

Title: Environmental Sustainability of Africa in the Context of Global Sustainable Development Efforts with a Focus on Good Governance

Abstract

This research has been conducted with the aim of analyzing African countries sustainable developmental problems at the beginning of the 21st century and contributing to a better understanding of the sustainable development concept and its related politics application, especially environmental ones, as well as of contradictory factors of African continent realities.

Due to the scope of this topic and to currently increasing interest of the international community, theorists and practitioners working in the field of sustainable development the research concentrates on governance issues in general and in the field of environmental protection in particular. The governance can be understood as a new cross-cutting issue in sustainable development theory and practice.

Based on meta-analysis of a substantial number of relevant sources and literature, African academia studies and scholarly publications in the field of developmental and sustainable developmental theory have been classified into three categories:

- 1) “global” research performed in the framework of political philosophy of neo-liberalism and institutionalism;
- 2) “continental” research traditionally affirmative to an “autonomous” course of African development and supportive to the idea of African “developmental” state;
- 3) “bridge-building” research conducted by African younger generation scholars deeply anchored in global context sustainable development perspectives’ assessment, aimed at specific needs of African societies at the same time.

A qualitative analysis and then synthesis of global, regional, subregional and national strategies, documents and papers dealing with environmental matters has been linked up to carrying out and interpretation of substantial number of semi-structured interviews with African specialists, politicians, public service and non-governmental organization representatives focusing on African sustainable development and environmental problems and proposals of their solutions by African countries alone or in cooperation/combination with other continents. Evaluation of this background material has been applied to the public form of governance and confronted with the real existing regional, subregional and national mechanisms of sustainable development and environmental protection functioning on the African continent in the overall developmental frameworks. Also the results of the global conferences on sustainable development and environment, including the latest United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in June 2012 and their reflexion in relation to the environmental sustainability and good governance in Africa have been analyzed and suggestions and recommendations for their accomplishment have been formulated.

I find that in Africa the capability of institutions at all levels to fulfil preventive functions as well as to assist in recovery of environmental degradation impacts is the main determinant of good governance towards the promotion of sustainable development and environmental sustainability including its efficient protection performance. This capability is in majority of cases dependent on the quality and efficiency of political governance (including the extreme cases of civil wars and subregional conflicts) as well as economic governance (predominance of export sectors exploiting natural resources, insufficient promotion of development based on internal sustainable consumption) and social governance (demographic growth and unsustainable aggressive pressure on ecosystems and resources). The influence of global climate change on African continent has been identified as an impact accelerating and multiplying other long-term negative development trends. The climate change is a factor linked in particular to degradation of ecosystems and soil, reduction of biodiversity and related to a broad spectrum of problems (e.g. availability of water resources, energy and material resources) posing an ultimate threat to the process of promotion of sustainable development, environmental sustainability and poverty reduction. As an important factor impeding internal restructuring of African economies and causing rapid environmental degradation of Africa the present excessive boom in mining industry and exports of natural sources can be identified as part of global efforts to ensure access to the material, energy and food resources.

Key words: sustainable development in Africa, environmental sustainability, good governance, African sustainable development theories, environmental governance, sustainable development institutional aspects, Rio+20 and Africa