



## Green-Schools Global Citizenship

### SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Since the UN Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm in 1972, the UN deals with global environmental problems. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is an organisation that works within the UN system. UNEP is the voice for the environment in the UN. UNEP's mission is:

*"to provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations."*

UNEP established a World Commission on Environment and Development. The Commission was created to address the deterioration in the human environment and the depletion of resources; by establishing the Commission, the UN General Assembly recognized that environmental problems were global in nature and determined that it was in the common interest of all nations to establish policies for Sustainable Development. After a 6 day meeting held in Nairobi in June, 1987, a report entitled, 'Our Common Future' was published. This report, more commonly known as '**The Brundtland Report**', was the first report to popularize the concept of Sustainable Development, and it highlighted the problems that arise from unsustainable development. The main problems were found to be:

- Poverty
- Depletion of natural resources,
- Pollution
- Global changes
- Growing national debt
- Rise in consumption of resources due to the rise of the global population.

**Sustainable Development** – Development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs

The main message of the Brundtland Report is that ecology cannot be separated from equity; and vice versa, i.e. natural environment and human justice issues are linked. It established the fact that not only is the economy intrinsically linked with the environment, but that there is also a socio-cultural factor that has to be taken into account. In other words, social development has to include environmental care and preservation. Poverty and environmental pollution are linked!

This report resulted in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, better known as the “**Earth Summit**”, held in Rio de Janeiro, in 1992. The Earth Summit, which was far larger than any previous intergovernmental global conference, incorporated input from numerous NGOs. It produced:

- A declaration of principles (the **Rio Declaration** on Environment and Development)
- A plan for the sustainable development of the Earth’s resources into the 21st century (**Agenda 21**)
- Guidelines for the management, conservation, and sustainable development of forests.

The **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change** was also drawn up during the Earth Summit. Subsequent UN conferences on social issues continued to incorporate sustainable development policies into their programs.

### **THE KYOTO PROTOCOL**

Another very important convention that took place in Kyoto, in 1997, resulted from the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The EU signed up to the **Kyoto Protocol** and agreed to cut their Greenhouse Gas emissions by 8% by 2012 compared to the baseline year, 1990. This was a very ambitious target and the EU was able to commit to this only because all the Member States were working together. Each state had their own quota and Ireland’s quota at the time meant that they were allowed to *increase* their emissions by 13% above 1990 levels because then they were still a nation with high economic growth and development. The EU has already been considering what they are going to do after the Kyoto agreement in 2012, they have committed to reduce their Greenhouse Gas emissions by at least 20% compared to 1990 levels by 2020 but they have also stated that they will reduce these emissions by 30% if other developed countries show the same commitment.

Top Tip: Check out Trocaire’s Climate Change lesson plans and worksheets at [www.trocaire.org/primary](http://www.trocaire.org/primary) and if you want to learn more about the Kyoto Protocol look at [unfccc.int/kyotoprotocol/items/2830.php](http://unfccc.int/kyotoprotocol/items/2830.php).

*Top Tip: Find out about the UN and the various organisations that work within the UN system at [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)*