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THE PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

Abstract:

The concept of sustainable development can be interpreted in different ways, but at its core is an approach to development that looks to balance different and often competing needs against an awareness of environmental, social and economic limitations in the society. Most often than not, development is driven by one particular need without fully considering the wider or future impacts. The effects of the damages this type of approach can cause should be the concern of all. When the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) presented their report titled "our common future", they sought to address the problems of conflicts between environment and development goals by formulating a concise approach to the understanding of the concept. The Postulation is that, both development and the environment, hitherto addressed as separate issues, could be managed in a mutually beneficial way. One implication of not doing so is environmental degradation resulting in climate change. However, the focus of sustainable development is more encompassing than just the environment; it is also about ensuring the strong, healthy and just society. This invariably involves meeting the diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities since we cannot afford to exploit our environment in such a way that would endanger our common future. The contemporary Nigerian society has not shown much effort in this regard. The period between 1989 when the Nigerian policy on sustainable development was formulated and today, has marked a period of intensive political, administrative and to a lesser extent, judicial actions against man's activities that are delirious to the environment. The ambition of the federal government of Nigeria towards sustainable development after the Koko incidence of 1999 has been great, but her achievement remarkably small. The reason is simply and squarely due to lack of implementation of policies. This paper is basically an assessment of the challenges of sustainable development in Nigeria; the author warns that humans are transforming the planet in ways that could undermine any developmental gains. Hence, he suggests among other things that global principles of sustainable development drawn from the existing United Nations agreements be combined with some recommended proposals to achieve new sustainable developmental goals for Nigeria and other developing nations. The paper employs the philosophical tools of critical analysis and rational justification. It is also prescriptive in the sense that it recommends ways to achieve sustainable development.

Keywords:

Sustainable Development, Environment, Philosophy, Nigeria.

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