

ENVIRONMENT RELATED INSTITUTIONS - I

The role of national government is critical for control of environmental pollution control, conservation and improvement of environment for promoting sustainable development. To address the diverse environmental issues a number of environment related institutions and organization have been setup at international, national level by United Nations, national governments and civil society. An environmental organization is an organization seeks to protect, analyze or monitor the environment against misuse or degradation or lobby for these goals. Environmental organization may be a government organization, a non-government organization, a charity or trust. Environmental organizations can be global, national, or local. This lesson provides information on leading environmental organizations, both within and outside the government, working for the conservation and improvement of environment at global and national level.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO ENVIRONMENTAL INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA

India's consciousness to protect the environment and to restore it exists since the early days of civilisation. The Vedic and post-vedic history bears testimony to this. However, in the modern days, especially in the post independent era because of high priority to economic growth, environment receded to a less important place. It is only in 1972 steps were initiated with the formation of the National Committee on Environmental Planning and Coordination(NCEPC) that gradually evolved as a separate department of environment and reached the full-fledged stage of Ministry of Environment and Forests in 1985. Initially the Constitution of India did not contain any provision towards the promotion/protection of environment. However, the 42nd amendment of the constitution in 1977 added some important clauses that entrusted the government the responsibility of providing a clean and well-protected environment.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCIES

The Ministry of Environment and Forest, Central Pollution Control Board, Indian Board for Wildlife are the main national environmental agencies.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF)

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) is the nodal agency in the administrative structure of the Central Government, for planning, promoting, coordinating and overseeing the implementation of environmental and forestry programmes in the country. The main activities undertaken by the ministry include conservation and survey of the flora and fauna of India, forests and other wilderness areas; prevention and control of pollution; afforestation and reducing land degradation. It is responsible for the administration of the national parks of India. The main tools utilized for this include surveys, environmental impact assessment, control of pollution, regeneration programmes, support to organizations, research to find solutions and training to augment the requisite manpower, collection and dissemination of environmental information and creation of environmental awareness among all sectors of the country's population. The Ministry is also the nodal agency in the country for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Central Pollution Control Board

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), is statutory organisation, was constituted in September, 1974 under the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974. Further, CPCB was entrusted with the powers and functions under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981. It serves as a field formation and also provides technical services to the Ministry of Environment and Forests of the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

Principal functions of the CPCB, as spelt out in the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, and the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981,

(i) To promote cleanliness of streams and wells in different areas of the States by prevention, control and abatement of water pollution, and

(ii) To improve the quality of air and to prevent, control or abate air pollution in the country. Air Quality Monitoring is an important part of the air quality management.

The National Ambient Air Quality Monitoring (NAAQM)

Programme has been established with the objectives to determine the present status of air quality, for controlling and regulating emission of air pollutants from industries and other sources to meet the air

quality standards. It also provides background air quality data needed for setting of industries and town planning. Fresh water is a finite resource essential for use in agriculture, industry, propagation of wildlife and fisheries and for human existence. India is a riverine country but there are numerous lakes, ponds and wells which are used as primary source of drinking water even without treatment. Most of the rivers being fed by monsoon rains, which are limited to only three months of the year, run dry throughout the rest of the year often carrying wastewater discharges from industries or cities or towns endangering the quality of our scarce water resources.

The parliament of India in its wisdom enacted the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 with a view to maintaining and restoring wholesomeness of our water bodies. One of the mandates of CPCB is to collect, collate and disseminate technical and statistical data relating to water pollution. Hence, Water Quality Monitoring (WQM) and Surveillance are of utmost importance. The scheme of labeling of Environment Friendly Products is on anvil for household and other consumer products to meet certain environment criteria along with the quality requirements of Indian Standards. The scheme is known as Ecomark Scheme of India.

Functions of the Central Board at the national level

- Advise the Central Government on any matter concerning prevention and control of water and air pollution and improvement of the quality of air.
- Plan and execute nation-wide programme for the prevention, control or abatement of water and air pollution:
- Co-ordinate the activities of the State Board and resolve dispute among them;
- Provide technical assistance and guidance to the State Boards, carry out and sponsor investigation and research relating to problems of water and air pollution, and for their prevention, control or abatement;
- Plan and organise training of persons engaged in programme on the prevention, control or abatement of water and air pollution;

- Organise through mass media, a comprehensive mass awareness programme on the prevention, control or abatement of water and air pollution;

Environmental Governance and State Pollution Control Board

The umbrella Act, EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) 1986 added strength to all preceding provisions.

Special stipulations were made for industrial, vehicular and noise pollution control in the country. In India, states do not pursue independent environmental policy of their own but adopt the policies formulated at the national level subject to such variations as may be necessary to suit to the local conditions. The central government has also been issuing guidelines to the states on various environmental matters.

Indian Board for Wildlife (IBWL)

The IBWL is the apex advisory body in the field of Wildlife Conservation in the country and is headed by the Honorable Prime Minister of India. The IBWL has been reconstituted w.e.f. 7.12.2001. The XXI meeting of the IBWL was held on 21.1.2002 under the Chairmanship of the Honorable Prime Minister of India at New Delhi.

INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCIES

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), World Health Organisation (WHO) and Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) are some of the main international agencies.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

UNEP was created by United Nations General Assembly, as an outgrowth of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm, Sweden that same year.

The United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg in 2002 (also known as RIO+10) did not substantially change its configuration. It is headquartered in Nairobi (Kenya)

UNEP's main mandate is to coordinate the development of environmental policy for keeping the global environment under review and bringing emerging issues to the attention of governments and the international community for action. Its activities cover a wide range of issues encompassing the atmosphere, marine and terrestrial ecosystems.

UNEP has played a significant role in developing international environmental conventions, promoting environmental science and information and illustrating the way those can work with national governments and regional institution and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

UNEP has also been active in funding and implementing environment related development projects for promoting sustainable development through sound environmental practices.

The implementation of UNEP' s work is done by the following seven divisions:

- Early Warning and Assessment
- Environmental Policy Implementation
- Technology, Industry and Economics
- Regional Cooperation
- Environmental Law and Conventions

- Global Environment Facility Coordination

- Communications and Public Information

Among UNEP's many initiatives is the "Clean up the World" campaign, which attempts to build awareness throughout the world regarding the huge impacts of our modern life style. UNEP has aided in the development of guidelines and treaties on issues such as the international trade in potentially harmful chemicals, Trans boundary air pollution, and contamination of international waterways.

The World Meteorological Organization and the UNEP established the Inter governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988. UNEP is also one of several Implementing Agencies for the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

Funding

UNEP receives the necessary funding for its programs from the Environmental Fund, which is maintained by voluntary contributions of member governments, supplemented by contributions to more than seventy trust funds and by small contributions from the regular budget of the United Nations. The UNEP budget for the 2004-2005 biennials is 130 million dollars.

World Health Organisation (WHO)

Constitution and history The WHO's constitution states that its objective "is the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health." Its major task is to combat disease, especially key infectious diseases, and to promote the general health of the people of the world. It is one of the original agencies of the United Nations, its constitution formally come into force on the first World Health Day, (7 April 1948), when it was ratified by the 26th member state. The WHO has 193 Member States. The WHO is financed by contributions from member states and from donors.

The Regional Offices are: Regional Office for Africa (AFRO); Regional Office for Europe (EURO); Regional Office for South East Asia (SEARO); Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office for Western Pacific (WPRO); Regional Office for the Americas (AMRO),

Activities

Activities of WHO includes coordinating international efforts to monitor outbreaks of infectious diseases, such as SARS(Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), malaria, swine flu, and AIDS as well as to sponsor programs to prevent and treat such diseases. The WHO supports the development and distribution of safe and effective vaccines, pharmaceutical diagnostics and drugs. After over two decades of fighting smallpox, the WHO declared in 1980 that the disease had been eradicated – the first disease in history to be eliminated by human effort. WHO aims to eradicate polio within the next few years. In addition to its work in eradicating disease, WHO is devoting increasing attention to various health-environment related issues— for example, campaigns to boost the consumption of fruits and vegetables worldwide and to discourage tobacco use. Environment and health are closely related.

The Principle of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 1992 states “human beings are at the centre of concern for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.” Environmental hazards are responsible for an estimated 25% of the total burden of disease worldwide.

HELI

To tackle environment related health hazards WHO has developed Health Environment Link Initiative (HELI).

HELI is a global effort by WHO and UNEP to support action by developing country policymakers on environmental threats to health.

HELI encourages countries to address health and environment issues as integral to economic development.

HELI supports valuation of ecosystem ‘services’ to human health and well-being – services ranging from climate regulation to provision or replenishment of air , water , food and energy sources and generally healthy living and working environments.

HELI activities include country-level pilot projects

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (F AO)

It is a specialised agency of the United Nations with member states that leads international efforts to defeat hunger. Serving both developed and developing countries, F AO acts as a neutral forum where all nations meet as equals to negotiate agreements and debate policy. F AO is also a source of knowledge and information, and helps developing countries and countries in transition modernise and improve agriculture, forestry and fisheries practices, ensuring good nutrition and food security for all. Its Latin motto, *fiat panis*, translates into English as “let there be bread”.

The F AO headquarters are located in Rome and has five regional offices. Regional Office for Africa in Accra, Ghana Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean in Santiago, Chile Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok, Thailand Regional Office for the Near East in Cairo, Egypt Regional Office for Europe in Budapest, Hungary WHO member states appoint delegations to the World Health Assembly, WHO’s supreme decision-making body. All UN member states are eligible for WHO membership and according to the WHO web site, “Other countries may be admitted as members when their application has been approved by a simple majority vote of the World Health Assembly.”

COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (CSD)

It was established in December 1992 by General Assembly Resolution A/RES/47/191 as a functional commission of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), implementing a recommendation in Chapter 38 of Agenda 21, the landmark global agreement reached at the June 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development or Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro.

Mission

The Division for Sustainable Development (DSD) provides leadership and is an authoritative source of expertise within the United Nations system on sustainable development. It promotes sustainable development as the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and through technical cooperation and capacity building at international, regional and national levels.

Goal

- Integration of the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in policy-making at international, regional and national levels;
- Wide-spread adoption of an integrated, cross-sectoral and broadly participatory approach to sustainable development;
- Measurable progress in the implementation of the goals and targets of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. it says: "In order to ensure the effective follow-up of the conference, as well as to enhance international cooperation and rationalization the intergovernmental decision making capacity for the integration of environment and development issues and to examine the progress of the implementation of Agenda 21 at the national, regional and international levels, a high level Commission on Sustainable Development should be established in accordance with Article 68 of the Charter of the UN." Agenda 21 (1)

The General Assembly met in the autumn of 1992 to debate the setting up of the CSD; it resolved that:

- The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has been requested to establish a high level commission as a functional council body.
- Representatives of 53 states have been elected by the council for up to three year terms.
- The commission will meet once a year for two or three weeks. It is a functional ECOSOC commission with a full time secretariat based in New York.

The CSD' s mandate (Resolution 1993/207) is:

- to monitor progress on the implementation of Agenda 21 (deals with environment and development issues) and activities related to the integration of environmental and developmental goals by governments, NGOs, and other UN bodies.
- To monitor progress towards the target of 0.7% GNP from developed countries for Overseas Development Aid.
- To review the adequacy of financing and the transfer of technologies as outlined in Agenda 21.
- To receive and analyze relevant information from competent NGOs in the context of Agenda 21 implementation.
- To enhance dialogue with NGOs, the independent sector, and other entities outside the UN system, within the UN framework.

Sustainable development to satisfy the needs of present generations without endangering the needs of future generations will not be brought about by policies only: it must be taken up by society at large and the choices each citizen makes every day, as well as the big political and economic decisions of the countries. This requires profound changes in thinking, in economic and social structures and in consumption and production patterns.

UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE (UNFCCC)

The convention and the protocol. Over a decade ago, most countries joined an international treaty — the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) — to begin to consider what can be done to reduce global warming and to cope with whatever temperature increases are inevitable. More recently, a number of nations approved an addition to the treaty: the Kyoto Protocol, which has more powerful (and legally binding) measures. This section contains numerous resources — for beginners or experts — such as introductory and in-depth publications, the official UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol texts and a search engine to the UNFCCC library .

Facing and surveying the problem

A major accomplishment of the Convention, which is general and flexible in character, is that it recognizes that there is a problem. That was no small thing in 1994, when the treaty took effect and less scientific evidence was available. (And there are still those who dispute that global warming is real and that climate change is a problem.) It is hard to get the nations of the world to agree on anything, let alone a common approach to a difficulty which is complicated, whose consequences aren't entirely clear, and which will have its most severe effects decades and even centuries in the future.

The Convention sets an ultimate objective of stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations "at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic (human induced) interference with the climate system." It states that "such a level should be achieved within a time-frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened, and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner." The Convention requires precise and regularly updated inventories of greenhouse gas emissions from industrialized countries.

The first step in solving a problem is knowing its dimensions. With a few exceptions, the "base year" for tabulating greenhouse gas emissions has been set as 1990. Developing countries also are encouraged to carry out inventories. Countries ratifying (approve and sanction) the treaty — called "Parties to the Convention" in diplomatic jargon — agree to take climate change into account in such matters as agriculture, industry, energy, natural resources, and activities involving sea coasts. They agree to develop national programmes to slow climate change. The Convention recognizes that it is a "framework" document — something to be amended or augmented over time so that efforts to deal with global warming and climate change can be focused and made more effective. The first addition to the treaty, the Kyoto Protocol, was adopted in 1997.

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