

Chapter 14

Water Resources Management for Sustainable Development: International Environmental Law Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

Global water consumption has increased dramatically with the pace of population growth. Production of food and better standard of living for individuals and nations increase the demand of water. Availability of water in adequate quantity and quality is a necessary condition for sustainable development. Knowledge and understanding of freshwater resources is essential for sustainable development too as it ensures management of renewable natural resources for growth and prosperity. Progress towards sustainable development requires engaging a broad range of actors in government, civil society, and business to assure that water is taken into account in their decision-making process and to promote cooperation across disciplines, sectors, and borders. Water resources, if managed properly, can be realized for sharing of greater benefits to the society. National governments have responsibilities towards their citizens, and therefore, the national governments and the global community need to take action and track progress over a much broader set of water-related challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Water is indispensable to sustain lives and uninterrupted human activity. Global water consumption has increased dramatically with the pace of population growth. Production of food and better standard of living for individuals and nations would cause to increase the demand of water. Availability of water in adequate quantity and quality is a necessary condition for sustainable development. Knowledge and understanding of freshwater resources is essential for sustainable development too as it ensures management of renewable natural resources for growth and prosperity. There is no doubt that water is an integral part of the ecosystem, a natural resource, and a social and economic good. Considering the value and

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utility of water, integrated water resources management has been a recent imperative for efficient water use, sustainable water utilization patterns, water conservation, wastage minimization, controlling water distribution, abatement of pollution, and eutrophication of freshwater bodies. UN Water Conference in 1977 acknowledging importance of water in the lives of people asserted that all people, whatever their stage of development and their social and economic conditions, have the rights to have access to drinking water in quantities and of a quality equal to their basic needs.

SUSTAINABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT

National security is a very popular notion and concerned with the international peace and security. The security in the 1960s was no longer simply an issue of external aggressors but also one of internal threats to stability. While national security concerns were being dominated by the threat to a state's borders and sovereignty, the environment began to take its place within the security agenda in the 1970s at the time the Club of Rome published *The Limits to Growth* (Meadows, Randers, Meadows, & Behrens, 1972). Alexandre Timoshenko rightly articulates security cannot only be political or military; it must be as well ecological, economical, and social. It must ensure the fulfillment of the aspirations of humanity as a whole. Thus, the necessity of a secure environment for the survival of mankind was duly stressed in the report.

There is an essential connection between social justice and the environment (Kassiola, 2002) that casts the essence of environmental policy. Proper application of policy and regulation in respect of environmental sustainability can help earning benefits of sustainable development. The Court of Justice of the European Union (EU) has, to a certain extent, demonstrated willingness to engage in balancing exercises where commercial economic interests are involved (Hamlyn, 2015). In fact, a balancing decision making among social, economic, and environmental aspects renders development.

In 1950s and 1960s, unsustainable resource exploitation and population increases severely affected the environmental sustainability. The utilization of natural resources pursuant to the national policies became a key concern for the nation states for their economic development. In 1977, Lester Brown published a World Watch Paper under the title of *Redefining National Security* in which he criticized the militarization of the world economy and opined that the emerging threat for the mankind would be their relationship with nature.

In the 1980s, the theme of unsustainable environmental exploitation gathered pace leading to the World conservation Union's World Conservation Strategy in 1980 (World Conservation Union, 1980) and the formation and reports of the World Commission on Environment and Development. Brundtland Report of the commission put an emphasis on an integrated approach and subsequently it became known as sustainable development.

INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

Climate change continues to dominate international environmental efforts, and thereby, the issues of sustainability and development. Environmental law continues to change and evolve, as new regulations are adopted, and existing rules are amended or challenged in courts or interpreted by agencies. Therefore, the international community is experiencing many areas of relevant international legal activity as well as the breadth and complexity of international development and economic activity.

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