should be provided to develop programmes that encourage economic and social substitution policies.

There are 40 chapters in Agenda 21, divided into four sections. They are as follows:

Section I: Social and Economic Dimensions

Section II: Conservation and Management of Resources for Development

Section III: Strengthening the Role of Major Groups

Section IV: Means of Implementation

In particular, Chapter 25 of Agenda 21 talks about the Children and Youth in Sustainable Development. Chapter 36 deals with Promoting Education, Public Awareness and Training. The full implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Commitments to the Rio principles, were strongly reaffirmed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg, South Africa from 26 August to 4 September 2002. (25 Aug - 4 Sept 2002).

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## **2.7 THE WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, 2002**

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In 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development was held in Johannesburg, South Africa. This was the occasion for participants to renew their commitment to the principles defined in the Rio Declaration and the Agenda 21 objectives, and also to progress in this sense by prioritizing certain targets. These include the elimination of poverty, changes to consumption patterns and non-viable production, and the protection and management of natural resources. It also broached the subject of globalization and ties linking health and development issues. Of note, government representatives in attendance pledged to develop national sustainable development strategies to be implemented before 2005.

Thus the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002 convened in order to reinvigorate the global commitment to sustainable development and review the progress. In this regard, the report assessing the implementation status of Agenda 21 identified some serious deficiencies: fragmented approach to SD; lack of progress in addressing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production; inadequate attention of core issues; coherence policies on finance, trade, investment, technology and SD; insufficient financial resources; and absence of a robust mechanism for technology transfer.

The Johannesburg Summit delivered three outcomes: a political declaration, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and the establishment of numerous partnership initiatives (most importantly so-called Type II partnerships).

### **2.7.1 The Johannesburg Declaration**

The Johannesburg Declaration confirmed the commitments from Stockholm 1972 and Rio 1992 as well as of some of the Millennium Development Goals. Although the Johannesburg Declaration refers to strategic approaches on how to deliver the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, it had no specific mandate to contribute to the development of international environmental law, nor even to further elaborate general principles of non-binding nature to guide the conduct of states with respect to SD. Negotiations on the document were rather short due to time constraints and, especially the part on implementation with regard to finance and trade was heavily controversial with an agreement of about 11 and 15 %, respectively.

### **2.7.2 The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation**

Another important deliverable, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) can be regarded as a programme of action to guide government activities, negotiated and agreed between governments covering key commitments and targets in the areas of sustainable consumption and production, water and sanitation, and energy. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) is a guide for further implementation of Agenda 21 – comprises measures of implementation and specific measurable targets and associated time frames, which, however, are in most cases reiterated from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agreed at the Millennium Summit in 2000 and other agreements.

### **2.7.3 Type II Partnerships**

In addition, the Johannesburg Summit 2002 produced the so-called Type II Partnerships (i.e. voluntary transnational multi-stakeholder agreements between government and non-state actors) allowing civil society to contribute to the implementation of sustainable development.

Overall, the discussions that took place during the conference shifted the attention of SD away from the environmental and more towards the social and economic development perspective. This shift was mainly driven by the developing countries' needs and particularly influenced by the Millennium Declaration and its associated goals partly reiterated into the conference's final deliverables. This shift is reflected by the introduction of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and the focus on issues such as poverty, education and sanitation. The inclusion of poverty alleviation and

eradication is an important step towards integrating social and economic aspects of sustainable development with environmental goals.

### Check Your Progress 1

**Note:** a) Use the space below for your answer.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

1) List the historical markers that led to origin of the concept of Sustainable Development?

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2) Explain Stockholm conference.

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3) What is 'Agenda 21'?

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4) What are the outcomes of Johannesburg Conference?

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## 2.8 MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGs)

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The Millennium Development Goals are goals that 192 United Nations member states have agreed to try to achieve by the year 2015. The MDGs were officially established at the Millennium Summit in 2000, where 189 world leaders adopted the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

The 8 MDGs that were particularly promoted in the years following the Millennium Summit break down into 18 quantifiable targets that are measured by 48 indicators. These include:

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

### **Implementation of the MDGs**

- In 2001, the Road Map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration was presented, outlining potential strategies for action designed to meet the goals and commitments of the Millennium Declaration.
- In 2002, the annual report focused on progress made in the prevention of armed conflict and the treatment and prevention of diseases, including HIV/AIDS and Malaria.
- In 2003, emphasis was placed on strategies for development and strategies for sustainable development.
- In 2004, it was on bridging the digital divide and curbing transnational crime.
- In 2005, the comprehensive five-yearly report on progress toward achieving the MDGs was prepared. The report reviewed the implementation of decisions taken at the international conferences, progress on HIV/AIDS and financing for sustainable development.

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## **2.9 RIO+20**

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Commonly known as the Rio+20 Conference, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) took place in Rio de Janeiro between the 20-22 June 2012, twenty years after the UNCED (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development), which was also hosted in Rio in 1992. More than 150 heads-of-state and ministers participated in the Rio+20 Conference on 20 June 2012.

### **2.9.1 Rio+20 Objectives**

The main three objectives of the Rio+20 Conference were:

- To secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development,
- To assess the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development, and
- To address new and emerging challenges.

The conference focused mainly on two themes:

- I) Green economy in the context of SD and poverty eradication; The concept of green economy focuses primarily on the intersection between environment and economy.

II) The institutional framework for SD. Sustainable development was recognized as an overarching goal for institutions at the national, regional and international levels. The need to enhance the integration of Sustainable Development in the activities of all relevant United Nations Agencies, Programme and funds, and the International financial institutions, within their mandates was highlighted.

### **2.9.2 The Final Outcome Document - The Future We Want**

The structure comprehends six main sections:

- i) Our Common Vision
- ii) Renewing Political Commitment
- iii) Green Economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication
- iv) Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development
- v) Framework for action and follow-up
- vi) Means of Implementation

Final Outcome Document structure is as follows:

- i) Our Common vision
- ii) Renewing Political Commitment
  - a) Reaffirming Rio principles and past action plans;
  - b) Advancing Integration, Implementation, and Coherence: Assessing the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development and addressing new and emerging challenges;
  - c) Engaging major groups and other stakeholders;
- iii) Green Economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication
- iv) Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development
  - a) Strengthening the three dimensions of sustainable development;
  - b) Strengthening intergovernmental arrangements for sustainable development;
    - i) General Assembly
    - ii) Economic and Social Council
    - iii) High level political forum
  - c) Environmental pillar in the context of sustainable development;
  - d) International financial institutions and United Nations operational activities;
  - e) Regional, national, sub-national, local levels.

v) Framework for action and follow-up

A) Thematic areas and cross-sectoral issues;

- i) Poverty eradication
- ii) Food security and nutrition and sustainable agriculture
- iii) Water and sanitation
- iv) Energy
- v) Sustainable tourism
- vi) Sustainable transport
- vii) Sustainable cities and human settlements
- viii) Health and population
- ix) Promoting full and productive employment, decent work for all, and social protection
- x) Oceans and Seas
- xi) Small Island Developing States (SIDS)
- xii) Least developed countries
- xiii) Landlocked Least Developed Countries
- xiv) Africa
- xv) Regional efforts
- xvi) Disaster risk reduction
- xvii) Climate change
- xviii) Forests
- xix) Biodiversity
- xx) Desertification, land degradation and drought
- xxi) Mountains
- xxii) Chemicals and waste
- xxiii) Sustainable Consumption and Production
- xxiv) Mining
- xxv) Education
- xxvi) Gender equality and the empowerment of women

B) Sustainable development goals

VI) Means of Implementation

- A) Finance
- B) Technology
- C) Capacity-building
- D) Trade

## Check Your Progress 2

**Note:** a) Use the space below for your answer.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

1) Explain the most important outcomes of Rio +20

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2) Describe Millennium Development Goals

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## 2.10 HABITAT CONFERENCES

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In this section, you will learn about the various Habitat Conferences.

### 2.10.1 Habitat Conference Vancouver, 1976

The original Habitat Conference held in Vancouver in 1976. Habitat I was a product of the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972. Whereas Stockholm was about international environmental problems, Habitat I was convened to address local environmental problems, such as housing, shelter, infrastructure, water, sewage, transport, etc.

### 2.10.2 United Nations Conference on Human Settlements - Istanbul, Turkey, 1996

The United Nations Conference on Human Settlements commonly known as Habitat II was held on the 20th anniversary of the original Habitat Conference held in Vancouver in 1976. Habitat II received its impetus from the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio. In response to a resolution from Habitat I, the United Nations General Assembly established the United Nations Commission for Human Settlements, comprised of 58 States elected by the General Assembly (with rotating membership). In the same resolution (GA 32/162) the GA also created a new UN agency — the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), which serves both as Secretariat for the Commission and carries out the functions mandated by the Commission and the General Assembly.

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## 2.11 IMPORTANT PERSPECTIVES FROM THE GLOBAL DISCOURSE: NORTH SOUTH DEBATES.

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We use “North” and “South” here, well aware that aside from the purely geographical inconsistencies, there are elements of the (wealthy, industrialised) North in the (poor and increasingly marginalized) South and vice versa. ‘Developing’ and ‘developed’ countries are less satisfactory terms, implying



that the 'developed' have arrived at some predefined and necessarily desirable goal whereas the 'developing' are still striving to get there. Such terms discount the huge environmental and social problems of the rich countries and the fact that the levels of consumption of the latter were they to be achieved by five billion people, would lead to ecological collapse.

The 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm is said to mark the beginning of modern international environmental law, which is characterized by a shift in the interests of states from trans-boundary environmental matters to global environmental concerns. At the same time the states' awareness of the close interdependency of development and the environment increased. Twenty years later, the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro raised the concept of "sustainable development" that embodies this interdependency as the leitmotif of all subsequent international environmental activities. In 1992 the United Nations convoked the state community to the Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. Inspired by the innovative concept of sustainable development, the Rio Conference adopted a number of important documents, such as the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, designed to open up concrete ways for bridging the still existing dichotomy between North and South. On the other hand, the discussions held during the Rio Conference showed that there are still deep clashes between the two groups of states in weighing environmental interests against developmental needs. Accordingly, the post-Rio process of cooperation between North and South was not as successful as originally hoped. Thus, at the end of the 20th century, the core demands of the 'New International Economic Order' were still unfulfilled. As the industrialized states' official development aid still clearly kept below the threshold of 0.7 % of their respective GNP, they could not reasonably claim to have pursued a meaningful policy of eradicating poverty, as promised 25 years before.

This is why in 2000 the UN General Assembly adopted its Millennium Declaration that called upon Member States to take actions at all levels in order to halve the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than 1 dollar per day, who suffer from hunger, and who are without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, by the year 2015. In 2002 the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, in its "Plan of Implementation", reaffirmed this urgent appeal. Although this plan advanced the Third World's developmental concerns more clearly than its predecessors in Stockholm and Rio, it has not brought about any substantial progress in bridging the North-South divide. Today, the developing states continue to insist on making the industrialized states primarily responsible for solving the most crucial global environmental problems, particularly in respect to two issues. The first subject is climate change for which, at least for the past, the industrialized states are mainly responsible. Furthermore, developing states still blame the North for pursuing a policy of eco imperialism by restraining their sovereignty over natural resources, preventing them from becoming industrialized, and keeping their products away from the world markets. Thus, today the North-South divide hampers international environmental and developmental cooperation almost as seriously as it did in the 1970s and 1980s. States are still far from taking joint protective and remedial environmental action that suffices to achieve the aim of preserving and administering our common natural heritage for the benefit of the present and future generations.

The basic ideas of international solidarity and justice should constitute the critical starting-point for constructing an international legal framework of environmental and developmental cooperation between the North and South. Ways and means of better integrating the specific concerns of the developing world in international environmental law has revealed that “sustainable development”, “common but differentiated responsibilities”, “equitable participation”, and “equitable sharing of benefits” may constitute concepts that promise to help in this respect. All of them might contribute to shifting the inter-relationship between the North and South from disparity to equal partnership. The concept of “sustainable development”, in both its intra generational and inter-generational dimension, can be understood as an emanation of solidarity and, concurrently, as a specification of the idea of distributive justice. “Common but differentiated responsibilities” and “equitable participation” are important manifestations of international justice. They both may help to reconcile the dichotomy between North and South in global environmental affairs, such as combating climate change and preserving biological diversity.

**Check Your Progress 3**

- Note:** a) Use the space below for your answer.  
b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

1) Describe United Nations Habitat Conferences.

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2) Describe important perspectives from the global discourse: North-South debates

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**2.12 LET US SUM UP**

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The term, sustainable development, was popularized in ‘Our Common Future’, a report published by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987. Also known as the Brundtland report, ‘Our Common Future’ included the “classic” definition of sustainable development: “Development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Acceptance of the report by the United Nations General Assembly gave the term political salience; and in 1992 leaders set out the principles of sustainable development at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

At the original Earth Summit, 178 governments agreed to: the Rio Declaration, a set of 27 Sustainable Development ‘principles’; Agenda 21, a massive 40 chapter Action Plan to achieve sustainable development; and a Statement of Forest Principles. The Summit also saw two new conventions opened for

signatories: The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. Taken together, these documents were recognition both of the need to radically improve people's well-being in many countries of the world and of the need for major changes to production and consumption patterns due to the massive adverse impact humans are having on the planet.

A decade later, in 2002, governments once again gathered, this time in Johannesburg, and once again committed to achieving sustainable development. Although some progress had been made on reducing poverty (mainly due to rapid economic expansion in China) massive inequalities still existed and the environmental crisis had, if anything, become more severe. An implementation plan was agreed that was intended to provide more specifics on how governments would make good on the promises made in Rio.

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, was probably the largest event in a long series of mega-summits on environmental protection and sustainable development. Roughly 44000 participants descended on Rio de Janeiro to take part in ten days of preparatory committee meetings, informal consultations, side events, and the actual conference.

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## 2.13 KEY WORDS

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### **Agenda 21**

: One of several documents emerging from the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. Major issues of environment and development were examined, including poverty, population, and human health

### **Brundtland Commission**

: The World Commission on Environment and Development chaired by Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland. The Commission's report, *Our Common Future* (1987), popularized the notion of Sustainable Development.

### **Rio Conference**

: The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, which took place at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June, 1992.

### **North or Northern**

: Industrialized countries located mainly in the Northern Hemisphere and referred to as the First World, including Canada, the U.S., western European countries, the former Soviet Union, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand.

### **South or Southern**

: Less developed countries located in the Southern Hemisphere and often referred to as the Third World.

**Stockholm Conference** : The 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. Many scholars assert that this conference was the springboard for the modern environmental movement.

**United Nations Conference on Environment and Development** : The Earth Summit held in Rio in 1992.

**United Nations Development Programme** : A program with the stated purpose of enhancing development worldwide.

**United Nations Environment Programme** : A program conceived at the 1972 with the purpose of raising environmental consciousness on a global level.

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## **2.14 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS**

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## 2.15 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Your answer must include the following points:
  - 1968 - The Club of Rome
  - 1972 - The release of The Limits to Growth, The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment
  - 1984 - The World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission)
  - 1987 - The release of Our Common Future
  - 1992 - The Earth Summit
  - Rio Declaration on Environment and Development
  - Agenda 21
  - 2002 - The World Summit on Sustainable Development
  - 2012- Rio +20
- 2) Your answer must include the following points:
  - Also known as The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was held in Stockholm, Sweden from 5 to 16 June 1972.
  - Adoption by participants of a declaration of principles and action plan to fight pollution.
  - The Conference approved establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- 3) Your answer must include the following points:
  - Agenda 21 –an action plan, aimed at introducing sustainable development
  - addresses front-line global problems, which are grouped together under 39 themes involving social and economic development, environmental protection, resource management, participation of civil society Legal protection to biodiversity in India

- 4) Your answer must include the following points:
- Johannesburg political declaration,
  - The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation
  - The establishment of numerous partnership initiatives (most importantly so-called Type II partnerships).

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Your answer must include the following points:
- The final outcome document - the future we want
  - Seven critical issues recognized during the conference: jobs, energy, cities, food, water, oceans, and disasters.
- 2) Your answer must include the following points:
- The Millennium Development Goals are goals that 192 United Nations member states have agreed to try to achieve by the year 2015.
  - The 8 MDGs that were particularly promoted in the year

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Your answer must include the following points:
- Habitat Conference Vancouver, 1976
  - United Nations Conference On Human Settlements - Istanbul, Turkey, 1996
- 2) Your answer must include the following points:
- Industrialized countries located mainly in the Northern Hemisphere and referred to as the First World, including Canada, the U.S., western European countries, the former Soviet Union, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand.
  - South or Southern- Less developed countries located in the Southern Hemisphere and often referred to as the Third World.
  - Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, designed to open up concrete ways for bridging the still existing dichotomy between North and South.