

## ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

The relationship in both theory and practice between environment and sustainable development within the context of the emerging globalization is one whose study requires trans-disciplinary engagements for the understanding and appreciation of the embedded issues within the realm of critical interrogation. Because the ensuing discussions and analyses of the critical issues and problems that are inherent in the discourse on climate change and the attendant impact on sustainable development are currently being approached from the perspective of the general as opposed to the specific, there is the existence of a gap in literature. Narrowing the embedded issues to situational circumstances justifies the relevance and need of the paper and provides the much needed opportunity for the development and building of generalizations from such peculiar experiences. The paper consequently seeks critical examination, discussion and analysis of the relevance of the knowledge of the environment to mankind and in turn places the latter within the prevailing discourses on the subject matter globally.

Keywords: Environment, Development, Sustainable Development, Globalization, Critical Interrogation.

## INTRODUCTION

Contemporary academic discussions and analyses of the environment explain and compel the distinction between its study and knowledge notwithstanding the realization of the fact that it is the study of the environment that provides the knowledge of, and about it, and the fact further that it is the knowledge of the environment that equally propels its study. The distinction that is being emphasized, I should add, exists only at the level of practice and hence represents a practical formulation. Consequently, the training that the discipline of political science provides with respect to the discussions and analyses of the environment exists in the usual politics that is associated with its knowledge and study. The training further exists in the opportunity for the interpretation and analysis of its relationships with the idea of sustainable development and the entire discourse in which the subject matter is both enmeshed and encapsulated. Without running the risk of contradiction to the submission earlier made, the organized and elaborate study of the relationships between the environment and sustainable development is however a very recent one because it is a 21<sup>st</sup> century phenomenon notwithstanding the fact that it dates back to the twilight of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The relationship between the environment and sustainable development as presently exists in the discourse on globalism finds its explanation in the theory of contemporary global interdependence between and among nation-states, and between and among non-state actors working independently and in relation with the state, all within the created sphere of global interdependence.

The global discourse on the subject matter of the environment and sustainable development equally finds its expression in the emerging globalization particularly in the encapsulating democratization relating to the advancement and consciousness of the associated consequences and effects. A political science training that is anchored in competent knowledge and skill of contemporary social science analysis exposes the political scientist to the inter-disciplinary methodologies that are inherent in the discussion and analysis of the environment and its many parts and dimensions. We need, therefore, in the standard practice of intellectualism, to ask ourselves these very important questions: Why is it important for us to study and know our environment? What has being the pattern of the existing study and knowledge of it? Why is the knowledge and study considered so important? And what can we as Nigerians and Africans benefit from the answers to these questions? The study and knowledge of the environment are both encapsulated in environmentalism as a field of knowledge and as well as an area of human advocacy. Both, in my humble opinion, are related to the concept and idea of sustainable development. Therefore, the basis and justification of the study and knowledge of the environment and by extension its necessity in this contemporary time of ours, exist in the implication for our today's existence and the possibility of this extending into the future. What is this implication, and what as well is the link between it and our fundamental existence? All the questions, put together, are important for us to be able to make projections into the future.

The rains of yesteryears and the particular oscillation between the two seasons provided knowledge of the relationships between agriculture and industry, and between trade and manufacturing. Through the knowledge of the patterns, we are able to undertake the study of the relationships and further make some important generalizations. The average study of the weather conditions for decades give information about our knowledge of today's climate and the realization that this has indeed changed. We now know, after the prolong persuasion of the United Nations Organization by experts for over twelve years that the global climate characterization has changed, and that this portends danger to our collective future if some

urgent actions are not taken. The debate with respect to whether or not the global climate has changed is no doubt over. What now remains and still ridden with controversies because of the embedded politics revolves around the actions that are needed to be able to combat the contained implications and consequences.

Investigating the environment and seeking to know and predict the implication on sustainable development requires a combination of strategies and approaches especially as these exist in disciplines. Again, because development is about man suggests further that attempts at its study and advancement should revolve around anything related to man and the totality of his existence as expressed particularly in culture, language, religion, habit, and so on. Science and its application, technology, with particular respect to the discourse on environment and sustainable development, should possess an investigative mode that is rooted in the above for good results. Knowing the environment therefore provides the necessary ideas about impending disasters such as flooding, land-slides, and other massive destructions that are capable of threatening our existence now and in the future. The knowledge of the environment is hence of importance to us all. Finally, the fact further that the emerging consequences and effects cut-across geographical boundaries necessitate the desirability of an international governance regime in which all of us are involved. The knowledge of the environment and of relationship between it and sustainable development should therefore not be allowed to be the exclusive preserve of certain experts. It is today about action involving all of us.

The understanding of the technical matters and issues in the epistemology of environment and sustainable development, the view is here being held, absolutely depends on the initial appreciation of the connection in both theory and practice between the two. Consequently, what is this connection like? How can its establishment within elaborate theoretical and practical perspectives help in the understanding of the knowledge of the connection as here formulated? What is the consequence of the interchangeability in the use of relationship in place of connection? Finally, how can the questions individually and collectively advance the intellectual discourse on the subject matter? Before attempts are made to answer the questions, it has become necessary to reflect briefly on the epistemology and theory of the environment, and in relation to sustainable development. This no doubt involves raising some additional questions. What are these additional questions, and of what relevance are they to the body of the paper? The reflection first captures the paper's understanding of the concept of theory, and much later in relation to the task earlier mentioned. Social science analysis, I should say, recognizes the idea and meaning that what a theory is exists in some confused terminological expressions. This boldly explains the description and characterization of theories as normative or empirical, low-level, middle-level and over-arching. The distinctions and differences encapsulate the problematic nature of the study of human behaviour given the nature of man and the growing sophistication of the discipline when compared with the physical sciences, the so-called "hard sciences"! A theory, here expressed, represents an organized body of idea whose responsibility is to facilitate the understanding of a subject matter within the tradition and intellectual engagement of seeking the explanation and analysis of the many parts of its existence in such a way and manner that the knowledge of the subject matter is both facilitated and enhanced. This inevitably requires the initial understanding of important concepts that do provide the intellectual basis for the appreciation of the subject matter. The knowledge of the connection in theory between the environment and sustainable development depends on the understanding of the critical concepts: environment, development, sustainable development, globalization and critical

interrogation. Therefore, what are they, especially in relation to the explanation and analysis of the theory and epistemology of environment and sustainable development?

The paper, I should emphasize, does not intend to repeat and regurgitate the outcomes of the existing studies in literature on the issues and problems of the environment and its relationship with sustainable development, but to carve a niche for itself by developing, formulating and proposing new ideas and concepts relevant for the investigation of the many networks of interactions that currently shape and influence the body of thoughts and ideas on the subject matter. The task particularly involves ensuring that the entire presentation is based on the technical principle of systematization so that the current “anarchy” with respect to the organization and presentation of research outcomes on the subject matter is reduced to the barest minimum. The latter compels mentioning and specifying the pattern that is here adopted. Section one of the paper extends the introduction further by engaging in clearer articulation of the desirability and relevance of the contemporary attention on the subject matter of environment and sustainable development generally, and with specific regard to Nigeria. The section undertakes detailed examination, discussion and analysis of the key concepts within the context of the paper. It consequently provides the essential conceptual and theoretical reviews. It goes further to provide a critique of the ideas with the objective of demonstrating the attendant consequences on the contemporary patterning of investigations on the subject matter. Section two situates the emergence of environmentalism within the global framework of politics leading to the understanding of the negotiations and interests involved as countries of both the North and South disagree and clash on important technical points and details especially relating to the adoption of strategies and tactics on how well to mitigate the threats being posed by carbon dioxide emission leading to the recognized impacts of climate change. This is indeed the international dimension to the discourse on environment and sustainable development. Section three of the paper addresses the gender issue in environment and sustainable development. It specifically brings to the fore of analysis and discussion how the ensuing discourse relates to women especially the extremely poor and poverty-stricken ones. The gender point raised should not confuse the appreciation and understanding of feminism as a socio-political theory and the whole ideas and thoughts in which it is embedded. It should further not be seen as an establishment of a contest between male and female but viewed from the perspective of the development of an intellectual platform important for the organization of research and its implementation on a subject matter that provides the hope for a prosperous global community where everybody, irrespective of race, sex and colour, feels happy and fulfilled. Section four provides the Nigerian context to the body of the discourse and illuminates and clarifies a number of knotty matters and details especially as contained in the Buhari Administration Economic Recovery and Growth Plan. Section five presents the conclusion and makes some recommendations of public policy importance.

#### **Literature Review: The Necessity and Importance of the Knowledge of Environment**

Two approaches are here employed in the attempt to answer the above questions and they are labeled as the semantic and the technical. The semantic is in relation to the common meaning and understanding, and the technical, in relation to the advancement of a knowledge and understanding of a subject matter anchored in, and driven by, the principle of systematization. Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary defines environment as: “the circumstances, objects, or conditions by which one is surrounded”. The definition has contained in it very useful information. First, it conveys the point that man is central to the understanding of environment. Second, it conveys the point further that the environment is about: “circumstances, objects

and conditions”. Implicit in the definition is the point that environment is an imposed “circumstances, objects and conditions” that man can either not control or might find difficult to control. The latter constitutes a pitfall in the understanding and knowledge of the environment. The realization of the need for progress compels man to either control or wanting to control his environment. This is the basis for the knowledge of environmental science and its technology. The Dictionary should not however be totally condemned. This is because it defines environment further as: “the complex of physical, chemical, and biotic factors (as climate, soil and living things) that act upon an organism or an ecological community and ultimately determine its form and survival”. It finally defines environment as: “the aggregate of social and cultural conditions that influence the life of an individual or community”. The definitions, one should emphasize, provide the basis for the knowledge of the technical meaning and understanding of the environment as a terminological expression. The technical interpretation of environment, it is here noted, has roots in the two variants theory of environmentalism. The first variant sees environmentalism as a theory of cultural and intellectual development of an individual and group from the perspective of the environment rather than heredity. This means that the theory places important factor on the environment rather than heredity as a measure of man’s cultural and intellectual development. The second represents a kind of advocacy meant to either preserve or improve the natural environment such as controlling noise pollution, among others.

It is proper at this juncture to ask the question: how have the semantic and technical exploration of the meaning and understanding of environment helped in the understanding of the theory and epistemology of the environment? Second, how have the theory and epistemology in turn provided the basis for the relevance of the theme in global affairs? The answers to the questions need be postponed and adjourned temporarily. This has become necessary for me to engage myself with the task and duty of establishing the theoretical and practical relationships and connections between environment and sustainable development.

The environment of man determines what he is and influences all of his activities. Fishing is for instance possible only where there is water and farming where arable land exists. Teaching and research only take place where school and research institutions exist. A footballer can only emerge when and where football, playing field and instructor exist. Corruption equally thrives in an environment characterized by lawlessness and impunity. A one-eyed man can as well become a king only in the land of the blind. The examples help to illustrate the connection and relationship between the theory and practice of the environment. The important question now is: how can all of this in turn help in the establishment of a relationship between environment and sustainable development as conceptual foundations and practical illustrations? The answer to the question quickly leads us to the understanding of the twin concepts: development and sustainable development.

Development is commonly used as a pejorative term and this no doubt confuses and blurs the understanding, interpretation, explanation and analysis of the concept of sustainable development. This no doubt amounts to stating the obvious. Notwithstanding, how, especially from the perspective of Africa, can or should the concept be viewed? The question no doubt admits clearly that the knowledge of the concept lacks commonality of understanding without this necessarily translating to mean the absence of acceptable criteria and standards of its evaluation and assessment. For the concept to be relevant to Africa, it requires placing it within the existing historical context. So, what is the historical context in the understanding of the concept of development in Africa? Historicizing the understanding and meaning of the concept of

development with particular reference to enhancing the knowledge of the root cause of the underdevelopment and malfunctioning of the political systems of Africa is important and relevant to the decolonization of the orthodox notion and understanding of development especially in the making of the quick distinction between it and growth. Part of the historical exercise, I should point out, is already contained in the classical documentation systematically provided by the great thinker and historian in person of Walter Rodney. Rodney (1972:84) posited that: “Western Europe and Africa had a relationship which ensured the transfer of wealth from Africa to Europe”. Arising from the above is the fact that the only intellectual route to the understanding and meaning of development is seeking first the meaning and understanding of underdevelopment. The meaning of underdevelopment is critical for the formulation of a meaning for development and by extension, sustainable development. Underdevelopment, from my perspective, is a condition of human existence characterized by miserable social life and condition. In the opinion of Rodney (1972:21) it is: “...not the absence of development, because every people have developed in one way or another and to a greater or lesser extent”. This submission of Rodney (1976), to me, is ideological and represents the reification problem in contemporary social science analysis. The intention is not to engage in ideological iconoclasm but to draw attention to the need for objectivity and objective analysis interpreted and conceived not from the viewpoint of the imperial and Western understanding of science, but from a perspective of study whose intention is to propagate the truth from a common and global perspective. The propagation of the truth is an essential pre-condition for critical scholarship and the development of meaningful generalizations across the borders of the world. This is the paper’s meaning and understanding of critical interrogation.

While the knowledge of underdevelopment helps in the understanding and knowledge of development, the relationship between the two is not necessarily antagonistic and antithetical as argued by the Marxists. History, whether based on our material existence or not, is important only for the purposes of the appreciation of the past in terms of how our forefathers tackled the problem posed by the physical environment then. The knowledge which it provides with respect to the understanding of the mode of production and the engendered social relations of production does not necessarily express something that is totally and completely antagonistic as made to be believed by the Marxists. Having made the above observation, what next in the paper is the conception and understanding of development and by extension, sustainable development? Development, even though acquires many dimensions and therefore can be variedly expressed as economic, social, political, cultural, scientific and technological, among others, seeks to describe one thing. And that is the level of sophistication and social attainment of people across the globe. A further feature of it is complete role differentiation between and among institutions which remain ever strong and resilient and capable of “pattern maintenance” to borrow the Eastonian phraseology. The level of sophistication and social attainment that is being referred to does not necessarily translate to qualitative indices of measurement as development economists of the Western orientation would want us to believe. Because man engages permanently in a struggle with his physical environment and fellow beings competitively throughout his generation, the concept of development therefore expresses the fact that it is a direction towards the attainment and sustenance of progress. There are therefore no completely developed and underdeveloped nations. Every nation still struggles to develop by improving on the levels of initial sophistication and attainment. This is the reality of our today’s world.

What now is sustainable development? This is the practice (a deliberate one for that matter) of ensuring that the advances made and successes recorded as man continues to struggle and battle with his worries are regularly improved upon and permanently integrated into the created framework of new life for the betterment of man's living conditions. How, it can be further asked, is the environment related to this? In other words, how is the environment relevant to the attainment and realization of sustainable development? Environment in this case is not only the physical world. Rather, it is the totality of man and the many dimensions of his existence working and relating together for him to be able to fulfill his fundamental purposes of existence and leaving behind worthy legacies. Sustainable development, by implication of meaning and understanding, involves the formulation of ideas and strategies targeted at enhancing man's living conditions by ensuring that he is permanently fed, healthy, accommodated, clothed, and not discriminated against, happy, educated and free, among others. Globalization, within the context of the paper, is a summation of the matrixes of relations between state and non-state actors at the international system represented and captured by the series of discussions and debates around the consequences and effects of climate change facilitated by the enhanced improvements in information and communication technologies (ICT).

This section of the paper, it should be emphasized, requires further imaginative and distinct approach. And the imagination and distinction exist in the fundamental question: What makes or explains the necessity and importance of the knowledge of the environment? In addition, why are disciplines interested in this knowledge? The study and knowledge of the environment should attract the concern of every living being for so many important reasons. First, it determines the fundamentality and necessity of human existence. Whether approached from the Biblical or Qur'anic framework or viewed from the perspective of empirically patterned scientific investigation, environment has contained in it the purpose of human existence. Further amplification of the point requires a brief examination and analysis of this purpose. When people gathered in the ages past and formed themselves into a government, they realized by their own experience that living on the earth surface has with it a purpose. The purpose, they realized further, has to do with the fact that living in the world confers on all living being responsibility of maintaining its continuity while man comes and goes. The purpose of human existence therefore comes with the realization of the fact that we all owe to the world the duty and responsibility of procreation only within the context of the extent to which we know our environment and have reliable knowledge of its structure and pattern as naturally arranged. The urge/desire to know the environment is not of today. It is as old as the history of human civilization. This should be finally emphasized.

The purpose of human existence is as well captured in the theory and practice of agriculture and in the survival of man. Soil and water, as components of the environment, are important for the survival of man from the dimension of agriculture, among others. Agriculture, for instance, provides food and other items for the purpose of human existence and the provisions form the basis for the assessment of the extent to which social progress is made, and in the attendant classification and categorization of societies as either "developed" or "developing". The study and knowledge of the environment manifest further as man tries to increase his sophistication especially as he tries to mass produce the needed items arising from population explosion through manufacturing. Manufacturing, man further realizes, has its complications and threats to human existence considering the rapidity and negative consequences arising from pollution and the engendered environmental

degradation and the collapsing and deteriorating social relationships emerging from the interpenetrating networks of production, distribution and consumption within the encapsulating framework of manufacturing and industrialization.

The sophistication of our modern time expressed in the many networks of relationships arising from the interconnections between and among the sectors of the global economies equally propels the interest in the study and knowledge of the environment. Economic growth and development impact positively on gross domestic products and give useful information about the living standards of the peoples of the world. Economic prosperity, it must be however pointed out and emphasized, has associated with it some negative consequences and effects that are capable of igniting life threatening diseases as we become daily exposed to the impacts of noise pollution, soil pollution and degradation, and regular exposure to earthly distortions and disruptions of the ecosystem. The realities of today manifesting as large-scale and monumental distortions and disruptions of the ecosystem create before our eyes many problems and challenges and thus compel the study and knowledge of the environment from diverse perspectives.

### **THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION OF THE DISCOURSE ON ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

The clarifications made above can only be useful to the extent to which they individually and collectively assist in the understanding of the complex debates and arguments that currently trail the knowledge of the relationship between the environment and the realization of the dream and goal of sustainable development. More fundamental to the climate change discourse are two emerging facts that are very worthy to note. First, the fact that it took United Nations over ten good years to accept the existence of climate change as argued by experts in the 1960s and second, the fact further that the change has contained in it some negative consequences for the global economy and society, points signal to the lack of yet an acceptable framework for the management of the consequences. The fact further that the United States under President Donald Trump either “failed, refused or neglected” in the language of the practice of public administration to attend the session on Climate Change during the meeting of the Group of Seven Industrialized Countries (G7) in August, 2019 in France attests to the cogency of the submission. Arising from the observations made above are three important questions. First, what are the emerging debates and arguments on climate change? Second, to what extents have the debates and arguments re-kindled the development and underdevelopment arguments and debates of the yesteryears? Third and final, how can Africa be placed within the emerging issues and problems of analysis? The answers to the questions compel the importance of this subsection of the paper.

Understanding the broad discourse on the environment and the emerging politics in which the discourse is encapsulated requires a systematic and detailed analysis of the various International Conferences on the subject matter held under the auspices of the United Nations Organization in particular. The systematic and detailed analysis, it should be emphasized, is specially anchored in the history on the subject matter. The option of history as here presented and accomplished helps in the understanding of the major decisions and steps taken, and provides further a framework of intellectual understanding that has the capability of presenting and analyzing the differences and similarities that are contained in the decisions and actions of the United Nations. The analysis that is here contained covered the International Conferences held in 1972, 1987, 1992, 1997, 2002, 2012 and 2015 on the subject of the environment. For clarity of purpose, the analysis shall involve the examination of

the objectives and purposes of the Conferences, the communiqués reached and highlights of the decisions taken with the view to making distinctions and differences between and among the Conferences, and the development of a framework for their comparative investigations and analyses. Accomplishing the task involves raising some other important questions. What is the international dimension to the study and knowledge of the connections and relationships between environment and sustainable development? There is, the paper argues, the international context in the explanation, discussion and analysis of the relationships and connections between the environment and sustainable development. If this is accepted to, the urgent question then becomes: how can this dimension be explored and analyzed? What perspective of study should the exploration and analysis take? How should the perspective of study be patterned to reveal the many complex and knotty issues and problems, gains and successes that do characterize and describe the study and knowledge?

Contemporary International Relations, from the perspectives of theory and practice, depicts many dimensions of importance to scholars and activists. The idea of globalization following the rise of the new international political economy has engendered important discourse of note. The emergence of a “borderless world” as pieces of information are being transmitted using the internet creates opportunities and problems of monumental proportions and cataclysmic consequences within the “global village”. The interdependence that was nurtured by the theory and practice of comparative advantage and the internationalization of capital following the incorporation and integration of the world into a global political economy have the consequences and effects of propping up financial crises, trade deficits, security threats and challenges, and lately the concern about climate change following the destruction of the greenhouse. Climate change is beginning to have consequences on our world especially from the perspectives of enhancing food shortage, flooding and eco-system destruction, increased temperatures and unpredictable weather. The financial and agricultural sectors of the world are under threats and attacks arising from the impacts of climate change. The understanding of these Conferences and the policy outcomes and consequences emanating from the various communiqués that were issued need be systematically presented. The history of the United Nations Conferences therefore needs careful arrangement of presentation and analysis.

#### The 1972 International Conference: UN Conference on the Human Environment

The Conference was held in Stockholm, Sweden between 5<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> June, 1972 and tagged: “United Nations Conference on the Human Environment” out of which came a Report. The Report is divided into three parts with annexes. The most important being Part I titled: “Action Taken by the Conference” and this is further divided into five parts including: (i) Declaration, (ii) Action Plan for the Human Environment, (iii) Resolution on Institutional and Financial Arrangement, (iv) Other Resolutions by the Conference, and (v) Referrals to Governments of Recommendations for Action at the National Level. Of importance to note in the Declaration is Principle No 2 which states clearly that: “The natural resources of the earth, including the air, water, land, flora and fauna and especially representative samples of natural ecosystems, must be safeguarded for the benefit of present and future generations through careful planning or management, as appropriate”.

#### The 1987 International Conference: World Commission on Environment and Development

Following resolution 38/161 of 19<sup>th</sup> December 1983, the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization established a Special Commission that: “...should make available a report on environment and the global problematique to the year 2000 and beyond, including proposed strategies for sustainable development”. The Special Commission turned out later as the

World Commission on Environment and Development and the further emergence of the United Nations Environment Programme after a meeting held between 8<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> June, 1987 in Nairobi, Kenya with a Report titled: “Our Common Future” of three parts and two annexes. The Report was also known as the “Brundtland Report”. The Report in Part I addressed what it called: “a threatened future” and made proposals on “the attainment of global sustainable development” emphasizing further on “the role of the international economy”.

#### The 1992 International Conference: United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992)

Popularly referred to as the Earth Summit, the Conference was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> June, 1992 and came out with the document titled: The Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development issued in three volumes to include: Volume I: Resolutions Adopted by the Conference, Volume II: Proceedings of the Conference, Volume III: Statements Made by Heads of State or Government at the Summit Segment of the Conference. Volume I contained three items: (a) The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, (b) Agenda 21 (a global plan of action to promote sustainable development), and (c) Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests. The Conference further led to the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

#### The 1997 International Conference: General Assembly Special Session on the Environment

The Conference was held between 23<sup>rd</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> June, 1997 in New-York, United States. It was particularly meant “...to review progress achieved over the five years that have passed since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and to re-energize our commitment to further action on goals and objectives set out by the Earth Summit”. The Conference further engaged itself with the review of the implementation of Agenda 21 and launched “...a new global partnership for sustainable development - a partnership that respects the indivisibility of environmental protection and the development process”.

#### The 2002 International Conference: World Summit on Sustainable Development

The Conference was convened by the General Assembly resolution 55/199 of 20<sup>th</sup> December 2000. It is known and addressed as Rio+10 and held in Johannesburg, South Africa between 26<sup>th</sup> August and 4<sup>th</sup> September, 2002 and further reviewed the progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 since its adoption in 1992.

#### The 2012 International Conference: UN Conference on Sustainable Development

The Conference was known as Rio+20 and held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil between 20<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2012 at the instance of the General Assembly resolution 66/197. A Report was consequently issued and titled: “The future we want”.

#### The 2015 International Conference: UN Sustainable Development Summit

The Conference was held in New-York, United States between 25<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> September, 2015 as a high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly of United Nations and came-up with a Report titled: “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” containing seventeen (17) goals: (a) No Poverty; (b) Zero Hunger; (c) Good Health and Well-being; (d) Quality Education; (e) Gender Equality; (f) Clean Water and Sanitation; (g) Affordable and Clean Energy; (h)

Decent Work and Economic Growth; (i) Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (j) Reduced Inequality; (k) Sustainable Cities and Communities; (l) Responsible Consumption and Production; (m) Climate Action; (n) Life Below Water; (o) Life on Land; (p) Peace and Justice Strong Institutions, and (q) Partnerships to achieve the Goal.

Beautiful as these Conferences were and their various resolutions, the emphasis by the United Nations especially following the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil to the effect that the principles and consensus arising from the resolutions are not legally binding renders useless the strengths of these various documents.

### **FEMINISM, ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

A neglected area in the global intellectual discourse on the environment is feminism. Feminism, as a social theory, emphasizes equality of economic and political rights between sexes. What is the contained implication on the subject of study? In other words, how has the theory either helped or assisted in the determination of the scope of the study and knowledge of the relationships between the environment and sustainable development? Appreciating the relevance of the question will no doubt require a lengthy and elaborate discussion and analysis of the literature on the subject matter. The option, I should note, has the implication of wrongly directing the purpose of the subsection and the decision for its incorporation into the body of the paper. Feminism, as a concept and theory relevant for the organization of knowledge around the subject matter of the environment and sustainable development, needs further be explored especially from the perspective of clarifying the distinctions, differences and relationships between it and other important concepts and theories such as gender, sexism, sexuality, feminity, etc., with the view to ensuring detailed knowledge and understanding relevant for the purpose of developing other important theses or anchoring positions and submissions. Engaging in the attendant discussions and analyses for the purpose of highlighting the distinctions, differences and relationships has the tendency of misdirecting the intention and academic purpose of the subsection as earlier stated.

Women are indeed an important component of the environment and they remain very relevant in the discourse on the subject matter. Their biology should not therefore be an issue as being recently emphasized in literature on the subject matter especially from the angle and perspective of bio-politics in International Relations. The subsection therefore hopes to address the roles of women in the study and knowledge of the relationships between environment and sustainable development, and using the engagement to formulate and amplify the direction of research on these roles. This will no doubt require at the initial stage the development of consensus around the expected roles and further development of the means that would ensure the acceptance and institutionalization of these roles from the perspectives of research and advocacy.

The focus of the study on women with particular regard to the investigation and analysis of the environment and sustainable development should not be for the purpose of knowing the extent to which they are considered weak with respect to initiating actionable agenda to avert or ameliorate some of the consequences of climate change, or determining the extent to which they are considered rich in knowledge and capable of initiating research proposals on the subject matter. The teenager, Greta Thunberg, a Swedish girl, who along with her father undertook a travel to New York from London in a boat that lasted two weeks using solar energy shortly before the commencement of the 74<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the United Nations and who again had the opportunity of addressing the body, helps to underscore the irrelevance in sexualizing a matter and topic of

global significance to our collective existence. Women need therefore not be discriminated against in the collective effort of the global community in the investigation, analysis and reporting of all issues and problems relating to the understanding of the environment and in the knowledge of the relationships and impacts on global sustainable development. Consequently, culture that tends to limit the roles of women broadly and specifically, on all matters of human development need be abolished, outlawed and thrown into the bush!

Women are actors and stakeholders in the knowledge of the environment and of the consequences arising from climate change. They are the undisputed majority producers, distributors and consumers of goods and services arising from human interactions and interface with the environment. They are the silent motivators and propellers of actions and counter-actions in which the study of the environment and its relationships with sustainable development are anchored. Their absolute majority confers on them a sense of importance with respect to articulating what the issues and problems are, specifying the dimensions of the problems and issues, and their investigation, analysis and reportage. They are further important in the task and responsibility of setting the priorities and solutions meant to neutralize their effects and consequences. Women, I should particularly note, need not preferential treatment as both sexes seek solutions to the problems and issues of the environment. The idea of reserving for them a percentage of political offices makes nonsense of the recognition that they deserve. The Swedish teenager, Greta Thunberg is already impacting and shaping the world on the subject matter of the environment without being a Minister or Councilor. She demonstrates that women need only to design their focus appropriately well and navigate carefully the ups and downs that are usually associated with the realization of life ambitions.

Feminism as a social theory has the ability to rearrange our thoughts and ideas with respect to the organization of research on the subject matter of the environment and sustainable development. It helps in the appreciation of the fact that the knowledge of the environment and of the consequences of climate change does not exist in the rivalries between the sexes but in the demonstrated preparations and efforts at ensuring that all the related variables are first and foremost identified. Feminism further helps to reveal and appreciate the fact that both the environment and the entailed contemporary consequences have no respect for the sexes. Deforestation and desertification have consequences for both men and women. Soil depletion and land degradation affect farmers irrespective of their sexes, and farmlands irrespective of their owners. Pollution knows no bound as we are all affected by the same air space. Carbon dioxide emission into the atmosphere cannot be quantified in terms of sexes. Men and women, as contributors and participants, remain indistinguishable from the perspective of the environment and of its consequences and challenges globally.

## **ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

It has become very important to spell out at the beginning of the subsection what the approach should be. The subsection examines and analyzes the content from what I here call institutional/administrative and political perspectives. In Nigeria, there is the Federal Ministry of Environment, a full cabinet ministry with serving Honourable Minister, Honourable Minister of State and a Permanent Secretary, among other carrier staff. The vision of the Ministry declares unambiguously that she intends to make Nigeria: "...a Nation that develops in harmony with her environment" and with the mission: "...to ensure environmental protection, national resources conservation and sustainable development". The Ministry further sets for itself the following mandates: "(1) securing a quality environment conducive for good health and well-being of fauna and flora; (2)

promoting sustainable use of natural resources; (3) restoring and maintaining the ecosystem, ecological process and preserve biodiversity; (4) raising public awareness and promoting understanding of linkages of the environment; and (5) cooperating with relevant ministries, departments and agencies of government, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations on environmental matters”. Its agencies include, among others: (1) Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria; (2) National Park Service, (3) National Environmental Regulatory and Enforcement Agency, (4) National Agency for Great Green Wall, and (5) National Biosafety Management Agency.

There are two major issues and problems of environmental management for sustainable development in Nigeria. These issues and problems revolve around first, the formulation and development on regular basis of appropriate and relevant political mechanisms and legislative enactments for the purpose of “...reconciling environmental imperatives with developmental goals”, and second, taking the sufficient precautions “...to balance development objectives against the need to maintain desirable environmental quality”. The Federal Government of Nigeria has so far responded to these problems and issues by the creation of the Ministry of Environment (earlier mentioned) charged with the administration and management of environmental matters, the institutionalization of Environmental Sanitation campaign using the mobilizational framework of the War Against Indiscipline, sponsorship of conferences, researches and workshops on problems relating to the environment, and the formal launch of a National Policy on the Environment. There is, one should note further, the recognition of the role of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in the overall achievement of sustainable development goal programme and the designation of specific amount in the yearly budgetary income and expenditure framework/profile for the purpose of maintaining and stabilizing the environment.

The second perspective earlier described as political requires the examination and analysis of the relationships between and among the discourses on environment and sustainable development in the country. Nigeria, a very rich oil nation, notwithstanding the dual challenges and problems of leadership and followership, mismanagement and maladministration, has, since the first United Nations Conference on the Environment held in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1972, been actively involved in the formulation and development of frameworks, protocols and documents relating to the environment and the achievement of sustainable development for the peoples of the earth including her citizens. She has cleverly articulated what the environmental challenges are, and with the return to democratic rule since 1999, especially during political campaigns and rallies, expressed the actions that are needed to tackle in particular the ravaging desertification in the North, the soil depletion and degradation arising from the massive erosion in the South-East, and the encroachment and destruction of lands by the ocean in the South-West and South-South geo-political zones.

The examination and discussion of the environment and sustainable development in Nigeria require further amplification and expanded analysis because of the context of her political operations. As a federal political system, with a three-tier recognized structure of administration, coupled further with the provision in the 1999 Constitution (as amended) titled: “The Directive Principles of State Policy”, Nigeria, politically and constitutionally speaking, has the statutory duty and responsibility to manage her environment and natural resources for the attainment of sustainable development. Every state of the Nigerian federation has a Ministry of the Environment with agencies created and developed to address peculiar environmental problems and challenges in their urban and rural areas. The Governors’ Forum further provides the

institutional and political frameworks that have facilitated state-state relations within the ambit of intergovernmental relations and administration for the cooperative and collaborative management and resolution of common environmental and developmental problems such as the creation of the Western Nigeria Development Commission by the Governors of the South-West geo-political zone. There is, in addition, relations between the states and the federal authority within the vertical intergovernmental relations of the Nigerian federal political system and administrative architecture that allow for cooperation and collaboration between and among the Ministries of the Environment of the federation of Nigeria for the purposes of environmental/ natural resources management and the attainment of sustainable development.

Notwithstanding the erosion of local government autonomy, there are in existence local-local relations, local-state relations, and local-state-federal relations within the context of intergovernmental relations and management in Nigeria for sustainable development. Until recently, there used to be the Federal Ministry of National Planning and Development charged with the responsibility and duty of initiating national development plans and priorities for the overall development of Nigeria. Even though local government is a recognized tier of government constitutionally speaking, it is however the least in terms of ranking defined by the principles of allocation of powers as enshrined in the constitution as the fundamental legal charter of the Nigerian political system. Therefore, rather than having a ministry in its organizational structure, she, instead, has a department headed by a Supervisor. Environmental matters especially sanitation fall within the responsibility and purview of the Department of Health Services under the overall coordination of the Chairman. The Chairman coordinates as well the relationships between and among the departments of the local government in particular the relationships between and among the Departments of Health Services, Research, Manpower and Development Planning, and Works and Housing.

The above exposition on the environment and sustainable development in Nigeria using the perspectives of politics and institution is meant to reveal and capture important points in the ensuing discourse. What are these points, and to what extent do they help in the appreciation and understanding of the epistemology on the environment and sustainable development that is specific to the Nigerian context? In other words, how has the exposition revealed the intellectual issues and problems inherent in the examination, discussion and analysis of the environment and sustainable development in Nigeria? The two questions are attempts to relate the topic to the prerequisites and uniqueness of social science research. Social science research uniquely emphasizes the imperative and necessity of recommendations and thereby using the idea to illustrate the fact that it aims at solving the problems of the society. The recommendations that are to accompany the conclusion of the paper therefore need certain intellectual background for them to be appreciated. And the background exists in the further amplification of the referred to important points and issues in the epistemology on the environment and sustainable development.

The problems of the Nigerian urban and rural communities such as the parlous state of physical/infrastructural facilities raise important questions with respect to how they are to be solved, and the appropriate constitutional framework that is needed. Urban wastes, poor road networks and inter-linkages, regular violation of urban planning laws, etc., in the face of massive population increase and rural/urban drift occasioned by the neglect of the rural communities within the context of contemporary implementation of sustainable development plans and programmes, creates for Nigeria broad issues and problems of governance. The suggestion relating to the complete political and administrative restructuring of the country has

the capacity to further facilitate and entrench the perennial problems of government and politics with particular respect to the appropriate determination of the most efficient and effective political representation mode/framework within the context of ethnicity and the manipulation of religion to serve selfish ends and desires.

The contemporary problems of government and politics in Nigeria throw up matters of public policy consequences. While the world seems to be going toward the direction of decentralization and delegation of authorities, federalism in Nigeria is trapped in between the extreme of centralization of powers and authorities and the gradual extension of decentralization between and among the tiers of government. This explains the confusion enveloping the direction of the Buhari Administration for instance. Added to the problems of urban and rural communities is the issue of insecurity such as kidnapping, armed robbery, drug addiction, among others. These problems have individually and collectively defined the understanding and approach to the achievement of sustainable development.

Nigeria, we should be further reminded, is faced with sub-regional problems rooted in global environmental challenges. The depletion of Lake Chad for example, partly explains why it is difficult to quickly neutralize and completely defeat Boko Haram. Nigeria no doubt requires the cooperation of her neighbours to be able to face the challenges being posed by the environment. The cooperation, we should know further, is both shaped and influenced by the inherent politics of the international system not from the perspective of cold war escalations but from the angle of the trade war between United States and China, and the abuse of power of Donald Trump's presidency. The rise of Islamic fundamentalists in the Sahel Region of Africa and their determination to establish Caliphate political systems across the world has consequences for Nigeria's foreign policy and national stability. The unconfirmed sponsor of Islamic fundamentalism, Iran, an oil producing economy like Nigeria, is further capable of supporting threats to Nigeria's national security as politicians shop around the world for international currencies to prosecute electoral victories, disarm perceived enemies at Election Tribunals, and further prepare and strategize for 2023 using their bases in Dubai and other capital cities of the world.

There is the need, within the sub-thematic area of the "environment, food production and processing" of the broad discussion and analysis of the relationship between environment and sustainable development, to reflect on the implications and consequences of the Nigerian dietary habit on the attainment of sustainable development. Nigerians are in the habit of consuming all kinds of junks in the name of modernization and enjoyment. An average Nigerian is poor in information relevant to his healthy living and lifestyle. It is common seeing our people at "Joints" with "sweet sixteen" in Eateries and Bukateria Complexes using their hard earn money to purchase food items and drinks that are injurious and detrimental to their health and families. The habit has the implication of developing an orientation to politics, public administration and service that tends to emphasize financial profligacy and corruption in the urge and propensity to use these "Joints" to build social and political networks of interactions intended to capture the Nigerian State at all levels of government, local, state and federal, and regrettably not necessarily of ideas that are capable of providing solutions to the problems of our existence. The emergence of these "Joints" helps to explain the avalanche of used plastics, plastic bottles, and other disposable packs that not only litter our streets but as well impede drainages and the pollution of our environment. Related to the point are the growing refuse sites for the dumping of used and mutilated electrical appliances and computer accessories and parts as our youths join the race to wealth using the speed of the internet, the yahoo boys and the *yahoo<sup>+</sup> kingpins*, who as well serve as

personal assistants to politicians on security matters and ever ready to snatch ballot boxes and set collation centers ablaze during elections! The sedentary lifestyles of Nigerians, their involvement in “*Owanbe parties*” and unregulated consumptions of intestines and skins of animals as “pepper soups”, perhaps likely explain the emergence of diseases such as cancer of the colon, brain tumors, etc. The collectors of wastes, the so-called “bowlers”, the itinerant young Nigerians who push cart along the ups and downs of our streets constitute security threats to our homes in their search for livelihood which is considered as legitimate.

## **CONCLUSION**

Environment and sustainable development broadly, and within the socio-political context of Nigeria, represent an encapsulating discourse that is of relevance to our today’s world. Like other human discourses, it particularly requires clear definition of understanding anchored in the diversity of our human existence, knowledge wise. The link in both theory and practice between the environment and sustainable development still therefore requires further intensive and organized interrogation, systematic amplification and sustained spread of the results and outcomes of the emerging researches in diverse languages for our general knowledge of the impending consequences and impacts as we continue, especially in this part of the world, to wallow in our underdevelopment just as the COVID-19 pandemic ravages on and keeps compounding our terrible situations. There is finally the need to place the discourse within the broad thoughts on feminism to underscore the point that the existing climate change consequences are not discriminatory with particular regards to sex and levels of development of nation-states. The paper, taking the path of social science intellectual pluralism and diversity, uses the political science framework to throw-up for critical discussion and analysis the many complex and varied issues in the epistemology of the study of the environment and sustainable development. The conceptual clarifications that are provided in the paper revolve around making important distinctions between the semantic and the technical, and using the outcome to in turn situate an understanding within the context of the African historical experience. While appreciating further the value and relevance of history, the paper refused to fall into the temptation of the existing iconoclasm in its examination and analysis of the concept of development and further amplification of the definitions of environment and sustainable development.

At the international level, the challenges and consequences of climate change are no doubt enmeshed in the games and crises of contemporary international economy especially as the developed capitalist economies try to defend the interests of their citizens by ensuring the synchronization of policies and priorities with respect to job security and enhanced living standards. The disagreements between and among politicians of the developed economies and democracies with respect to the institutionalization of priorities to mitigate the consequences and effects of climate change within the broad and holistic framework of enhanced global sustainable development by the year 2030 can only be relevant to the extent to which the assumptions are realistic and the vast majority of the peoples of the world are indeed accommodated. While the goals, seventeen in all, are important, their attainment however remain doubtful given the trade war between China and the United States, and other developments in Europe and Asia that appear more important to the United States just as she used the Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe post 1945.

Corruption, maladministration and misplacement of priorities in Nigeria help to limit her management of the environment and the enhancement of sustainable development. While the extent to which the pace of development is fast-tracked with the

return to democratic rule in 1999 will ever remain a subject of controversy, further controversy beclouds the victory arising from the transfer of power from one civilian government to another following the 2015 General Elections as the international debts profile of the country is fastly building again in the midst of impressive figures being rolled out by the Federal Inland Revenue Service and the National Bureau of Statistics. My recommendations include: (1) a realistic review of the principles in which the allocation of powers and authorities are based in the constitution with the ultimate goal of the attendant re-arrangement of revenues sharing formula, (2) empowering the existing agencies and departments of government responsible for environmental management and sustainable development planning to be able to discharge their mandates efficiently and effectively using reforms that focus more on people's involvement and enhancement of transparency and public accountability, (3) formulating programmes and initiatives using local dialects to educate Nigerians on the consequences and effects of practices that are inimical to the environment, and (4) regular monitoring of food processing outlets and eateries by relevant agencies and departments of government to ensure perfect combination of food calorie and the consumption of food items important to promote healthy living and life style.

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