



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Convention On Bio- Diversity And Climate Change: Road To Copenhagen

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ABSTRACT

Bio-Diversity is the grand diversity of life on earth and all the inter connection that support these innumerable forms of life. The term bio-diversity is important to people because we depends on other plants and animals species and the ecosystems that are essential at the global, regional and local levels. The production of oxygen, reduction of carbon dioxide, maintaining water cycle and protecting soil are some of the notable service provided by biodiversity. The world now acknowledges that the loss of diversity contribution to global climate change. The problem of global warming and consequential climate change has assumed urgency. If the global community fails to take appropriate action with respect to these impending crises the consequences shall be disastrous. The rising global temperature would lead to melting of ice caps and glaciers resulting in rise sea level. The more significant fall out of the global warming is changes in the climatic pattern leading to irregular rainfall, droughts, floods and damage to agriculture. The rising temperature shall have many serious consequences for the health and well being of human community. Bio-diversity plays an important role in evolution and for maintaining the condition of life support system within the biosphere. If we are going to meet the food and health needs of a growing world population, then it is widely recognized that we need to conserve and sustain our biological diversity.

The convention on Biological Diversity entered into international law in 1994, with 153 nations signing up. The world community of Rio conference showed unanimity on two aspects i.e. to prevent global climate change and eradication of biologically diverse species. Accordingly two legally binding conventions i.e. the “convention on climate change” and “convention on Bio-diversity” were signed by the representatives of more than 150 countries. These two conventions can be seen as a first step towards implement action of the concept of sustainable development following the Rio declaration.

This paper tries to highlights the various conventions on climate change and on Bio-diversity like –

- a) UNFCCC
- b) EARTH SUMMIT
- c) Bali Plan of Action
- d) Kyoto Protocol
- e) Road to Copenhagen etc.

Keywords: Biodiversity, Climate Change, Global Warming.

Introduction :-

During the last two decades interest has been growing to protect the rapidly vanishing plants and animal's species. In due course of time, both ecological and general public realized that all are living in a time of unprecedented mass extinction. The cry of loss natural resources is reflected from each corner of the globe. Biological communities that took millions of year to develop are being divested by urbanization and human activities. The root excess of extinction are destruction of habitat by human interference such as cutting of trees, clearing of forests, overgrazing grass lands and polluting the environment. All this crisis and the loss of balance in the ecosystem build up a new challenge called conversation of Biodiversity. Biodiversity is an abbreviation of "Biological diversity". Thus in a concise manner biodiversity can be defined as the variety and difference among living organisms from all sources including terrestrial marine and other aquatic ecosystem and the ecological complex of which they are a part.

The world now acknowledge that the loss of biodiversity contributes to global climate change. As the 15th conference of parties on climate change is approaching both the rich and the poor countries are articulating their strategies to have the best deal. The scientific data suggest that the crisis of climate change is assuming a global urgency. The rising of global temperature would lead to melting of ice caps and glaciers resulting in rise of sea level. The rising sea level would submerge many low lying coastal areas throughout the globe. But the more significant fall out at the global warming is changes in the climate patterns leading to irregular rainfall, droughts, floods, cyclones and damage to agriculture. Even the absorbers blame the changing climate as the reason for intense activity of cyclone silo in the Bay of Bengal, delay in rainfall and unusual fluctuations in temperature in India in 20. The enhanced emission of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydro fluorocarbons, per fluorocarbons and sulphur hexafluoride, in the environment lead to rise in temperature. These gases trap tae solar heat to escape from the environment of the earth. The modern day industrial and commercial activities are a main source of emission of these gases.

The severity of global warming and climate change was underlined by the Inter governmental panel on climate change in Nov,2007. Accordingly we are on the threshold of crossing 2c temperature rise over pre industrial period 1860 as soon as the concentration of carbon dioxide in the environment includes 400 parts per million, which is at present 380 part per million. If and when the global temperature rises beyond 2c above the pre industrial level, severe climate change conditions would result, the UN inter governmental panel on climate change (IPCC) further predicted that the Global temperature would rise from 1.1c to 4.6c by the year 2100 depending upon the efforts of global community to check the green house gases.

EFFORT OF GLOBAL COMMUNITY:

The first major effort of global community towards environmental protection was the organization of UN conference on Human Environment at Stockholm in June 1972. Since the issue of environmental degradation was not pronounced at that time, the efforts of global community were casual and adhoc almost. However, the Stockholm conference generated awareness among the policy makers throughout the world over the importance of protection of environment. Consequently, many measure were initiated by national government in this regard. Later the issue of environment protection was graduate integrated with the process of development as was evident at UN conference on Environment and development held in Dec 1988.

UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) :-

In response to scientific prediction of man made global warming, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate change (UNFCCC) was adapted and signed by 162 countries in 1992, at the Rio-Earth Summit. With 26 Articles, consisting of objectives, principles, commitment and recommendations, the FCCC became a blueprint for precautionary action against the threat of global climate change. The convention highlighted the fact that human activities, like the burning of fossil fuels, are releasing large quantities of gases into the Earth's atmosphere. These gases, including carbon dioxide are enhancing the natural green house effect. There are many concern that the increase of such green house gases in the atmosphere is causing "global warming", which is threatening humans and natural ecosystems. The aim of the convention was to provide an international framework within which future actions could be taken to reduce the threat of global warming.

The most important principal of the convention is listed in Article 3(1) which states, "The parties would protect the climate system for the benefit of the present and future generations of mankind on the basis of equity and in accordance with their common but differential responsibilities and respective capabilities. Accordingly, the developed countries parties should take the lead in combating climate change and the adverse effects there of."

Article, 7 of the convention established a mechanism called conference of Parties (COP) which shall be highest decision making and supervisory body under the convention. It should be noted that so far, 14 conferences of parties have been held to negotiate further measures on climate change. The 14th cop was held at Bonn in August 2009 and the 15th conference of parties is scheduled to be held on Dec.7-18,2009 at Copenhagen, which shall finalize the measures of international community with respect to climate change.

KYOTO PROTOCOL:

It was adapted in 1997 and is attached to the UNFCC. More than 160 nations met in Kyoto, Japan, to negotiate binding limitations on greenhouse gases for the developed nations, pursuit to the objectives of the Framework convention on climate change of 1992. It consist 28 Articles, Article 3 of the protocol committed developed countries to reduce Greenhouse gas emission by at least 5% below 1990 in the period 2008-2012. It should be noted that the US has not ratified this protocol so far and majority of the developed and rich countries have failed to fulfill their promises under this protocol.

EARTH SUMMIT June 1992:

Another major milestone in the efforts of global community to forge an international consensus for protection the global environment was the UN conference on Environment and development popularly called Earth Summit held at Rio-de-Janario (Brezil) between June 3-12,1992. Some 178 countries and large number of environmental organizations participated in this conference.

The Earth Summit adapted 27 guiding principles for the protection of environment. The main principles are concerns for sustainable development, integration of environmental concerns in the

developmental process, participation of citizen in the process of environment protection adapting effective environmental protection legislation, protecting the traditional rights of indigenous peoples etc. However, the most important Principle relevant to present discussion was the principle of common but differentiate responsibility to bear the of environmental protection. This principle is the bone of contention between the developed and developing countries in the present negotiations on climate change.

Besides formulating these fundamental principles, the Earth Summit also adopted five specific documents for the protection of environment. There are: 1. Agenda 21 which presents a framework for the protection of environment in 21st century, 2. Rio- Declaration which calls for adopting the practice of sustainable development and protection of the rights of the rights of poor nations, 3. Bio-diversity convention calls for participant countries to adopt legal and other measures to check the destruction of plant and animal life due to human activities. 4. Protection of forests while recognizing the importance of indigenous and tribal people this calls for adopting new mechanism for the protection forests. 5. Climate change_ with respect to climate change, the Rio Summit underscored the UNFCCC adopted in May 1992 and called the developed countries to adopt measures to reduce further emission of greenhouse gases.

EARTH SUMMIT (2002):

The United Nations organized a ten day world Summit on sustainable. Development in Johannesburg from August 26 to September 4,2002. The earth summit opened with call for coordinated international action to fight poverty and protect the global environment. The UN Secretary General Kofi Annan urged, the delegates to commit to firm action to solve problems identified a decade ago at the Earth Summit, 1992 in Rio-defanerio. At the end of the summit, a declaration was adopted, which has been named as “Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development”.

In Johannesburg, the representatives of the people of the world restated their commitment to sustainable development and it was declared that they were determined to ensure that our rich diversity, which is our collective strength, would be used for constructive partnership for change and for the achievement of the common goal of sustainable development.

BALI PALN ACTION : DEC.2007:

It was finalized during the 13th conference of parties held at Bali(Indonesia) in December 2007. This conference was attended by 10000 delegates from 190 countries and other organizations. Due to intransigent outlook of the developed countries, particularly the U.S.A, the rich countries could not commit to any fresh targets for greenhouse gases emissions. Yet the Bali Plan of action presented an ambitious programme of multilateral work to tackle the challenges of climate change. Finally, the participant countries agreed to continue with climate change negotiations and finalize new measures beyond 2012 at the Copenhagen in Dec 2009. The next round of climate change negotiations took place in Poznan, Poland in Dec 2008.

UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE 2005:

The United nations climate change conference was held in Montrial, Canada in Dec 10,2005. Key decisions were made in that outline the path to future international action on climate change under the Kyoto protocol, the process for future commitments beyond 2012 got underway. A new working group was established to discuss future commitments for developed countries for the period of 2012. It will start work in May next year.

Key decisions were made that outline the path to future international action on climate change. Under the Kyoto protocol, the process for future commitment beyond 2012, got underway. Developed countries committed themselves to fund the operation of the clean development mechanism with other USD 13 million in 2006-2007. In addition to this, the second key to ensure that the parties to the protocol have a clear accountability regime in meeting their reduction targets.

Adaptation to the impact of climate change was also an important focus of the conference. It adopted a five year programme on adaptation to climate change impact.

Technology was at the centre of discussion on efforts to reduce emission and adopt to climate impacts. Countries agreed on further steps on promoting the development and transfer of technologies.

ROAD TO COPENHAGEN:

The 15th conference of parties (COP) under the auspices of UN framework convention on climate change would be held at Copenhagen (Denmark) from Dec 7-18,2009. This conference is significant in the sense that it is used likely to adopt measures about prevention of climate change beyond the year 2012, the time by which the target set in Kyoto protocol expires. The conference is also significant in the sense that the different between the developed and developing countries would come to the fore as far as climate change negotiations are concerned.

The proposed climate change negotiations involve the four following aspects:-

- a. The mitigation : This involves consensus among the parties to reduce the Green house gas emission at levels fixed in the conference. This is the most crucial aspects of proposed negotiations where the views of developed and developing countries are opposed to each other.
- b. Adaptation : This involves developing measures to enhance the capacity of nations particularly the vulnerable and poor nations to meet the consequences of climate change in an effective manner. The effect of climate change shall be most severe for those countries which have poor adaptation capacity to cope with the climate change.
- c. Financial arrangement: The third aspect of the proposed climate change negotiation is to make arrangement for funding the measures and programmes formulated for fighting and preventing the consequences of climate change. The developing countries, already poor in finances resources are hopeful that the rich countries should provide adequate financial resources for implementing measures to prevent climate change.
- d. Technology: The fourth aspect of these negotiations is the development and transfer of appropriate technology to the developing countries so that they can adopt mitigation and adaptation measures. The poor countries hope that rich countries should commit to the prompt transfer of appropriate technology as these countries are not in a position to invest in the development of such technology.

INDIAN PERSPECTIVE ON CLIMATE CHANGE:

India has been at the forefront of the climate change negotiations. India has led the developing countries in these negotiations and presented their viewpoints in an effective manner. Since, India is a developing country and it cannot compromise with its poverty reduction and development agenda, her stand in these negotiations is motivated by this primary factor. Following are the main features of Indians stand on these negotiations:

- a. India wants the strict adherence by the developed countries to the principle of equity and common to the principle of equity and common but differentiated responsibility towards the protection of environment.
- b. Since the rich countries are the major contributor to the climate change crisis, they should bear the historical responsibility to solve this crisis.
- c. India emphasis the level of per capita Greenhouse gases emission as the basis criteria to adopt the mitigation measures. Since, the per capita emission of these gases is very less in comparison to the rich countries the latter should first commit to the reduction of Greenhouse emission within a definite time frame. India supports the nation that polluter should pay.
- d. In view of the developmental needs the developing countries like India should not be forced to reduce the emission of Greenhouse gases at present as it would jeopardize their efforts. However India, instead of mitigation efforts, is willing to adopt adaptation measures to develop the capacity to face the consequences of climate change.

- e. India also wants that the rich countries should commit to financial resources for the mitigation and adaptation measures in poor countries. India also wants that the developed countries should transfer the appropriate technology to deal with the problem of climate change.

CONCLUSION:

Various efforts aimed at protection of environment and Bio-diversity has been a comparatively recent phenomenon. Systematically, it started with United Nations Conference on Human Environment (1972). It made significant progress in processing a sensitivity towards environment and its protection. The Earth Summit (1992), marked a watershed in discussion on environment protection. Kyoto protocol (1997) was concerned with a particular viz stabilization of greenhouse gas emission by 2010. The Johannesburg summit (2002) aimed at broadening the ambit of environment protection effort by effective participation at different levels of govt. as well as sensitizing the private sector.

A brief summary of environment protection programme does not present an optimistic picture. It shows that the international community has not been able to live upto its expectations. There has been lack of unanimity among the actors. Such unanimity are partly a manifestation of vested interest that the big powers have in continuing with their growth oriented strategy and also a manifestation of significant nature of the developing countries. The adamant posture of United States on a number of occasions and its unwillingness to sign the Kyoto protocol have placed these efforts at a paradoxical structure on the contrary the developing countries plunged by momentous socio economic problems have shown more sensitivity and commitment such crucial concern.

A country's demography, security of its frontiers, health and hygiene of its citizenry and alike are substantially shaped by environment factors. Every country and international forum has a genuine responsibility in ensuring the effectiveness of efforts at environment protection. People of the world have realized that environment degradation is a man made phenomenon. The state as well as non state actor and international community cannot remain aloof from it. How far they succeed in their Endeavour will be revealed only with the passage of time.

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