

WORLD ENVIRONMENT ORGANIZATION: A DESPERATE NEED FOR GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

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Abstract: *Environmental calamities and destruction do not recognize national borders. Furthermore, environmental “crimes” are being committed everyday throughout the whole planet. Rare species of flora and fauna of the Globe are insistently in the process of extinction. Deforestation and desertification are going on with full speed. Not only the rain forests of South America, but also the forests of Africa and ex-Soviet bloc countries are being completely cleared. The impacts of global warming and acid rain are becoming more visible thus threatening the fate of the global civilization. GMOs are being explored and put into the service of mass consumers day by day without any adequate control over it. Toxic and hazardous wastes are still being exported illegally to especially developing countries. Hundreds of international documents have been put into effect for several years. However, since there is no global monitoring organization, the implementation status of these treaties is not clearly known.*

All these indicate that global environmental planning and management needs require institutional remedies to be set by the international community. However, on the other hand, the available international organizations such as the United Nations, The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and Global Environmental Facility (GEF) do not have such a global organizational setup, global power and global financial resources. Therefore, these organizations cannot provide any light of hope for the global future.

The subsequent transformation of the GATT, into the World Trade Organization (WTO) has created a new example and genre of international institutions. Member countries have transferred some of their rights to this Organization in order to accelerate the pace of global trade.

The world’s environmental problems desperately need a unique and comprehensive body to run the planning, organizing, execution, coordination and cooperation functions of the global environmental management. This organization should be the World Environment Organization.

Keywords: *Global environmental management, World Environment Organization, Global environmental policy.*

Introduction

The last three decades on our Globe, have witnessed two important environmental phenomena: first, the glamorous success in environmental

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diplomacy thus leading the way to ample amount of global bilateral and multilateral environmental agreements, conventions and protocols resulting in further enhancement of legal framework and enrichment of international environmental law and, second, continuing deterioration in global environmental quality despite the international and national actions and remedies already taken against this on-going process.

“The *Limits to Growth, A Global Challenge; a Report for the Club of Rome Project on the Predicament of Mankind*”¹, was the first eye opening declaration in this regard. Having its own thoughts traced back to Malthus (*An Essay on the Principle of Population*), P. and A. Ehrlich (*The Population Bomb*) and G. Hardin (*The Tragedy of Commons*), Meadow and his friends have made this astonishing statement: “*If the present trends in world population, industrialization, pollution, food production and resource depletion continue unchanged, the limits to growth on this planet will be reached within the next 100 years. The most probable result will be sudden and uncontrollable decline in population and industrial capacity... It is possible to alter these growth trends and to establish a condition of ecological and economic stability that is sustainable for the future.*”

Similarly, almost at the same period, another Report² submitted to the US President was also repeating the above mentioned statement: “*If public policies unchanged through the end of the century, a number of serious world problems will become worse...*” The Report indicated that the world population will go up to 6.35 billion in the year 2000, GNP will still be low and the food problem will be unsolved in developing countries, there will be more pollution but less stable economies, national states will be more vulnerable to social and political disruptions, regional water shortages will be observed, the year 2050 will be turning point for global climate change and the rate of extinction of plants and animals will be accelerated.

The works of Mishan (*The Costs of Economic Growth*), Odum (*The Strategy of Ecosystem Development*), White Jr. (*The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*), Stone (*Should Trees Have Standing*), Komarov (*The Destruction of Nature in the Soviet Union*), Commoner (*Closing Circle*), Boulding (*The Economics of Coming Spaceship Earth*) and Lovelock (*Gaia*) have also resulted in indicating the same problem: World’s resources are finite and under a big threat of irrational consumption thus endangering the right of living of the next generations on this Globe.

Amidst these theoretical and philosophical understandings, perceptions and conceptions, the well-known Brundtland Report³ has finally shaped the commonly shared belief of the Globe’s inescapable fate: “*there are also environmental trends that threaten to radically alter the planet, that threaten the lives of many species upon it, including the human species.*”⁴

¹ Meadows, D., Universe Books, New York, 1972.

² “The Global 2000 Report to the President of the USA”, 1980.

³ World Commission on Environment and Development, “*Our Common Future*”, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1987.

⁴ Nellisen, Nico, Jan Van Der Straaten and Leon Klinkers, “Classics in Environmental Studies: An Overview of Classical Texts in Environmental Studies”, International Books, Utrecht, 1997.

The authors of *“The Limits to Growth”* have repeated their study almost 20 years later in 1991, and showed that *“the world has already overshoot some of its limits and, if present trends continue, we face the prospect of a global collapse –perhaps within the lifetimes of children alive today”*.⁵

This statement is also confirmed by another very important, independent and dependable study carried out by the World Resources Institute⁶, under the title of *“PAGE: Pilot Analysis of Global Ecosystems”* - a study to be completed by another but more global study called *“MEA: Millennium Ecosystem Assessment”*.

PAGE has analysed five of the World’s major ecosystem types, namely, agro-ecosystems, forest ecosystems, freshwater ecosystems, grassland ecosystems and coastal and marine ecosystems. Study on agro-ecosystems revealed that environmental damage **threatens future world food production**. Forest ecosystems study showed that forest areas in **developed countries continue to increase slightly**, while **clearance for agriculture, development and logging in developing countries is reducing their forests by at least 140.000 square kilometres every year**. Likewise, freshwater systems study also revealed that the **world’s freshwater systems are so degraded that their ability to support human, plant and animal is greatly in peril**. Grassland ecosystem study warned that the **world’s grasslands have declined in their extent and condition, as well as their ability to support human, plant and animal life**. Finally, the coastal and marine ecosystems study indicated that the **Planet’s coastal zone is in danger of losing its capacity to provide fish, protect homes and businesses, reduce pollution and erosion and sustain biological diversity**.

Hilary French, from the Worldwatch Institute, has also proclaimed similar findings for the global environment in her book titled *“Vanishing Borders, Protecting the Planet in the Age of Globalisation”*. French said *“The world economy and the natural world that it relies on are both in precarious states as we enter the new millennium, provoking fears that an era of global instability looms on the horizon. Over the course of the twentieth century, the global economy stretched the planet to its limits.”*

Basing upon this belief and giving so many convincing data and evidence, French came to the conclusion that *“the time is now ripe to build international governance structures needed to ensure that the world economy of twenty-first century meets people’s aspirations for a better future without destroying the natural fabric that underpins itself.”*

However, a considerable amount of effort has been spent to change the on-going trends and the course of global environmental fate. These include both dealing with the individual cases and episodes of environmental pollution and establishing technological and institutional infrastructure for more effective environmental management. Countries mainly in the north and some in the south have taken steps to stop the environmental calamities, problems and nuisances.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ World Resources Institute, *“World Resources 2000-2001, People and Ecosystems: The Fraying Web of Life”*, Washington DC, September 2000, p. 387. This book contains huge amount of statistical data covering almost every section of the Planet.

On the other hand, more than 200 MEAs (multilateral environmental agreements) have been signed to protect and enhance the global environmental quality. Amongst these, CITES-Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, RAMSAR-Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, Especially as Waterfowl Habitat, BONN-Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, BASEL-Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, Convention to Combat Desertification, Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, UN Convention on Biological Diversity, Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer are few to name.

These international legal documents covered almost every aspect of global environment including climate change, global warming, acid rain, ozone layer depletion, extinction of rare species and deforestation in rain forests. Undoubtedly, these endeavours have played very important role in diminishing the environmental nuisances. For instance, Montreal Protocol, on ozone layer depletion succeeded in achieving the original objectives. CITES, BASEL, RAMSAR conventions can also be seen as other successful initiatives. Naturally some others were not so successful due to several reasons. Consequently, it would not be wrong to state those international agreements, conventions and protocols were the proofs of **a glamorous success** for global environmental diplomacy.

As far as the monitoring, implementation, compliance management and enforcement of these MEAs concerned, two distinctive institutional models have been materialised: first, to set-up a unique institutional framework for each individual agreement in which the original and the ratified documents are deposited, secretarial works are provided, the management functions have been performed or, secondly, to set-up a world-wide institutional entity such as UNEP and GEF to deal with the problem.

Unfortunately, either way has proved to be in great problems. These problems range from securing the adequate financial contribution, to manning and cooperation and coordination among the parties to the MEA.

Additionally, UNEP institutionally and financially was so weak to deal with the complicated global environmental problems and GEF has so far resulted in a disappointment especially for the southern countries.

The overall consequences of these global trends and actions have become the on-going global environmental and ecological deterioration and the destiny of the Globe seems to be still in same direction as forecasted by the above mentioned studies.

Institutional Reasons of the Failure: Inadequacies in Organisation, Management and Finance.

The present **global institutional set-up** for managing the global environment is rather **weak and ineffective**. United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), United Nations Sustainable Development Commission (CSD) and the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) mainly constitute the present system. As all we know, UNEP with its financial and personnel availabilities cannot cope with the global environmental problems. Additionally, the legal status in which UNEP is trying fulfil its mission cannot provide a base for an

effective and efficient handling of global matters. As far as GEF is concerned, it is totally unrealistic to expect that GEF would even minimally be successful in re-coursing the global environmental problems such as climate change, bio-diversity, deforestation, and desertification. CSD of ECOSOC does not have its own financial resources.

In addition to above-mentioned directly related global organisation, there are several **indirectly related** global organisations. These, among several others, include the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the OECD and the World Trade Organisation. Some of these organisations **have not yet incorporated** the environmental concerns with their own mandates and some of them have attached **secondary importance** to the global environmental concerns.

The third group of global environmental organisations is the “**secretariats**” established by the MEAs. Some of these secretariats **have been successful** in fulfilling the missions such as ozone layer depletion and whale protection but the majority of them **have failed**.

Furthermore, there is **no institutional relation** whatsoever **among these secretariats** and **between the secretariats and other international organisations**.

These secretariats are dispersed all over the world thus experiencing huge amount of **communication, cooperation and coordination problems**. Even, most of them are **not aware** of the priorities of others and **political differentiation and contradiction** are highly likely among them.

And, again, it is almost impossible to expect that these secretariats **will come together** and **form a kind of global collaboration** platform to fight in harmony and close contact with the global environmental problems.

Naturally and expectably, **the NGOs** -either national or international- such as the Greenpeace, the Friends of Earth and the Audubon Society, despite their intense work **cannot be a leverage to modify and reshape** the global organisational misgivings described above.

Under these circumstances, **planning the global environmental problems** is almost impossible whereas the planning of global environmental problems bears an utmost necessity.

Scientists due to the **lack of data and information** on the nature and characteristics of the issues concerned have not adequately defined most of the global environmental problems. GMOs, chemicals and ozone layer depletion are the examples in this regard. The **boundaries of science have been reached** in most cases and further knowledge is an absolute necessity to make accurate predictions and develop secure solutions. Scientific research needs have not yet been adequately met for global ecological and environmental problems.

Similarly, **directing and/or managing the Globe’s ecosystem is not possible** under the given conditions. There is **no global management of world’s ecosystems and there will not be in the future**.

The management function requires development of management procedures. These include **technological, financial, administrative, legal, institutional and managerial ones**. Global **rules** have to be formulated. These rules are to be **legislated** and **put into effect** all over the world. Certain

organisations should be set-up to **monitor** the developments and **implement the sanctions** agreed upon internationally. **Technical and administrative infrastructures** should be established. **Finance** should be secured to run all these procedures. **International courts** should be able to issue binding resolutions on the offenders. **Funds** should be available to help the countries in need of assistance. However, none of these crucial systemic inputs is available at the moment. **Therefore, global management of ecosystems is not possible.**

Consequently, the global ecosystems will continue **to deteriorate, the global environmental quality will be jeopardised and extinction processes** of some certain living creatures -including human species- will continue.

This process will not only damage the global eco-systems but will also threaten and endanger the future political stability of the nations as well as the life conditions of all human kind living on the this planet.

WEO: A Desperate Global Need

This alarming phenomenon necessitates the establishment of a global institution to deal with the problem, to forecast the future, to identify the required counter measures, to develop rules, norms and sanctions to be applied to all related parties, to generate funds, to finance the expenditures, to establish the global monitoring systems and laboratories and to try the polluters ad offenders.

Similar thoughts in this line have also been reflected by the *“OECD Environmental Strategy for the First Decade of the 21st Century”* which the OECD Environment Ministers have adopted on May 16, 2001. Although, the Strategy did not call for the establishment of the WEO, the following statements taking place in the Strategy are remarkable in this regard: *“Efforts are needed to better manage the environmental effects of globalisation through improved national and international environmental governance. Over time, non-OECD countries will account for an increasing share of environmental pressures at regional and global levels. Action by OECD countries to combat these pressures will only be effective if accompanied by countries require robust policy and institutional frameworks to play their role in addressing global and regional environmental problems and to ensure that maximum benefits are derived from globalisation... Stronger efforts are needed to ratify, implement and ensure compliance with and enforcement of existing Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and instruments. Best practices in the implementation of existing MEAs should routinely disseminate. Some new multilateral instruments may need to be developed to address gaps in the existing international environmental governance system, but the priority should be on making existing MEAs as effective as possible. Improved cooperation and coherence between existing MEAs should also be promoted...”*

Several important calls came from the prominent world leaders and global organisation. The Prime Minister of France, M. Jospin, in his speech at the World Bank Conference on Development Economics in Paris on 26 June 2000, said *“Problems are now global and require global solutions. States acting in isolation are not in position to protect their citizens’ interest and guarantee them the benefits*

of globalisation". Jospin, called for the strengthening of the United Nations and other institutions "which endeavour to guarantee international public assets, especially in areas where there are still gaps." Jospin said "to this end, France will propose a new World Environment Organisation to enforce international commitments. France will be taking an initiative along these lines, based on the UN system, when it assumes the Presidency of the European Union..."

Similar idea has been voiced by Germany in June 1977 at the Special Session of the UN General Assembly (Rio + 5). Germany has proposed the establishment of "World Environment Organisation" under the possible formats of "World Environment Council" at the level of UN "ECOSOC" or even at the level of UN "Security Council" or as an independent "Global Environment Organisation" with competencies similar to World Trade Organisation".

WTO, also, proposed the establishment of World Environment Organisation. The Director General of WTO, Renato Ruggiero, in his speech in Geneva on March 15, 1999 suggested that "we need a WTO-similar, multilateral, rules-based system for the environment – a "World Environment Organisation" to also be the institutional and legal counterpart to the World Trade Organisation".

Recently, in a meeting held in Canberra, Global Greens Conference, in June 2001, delegates from more than 60 countries proposed that the World Trade Organisation should be subject to environmental controls imposed by the new World Environment Organisation which would be backed up by an environmental court.

Several academicians are also supporting the idea and proposing the establishment of "World Environment and Development Organisation". Biermann and Adonis, in their article have stated the following conclusion: "While improved efficiency and more coordination are desirable, they will not suffice on their own to upgrade the efficacy of the existing system of international institutions in global environmental and development policy. This system, therefore, needs to be complemented by a further specialised agency of the United Nations: a World Environment and Development Organisation that integrates existing programs and institutions. This could, first, serve to give an enhanced status to the urgent tasks of global environmental and development policy among national governments, international organisations, NGOs and civil society at large. Secondly, it could help to improve the institutional setting for the negotiation of new conventions and programs of action and for the implementation and coordination of existing ones. Thirdly, this would be a way to strengthen the capacity for action of states, particularly in Africa, Asia and Latin America, through improved international cooperation and support."

What Kind of New Global Institutional Framework?

The recently published World Resources Institute Report reveals the following: "The Pilot Analysis of Global Ecosystems (PAGE) shows that the overall capacity of ecosystems to deliver goods and services is decreasing. Yet human demand for ecosystem products - from water to food to timber-continues to increase. Globally, we have managed agriculture, forests and freshwater systems to achieve remarkable growth in the output of food and fibre. But, when PAGE researchers examined the full range of goods and services

produced by five major ecosystems, they found that the increased output of some goods and services has resulted in steep declines in virtually all others -from water quality and quantity to biodiversity and carbon storage. In many cases, these trade-offs were unconscious. Nonetheless, even with a new awareness of the value of traditionally overlooked ecosystem services like biodiversity and carbon storage, we can't simply reverse the trade-offs we've made... The poor and disadvantaged would pay the human consequences of such strategy."

Therefore, the correct answer to the question of "What kind of management" lies within the limits of the management **approach** to be adopted for the global environmental and ecological problems. Since, the present approach is based upon continuous and extensive abuse of scarce resources for social and economic development, which naturally results in creating more pressures for ecosystems, the new approach should base upon the concept of **ecosystem management** of global resources.

The WRI report also points out five major criteria of ecosystem approach:

- An integrated approach,
- Reorients the boundaries that traditionally have defined our management of ecosystems,
- Takes the long view,
- Includes people, and
- Maintains the productive potential of ecosystems.

Although, above mentioned criteria are developed mainly for local and regional ecosystems, same principles can also be applied to global ecosystems. Therefore, the WEO should try to manage the global ecosystems in the same line. This approach, if adopted, also specifies the statute, functions, duties, responsibilities, authorities and powers of the new institution.

However, the proponents and adversaries of WEO seem to have contradicting ideas over the institution. While the proponents are supporting the idea, the adversaries are sceptical about the success of the new organisation. Both parties are expressing their opinions taking into consideration of environmental and political realities of today's world. Since, the ecological problems is always discussed simultaneously with the problem of unemployment and achieving economic growth especially in the poor and developing countries, it is expected that consolidation and/or compromising the contradicting interests of world nations will not be an easy endeavour.

Despite this discouraging difficulty, the proponents of the idea seem to be convinced on the merits of the new organisation. In this regard two main options/strategies can be thought for the establishment of the new WEO:

- Radical option: A totally brand-new and comprehensive international body.
- Incremental and transient option: Utilisation of present international organisations such as UNEP and GEF.

Naturally, first option is the ideal solution. However, the feasibility of this option is greatly doubtful. The existing and very serious contradictions between the north and south -as materialised in Kyoto and aftermaths- and the problem of securing revenue sources for the operational expenses of the WEO -as has been observed in GEF practices where the donor countries have much more power and

right to say than the receiving countries- make this option rather difficult if not impossible.

Therefore, the second option seems to be more practicable. In this regard, the UN path should be followed and UNEP, GEF and CSD should be united under a single umbrella. Biermann and Simonis perhaps like to see UNDP under the same entity. Likewise, World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) may also take part in the new organisation.

What would be more significant is the integration of individual secretariats of MEAs in the scheme. These organisations must be effectively incorporated into new system.

The management functions of the new body should be planned according to the phases. At the first phase, which would be the transition phase, status gaining and institutional strengthening should be given the priority. Upon the completion of this stage, a full-scale management of global ecosystem -perhaps incorporating an international court into the system- should be the overall target for the new entity. International arbitration of environmental disputes and management of ISO 14000 series should also be included in this process.

The recently GATT-transformed body of World Trade Organisation is certainly a good example in this regard. First, the international experience gained in the Uruguay Round should be repeated for the enhancement of the idea and then again the WTO model should be replicated in terms of status, structure, relations, decision-making, functions, duties, authorities and fund raising.

Therefore, the main functions of the WEO should be similar to those of WTO as follows:

- Administering MEAs
- Acting as a forum/platform for environmental negotiations
- Settling environmental disputes
- Reviewing national environmental policies
- Assisting developing countries in environmental policy issues through financial and technical assistance and training programs
- Cooperating with other international organisations.

Organisationally, the WTO structure, which is mainly comprised of the Ministerial Conference, the General Council, specialised committees, MEA secretariats and the General Secretariat, can be adopted.

Biermann and Simonis seem to be certain about the sources of finance. They are basically pointing out the sources to be derived from the developed countries' already promised environmental financial assistance (like Sweden and the Netherlands) to developing countries, buying up of the debts of developing countries by the developed ones, a levy on international air travel and a levy on foreign exchange transactions.

Conclusion

The on-going deterioration of global environmental and ecological quality parameters should create an effective alarm for world leaders, leading countries and international organisations.

It is already proven that even the spectacular success in environmental diplomacy is not adequate to reverse the well-known adverse, unmitigable and irrevocable impacts of global environmental deterioration.

The establishment of the World Environment Organisation can only achieve such a revolution.

The existing bodies of UNEP and GEF and the huge accumulation international relations expertise in the UN can provide a very effective leverage in this regard.

Consequently, the time has arrived to revolutionise the global environmental governance. Hilary French's comment and expectation on the venue are inspiring: "...Thirty years ago, photographs taken from space by the Apollo expeditions indelibly impressed on all who saw them that our planet, while divided by political boundaries, is united by ecological systems. These photos helped inspire the first Earth Day, which in turn motivated numerous countries to pass environmental laws and create environmental ministries. This year, the world will celebrate Earth Day 2000. The time has come for a comparable groundswell in support of the international governance reforms that are needed to safeguard the health of the planet in the new millennium."

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