

# Evolution of the Concept 'Sustainable Development' and its Current State

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32782/2707-8019/2021-1-1>

**Abstract.** *In this article the evolution of the concept 'sustainable development' was investigated. The UN Millennium Development Goals, the Nairobi Declaration, the United Nations Environmental Program, the Johannesburg Declaration and other documents were analyzed. The current state of this concept was clarified. Rio Declaration is considered to be an important document for providing sustainable development. This document consists of 27 values that will serve as a roadmap for future global sustainable development policies. The 1997 Kyoto Protocol shares the Convention's objective, principles and institutions, but significantly strengthens the Convention by committing legally-binding targets to limit or reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. It is stated in the paper that nowadays 'sustainable development' has become a common used catchphrase in everyday language.*

**Keywords:** *sustainable development, eco-development, the Nairobi Declaration, Brundtland Commission, the Rio Declaration.*

**JEL Classification:** O10

## 1 Introduction

In the seventies of last century, 'sustainable development' was known in literature as 'eco-development'. At that time, the term 'eco' was politically and philosophically too loaded to reach a consensus. Mainly from a politically and industrial perspective, the more neutral term 'sustainable development' was more accepted.

In 1972, the first international United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was held in Stockholm (Sweden). It focused international attention on environmental issues, especially those relating to environmental degradation and transboundary pollution (UN, 2002).

The term 'sustainable development' first came to prominence in the World Conservation Strategy (WCS) published by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in 1980 (Reid, 1995).

Ten years after United Nations Conference on the Human Environment of Stockholm, the measures taken to implement the Declaration and Action Plan adopted at that conference were reviewed in the Nairobi Declaration (1982).

In Resolution A/38/161 – "Process of preparation of the Environmental Perspective to the year 2000 and beyond" of the United Nations General Assembly the need for the establishment of a special commission focusing on environmental strategies was expressed (United Nations General Assembly, 1983).

The special commission mentioned in Resolution A/38/161 is the UN World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). This commission would become a milestone for the concept 'sustainable development'. Thanks to their report, "Our Common Future", the concept 'sustainable development' achieved a new status and got known on global scale. The more popular name for "Our Common Future" is the Brundtland Report in recognition of Gro Harlem Brundtland's role as chair of the World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission).

The Brundtland Report and the work of the Brundtland Commission laid the groundwork for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), often wrongfully named the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in 1992. The Earth Summit resulted in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Agenda 21, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Forest Principles and the Framework Convention on Climate Change. A half-year after the UNCED, the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was established to ensure effective follow-up of United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

A Special Session of the General Assembly to Review and Appraise the Implementation of Agenda 21 was held in 1997 in New York. Earth Summit+5, as the special General Assembly session

is called, reviewed and appraised implementation of Agenda 21 and other commitments adopted by the Earth Summit.

In September 2000, the United Nations General Assembly agreed on the Millennium Development Goals. These are eight goals which the UN member states have agreed to try to achieve by the year 2015.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), informally known as Earth Summit 2002, took place in Johannesburg (South Africa) in 2002. It builds on the early declarations made in Stockholm in 1972 and Rio in 1992. The result of this summit was the Johannesburg Declaration. Apart from the attention given to sustainable development, special notice was given to multilateralism as the path forward.

Nowadays, 'sustainable development' has become a common used catchphrase in everyday language. Sustainable development is part of the mission of countless international organisations, national institutes, cities, companies, NGO's and others (Parris and Kates, 2003). In a search engine, such as Google, 'sustainable development' results in more than 62 million hits. However, this has led to the fact that the term 'sustainable (development)' is often used in a context that is unrelated to the original definition as stated in the Brundtland Report.

## 2 Methodology

The research is primarily based on the analysis of the official documents and charters, including the UN Millennium Development Goals, Nairobi Declaration, the United Nations Environmental Program. To achieve this aim efficiently, different methods of research were applied. To discover similarities and dissimilarities in various approaches to define the concept 'sustainable development', a comparative study was used. Structural analysis was a method for considering various principles of sustainability.

## 3 Results

The Stockholm Conference was the first conference to have laid the foundations of environmental action at an international level. Following this conference, the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) was launched in order to encourage United Nations agencies to integrate environmental measures into their programs (UNESCO, 2005).

The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was held in Stockholm (Sweden) from June 5th till June 16th 1972. It was the first in a series of world environmental conferences.

In the Declaration of this United Nations Conference the need for a common outlook and for common principles to inspire and guide the countries of the world in the preservation and enhancement of the human environment, was considered (UNEP, 1972). According to this declaration, the solution for environmental problems could be found in scientific-technological solutions.

In the Action Plan that was the result of this conference, lists 109 recommendations were subdivided into three categories:

- Framework for environmental action;
- Recommendations for action at the international level (Pollution Generally & Marine Pollution);
- Educational, informational, social and cultural aspects of environmental issues.

In the sections 'Recommendations for action at the international level', the first 69 recommendations are dealing about the planning and management of human settlements for environmental quality. The next 16 recommendations have as common theme the pollution in general, while the last 24 recommendations deal with marine pollution. (UNEP, 1972). The Stockholm conference was characterised by too much optimism on the capacity of science and technology to solve environmental problems. However it set the scene for at least 40 years of discussion on worldwide environmental quality.

The World Conservation Strategy (WCS) was commissioned by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which together with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) provided the financial support for its preparation and contributed to the evolution of its basic themes and structure. The document presents the aims of the WCS. It explains the contribution of living resource conservation to human survival and to sustainable development, identifies the priority conservation issues and the main requirements for dealing with them and proposes ways for effectively achieving the Strategy's aim (NSSD, 2003). The strategy recognized that addressing environmental problems calls for long-term effort and the integration of environmental and development objectives. The WCS foresaw governments in different parts of the world undertaking their own national conservation strategies, meeting one of the objectives of Stockholm to incorporate environment in development planning (GEO-3, 2002).

The United Nations, assembled in Nairobi from May 10th to May 18th 1982 to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm. The starting point in Nairobi was the review of the

measures recommended by the Declaration and Action Plan adopted at the Stockholm Conference.

In this Nairobi Declaration it's admitted that the Action Plan of the Stockholm Conference has only been partially implemented, and the results cannot be considered as satisfactory. The Action Plan has not had sufficient impact on the international community as a whole (UNEP, 1982).

In the Nairobi declaration, environmental problems are regarded in their social-economical perspective:

- “Threats to the environment are aggravated by poverty as well as by wasteful consumption patterns: both can lead people to over-exploit their environment” (UNEP, 1982);

- “The human environment would greatly benefit from an international atmosphere of peace and security, free from the threats of any war, especially nuclear war, and the waste of intellectual and natural resources on armaments, as well as from apartheid, racial segregation and all forms of discrimination, colonial and other forms of oppression and foreign domination” (UNEP, 1982).

The Nairobi conference meant an important conceptual shift: the international community admitted that the causes of environmental problems root in the socio-environmental organization of societies.

On December 19<sup>th</sup> 1983, the United Nations General Assembly agreed on Resolution A/38/161. The United Nations General Assembly is one of the five core organs of the organization. It's made up of all United Nations member states and meets in regular yearly sessions.

The General Assembly suggests in Resolution A/38/161 that the special commission, when established, should focus mainly on the following:

- to propose long-term environmental strategies for achieving sustainable development to the year 2000 and beyond;

- to recommend ways in which concern for the environment may be translated into greater co-operation among developing countries and between countries at different stages of economic and social development and lead to the achievement of common and mutually supportive objectives which 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 environmental concerns, in the light of the other recommendations in its report;

- to help to define shared perceptions of long-term environmental issues and of 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, taking into account the relevant resolutions of the session of a special character of the Governing Council in 1982 (United Nations General Assembly, 1983).

As the result of Resolution A/38/161, the United Nations' World Commission on Environment and Development was established in 1987. The more popular name of this commission is the Brundtland Commission, named after the commission's chair Gro Harlem Brundtland. At that time, she was Norway's Prime Minister.

The Brundtland Commission's report, “Our Common Future”, was published after three years of public hearings and over five hundred written submissions. Commissioners from twenty-one countries analysed this material, with the final report being submitted to the United Nations General Assembly in 1987 (WCED, 1987; UNESCO, 2002). The report popularised the notion of sustainable development and is still one of the most important documents concerning sustainable development.

Although many definitions for ‘sustainability’ and ‘sustainable development’ have been published, the ones described in the Brundtland Report are still the most accepted:

- “Sustainability is the rearrangement of technological, scientific, environmental, economic and social resources in such a way that the resulting heterogeneous system can be maintained in a state of temporal and spatial equilibrium” (WCED, 1987).

- “Sustainable Development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987).

The aim of the World Commission was to find practical ways of addressing the environmental and developmental problems of the world. In particular, it had three general objectives:

- To re-examine the critical environmental and development issues and to formulate realistic proposals for dealing with them.

- To propose new forms of international co-operation on these issues that will influence policies and events in the direction of needed changes.

- To raise the levels of understanding and commitment to action of individuals, voluntary organizations, businesses, institutes, and governments (UNESCO, 2002).

Our Common Future reported on global realities and recommended urgent action on eight key issues

to ensure that development was sustainable. These eight issues were:

- Population and human resources.
- Industry.
- Food security.
- Species and ecosystems.
- The urban challenge.
- Managing the commons.
- Energy (UNESCO, 2002).

“Our Common Future” not only popularised the ideas of sustainability and sustainable development, it also extended the sustainable development discussion for at least the following 25 years.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) was held in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) from June 3rd to 14th 1992. During this conference, 172 of the 178 members of the United Nations did send an official delegation, 7000 diplomats were present and 7000 journalists were covering the events. More than 1000 non-governmental organisations (NGO’s), of whom 200 actively participated, sent a delegation to the UNCED. The last two days of the conference, the UNCED concluded with the ‘real’ Earth Summit (often the “Earth Summit” is erroneously used as the popular name for the UNCED). Ministers and heads of state from 108 countries attended the Earth Summit. During these meetings, consensus was reached on conference documents (Parson et al., 1992; Hens 1996).

The formal intergovernmental UNCED process yielded five documents signed by heads of state:

- The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development: a statement of broad principles to guide national conduct on environmental protection and development.
- Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- Convention on Biodiversity.
- A Statement of Forest Principles (official name: Non-Legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests).
- Agenda 21: a massive document presenting detailed work plans for sustainable development, including goals, responsibilities, and estimates for funding (Parson et al., 1992).

Simultaneous to UNCED, a large gathering of NGO’s was held in one of Rio’s parks, 40 kilometers from the conference site, under the umbrella title of the “Global Forum”. The Global Forum was a mixture of extensive NGO networking, street fair, trade show, political demonstration, and general events. It involved about 18 000 participants and more than 200 000 local residents who visited the

site during the conference (Parson et al., 1992; Johnson, 1998).

The “Rio Declaration on Environment and Development”, often shortened to “Rio Declaration”, is a short document produced at the UNCED. It consists of 27 principles that intend to guide future sustainable development policies around the world.

Principles in the document include human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development (principle 1) a state’s sovereign right to exploit its own resources in accordance with its own policies, without harming the environment elsewhere (principle 2), the right to development (principle 3), environmental protection as an integral part of development (principle 4), all states and all people shall cooperate in the essential task of eradicating poverty as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development (principle 5), the special situation and needs of developing countries, particularly the least developed and those most environmentally vulnerable, shall be given special priority (principle 6), states shall cooperate in a spirit of global partnership to conserve, protect and restore the health and integrity of the Earth’s ecosystem (principle 7), states should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and promote appropriate demographic policies (principle 8), sustainable development should be strengthened by improving scientific understanding through exchanges of scientific and technological knowledge, and by enhancing the development, adaptation, diffusion and transfer of technologies (principle 9), access to information and citizen participation (principle 10), the need for an effective environmental legislation (principle 11), the cooperation between states to promote a supportive and open international economic system (principle 12), the development of a national law regarding liability and compensation for the victims of pollution and other environmental damage (principle 13), states should discourage or prevent the relocation and transfer of any activities and substances that cause severe environmental degradation or are found to be harmful to human health (principle 14), the precautionary principle (principle 15), the polluter pays principle, including the internalization of costs and the use of economic instruments (principle 16), environmental impact assessment as a national instrument (principle 17), states shall immediately notify other states of any natural disasters or other emergencies that are likely to produce sudden harmful effects on the environment of those states (principle 18), the prior informed consent principle (principle 19),



the vital role of women in environmental management and development (principle 20), the importance of the creativity, ideals and courage of the youth of the world to achieve sustainable development (principle 21), the vital role in environmental management and development of indigenous people and their communities and other local communities (principle 22), the protection of the environment and natural resources of people under oppression, domination and occupation (principle 23), states shall respect international law providing protection for the environment in times of armed conflict and cooperate in its further development (principle 24), the independence and indivisibility of peace, development and environmental protection (principle 25), environmental disputes shall be resolved peacefully and by appropriate means in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations (principle 26) and the cooperation between states and people will be in good faith and in a spirit of partnership (principle 27) (UN, 1992a).

The Rio Declaration is to a large extent a collection of environmental policy principles as they were handled by the member states in the early 1990's. Philosophically, it is a most heterogeneous set of guidelines. However until now, it is the most authoritative and influential group of policy directives, although states still use many of them in a most reluctant way.

This framework convention aims at limiting the worldwide emissions of greenhouse gasses. Such as every framework convention, it includes provisions for updates, called protocols. For example, mandatory emission limits weren't set in the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). These limits were later agreed in the Kyoto Protocol, which has become much better known than the UNFCCC itself. The 1997 Kyoto Protocol shares the Convention's objective, principles and institutions, but significantly strengthens the Convention by committing legally-binding targets to limit or reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. The global goal is a total cut in greenhouse-gas emissions of at least 5% from 1990 levels in the commitment period 2008–2012 (UNFCCC, 1997).

The UNFCCC is an international treaty that was open for signature by the countries at the UNCED. The convention sets an overall framework for intergovernmental efforts to tackle the challenge posed by climate change. It recognizes that the climate system is a shared resource whose stability can be affected by industrial and other emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. The convention enjoys near universal

membership, with 189 countries having ratified it (UNFCCC, 1992).

Under the Convention, governments:

- Gather and share information on greenhouse gas emissions, national policies and best practices.
- Launch national strategies for addressing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to expected impacts, including the provision of financial and technological support to developing countries.
- Cooperate in preparing for adaptation to the impacts of climate change.

The Convention entered into force on 21 March 1994 (UNFCCC, 1992).

The convention is characterized by a reluctant implementation. The parties took five years to agree on quantitative targets for emission reductions and another five years to put the Kyoto agreements into action. This has seriously limited the effectivity of the convention until today.

The Convention on Biodiversity is an international treaty that was also open for signature at the UNCED. Thus far, 188 parties have ratified the Convention on Biodiversity. The United States of America have signed the convention text at the Rio Conference, but have not yet ratified it (Convention on Biological Diversity, 2001a).

The objectives of this Convention, to be pursued in accordance with its relevant provisions, are the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources, including by appropriate access to genetic resources and by appropriate transfer of relevant technologies, taking into account all rights over those resources and to technologies, and by appropriate funding (Convention on Biological Diversity, 2001b).

Although its implementation attracted much less media attention than the climate change convention, it was much more effective. In spite of numerous interesting and essential initiatives, after fifteen years, the convention wasn't able to halt or to reverse the trends of biodiversity loss.

A Statement of Forest Principles is the informal name for the "Non-Legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests". It's a non-legally binding document that makes several recommendations for forestry management (UN, 1992b).

An authoritative statement has less authority than a convention. Because of this lack of a legally binding aspect, the Statement of Forest Principles has only moral value. Ten years after the UNCED, the forest principles almost disappeared from the

agenda of international sustainable development discussion.

Agenda 21 is a comprehensive plan of action for the 21st century to be undertaken globally, nationally and locally by organizations of the United Nations system, governments and stakeholders in every area (women, children and youth, indigenous people, NGO's, local authorities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, scientific and technological communities and farmers) in which human impacts harm the environment (UN, 1993c).

The full text of Agenda 21 was agreed upon with consensus at the 1992 UNCED, where 179 governments voted to adopt the programme. The final text was the result of drafting, consulting and negotiation, beginning in 1989 and culminating at the two-week Rio conference.

"Social and economic dimensions" provides an excellent analysis of how the United Nations perceive the root problems of sustainable development in 1992. Demographic changes, poverty, production and consumption patterns are core issues. People have the right on an environment that at least doesn't harm their health and on a decent shelter. Section II deals about "Conservation and management of resources for development". It contains an analysis of the state of the most important international problems. The chapters in this section cover among others air, water, soil, ecosystems and waste. Chapter 9 provides the background information to the climate change convention. Chapters 15 and 16 do the same for the biodiversity convention. Chapter 12 gives the background for the desertification convention that was concluded during the aftermath of Rio. Section III is on the role of the stakeholders on implementing a sustainable development policy. The basic idea behind this section is that all major societal groups should contribute and cooperate on the implementation of sustainable development. The "major groups" not only refers to the representatives of industry and business, worker unions or farmers who traditionally are consulted in any policy preparation process. It equally refers to other groups authorities speak less frequently to as woman, children and youth and environmental and developmental NGO's, to name a few ones. The last section is on "Means of implementation". It deals with people, organisations, financial and legal instruments, capacity building and education for environment and development.

Until today, Agenda 21 is a most inspiring document for all those who deal with making sustainable development work through policy.

The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was established by the United

Nations General Assembly in December 22nd 1992 (Resolution A/RES/47/191) to ensure effective follow-up of UNCED (UN, 1992e). The CSD is a functional commission of the UN Economic and Social Council, implementing a recommendation in Chapter 38 of Agenda 21.

The Commission is responsible for reviewing progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, as well as providing policy guidance to follow up the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) at the local, national, regional and international levels. The JPOI reaffirmed that the CSD is the high-level forum for sustainable development within the United Nations system (UN, 1992e).

The CSD meets annually in New York, in two-year cycles, with each cycle focusing on clusters of specific thematic and cross-sectoral issues (UN, 1992e).

The official name of Earth Summit+5 is the "Special Session of the General Assembly to Review and Appraise the Implementation of Agenda 21". The meeting took place in New York from June 23rd to June 27th 1997 (UN, 1997).

The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was set up to monitor and report on implementation of the Earth Summit agreements. It was agreed that a five-year review of Earth Summit progress would be made in 1997 by the United Nations General Assembly meeting in special session. This special session of the UN General Assembly took stock of how well countries, international organizations and sectors of civil society responded to the challenge of the Earth Summit (UN, 1997).

The Earth Summit+5 took many governments by surprise. They were insufficiently prepared for this session and the enormous work that had gone into creating the political climate for 1992 was not repeated in 1997. Most governments started preparation less than a year before the Special Session and did so with the realization that the Rio agreements had not been kept to by many countries, notably the industrialized world. In particular, funding for the implementation of Agenda 21 decreased during the period 1992 to 1997, in contrast to the commitments. The result was an event that did not provide a clear message of how to move on and how to get there. Instead, the Earth Summit+5 evaluation was characterized by disappointment and frustration (Towards Earth Summit 2002, 2000).

The eight Millennium Development Goals were established at the beginning of the new millennium. They provide an action program for the 21st century. They list the absolute policy priorities

to make this world a better place to live. They equally form a blueprint agreed to by the world's countries and all the world's leading development institutions. They have galvanized unprecedented efforts to meet the needs of the world's poorest (UN, 2005).

Box 2 lists the Millennium Goals. For this discussion, in particular goal 7 on "Ensure environmental sustainability" is important, although also the other goals are relevant for the sustainable development discussion. Although the Millennium Goals provide a general framework, they will be traced back in most international sustainable development discussion for the years to come.

In late 1999, the United Nations General Assembly called in Resolution A/Res/55/199 for a 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), where country delegations and other stakeholders would review and follow up on the initiatives, many collected in Agenda 21, that were agreed upon 10 years earlier at the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. (Gutman, 2003) The WSSD, informally known as Earth Summit 2002 or Rio+10, was held in Johannesburg from August 26th to September 4th 2002.

To set an agenda that allowed governments and other major groups to join forces effectively in Johannesburg to confront the real challenges of sustainable development, countries agreed that preparations would begin at the national, sub-regional and regional levels, moving towards the global stage. The issues considered in Johannesburg were therefore identified and agreed at each level through a participatory process involving governments and other stakeholders (EU, 2002a).

Many member states have convened their own National Preparatory Committees (known as PrepComs) to review their successes and the challenges they face in achieving sustainable development, and to contribute their views to the assessment of progress. National Preparatory Committees are expected to involve representatives of government, local authorities, professional associations, media and other partners, including local offices of relevant UN organizations. National Preparatory Committees are expected to undertake national reviews/assessments and to raise awareness and mobilize stakeholders at the national and local levels (EU, 2002b).

These PrepComs assessed the key challenges, opportunities and constraints relating to sustainable development that each region faced over the past ten years, and identified future priorities, new initiatives and the commitments needed to make progress in the coming years. The reports from

these Regional PrepComs were taken to the Global PrepCom meetings that prepared the Summit itself (EU, 2002c).

The tenth session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (known as CSD10) acted as the global PrepCom for the Johannesburg Summit. Four inter-governmental PrepCom meetings were held during 2001–2002 to agree on the agenda and the documents for the Summit. The first three took place in New York, the fourth was held in Bali in early June 2002 (EU, 2002d).

Two types of outcome were expected from the summit: a political declaration or action plan agreed by all governments for the further implementation of Agenda 21 over the next decade and a series of specific commitments or voluntary partnership initiatives by and between governments, citizen groups, and the private sector that would actually translate the political commitments into action (EU, 2002e).

What is being referred to as the WSSD was actually a huge happening of events, pre-conferences and workshops in and around Johannesburg. The three main hubs of activity were:

1. The official UN summit, where delegations and governments met to deliberate. The three that resulted from the summit were the Political Declaration, the Plan of Implementation and the Partnership Agreements.

2. The Global Peoples Forum and other events such as the Peoples Earth Summit, where Civil Society gathered to exchange ideas, develop common perspectives and positions and make their concerns heard all over the world.

3. The Ubuntu Village, where governments and businesses exposed best practice examples in a colourful exhibition on sustainable development and held workshops and conferences (Heinrich Böll Foundation, 2002).

The low profile support by the United States weakened the summit. President George W. Bush did not attend and Secretary of State, Colin Powell, was repeatedly interrupted during his main address at the conference.

#### 4 Conclusion

Over a period of twenty years, policy makers contributed to specify the policy dimensions of sustainable development. In the research the UN Millennium Development Goals, Nairobi Declaration, the United Nations Environmental Program and other documents were analyzed. Therefore, from a vague idea in the Brundtland report, sustainable development was specified as policy guidelines (Rio Declaration) and

programmes. The ‘Rio Declaration on Environment and Development’, often shortened to ‘Rio Declaration’, is a short document produced at the UNCED. It consists of 27 principles that intend to guide future sustainable development policies around the world. The Rio Declaration is to a large extent a collection of environmental policy principles as they were handled by the member states in the early 1990’s. The 1997 Kyoto Protocol

shares the Convention’s objective, principles and institutions, but significantly strengthens the Convention by committing legally-binding targets to limit or reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. The global goal is a total cut in greenhouse-gas emissions of at least 5% from 1990 levels in the commitment period 2008–2012. Nowadays ‘sustainable development’ has become a common used catchphrase in everyday language.

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