

SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

A priority of sustainable development is to solve the economic and social problems.

The major cause of the continued deterioration of the environment on the global level is the deficit model of consumption and production, especially in industrialized countries.

Poverty eradication is a challenge which is faced the mankind for a long time and further expansion will lead to major crisis of humanity.

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Reorientation of Consumption and Production in Line with Current Needs

Agenda 21 is the plan of actions on key policies to achieve sustainable development and approach to environmental issues [C. Ciupagea (coord.), *Direcții strategice ale dezvoltării durabile în România*, European Institute for Romania Publishing House, Bucharest, 2007, p. 19].

According to Agenda 21, the action plan for sustainable development adopted at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio [*Rio de Janeiro Conference, 1992*], “the major cause of the continued deterioration of the environment on the global level is the deficit model of consumption and production, especially in industrialized countries”. 15% of the world population which is living in developing countries account for 56% of global consumption while the percentage of 40% - representing the poorest people in developing countries - account for only 11% of consumption. Although most people consume more today - given the world economic development and higher standards of living in many countries - consumption in a typical African household is 20% lower than it was 25 years ago.

Consumption is not, however, only a matter of rational use of resources. If everyone in the world would live in the average income of a person in a high income country, we still need 2.6 planets to reach for all according to the

“Ecological Footprint Measure Sustainability” - an independent assessment based the UN statistics. Even current levels of consumption and production, environmental measurement based on global average, are 25% higher than the ecological capacity of the planet. This means that at current levels, humanity eroding the natural capital of the planet at a rate significantly.

Production and consumption in industrialized countries have moved from material and energy intensive sectors towards services. Correlated with improved energy efficiency, this resulted in lower consumption of raw materials per unit of output. European Union, for example, has managed to achieve significant economic growth in the 90s, without increasing importance of fossil fuel consumption. However, these increases in efficiency were offset by the increase in consumption of goods and services. It consumes increasingly more natural resources and it generates increasingly more pollution.

Since *Earth Summit* were used new methods for efficient consumption and production:

Many governments have used economic incentives and legislation, such as environmental taxes, pollution taxes, operating licenses pollutant emissions and water use; guarantees repayment plans for waste management, tax compliance and performance bonds and codes environmental conduct.

Many companies have introduced production processes safer and more effective environmental pollution and other factors have reduced environmental impact through models, packaging and organic labels.

The population became increasingly aware of its responsibilities and consumer choices. In addition to the three R dissemination practices - reduce, reuse and recycle - is a willingness to pay more for green products.

Annual output of the world economy has increased from 31 trillion USD in 1990 to 42 trillion in 2000, up from 6.2 trillion in 1950. This increase in economic activity has created millions of new jobs and allowed people to consume more. For example, the number of telephone connections increased globally by 62 % - from 520 million in 1990 to 844 million in 1998.

Although per capita income grew by 3% annually in 40 countries since 1990, over 80 countries have per capita incomes lower than that recorded a decade ago. One fifth of the world population lives on less than a dollar a day, without having the means to buy basic goods and services.

World energy consumption increased significantly in 1992 and it is projected to continue to grow at a rate of 2% per year until 2020. Global consumption of fossil fuels has increased by 10% in 1992-1999. The highest per capita use remains in developed countries, which consume up to 6.4 tons of oil equivalent per year, ten times more than the consumption in developing countries.

Consumers pay often 50 to 100% more for products without chemicals and pesticides. As a result, the organic food industry grew by over 20% annually in 90 years in the United States, with similar rates of growth in other industrialized countries.

Continued existence as possibilities planet is not a viable long-term option. The problem is changing patterns of consumption and production fast enough to keep pace with growth. This can be achieved by technological change. It is

unlikely that businesses take green initiatives voluntarily if they are expensive. Increasingly more people need to change their mindset that increasing material consumption is progress or success. A more efficient use of resources will reduce social conflicts.

According to the UN Secretary General on the implementation of Agenda 21, it takes significant resource efficiency both in developed countries and the developing ones. The proposals include:

- Achieving efficiencies four times higher in terms of energy and resources in the next two or three decades, and a possible tenfold increase resource efficiency in developed countries in the long term;
- Increase the accountability of corporations through measures such as the global agreement and the Global Reporting Initiative and environmental management and reporting tools such as environmental;
- Provide incentives to industry and public institutions to accelerate research and development of safer production technologies;
- Promoting the use by government actions including environmental reports national tax reforms and measures for environmental conservation purchases.

Poverty and its Eradication

Poverty is the lack of time to satisfy basic needs, lack of financial resources necessary for normal life to the standards prevailing in that community [Gh. Raboacă, *Piata muncii si dezvoltarea durabila*, Tribuna Economica Publishing House, Bucharest, 2003, p. 59].

To emphasize once again the seriousness of problems posed by global poverty and the European Community, will present some of the definitions and types of poverty, as formulated in *National Action Plan on Anti-Poverty and Promotion Social Inclusion (Planul National de Actiune Anti-Saracie si Promovare a Incluziunii Sociale)* [CASPIIS, *Planul National Anti-Saracie si Promovare a Incluziunii Sociale*, 2003]:

1. *Extreme poverty*: a lack of financial resources so severe that the person living conditions are absolutely unacceptable for a civilized society, human dignity seriously impaired, causing rapid deterioration and hard reversible capacity of normal social functioning, in children blocks the normal development of personality, reducing to zero the chances of normal adult developments. Extreme poverty tends to fix the chronic marginalization and social exclusion, chances out of poverty becomes insignificant.

2. *Severe poverty*: a level of resources that provides modest stressed life, full of gaps and limitations that prevent normal social functioning, but not blocking any effort to escape poverty, and no recovery, where resources back normal.

3. *Relative poverty*: a standard of living within the parameters of decency, but in relation to the collective aspirations of life, creates discomfort, frustration.

4. *Relatively low income*: those with incomes significantly lower than standard income community.

European Union uses to identify poverty “incomes below 60% of median income in the country”. Relatively low income is therefore a relative threshold, designating not necessarily absolute poverty, but one relative to the prosperity of others. Relatively low income produce not necessarily, poverty itself, but rather a state of relative frustration, leading to feelings of inequity, inequality excessive. The term is often used to refer to multiple deprivations of economic polarization effect.

Social exclusion refers to the placement of a person outside the normal forms of social life, as a result of multiple deprivations, with little chance of reintegration into a normal social life. Result of discrimination, lack of opportunities and aggregation of deprivation, degradation/undeveloped capacity for normal social functioning or a lifestyle that marginalizes individually or collectively.

Social marginalization, term used generally the same content as social exclusion refers to the position of individuals/groups outside the normal social life of the community. In recent years it tends to be even replaced by the latter, which emphasizes more collective responsibility for the state of marginalization/exclusion.

Social inclusion is the process of reintegration into normal life forms in a normal social functioning of persons in situation of exclusion/marginalization or high risk of marginalization, capacity-building and construction opportunities.

Virtually all measures, delayed development efforts in Africa to take effect more than in any other region, and at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations, governments agreed on imposing special efforts to eradicate poverty and sustainable development in Africa. While in South Asia are more poor population, the proportion of people living in poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa is the largest in the world - nearly half of Africans survive on less than 1 USD/day. African issues have not been addressed properly and continued to increase during the last two decades. In the 90s, when most countries of the world record economic growth in African countries, with few exceptions, this has not happened. An overlooked globalization plan, the African participation on international trade is minuscule and shrinking. Conflicts are rampant in many countries, HIV/AIDS has a devastating impact, the desert stretches and deforestation continues. Meanwhile, international aid given to this area decreased.

In Africa there are recent initiatives to change this situation and establishing a new course of development. But the international community must provide assistance. The principles of sustainable development recognize that poverty and environmental degradation will affect an area recently and the world. During the negotiations before the summit in Johannesburg, African governments have stressed that Africa Summit must address directly.

While developing countries' exports have grown at a rate of 9.6%/year in the 90s, African exports have grown at a much slower pace, and the participation of the region in world trade declined from 2% in 1990 to 2.1% in 2000. Almost half the population of Sub-Saharan Africa living in poverty and the number of people living in poverty has increased substantially. Almost a third of Sub-Saharan Africa is undernourished and the percentage increasing.

While most nations increased consumption in recent years, the average African household consumption expenditure is 20 % lower than it was 25 years ago.

Deforestation rate in Africa is among the highest in the world, '90s recorded a loss of 5.3 million hectares of forest every year.

Over 40% of urban African households live in poverty, on less than a dollar a day. Official development aid granted most African nations had fallen by nearly 25% in the last decade and for seven countries, official development aid declined by over 50%.

In Sub-Saharan Africa there are 25 million people with AIDS and over 12 million have died of AIDS in Africa - more than two million in a single year. Around 13.2 million African children have been orphaned by the epidemic. Over 500 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa depend on firewood. Burning wood and other biomass components, account for 90 to 98% of the energy needed in households in most African countries. In Sub-Saharan Africa, about 30% of children die or become disabled due to acute respiratory infections in 60% of cases are caused by pollution.

If soil degradation continues at the current rate, African crops could fall by 50%. Almost 65% of the lands for agriculture have been affected already.

A new initiative has made its presence felt in Africa in the past three years, driven by the presidents of South Africa, Nigeria, Algeria, Senegal and Egypt.

Known as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) initiative aims to eradicate poverty and place their countries, individually and collectively, on the path of growth and sustainable development. It should also targets to stop of the marginalization of Africa in the globalization process, to restore peace, security and stability and to promote the role of women in all areas of activity. African governments have expressed hope that the Johannesburg Summit, especially because it takes place in Africa, will be a major catalyst in getting support for NEPAD by attracting resources, funds and technology partnerships that and fostering institutional and human capacity development.

Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, in his report for the implementation of Agenda 21, along with Dr. Emil Salim, Chairman of the Training Summit have identified several major areas on which Summit decisions on sustainable development Africa needs to focus:

- Support for regional, sub-regional and national development, peace, security and stability.
- Provide increased financial support in the fight against HIV/AIDS.
- Restructuring of international aid and the establishment of appropriate and effective levels of support.
- Support key social development goals, such as drinking water, literacy and healthcare.
- Promoting initiatives providing access to diversified sources of energy, especially in rural areas.
- Promoting access to technology for African companies.
- Removing the digital divide and marginalization of Africa.

- Supporting small and medium enterprises in Africa, focusing on the industries of agriculture.

African ministers at a preparatory meeting for the Johannesburg in October 2001 agreed on the objectives of development and poverty eradication, this depends on good governance in each country and at the international level and on transparency in the financial, monetary and trade. Also African ministers have stressed that multilateral trade and financial system fair, rules-based, predictable and non-discriminatory is essential [D. Caracota, C.R. Caracota, *Dimensiuni contemporane ale dezvoltării durabile și competitive*, 2004].

Poverty eradication is a challenge which is faced the mankind for a long time and further expansion will lead to major crisis of humanity [C. Zamfir, *Dezvoltarea socială – câteva elemente teoretice*, in Zamfir, C., Stoica, L. (coord.), *O nouă provocare: Dezvoltarea socială*, 2006].

A priority of sustainable development is to solve the economic and social problems.

Sustainable Development - a Primary Requirement Romanian Society Development in the Current Decade

Romania has since the end of 2008 the second National Sustainable Development Strategy, undertaken by the Government. However, the strategy is ineffective because there is not a National Implementation Plan and approved budget. It is also difficult to define what would be the program to stimulate the implementation of this strategy or responsible institutions, departments.

Although considered a horizontal policy, which means that its application should be made in each sector, it is not visible or is poorly understood, both in the government program and the initial investment in recent years. Moreover, if in 2006-2008 steps have been taken to develop the institutional capacity of central government through the establishment of specialized departments within each ministry, as of 2008, most of them were closed.

Of major importance is how the funds are used structural and cohesion so that project results will lead to real and sustainable development objectives assumed by Romania in Europe 2020. Although according to European Community regulations, sustainable development is considered horizontal objective and all programs should provide indicators of sustainable development, both in the evaluation and monitoring of projects, this indicator is treated superficially [*Research Report „Dezvoltarea Durabilă a Resurselor Umane”* realized by „Salvati Dunarea și Delta” Association]. The study reveals valences necessary and useful for all actors in the system (beneficiaries, potential beneficiaries and managing authorities). Such evaluation projects to achieve sustainable development indicators should be carried out within axes technical assistance for all operational programs.

Regarding sustainable development programs at the national level, the only dedicated programs that could contribute to the implementation of sustainable development are managed by the Environment Fund Administration. While the time was made a number of changes, program guides are suffering from incomplete or unclear. Another major problem is the lack of predictability of these

programs because there is a schedule of opening periods of funding and no estimate of the period of evaluation of proposals submitted.

Often the opening lines of funding was delayed or canceled without specifying an exact term. An example in this regard was Casa Verde program, announced in late 2008, shortly postponed and later canceled in summer 2010. Even with the start of the program, there is no assessment of the benefits that it brings to the environment.

The same uncertainty was highlighted programs for NGOs that are very restrictive (for information, awareness, management of natural areas and biodiversity conservation), although environmental organizations often demonstrated in other externally funded programs that are capable of both the proper management and to address other issues. Also, programs for NGOs suffer due to inadequate provisions on staff remuneration, administrative, implementation and can co-partnership projects from other sources.

Regarding the education of sustainable development as the emergence and development of environmental Brundtland Report [The Report was developed by the World Commission on Environment and Development established by United Nations in 1987] and especially after the Rio Conference (1992), the need to introduce education for sustainable development has become increasingly clear. In addition to caring for the global ecosystem, the concept includes the fight for social justice, democracy, respect for minorities, multiculturalism etc.

It is widely recognized that education is the most effective means available to society to meet the challenges of the future. From the perspective of sustainable development, education effectiveness is measured ultimately by changes taking place in the attitude and behavior of people individually and socially. Education for sustainable development requires the involvement of many people. It is necessary to extend this education sector by involving not only teachers, but also representatives of civil society, professional associations, business community representatives etc.

Proposals

Recognition of sustainable development as a horizontal policy and implementation tools that lead to this:

- Adoption of a National Action Plan for the National Strategy for Sustainable Development and creating the necessary infrastructure for its implementation;
- Development of specific budget allocations to programs leading to sustainable development;
- Waiver of investment projects affecting the environment irreparably (for example: Roşia Montană Project);
- Behavior changes of public administration so that it represents a model for the implementation of criteria and indicators of sustainable development;
- Consultation with all stakeholders and in particular non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the development of public policies related to sustainable development;
- Promoting best practices and demonstration projects;

- The introduction of sustainability criteria and monitoring their compliance in all publicly funded projects.

Using structural and cohesion funds so that project results lead to real sustainable development:

- Evaluating and monitoring more seriously sustainable development indicators in the operational programs;

- Encouraging educational projects on sustainable development for project managers, and staff management of operational programs;

- Evaluating the achievement of sustainable development indicators in projects under implementation or completed;

- Promoting best practice in sustainable development;

- For the next financial allocation to provide for the priority axis to consider projects aimed at environmental protection and other areas, such as improving and adapting to climate change, desertification and other issues when they are not covered by any program.

Operation of national sustainable development programs, clear and predictable, to help the transition to a green economy:

- Review guidelines for NGOs implementing the Environmental Fund, so that the funding may not be as restrictive as subjects, and reconsidering the type and composition of the budget for the project;

- The establishment of an annual calendar with specific dates for implementation and evaluation;

- Acceptance of projects in partnership with other institutions and co-financing from other sources.

Improving the formal and non-formal education and increasing public awareness regarding sustainable development [These requests were made by „Climate Action Network - Romania” through an open letter addressed to the mentioned ministries and Romanian Government since 2008.]:

- Further promote education for sustainable development initiatives, as well as curricular and extra-curricular activities by Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports;

- Support collaboration with Ministry of Environment and Forests for the development of joint programs to promote environmental education and sustainable development;

- Promoting a structured initial training, continuing professional education and in the wider framework of the adults involved in education for environment and sustainable development;

- Support awareness campaigns on issues that affect the acute socio-human (for example: climate change, biodiversity loss, desertification etc.);

- Supporting investments to ensure mitigate the impact of school infrastructure on the environment (for example: application of green public procurement procedures).

All these requirements could be solved if the government level would build a National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development through broad consultation with all stakeholders. The aim of this strategy is to recognize the central role of sustainable development in the context of current educational and

ensure effective implementation at all levels of its principles and measures in the Romanian society.

Conclusions

The priority of sustainable development consists in the solution of economic, but also the social problems.

Poverty eradication is the challenge that humankind is facing for a long time and its extension leads to the major crisis of humanity.

Continuing the existence under the opportunities of the planet is not a long term option. The problem is given by the changing of patterns of consumption and production fast enough in order to keep up with the economic growth. But this can not be achieved only through technological changes. On a voluntary basis, it is unlikely that the enterprises take environmental initiatives if these are expensive. People must change their mentality according to which the increasing of consumption represents progress or success. Through more efficient use of resources will be reduced also the social conflicts.

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