

**GROUP ASSIGNMENT:**

**Our Common Future ‘Bruntland Report’**

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# Our Common Future

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## **Our Common Future:**

Our Common Future, also known as the Brundtland Report, was published in October 1987 by the United Nations through the Oxford University Press. This publication was in recognition of Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Norwegian Prime Minister and Chair of the World Commission on Environment and Development. **The Brundtland Commission officially dissolved in 1987 after releasing Our Common Future**, also known as the Brundtland Report. The Brundtland Report(former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland),published 27 years ago.It has been successful in forming international ties between governments and multinational corporations.Described sustainability as a three-legged stool with people,planet and profit taking equal importance in the equation.

- The Report led the production of Agenda 21,an action plan of the U.N with regard to **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**.
- Agenda 21 entailed actions to be taken globally, nationally and locally in order to make life on Earth more sustainable.

Who is **GRO HARLEEM BRUNDTLAND** and what was her background?



**GRO HARLEEM BRUNDTLAND**

- She was born on 22 April 1939.
- She is a medical doctor with a public health degree. She is former director of the World Health Organization.
- A feminist, she was Prime Minister of Norway (1981, 1986-89, 1990-96), the first woman and youngest ever.
- She was chosen to direct U.N World Commission on Environment and Development.
- Since 2007, she is a special U.N envoy on climate change.

## 1. A Threatened Future:

The Earth is one but the world is not. We all depend on one biosphere for sustaining our lives. Yet each community, each country, strives for survival and prosperity with little regard for its impact on others. Some consume the Earth's resources at a rate that would leave little for future generations. Others, many more in number, consume far too little and live with the prospect of hunger, squalor, disease, and early death. Societies have faced such pressures in the past and, as many desolate ruins remind us, sometimes succumbed to them. The growth in economic interaction between nations. Economics and ecology bind us in ever-tightening networks. Today, many regions face risks of irreversible damage to the human environment that threaten the basis for human progress. We also found grounds for hope: that people can cooperate to build a future that is more prosperous, more just, and more secure; that a new era of economic growth can be attained, one based on policies that sustain and expand the Earth's resource base; and that the progress that some have known over the last century can be experienced by all in the years ahead. But for this to happen, we must understand better the symptoms of stress that confront us, we must identify the causes, and we must design new approaches to managing environmental resources and to sustaining human development.

A **global agenda** for change" - this was what the World Commission on Environment and Development was asked to formulate. It was an urgent call by the General Assembly of the United Nations:

- To propose long-term environmental strategies for achieving sustainable development by the year 2000 and beyond;
- To recommend ways concern for the environment may be translated into greater co-operation among developing countries and between countries at different stages of economical and social development and lead to the achievement of common and mutually supportive objectives that take account of the interrelationships between people, resources, environment, and development;
- To consider ways and means by which the international community can deal more effectively with environment concerns; and
- To help define shared perceptions of long-term environmental issues and the appropriate efforts needed to deal successfully with the problems of protecting and enhancing the environment, a long term agenda for action during the coming decades, and aspirational goals for the world community.

## I. Symptoms and Causes

Environmental stress has often been seen as the result of the growing demand on scarce resources and the pollution generated by the rising living standards of the relatively affluent. But poverty itself pollutes the environment, creating environmental stress in a different way.

- **Poverty:** There are more hungry people in the world today than ever before in human history, and their numbers are growing. In 1980, there were 340 million people in 87 developing countries not getting enough calories to prevent stunted growth and serious health risks. This total was very slightly below the figure for 1970 in terms of share of the world population, but in terms of sheer numbers, it represented a 14 per cent increase.
  
- **Growth:** In some parts of the world, particularly since the mid-1950s, growth and development have vastly improved living standards and the quality of life. Many of the products and technologies that have gone into this improvement are raw material- and energy-intensive and entail a substantial amount of pollution. The impact of growth and rising income levels can be seen in the distribution of world consumption of a variety of resource intensive produce. The more affluent industrialized countries use most of the world's metals and fossil fuels.
  
- **Survival:** Today we are close to many of these thresholds; we must be ever mindful of the risk of endangering the survival of life on Earth. The 'greenhouse effect', one such threat to life support systems, springs directly from increased resource use. The burning of fossil fuels and the cutting and burning of forests release carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). The accumulation in the atmosphere of CO<sub>2</sub> and certain other gases traps solar radiation near the Earth's surface, causing global warming.

- **The Economic Crisis:** This basic connection was brought into sharp focus by the environment and development crises of the 1980s. Developing country indebtedness remains serious; commodity and energy markets are highly unstable; financial flows to developing countries are seriously deficient; protectionism and trade wars are a serious threat. Yet at a time when multilateral institutions, and rules, are more than ever necessary, they have been devalued.

## **II. New Approaches to Environment and Development**

### **I. The Global Challenge**

#### **1. Successes and failures:**

- Each year another 6 million hectares of productive dryland turns into worthless desert. Over three decades, this would amount to an area roughly as large as Saudi Arabia.
- More than 11 million hectares of forests are destroyed yearly, and this, over three decades, would equal an area about the size of India. Much of this forest is converted to low-grade farmland unable to support the farmers who settle it. In Europe, acid precipitation kills forests and lakes and damages the artistic and architectural heritage of nations; it may have acidified vast tracts of soil beyond reasonable hope of repair.
- The burning of fossil fuels puts into the atmosphere carbon dioxide, which is causing gradual global warming. This 'greenhouse effect' may by early next century have increased average global temperatures enough to shift agricultural production areas, raise sea levels to flood coastal cities, and disrupt national economies.

#### **Sustainable Development :**

Sustainable development is based on three fundamental pillars: social, economic and environmental. Sustainable global development requires that those who are more affluent adopt life-styles within the planet's ecological means - in their use of energy, for example. Further, rapidly growing populations can increase the pressure on resources and slow any rise in living standards; thus sustainable development can only be pursued if population size and growth are in harmony with the changing productive potential of the ecosystem.

#### **The Institutional Gaps :**



Most of the institutions facing those challenges tend to be independent, fragmented, working to relatively narrow mandates with closed decision processes. Those responsible for managing natural resources and protecting the environment are institutionally separated from those responsible for managing the economy. The real world of interlocked economic and ecological systems will not change; the policies and institutions concerned must.

**2. Towards Sustainable Development:** Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts:

- The concept of 'needs', in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and
- The idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.

I. **The Concept of Sustainable Development:** The satisfaction of human needs and aspirations in the major objective of development. The essential needs of vast numbers of people in developing countries for food, clothing, shelter, jobs - are not being met, and beyond their basic needs these people have legitimate aspirations for an improved quality of life. Economic growth and development obviously involve changes in the physical ecosystem. Every ecosystem everywhere cannot be preserved intact. A forest may be depleted in one part of a watershed and extended elsewhere, which is not a bad thing if the exploitation has been planned and the effects on soil erosion rates, water regimes, and genetic losses have been taken into account. In general, renewable resources like forests and fish stocks need not be depleted provided the rate of use is within the limits of regeneration and natural growth. But most renewable resources are part of a complex and interlinked ecosystem, and maximum sustainable yield must be defined after taking into account system-wide effects of exploitation. As for non-renewable resources, like fossil fuels and minerals, their use reduces the stock available for future generations. But this does not mean that such resources should not be used.

## **II. Equity and the Common Interest:**

- Ecological interactions do not respect the boundaries of individual ownership and political jurisdiction. Thus:
- In a watershed, the ways in which a farmer up the slope uses land directly affect runoff on farms downstream.
- the irrigation practices, pesticides, and fertilizers used on one farm affect the productivity of neighbouring ones, especially among small farms.
- The efficiency of a factory boiler determines its rate of emission of soot and noxious chemicals and affects all who live and work around it.
- The hot water discharged by a thermal power plant into a river or a local sea affects the catch of all who fish locally.

## **III. Strategic Imperatives:**

The world must quickly design strategies that will allow nations to move from their present, often destructive, processes of growth and development onto sustainable development paths.

- Changing the quality of growth
  - Reviving growth
- Meeting essential needs for jobs, food, energy, water, and sanitation; ensuring a Sustainable level of population
- Conserving and enhancing the resource base
- Reorienting technology and managing risk
- Merging environment and economics in decision making.

## **IV Conclusion :**

- a political system that secures effective citizen participation in decision making.
- an economic system that is able to generate surpluses and technical knowledge on a self-reliant and sustained basis
- a social system that provides for solutions for the tensions arising from disharmonious development.
- a production system that respects the obligation to preserve the ecological base for development,

- a technological system that can search continuously for new solutions, an international system that fosters sustainable patterns of trade and finance, and an administrative system that is flexible and has the capacity for self-correction.

### **3 The role of the international economy**

#### **I. The International Economy, the Environment, and Development**

Two conditions must be satisfied before international economic exchanges can become beneficial for all involved. The sustainability of ecosystems on which the global economy depends must be guaranteed. And the economic partners must be satisfied that the basis of exchange is equitable; relationships that are unequal and based on dominance of one kind or another are not a sound and durable basis for interdependence. For many developing countries, neither condition is met.

- II. Decline in the 1980s** The pressures of poverty and rising populations make it enormously difficult for developing countries to pursue environmentally sound policies even in the best of circumstances. But when international economic conditions are bad, the problems can become unmanageable. During the 1980s, economic growth rates declined sharply or even turned negative in much of the Third World, particularly in Africa and Latin America. Over the five years from 1981 to 1985, population growth outstripped economic growth in most developing countries.

- **The African Continent**

Africa on the whole has been caught up in a series of downward spirals:

- poverty and hunger leading to environmental degradation, deteriorating agriculture, and hence more poverty and hunger;
- falling savings and a neglect of new investment in the wake of growing poverty;
- high infant mortality, poverty, and lack of education;
- high population growth rates; and

- a flight from rural hunger to the cities, leading to explosive levels of urban growth and squalor, compounding the problems of inadequate food supplies.

- **Latin American Debt:**

Debt is an acute problem for many countries of Africa. But, because of the magnitudes of debt involved, it has had its most visible impact in some middle-income countries - particularly in Latin America. The debt crisis remains a threat to international financial stability, but its main impact so far has been on the process of development, both in its economic and ecological aspects. Of the total world debt of around \$950 billion in 1985, roughly 30 per cent was owed by four countries: Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Venezuela. Their debts constitute roughly two-thirds of the outstanding loans of banks to developing countries.

### **III. Enabling Sustainable Development**

Developing countries have sought, for many years, fundamental changes in international economic arrangements so as to make them more equitable, particularly with regard to financial flows, trade, transnational investment, and technology transfer. Their arguments must now be recast to reflect the ecological dimensions, frequently overlooked in the past.

### **IV. A Sustainable World Economy**

If large parts of the developing world are to avert economic, social, and environmental catastrophes, it is essential that global economic growth be revitalized. In practical terms, this means more rapid economic growth in both industrial and developing countries, freer market access for the products of developing countries, lower interest rates, greater technology transfer, and significantly larger capital flows, both concessional and commercial.

Future patterns of agricultural and forestry development, energy use, industrialization, and human settlements can be made far less material-intensive and hence both more economically and environmentally efficient. Under these conditions, a new era of growth in the world economy can widen the options available to developing countries.



## II. New Approaches to Environment and Development

### The Global Challenge

#### 1. Successes and failures

2. The Interlocking Crises

3. Sustainable Development

4. The Institutional Gaps