

AN EXAMINATION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF COMMON BUT DIFFERENTIATED RESPONSIBILITY

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Abstract

The principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) became necessary in order to balance the roles of nations in addressing the menace of environmental pollution and its resultant degradation of the ecosystem. It is trite that highly developed and industrialized nations contribute more to greenhouse emissions all over the world, than less developed and less industrialized nations of the world. Besides, differences in terms of economic capacity played a vital role in the birth of this principle of CBDR. It became imperative to recognize this difference in levels of 'culpability', while accepting that all nations of the world have a common responsibility to contribute towards sustaining the environment. The Kyoto Protocol aimed at the reduction of environmental degradation through actions geared towards reducing carbon emissions, and commits industrialized nations to be responsible towards reducing the quantity of carbon and dangerous substances they release into the environment. This article examined the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, its operationalisation and how it will affect the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa, especially goals 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7. Recommendations were made in terms of strengthening efforts by Africa towards addressing environmental degradation irrespective of the fact that it has a lower level of responsibility towards curbing greenhouse emissions, unlike the more advanced nations of the world.

Keywords: Greenhouse Emissions; Kyoto Protocol; Sustainable Development; Environment; Climate Change

Introduction

The problem of climate change and the harmful effects it has had on the environment has been at the forefront of discussions among the international community. Concerted efforts have been made over the years to address environmental degradation by finding ways to minimize or possibly eradicate hazardous environmental practices. As a result of increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere, the oceans and atmosphere are getting warmer by the day, which in turn leads to melting ice caps and rising sea levels. Whole nations risk disappearing into the sea and extreme weather patterns such as heat-waves, cyclones, floods, droughts and wildfires are increasingly commonplace.¹

Environmental degradation is an outcome of various socio-economical, technological, and institutional activities, which occurs when the earth's natural resources are depleted.² In the process, the resources which are affected include water, air, and soil; factory effluents mainly include some toxic chemicals and metals as well as their associated harmful compounds, which are indiscriminately discharged into the air, land, and water bodies.³ Dumping of domestic and industrial waste as well as the discharge of toxic chemicals anyhow into the aquatic ecosystem

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¹ IPCC, 'Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report: Summary for Policymakers. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change' [2014] [Core Writing Team, RK Pachauri and LA Meyer (eds)] IPCC Geneva Switzerland 151 pp at 4 and 7-8.

² 'Protecting the Environment Through Sustainable Development Goals', available at <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348415713_Protecting_the_Environment_through_Sustainable_Development_Goals_SDG> accessed on 20 May 2023.

³ Ibid.

ultimately leads to disturbances in the physiology of all most all the animals residing there such as fishes, crustaceans, echinoderms, poriferans as well as the so-called beauties of seas the coral reefs.⁴

While the international community recognizes the presence of climate change and the responsibility that each nation has towards curbing the effect, it is also acknowledged that nations should contribute to this cause according to their capabilities and economic strength. Thus, the principle of common but differentiated responsibility presupposes that all nations have a common goal of preserving the environment, but their contributions should vary according to their capacities – poor and developing nations should not be placed on the same level as rich and industrialized nations. This principle thus seeks to address the problem of equity among nations in addressing the global problem of climate change. Wealthier and more industrialized nations contribute more to climate change than poor developing countries, who suffer more the effect of this climate change; it is only fair and reasonable that such inequality be addressed through the principle of common but differentiated responsibility. Instruments like the Kyoto Protocol have targeted the reduction of environmental degradation through actions aimed at reducing carbon emissions, by committing industrialized nations to be responsible towards reducing the quantity of carbon and dangerous substances they release into the environment.

This article will examine the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, its operationalisation, and how it will affect the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa, especially goals 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7. The level of contributions by nations to carbon emissions and their required attendant responsibility towards curtailing that will also be considered, bearing in mind the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and other environmental protection instruments.

The Kyoto Protocol

The Kyoto Protocol was adopted on 11 December 1997 and entered into force on 16 February 2005. The Kyoto Protocol operationalises United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change by committing industrialized countries and economies in transition to limit and reduce greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions in accordance with agreed individual targets. The Convention itself only asks those countries to adopt policies and measures on mitigation and to report periodically.⁵ It is interesting to note that the Kyoto Protocol is founded on the principles of the UNFCCC and it only binds developed countries, and places a heavier burden on them under the principle of ‘common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities’, because it recognizes that they are largely responsible for the current high levels of GHG emissions in the atmosphere.⁶ In a bid to combat greenhouse emissions, the Kyoto Protocol, just like the UNFCCC, is designed to assist countries in adapting to the adverse effects of climate change, especially through the Adaptation Fund that was primarily established for this purpose.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Environment

Sustainable development is the practice of developing land and construction projects in a manner that reduces their impact on the environment by allowing them to create energy efficient models of self-sufficiency.⁷ The Sustainable Development Goals are also known as the Global Goals, and they were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty,

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ ‘What is the Kyoto Protocol?’ available at <https://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol> accessed on 16 May 2023

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ ‘What is Environmental Sustainability and Sustainable Development?’, <<https://www.conserve-energy-future.com/what-is-environmental-sustainability-and-sustainable-development.php>> Accessed May 25 2023

protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.⁸ Unlike the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the SDGs are global in nature and are not limited to the developing countries, and they encourage new ways of working to ensure these goals are achieved collectively by nations of the world. It is a call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives of and prospects of everyone, everywhere.⁹ The 17 SDGs to transform our world are as follows:

- Goal 1: No poverty
- Goal 2: Zero hunger
- Goal 3: Good health and well-being
- Goal 4: Quality Education
- Goal 5: Gender Equality
- Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation
- Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy
- Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
- Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- Goal 10: Reduced Inequality
- Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
- Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production
- Goal 13: Climate Action
- Goal 14: Life below Water
- Goal 15: Life on land
- Goal 16: Peace and Justice Strong Institutions
- Goal 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goal

In the preamble to the 2030 Agenda, world leaders affirmed thus: ‘Determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations.’¹⁰ The representatives at the Convention further stated that:

In these Goals and targets, we are setting out a supremely ambitious and transformational vision. We envisage a world free of poverty, hunger, disease and want, where all life can thrive. We envisage a world free of fear and violence. A world with universal literacy. A world with equitable and universal access to quality education at all levels, to health care and social protection, where physical, mental and social wellbeing are assured. A world where we reaffirm our commitments regarding the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation and where there is improved hygiene; and where food is sufficient, safe, affordable and nutritious. A world where human habitats are safe, resilient and sustainable and where there is universal access to affordable, reliable and sustainable energy.

According to the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), its challenge in the 2030 Agenda is to develop and enhance integrated approaches to sustainable development, which will show that improving the state of the environment will consequently result in economic and social

⁸ UNDP, ‘What are the Sustainable Development Goals?’ available at <<https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>> accessed 22 May 2023.

⁹ ‘The Sustainable Development Agenda’, <<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>> Accessed 25 May 2023

¹⁰ ‘Sustainable Development Goals’, <<https://www.unep.org/evaluation-office/our-evaluation-approach/sustainable-development-goals>> Accessed on 22 May 2023

advantages. The Sustainable Development Goals were framed by founding countries in the common interest of preserving humanity and other forms of life through the protection of the environment from harmful activities that cause environmental degradation. From time to time various awareness campaigns have been undertaken throughout the globe, aimed to minimize human induced environmental degradation. Plans have been made and tried upon in routine to minimize the manmade damage to the environment.¹¹ In September 2015, the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit adopted an international framework to guide development efforts entitled, ‘transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.’ The SDG framework has a total of 17 goals, 169 targets and 244 indicators – 93 of which are environmental related.¹² In terms of the environmental dimension of development the SDGs cover natural resource management, climate change, water-related issues, marine issues, biodiversity and ecosystems, circular economy, environmentally sound management of chemicals and waste, and many other issues facing the planet.¹³ Achieving these goals will greatly impact on the economic and social development of world economies, as these aspects of humanity largely depend on the sustainability and survival of the environment. According to the United Nations, when the SDGs are achieved by 2030, it could open \$12 trillion in market opportunities and about 380 million jobs. It further said that the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) provides a unique opportunity to implement the SDGs and Agenda 2063.

Operationalisation of the Principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibility and the Realization of the SDGs

The adoption of SDGs, which are aspirational political goals for States premised on ‘leaving no one behind’, represents a significant shift toward capturing the environmental, economic, and social dimensions of sustainable development and guiding policy decisions toward achieving objective, transparent and superior development results.¹⁴ The corona virus pandemic in 2020 as well as climate change, have greatly affected the progress of achieving the SDGs in Africa, and it is less than 7 years to the targeted year 2030 for the attainment of these goals. The African Union Commission (AUC), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) jointly released a status report on the SDGs during the African Economic Conference in 2022, which took place in Mauritius that in spite of the significant progress recorded in terms of some of the goals like education, gender equality and in terms of partnerships to achieve the goals, there are still many challenges that have to be tackled through inward and home-grown efforts to find solutions.¹⁵ The principle of CBDR consists of two elements. The responsibility to confront climate change is common for all nations, yet different for each actor.

First, CBDR delineates that the responsibilities of actors are shared, meaning that everyone is entitled or even obliged, to engage in climate change response measures. The aspect that responsibilities are ‘common’ is said to originate from the simple fact that all countries will be, or

¹¹ ‘Protecting the Environment through the SDGs’ available at <<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348415713>> accessed on 26th April 2023

¹² ‘World Environment Situation Room’, available at <<https://wesr.unep.org/sdgs>> accessed 16 May, 2023

¹³ *Ibid*

¹⁴ Stellina Jolly & Abhishek Trivedi, ‘Principle of CBDR-RC: Its Interpretation and Implementation through NDCS in the Context of Sustainable Development’, (2021) 11 WASH. J. ENVTL. L. & POL’Y 310. available at <<https://digitalcommons.law.uw.edu/wjelp/vol11/iss3/6>> accessed 25 May 2023

¹⁵ African Development Bank, ‘New Reports shows need for greater actions if Africa is to hit SDG, Agenda 2063 targets’ available at <<https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/press-releases/new-report-shows-need-greater-action-if-africa-hit-sdg-agenda-2063-targets-57403>> accessed 25 May 2023

are already, affected by a changing climate.¹⁶ Moreover, each country will have to recognize that national legislation and policies concerning this issue are not only a matter of domestic jurisdiction. Since effects of climate change are global, consideration will also have to be made to the entire international community when deciding on such issues.¹⁷ Just like the term indicates, this ‘common responsibility’ is closely linked to ‘a common heritage/concern of mankind’, which is a term that has been prevalent in many international regulatory contexts for quite some time. It is also stated first in the preamble of the UNFCCC that ‘change in the Earth’s climate and its adverse effects are a common concern of humankind’. The ‘common’ responsibility of CBDR can be regarded as building on that notion, which means that an issue – in this case the environment – forms a collective heritage to which everything else is linked, thus also calling for cooperative action from all mankind to address associated concerns.¹⁸

Second, the CBDR principle also states that these common responsibilities are differentiated between states. This can partly be ascribed to the fact that states are varyingly accountable for the anthropogenic changes to the climate, yet also because all states have different possibilities. The two common justifications for the principle of CBDR can be seen in the preamble to the UNFCCC and Article 7 of the Rio Declaration, and these are:

- a. That developed countries have benefited from and, by implication, harmed the environment more than developing countries. As such, developing countries should also have the liberty to equally benefit, which might mean that, in so doing, they could harm the environment, and should have equal access to its resources.
- b. Due to the first justification, developed countries should have more environmental protection responsibilities. This justification is in line with the principle of legal liability.

The UNFCCC provides that Parties have an obligation to take actions to protect the climate system on the basis of equality and according to their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capacities. In other words, countries who contributed most to degrading the environment through pollution, should in all fairness, should take up more responsibility in cushioning the effects of such pollution; on the other hand, poorer or less developed countries who contribute less to climate change should take responsibility according to their level of contribution to the degradation of the environment. The principle of common but differentiated responsibility, according to Dr. Kariuki Muigua,¹⁹ is a way to take into account the differing circumstances, particularly in each state’s contribution to the creation of environmental problems and in its ability to prevent, reduce or control them. He further stated that the principle is important for the realization of Agenda 2030 SDGs which reaffirm all the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, including, *inter alia*, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, as set out in principle 7 thereof. In order to reduce inequality within and among countries, SDG Goal 10.a seeks to *inter alia*, implement the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, in accordance with World Trade Organization agreements.²⁰

¹⁶ Christopher D Stone, ‘Common but Differentiated Responsibilities in International Law’ [2004] 98(2) *American Journal of International Law* 276.

¹⁷ Tuula Honkonen, *The Common but Differentiated Responsibility Principle in Multilateral Environmental Agreements: Regulatory and Policy Aspects* (Kluwer Law International, 2009) 1-2.

¹⁸ *Ibid* at 68

¹⁹ Principles of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Equitable Sharing – The Lawyer Africa, available at <<https://thelawyer.africa/2022/05/29/common-but-differentiated-responsibilities-and-equitable-sharing>> accessed May 5 2023

²⁰ *Ibid*.

Environmental degradation is an outcome of various socio-economical, technological, and institutional activities. Whenever something important is extracted from the environment at a very higher level or something very harmful such as chemicals are added, it shows or initiates a high level of environmental degradation and enhanced death rate and diseases in inhabitants of such environment.²¹ The factory effluents mainly include some toxic chemicals and metals as well as their associated harmful compounds, which are indiscriminately discharged into the air, land, and water bodies. The pace with which such events are taking place is very fast and continuing this coming generation will be in danger.²²

According to a statistic published by Doris Dokua Sasu in 2021, on the levels of carbon dioxide (CO₂) by countries in Africa, South Africa ranked as the most polluting country in Africa in 2021 after it emitted about 436 million metric tons of CO₂ emissions.²³ Egypt was next with around 250 million metric tons of CO₂ emissions, followed by Algeria, Nigeria and Libya accordingly.²⁴ Despite accounting for just 4 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, climate change disproportionately hurts Africa, and poses a threat to human well-being and development on the continent.²⁵ According to the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO)'s State of the Climate in Africa Report 2021, extreme weather and climate change are undermining human health and safety, food and water security and socio-economic development on the African continent.²⁶ It is also on record that the African Development Bank has acknowledged the impact of climate change on Africa, and has stated that economies in Africa have been affected between 5 percent and 15 percent as a result of climate change.²⁷ In the same report, it is stated that Africa's cumulative CO₂ emissions amounted to around 48 billion metric tons in the period between 1884 and 2020, while from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in 1750 to 2020 the world emitted approximately 1.7 trillion metric tons of CO₂. Thus the contribution of Africa to global CO₂ emissions accounted for less than 3 percent as of 2020, while the United States, Europe and China have been the largest emitters worldwide.²⁸

According to the most recent data from the Global Carbon Atlas, the top five countries that have produced in the aggregate the most CO₂ since the Industrial Revolution are the United States, China, Russia, Germany, and the United Kingdom.²⁹ In 2020, the largest emitters were in China, the United States, India, Russia, and Japan. It is evident that the wealthy and developed nations of the world account for the most contribution to global carbon emissions, while the poorer and underdeveloped nations of the world suffer the most impact, even though they contribute way lesser than the advanced nations. The impact of climate change is felt more in Africa and other developing nations of the world firstly, climate change is a major obstacle to achieving the SDGs in Africa; droughts, floods and other hazards caused by climate change have affected some African economies. A report revealed that increasing temperatures and sea levels, changing precipitation patterns and more extreme weather are threatening human health and safety, food and water security

²¹ 'Protecting the Environment through Sustainable Development Goals', (n 11).

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Statista, '@Energy and Environment: Emissions' available at <<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1268395/production-based-co2-emissions-in-africa-by-country/>> accessed 16 May, 2023.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ World Economic Forum, "Africa's businesses are its secret weapon against climate change" ><https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/11/africa-business-climate-change-mitigation-adaptation/>< accessed on 16 May, 2023

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Union of Concerned Scientists, "Each Country's Share of CO₂ Emissions." available at ><https://www.ucsusa.org/>< accessed on 16 May, 2023

and socio-economic development in Africa.³⁰ Now, the UNFCCC provides for CBDR in principle 7 as follows:

States shall cooperate in a spirit of global partnership to conserve, protect and restore the health and integrity of the Earth's ecosystem. In view of the different contributions to global environmental degradation, States have common but differentiated responsibilities. The developed countries acknowledge the responsibility that they bear in the international pursuit of sustainable development in view of the pressures their societies place on the global environment and of the technologies and financial resources they command.

The goal of achieving sustainable development through the SDGs becomes unrealistic in the face of climate change and environmental degradation, which has differing impacts or effects on countries, the worst affected being the poor underdeveloped countries of the world. The need to balance environmental sustainability/preservation with sustainable development becomes necessary because the two are well interconnected. The principle of CBDR has been manifested in some policies and an example is the environmental pillar of sustainable development; the Kyoto Protocol of 1997 made a distinction between goals proposed for developed and developing nations by requiring 'developed countries to reduce their emissions while developing countries only needed to report their emissions.'³¹ This led to the agreement of developed countries to reduce their greenhouse gases (GHG) through a binding agreement. These countries now fall under Annex 1 of the Kyoto Protocol and are committed to reducing their GHG emissions in compliance with certain pre-agreed targets.³²

Now, when it comes to eradication of poverty the principle of CBDR encourages countries that have lesser levels of poverty to render assistance towards ending poverty, while the developing countries with higher rates of poverty on the other hand are urged to focus primarily on eradicating poverty. The greatest impacts of climate change are felt by developing countries, while the greatest per capita GHG emissions are concentrated in developed countries.³³ It is important to state here that there may be need to reassess from time to time, the degrees of responsibilities of developing nations, as the level of GHG emissions may have significantly increased in the course of the years after the principle of CBDR was first adopted. It is however hoped that by the year 2063 the SDGs would have been greatly achieved in Africa. The principle still remains very important in terms of rendering support to Africa by more advanced economies in areas of education, poverty eradication and technological advancement, as this will facilitate the smooth attainment of sustainable development.

It must be emphasized here that the CBDR principle was finally incorporated into the new UN 2030 Agenda mainly because the agenda managed to merge the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and it became universally applicable to all UN member states, notwithstanding their divergent capabilities to implement these goals.³⁴ Goal 17 in the UN 2030 Agenda, which focuses on actions to 'strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development,' underscores the CBDR principle in global development cooperation in all the five fields including finance,

³⁰ United Nations Climate Change, "Climate Change is an Increasing Threat to Africa," UNFCCC, available at <<https://unfccc.int/news/climate-change-is-an-increasing-threat-to-africa>> accessed on 16 May, 2023

³¹ 'What is the Kyoto Protocol? Definition, History, Timeline Status', available at <<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/k/kyoto.asp>> accessed 25 May 2023.

³² Ibid.

³³ UNDP, available at <<http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/data/climatechange/shares/>> accessed 22 May 2023.

³⁴ Ye Jiang, 'The CBDR Principle in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' available at <www.worldscientific.com> accessed 18 May 2023

technology, capacity-building, trade, and systemic issue.³⁵ For example, Target 17.2 on financial means requires developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments, including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 percent of ODA/GNI (Official Development Assistance/Gross National Income) to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 percent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries; [besides,] ODA providers are encouraged to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20 percent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries.³⁶

Target 17.7 also encourages developed countries to promote the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favourable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed.³⁷ The fact that is that different requirements for developed and developing countries are established on the basis that even though all countries of the world have common responsibilities in promoting sustainable development around the world, they have different levels of roles to play because of their different economic, technological and social strengths and capabilities *et cetera*. Addressing the concerns of marginalized communities and poor countries of the world will result in the achievement of the SDGs.

The historically disproportionate contribution of countries to climate change and existing disparities amongst countries in their ability to respond to climate change has forced the international community to deviate from the classic notion of the sovereign equality of States by adopting a differentiation principle in terms of climate obligation.³⁸ Principle 7 of the Rio Declaration explicitly integrated CBDR within the context of sustainable development. However, the relationship was expressed only in the context of historical contributions of developed countries to environmental degradation and their capacity to respond to environmental degradation. This point is a serious bone of contention between developed and developing nations where the latter insist on an expansive interpretation of CBDR to be applicable to all facets of sustainable development.³⁹

The presence of the differentiation principle in the context of sustainable development and its application to the implementation of SDGs was reaffirmed and reiterated in the OWG Report on sustainable development submitted to the General Assembly on August 14, 2014.⁴⁰ The application of the principle of CBDR can be seen in the area of aid from developed countries to poorer nations of Africa. The aid is to assist in alleviating poverty, supporting education and technological advancement and other social aspects of sustainable development, towards the achievement of the SDGs. For instance, on December 15, 2022 President Joe Biden announced that the United States, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), planned to provide \$2 billion in life-saving assistance to support crisis-affected people in Africa, subject to availability of funds.⁴¹ Even though this aid is supposed to assist in the attainment of the SDGs, sadly that has not been the case as available data show that over 75 percent of the world's poor

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Lavanya Rajamani, 'The Changing Fortunes of Differential Treatment in the Evolution of International Environmental Law', (2012) 88 INT'L AFFAIRS 605.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ 'United States to Provide \$2 Billion in Humanitarian Assistance for People of Africa', available at <<https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/dec-15-2022-united-states-provide-2-billion-humanitarian-assistance-people-africa>> accessed 23 May 2023.

live in Africa today, and some forecasts suggest that it could rise to 90 percent by 2030.⁴² It is my opinion that in order for the Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved, Africa has a duty to wake up and take responsibility for the efficient use of the large amount of money received as aids from developed foreign nations, and channel the resources towards investing in ventures that will prevent flood, droughts and other disasters that hamper meaningful development. Some of these aids are grossly mismanaged by African countries, and this is evident from the fact that for over 50 years that support from foreign donors have been coming, Africa still remains largely underdeveloped. People have therefore argued that financial support to Africa should be stopped or at best, overhauled.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is true that environmental degradation has become a matter of common concern to the international community, and concerted efforts have been made to see that the issue is addressed. Environmental degradation is now one of the most pressing issues facing the environment. Depending on the level of the harm done, some areas may never recover from the damage. The long-term effects of environmental development should be borne in mind by the relevant stakeholders; the advantages of protecting the environment far outweigh the disadvantages. A clean and healthy environment results in a robust and development-friendly atmosphere for sustainable growth. It is in the light of this that the international community, realizing that some nations contribute more to environmental degradation than others, and that some are equally more independent than the others in terms of financial and technological strengths and so on, came up with the principle of common but differentiated responsibility. This resolution is based on the doctrine of equity and fairness, especially as the larger brunt of environmental pollution is felt by poor developing nations of the world. The resultant benefits of this principle if utilized judiciously in Africa can greatly assist in the realization of the SDGs.

It is further recommended that Africa should take proactive steps towards addressing the problem of GHG emissions within the continent in order to prevent or reduce environmental degradation. Dumping of wastes into rivers, deforestation and other harmful activities should be discouraged in order to preserve aquatic and wild life reserves. Partnerships with stakeholders in the areas of environmental protection and actions towards achieving the SDGs should be strengthened; aid received have to be well managed to ensure they are strictly channelled towards sustainable development

⁴² 'International Aid to Africa needs an Overhaul', available at <<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/international-aid-africa-needs-overhaul-tips-what-needs-change>> accessed on 23 May 2023.