Sustainable development

By Lennart Kiil

Norway's prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland in 1989. She chaired the UN commission behind the 1987 Brundtland Report, which gave the most widely used definition of sustainable development.

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'Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. (World Commission on Environment and Development Report, 1987)

The above is the most widely accepted definition of sustainable development.

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The concept is complex and includes both economical, social, and environmental aspects. Since it can be argued that economy and society exist within and is dependent on the environment.

Focus is on improving human life quality for present and future generations by balancing the economical, social, and environmental needs.

At the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio a number of agreements and conventions were made including the Agenda 21. This is a plan on how to incorporate sustainable development at the global, national, and local levels in areas where humans impact the environment.

Climate and sustainable development

Climate change is being included as a factor in sustainable development planning, since present human activities could potentially affect future generations negatively through climate change. Reducing the emissions of CO_2 from a range of sectors, transport, energy, agriculture etc., is an attempt to avoid negative climate change impacts for future generations.

The concept of Sustainable Development has received some criticism for being too vague and for being unfair to developing nations.

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