

**“NATIONAL OR GLOBAL INTEREST:” REAPPRAISAL OF
EARTH’S SUMMIT AND FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE
IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

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Abstract

Climate change has become one of the greatest challenges to humankind, nations, and a highly debated issue in international relations as environmental protection and development give prime concern and attention. The earth summit signified a relevant landmark in awakening the world to the need for a development process to secure the present and future generations. The important aggregates of natural, physical, biological, psychological and cultural environment as a factor influencing the behavioural condition and structure of living things, including human beings are inescapable from the effects of climate change. On that note, this paper examines national or collective world interest towards the fight against the menace of climate change in relationship to the conceptual explication and understanding of climate change, theoretical framework, earth summit and its programmes against climate change vis a vis environment, the relevance of earth summit in the fight against climate change, and obstacles to the fight against climate change. By the historical method and analysis of secondary data, this paper argues that climate change is a transnational problem that is beyond any single state and its effective solution farfetched due to national interest of states and collective interest of the world. The paper finds that fight against climate change



requires the cooperative action and concerted efforts of the peoples of the globe. However, the paper concludes that the international environmental politics forestalled the achievement of the genuine action statement of earth summit towards the fight against climate change. The paper recommends among other things, the cooperation between the North and South over debate on climate change challenges.

Key words: National Interest, Collective Interest, Earth Summit, Climate Change and International Politics

Introduction

The climate change of the earth has elucidated multiple and complex consideration in the study of the ecosystem. Ecosystem which is referred as an environmental system consisting of the community of all living organisms in a given area, together with the non-living physical and chemical aspects of the environment, and other branches of biological and physical sciences, as they all bear on the environment of life - biosphere cannot be said to be free from the effects of climate change. Environment has provided the means of livelihood as well as have created difficult experiences for mankind. However, man has acquired the power to transform his environment in countless ways and at an unprecedented scale occasioned by population growth and rapid acceleration of science and technology. Man has always shown dexterity to explore, exploit and transform his environment despite the ever-increasing number of environmental challenges, starting from the archaic form of land degradation, lack of portable water and poor sanitation to the modern global environmental challenges such as ozone layer depletion, trans-boundary movement of toxic waste to loss of biological diversity, air and water pollution, acid rain and above all, the famous climate change reality.¹

Climate change has become one of the seriously debated environmental issues between and among states in international relations. This debate



arises from either national or global component interest, and even from private interest organizations on how to maintain and sustain the balance in the ecosystem. It becomes important, especially, as it has been observed that the global natural environment is under increasing threat from human activities and natural disasters. The effect of climate change, indeed, has bedeviled the biotic and abiotic aspects of the ecosystem and posed overarching challenges. Alteration in earth climate has been argued to being caused by human activities and technological advancement made to enjoy luxurious life or otherwise. This action by humans inadvertently led to severe irreversible imbalances and disturbance in the natural environment shown by volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, tsunamis etc. which are environmentally disastrous.²

John Tyndall, an Irish scientist, in his study by 1859, identified two gases; carbon-dioxide and water vapor as trapping heat in the atmosphere and the earth to be warmer than it would otherwise be.³ But, serious concern was not given to climate change until approximately a couple of decades after the World War 11, when climatologists have increasingly focused on the subject and large sums of finance was invested on data gathering and climate modeling.⁴ Thus, institutional arrangements, conferences, treaties or agreement etc. in the fight against climate change both on bilateral and multilateral form became necessary.

Considering the ongoing introduction, this study therefore, interrogates the earth summit and national interest of states or collective interest of the world towards the fight against the menace of climate change in relationship with: the conceptual explication and understanding of climate change, theoretical framework, earth summit and its programmes against climate change of the environment, the relevance of earth summit in the fight against climate change, obstacles to the fight against climate change: national interest of states or collective interest of the world and the conclusion.



Conceptual Explication and Understanding of Climate Change

Discourse on the conceptual explication and understanding of climate change may defy comprehensive knowledge outside the meaning of “climate”. Chuka Enuka defines climate as the characteristics weather of an area which includes temperature, rainfall, sunshine, wind, humidity etc.⁵ Climate means the general weather conditions of a place as measured over many years. The understanding of climate change shows important need to differentiate between climate and weather. Weather is the state of the atmosphere at any given time, including temperature, precipitation or winds while, climate is the “average weather” over a period ranging from months to thousands or millions of years.⁶

Climate change refers to the alteration of climatic conditions from historic norms and the associated threats to environments and society. Climate change is generally explained as a significant variation of average weather conditions becoming warmer, wetter, or drier over several decades or more. It is the change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of human activity which goes with the fact that it is the longer-term trend that differentiates climate change and natural weather variability.⁷

The conceptual understanding of climate change shows itself in many ways by its explications predicted in weather patterns. According to the National Academic Reports on climate change, the greenhouse effect is a natural phenomenon that is essential to keeping the Earth’s surface warm. Without it, there would not be life. Like a greenhouse window, greenhouse gases allow sunlight to enter and then prevent heat from leaving the atmosphere. Water vapour (H₂O), is the most important greenhouse gas, following by carbon-dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous-oxide (N₂O), halocarbons, and ozone (O₃). However, much higher concentrations of greenhouse gases than naturally occur – mostly from burning fossil fuels – are trapping excess heat in the atmosphere and are warming Earth’s surface faster than at any time in recorded



history.⁸The above statement shows that climate change emerges from negative and terrible radiative warming of earth climate system.

Different types of environmental related challenges such as ozone layer depletion, loss of biological diversity, population, air pollution, water scarcity and water pollution etc. are linked to climate change, primarily on the amount of greenhouse (heat-trapping) gases emitted globally and on the remaining uncertainty in the sensitivity of the Earth's climate to those emissions. In particular, climate change has been influenced by the widespread use of fossil fuels - coal, oil and gas - in homes, factories and transport as aforementioned. It is believed that when fossil fuels burn, they release greenhouse gases - mostly carbon dioxide (CO₂).⁹ These gases trap the Sun's heat in the atmosphere, causing the planet's temperature to rise, thus, the climate change.

The term "climate change" is considered interchangeably with the phrase "global warming". Climate change in common usage describes global warming. Therefore, a change in the world's climate can mean global climate change or temperature change leading to global warming. Climate change is measured by changes in temperature, precipitation, wind, storms and other indicators which include: changes in rainfall, sea level rise, increased storm severity, extended drought conditions, associated coastal erosion and flooding, and increased or intensified flash flooding, increasing floods and heat waves. It also makes the ocean become more acidic, causes the ice caps to melt, and with other biophysical effects.¹⁰

The understanding of climate change goes with the explanation of climate crisis and its related impacts. Climate crisis refers to the serious problems that are being caused, or are likely to be caused, by changes in the planet's climate, including weather extremes and natural disasters, and water insecurity, health risks, economic disruption, displacement, and even violent conflict.¹¹ By its impacts, Enuka asserts that:

Climate change will affect all countries, especially, the developing poor countries, will be disproportionately affected due to their reliance on local ecological resources, and limited financial, institutional and human resources dilemma expose the poor countries most vulnerable and least able to adapt to the menace impacts of climate change. ...climate change may undermine the ability of developing countries to meet the target put for the in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).¹²

He further observes that the Nigerian coastline, with particular reference to Lagos, for instance, which is low-lying will be affected adversely by the impacts of climate change through increase in sea level:

... about 403km² of the Mahin Mud Coast could be lost; a sea level increase of 0.2m-estimated coast to be under peril while with about 0.5m sea level; and about 1008km² of the Mahin Mud Coast could be lost. This could lead to the loss of 30 to 75 villages along the entire coast, displacement of population amounting to 32,000 to 180,000 people, Lagos and Lekki barrier Lagoon system harbouring large real estate could lose well over 584 and 602 square kilometers of land from erosion and inundation, and the residential, commercial, and tourist facilities on the Victoria, Ikoyi and Lagos islands will be under scourge

...¹³

The spread of disease vectors including malaria; the destruction of coral reef from warmer seas and extreme weather events; and hydrological variability that affects water quality and supply have assisted in conceptual explication and understanding of global warming or climate change which conveys that there are changes in addition to rising temperatures.

Generally speaking, climate change entails the long-term changes in the Earth's climate that are warming the atmosphere, ocean and land, affecting the balance of ecosystems that support life and biodiversity,



and impacting on health. Its significances can also be seen towards more extreme weather events, such as more intense and/or frequent hurricanes, floods, heat waves, and droughts, and leads to sea level rise and coastal erosion as a result of ocean warming, melting of glaciers, and loss of ice sheets within or beyond geographical environment. Therefore, climate change remains an important aspect of the international environmental challenge, greenhouse warming is a potential threat sufficient to justify the causal intricacies involved and leading to climate change.

Theoretical Framework

Theories can be used to predict how countries react to certain issues existing within contemporary society, such as climate change, which is a continuous problem that concerns not just one nation, but the entire globe. Realist, liberalist, and constructivist frameworks can provide insight as to how climate change can be approached. Within these three theories, realism, due to reasons concerning anarchy and power, offers the best explanation to the politics of climate change, however, in order to help better the issue, a liberal approach is necessary.

Liberalist theory is connected to liberal philosophers beginning with John Locke in the 17th century which saw great potential for human progress. They have positive view on human nature and believe that rational principles can be applied to international affairs. Liberals recognize that individuals are self-interested and competitive up to a point, however, they also believe that individuals share many interests and can thus engage in collaborative and cooperative social action, domestically and internationally that can benefit everybody at home and abroad.¹⁴

Liberalism as theory emphasizes interdependence between states and substate actors as the key characteristic of the international system. Interdependence means that state and their fortunes are connected to each other which suggests that what happens inside one state can have



significant effects on what happens inside another state, and the relations between two states can greatly affect the relations between other states.¹⁵ It is associated with such words as globalism, new world order, liberal internationalism, and internationalist.¹⁶ A situation whereby global or transnational problems like climate change could be ascertained and tackled with a global response. Climate change through liberal means would be for countries to commit to peaceful collaboration in efforts to create a resolution and emphasize change if it is deemed necessary, commit to appropriate reforms within their respective societies, with a fundamental purpose to improve the condition of the environment. A clear reflection of this is already evident within today's society through the Paris Climate Agreement in which they explicitly include:

Strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change. Through this agreement, countries are actively coming together to seek a resolution towards the issue. Furthermore, they are taking an extra step in which, "parties will take stock of the collective efforts". This organization is a conspicuous modern-day example of liberalism as states recognize the threat and are peacefully cooperating by pooling their resources together in hopes of solving the issue.¹⁷

Hans J. Morgenthau is considered as the father of the modern realist though as captured in his book, titled, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. Hillary I. Ekemam, quoting Morgenthau argues that "politics is embarked upon simply as a struggle to achieve power, ... what nation-states pursue in international arena is nothing, greater than power"¹⁸ States are forced to acquire, protect and manipulate power, for national interest. Realists believe in the doctrine that holds that where international relations exists, the interest of the state surpasses over all other values and interest.¹⁹

Supporters of realist theory are Thucydides, Niccolo Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, E. H. Carr, Max Weber, Karl Von Clausewitz,



Kenneth Waltz and among others. Hence, some of the basic assumptions of realism are:

States are the most important actors in global politics (states are governments that exercise supreme, or sovereign authority over a defined territory); states pursue their interest defined as power, and maximization of power that is in a state's interest (realists believe that power determines which country prevails, they hold that politics is aimed at increasing power, keeping power, or demonstrating power); states' defining features of global politics as anarchic in nature based on competition among sovereign states (realist believe that the international system based on sovereign states, which answer to no higher authority, is anarchic, with no overarching authority providing security and order, and the result of such a self-help system is that each state must rely on its own resource to survive and flourish); states attach high regard for the values of national security, interest, and survival; and states are skeptical that there can be progress in international politics that is comparable to that of domestic political life.²⁰

The fact that all states must pursue their own national interest means that other countries and governments cannot be relied upon completely to determine the approach for or against climate change condition. The main point is what protects and defends the interest of the state in international politics? States are skeptical of the conflictual and anarchical nature of international system and dispell the idea of international organization. Therefore, all international agreements about climate change which are taken within the framework of international organization (that do not favour the national interest of the state) are provisional and conditional on the willingness of states to observe them. All states must be prepared to sacrifice their international obligations on the altar of their own self-interest if the two comes into conflict. Treaties and all other agreements, conventions, customs, rules, laws,



and so on between states merely are expedient arrangements which can and will be set aside if they conflict with the vital interest of states.

The normative core of realism is national security and state survival: these are values that drive realist doctrine and realist foreign policy, that is, whatever enhances or preserves the state's security, its influence, and its economic power to promote welfare of the state is the final arbiter. This means that whether there exists climate change or not, state embarks on economic activities believed to benefit its interest irrespective of whatever negative implication it gives on the overall interest of others.

In essence, because states can never rely on others for protection, they pursue self-interested policies and seek power to secure their safety. Under realism, states aiding others would do little to achieve individual states' power acquisition and this can also affect their power positions. Therefore, regarding climate change, it would be illogical for a state to send financial resources to sustain economic development and technological advancements of other states in the name of climate change. Although, if they do, this would help prevent some challenges of climate change by elevating the society of numerous countries, it also inadvertently affects the global status of the sponsoring country and could compromise the power status of the state.

Consequently, individual national interest of states in international relations, undoubtedly, have influenced debates, legislations and international regimes put in place to solve the global catastrophic menace of climate change. This, thus, overrides and proved abortive the global collective interest encapsulated on "Earth Summits" towards the fight against environmental obstacle of climate change.

Earth Summit and its Programmes against Climate Change of the Environment

The Earth Summit which is officially known as the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) was a United Nations global conference set up to fashion out ways to halt the destruction of irreplaceable natural resources and tackle pollution of all kinds. It was a watershed in the environmental and climate change history of the world. Starting from its very first meeting where more than 170 Countries met at Rio Janeiro, Brazil, in June, 1992 to discuss on the potential dangers the disruption of our planet's natural system, the degradation of human and ecological health, the poisoning of the earth, and depletion of the productive natural resources of mankind, the conference had a target.²¹

The summit's message was that nothing less than the transformation of attitude and behaviour would bring about the necessary change required to avoid or mitigate climate change and its effects on the environment. The message reflected on the complexity of the problems facing mankind: the poverty as well as excessive consumption by affluent populations which placed damaging stress on the environment, and thereby calling on the government or governments to recognize the need to redirect international and national plans and policies to ensure that all economic decisions fully take the resulting environmental impact into account.²²

The major outcome of the conference, a 'blueprint' intended to guide development in sustainable directions into and through the 21st century was predicated on the Earth Summit's agreements. Heads of states and governments, therefore, adopted three major agreements aimed at changing the traditional approach to development which affect the environment leading to climate change. These include:(1) Agenda 21- a comprehensive programme of action for global action in all areas of sustainable development; (2) The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development – a series of principles determining the rights and responsibility of states; and (3) The Statement of Forest Principles – a



set of principles to underline the sustainable management of forest worldwide. In addition, Two legally binding conventions aimed at preventing global climate change and the eradication of the diversity of biological species were established and opened for signature at the summit, thus, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and The Convention on Biological Diversity.²³

Agenda 21 addresses today's pressing problems on social and economic sphere and aims to prepare the world for the challenges of the next century. It contains detailed proposal for action in social and economic areas such as combating poverty, changing pattern of production and consumption, demographic dynamics, and for ensuring and managing the natural resources that are the basis for life. It gave concern for protecting the atmosphere, oceans and biodiversity, preventing deforestation, and promoting sustainable agriculture. The programme of action also recommended ways to strengthen the part played by major groups; women, trade union, farmers, children and young people, indigenous peoples, the scientific community, local authorities, business, industry, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) etc. in achieving sustainable development.²⁴

The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development supported Agenda 21 by defining the rights and responsibilities of independent sovereign states within and among the declared principles, and states as follows:

- (1) That human beings are at the center of concerns for sustainable development who are entitled to health and productive life in harmony with nature;*
- (2) That scientific uncertainty should not delay measures to prevent environmental degradation where there are threats of serious or irreversible damages;*
- (3) That states have a sovereign right to exploit their own resources but not to cause damages to environment of other states;*
- (4) That eradicating poverty and reducing disparities in worldwide standard of living are indispensable for sustainable*



development; (5) That the full participation of women is essential for achieving sustainable development; and (6) That the developed countries acknowledge the responsibility 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.²⁵

The statement of forest principles cum non-legally binding statement of principle for sustainable management of forests was the first global consensus reached on forests conversation. Among its provisions include: (1) That all countries notably, developed countries should make an effort to “green the world” through reforestation and forest conservation; (2) That states have a right to develop forests according to their socio-economic needs, in keeping with national sustainable development policies and; (3) That specific financial resources should be provided to develop programmes that encourage economic and social substitution policies.²⁶

At the summit, the United Nations was also called upon to negotiate an international legal agreement on desertification, to hold talk on preventing the depletion of certain fish stocks, to devise programme of action for the sustainable development of small island developing states and to establish mechanism for ensuring the implementation of the Rio accord. Five years later, in June, 1997, the United Nations General Assembly held a special session to review the progress made since the United Nation Conference on Environmental and Development (UNCED). Following the review, the framework convention on climate change led to intense negotiations that ultimately resulted in the 1997 “Kyoto Protocol” which calls for industrialized countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by at least 5 percent by 2012. However, one of the controversial aspects of the protocol concerns the allowance of emission credits. Some states such as Russia and the developing world were not obliged to reduce emissions and could sell their credit to countries that were obliged to reduce emissions.²⁷



In September, 2002, World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) took place in Johannesburg, South Africa. The Earth Summit 11 convergence, as it is fondly called tried to address the undeniable fact that most of the agreements made at UNCED in particular were not obliged, development assistances were initiated and implemented on weekly bases at best. However, the Earth Summit 11 has the following main objectives: (1) To revitalize and energize commitments to sustainable development; (2) To frankly recognize failures and identify reasons why; (3) To recognize achievements and identify actions that will boost them; (4) To define priorities for the post-97 period; and (5) To raise the profile of issues addressed insufficiently by Rio.²⁸ Therefore, Earth Summit sets a pace for subsequent WSSD which contributed immensely in the fight against climate change of the environment.

The Relevance of Earth Summit in the Fight against Climate Change

The Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro was unprecedented for a UN conference, in terms of both its size and the scope of its concern. It was a universal multinational environmental conference, one of its kind that attracted more than 170 independent sovereign Heads of states and governments in their physical appearance capacity and more than 200 non-state actors to discuss on the issue of climate change and its effects, and proffer solutions for the future. From a global perspective, the Earth Summit marked the arrival of environmental concern on the international stage as a major new consideration in foreign policy. The presence of Foreign Ministers, Prime Ministers, Development Ministers, and Presidents made the point that environmental questions must be accommodated in decisions and policies affecting trade, energy, agriculture, and economic development.²⁹

The Earth Summit ushered in the Framework on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity (FCCCB, 1992) which stood as

a further example for complicated and global approach occupying much of the international environmental treaty making. The conference resulted in a non-binding agreement that covered every environmental issue, domestic development, social and economic policy changes, forms and expectations about environmental cooperation in effort to forestall adverse effects of climate change.³⁰

One of the remarkable achievements of the Earth Summit in the fight against climate was Agenda 21 - an ambitious 900 pages action plan for protecting the atmosphere, ocean, and other global resources, and a commitment to double the funding for help in the developing countries in order for them to fight against climate change were categorically stimulated in the Agenda 21 as part of sustainable development in their jurisdictions. For example, Baltic 21 programme by the 11 countries surrounding the Baltic Sea that addresses economic, social and environmental objectives as it applies to establishing sustainability in different sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, forests, industry, energy, tourism, and transportation.³¹

Mindful of the menace and terrible situations greenhouse and global warming effects may unleash on mankind, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (dubbed the Earth Summit) in its peculiarity produced and sponsored several global meetings on the environment. These include varieties of invitation of programmes to slow down, stop or begin to reverse the negative individual mindset towards degradation of the environment. Both intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations are now increasingly involved and also requiring that environmental impact statements accompanied requests for economic development aid to finance projects that have acceptable positive impacts on the biosphere.³²

The relevance of the Earth Summit has to do with awakening the world to the need for development process that does not jeopardize the future



generation. Earth Summit achieved some set of agreements between Governments to advance international cooperation on development and environment matters. Political commitment and arrangements at the highest level were marshaled out and issues of sustainable development were placed at the heart of the international agenda. New paths for communication and cooperation between official and non-official organizations were tailored towards developmental and environmental goals. It also led to an enormous increase in public awareness of the climate change issues that needed to be tackled – an awareness that supposed to facilitate the adoption of policies and allocation of additional resources to achieve the task of agenda 21.³³

Earth Summit, by its very nature, produced and provided a high level of international gathering to reinvigorate global political commitment to the Three dimensions of sustainable development which are: economic growth, social improvement and environmental protection (climate Change) focusing on reducing poverty while at the same time, promoting jobs growth, clean energy and achieving fairer sustainable uses of resources in the world.

Obstacles to the Fight against Climate Change: National Interest of States or Collective Interest of the World

Despite all efforts instituted by the Earth Summit to solve the environmental problems of climate change, much still needs to be done as the national interest of states seems to override the collective interest of the earth summit, compounded by lack of an overarching authority to effectively coordinate and maintain the Agenda 21. Admittedly, the eradication or mitigation of the most environmental challenges require the coordination of several states actions (both developed and developing/underdeveloped), but the importance of national interest over collective interest is often too high to be compromised. Because of this very point, the states globally are having difficult time to achieving



cooperation in a way that should effectively deal with the dangers of climate change.

The existing international political economic divisions, most especially, the North-South debate on environmental challenges has affected the international environmental cooperation and added to the general problems of convincing independent actors to contribute to collective good. Kaarbo and Lee Ray argue that “inequitable economic relations between the North and South have proven to be a crucial element of the political context of global environmental politics ... The developing states perceive the global economic structure as being fundamentally inequitable, often shape their policy response to global environmental issues and strategies for negotiating ...”³⁴

The less industrialized poorer countries pointed out that the blame for the environmental problem of climate change which the world is facing today lies with the past and current actions of the highly industrialized richer countries. They posit that during the period of the North’s industrialization, pollution and resource scarcity emerged, and developed countries consumed more than nine times as much as electricity per capita to developing countries and emitted over Six times as much carbon-dioxide per capita. For example, the United Kingdom produces more carbon-dioxide than Egypt, Nigeria, Pakistan and Vietnam combined, Texas emits more than the total region of Sub-Saharan Africa, and an air-condition in Florida produces more CO² emissions in one year than Afghanistan and Cambodia.³⁵

To the developing countries, they believe that the environmental damage is due to past and current abuses done by the North, hence, the North should bear the greatest burden particularly, the financial burden of solving environmental challenges. The North, for its part, points out that it is the developing world that accounts for the large and growing emission of greenhouse gases. China, for example, is highly dependent on coal-fired power plants for its electricity, the fastest growing source



of carbon-dioxide emission in the world and had passed the United States. The North argues that because of the role that the industrializing South will play in future climate change degradation, the South is the key to preventing future problems.

Obstacles to climate change remedy lies on the fact that most of the international environmental community agrees that environmental cooperation must be pursued with economic development for collective interest, however, there is no consensus on how to achieve this, and whether the emphasis should be placed on sustaining the environment or developing economies based on individual national interest. Arising from this, the developing countries failed to get the wealthier countries' consent to policies aimed at changing consumption patterns or to certain debt-reduction programmes that the South argued were important for economic development. On the other hand, the developed countries failed to get the poorer countries to agree on particular forest management policies. Sadly, there were many instances of failure than progress on the continued deterioration of the global environment, a decline in aid to the developing countries and a failure to set targets for reducing CO² emission.³⁶

One of the controversial aspects of the protocol concerns the allowance of emission credits. Misunderstanding on Kyoto protocol which calls for industrialized countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by at least 5 percent by 2012 and others targeted to reduce theirs as much as 8 percent were seen as unequal condition. States such as Russia, United States, and some of the developing world like China were not obliged to reduce emissions as they retorted and argued that developing states which contributed to greenhouse emissions were not included on the targeted countries to reduce emission. This made United States to announce in 2001 that it would refuse to ratify the Kyoto protocol. Thus, the United States is the only industrialized country not participating in the agreement to the fight against climate change proved to be a problem and obstacle. It is also observed that States that are in similar

positions economically do not always agree on environmental issues, and this portends obstacle to the Earth Summit towards the fight against climate change.³⁷

The European Union states, for example, were prepared to adopt specific targets and deadlines for conversion to renewable sources of energy at the 2002 World Summit in Johannesburg, but the United States disagreed and successfully blocked their efforts to include targets and dates in the final programme that suited them. In reaction, Brazil pointed to the Kyoto protocol negotiations and presented an analysis that compared the relative responsibility of what she referred as Annex 1 (industrialized) countries and non-Annex 1 (developing) countries for climate change, not just in terms of carbon-dioxide concentrations but that of historical emission of the industrialized countries. Brazil asserts that the responsibility of non-Annex 1 countries for accumulated emissions would not equal that of Annex 1 countries until the middle of the 22nd century.³⁸

In addition, developing countries themselves were split over much issues to climate change (oil producing nations Vs small island states), fisheries (distance water fishing countries Vs coastal countries), and population growth (Catholic and Muslim countries Vs more secular countries). On other hand, industrialized countries disagreed on a number of issues including ODA (overseas Development Assistance), level (Nordic countries Vs the United States), fisheries (distant water fishing countries Vs coastal countries), hazardous and radioactive waste disposal. All these above have contributed in no small measures as obstacle to Earth Summit objective in the fight against climate change.³⁹

However, the fact that states are not unitary actors and faced domestic pressures at home complicated efforts at achieving environmental cooperation in the issues of climate change. This is because some states are quite susceptible to business interest opposed to environmental



agreements. For example, negotiations on the law of the sea treaty was rejected by United States in 1982 after Ten years, citing its concern that the treaty rules for governing mineral resources in the deep seas were contrary to the private enterprise principles of the United States. Business interest represented at international environmental meetings by nation-states, no doubt, negated global interest of the climate change challenges. At the Kyoto Summit on global warming, the most powerful multinational corporations (MNCs) representing oil and car manufacturers worked to defeat stringent new environmental standards that might decrease carbon emission (and thereby cut into the sales of existing fuels or cars).⁴⁰ Thus, the environment and business interests clash in cooperation to avert the measure of climate change.

Conclusion

Since the emergence of the Earth Summit in 1992, individuals and states have increasingly recognized the importance of environmental issues and to that extent place concern to the global environmental cooperation on the international political agenda. Analysts of climate change or environmental issues tend to be either pessimistic about the future of the global community or optimistic that serious problems can be dealt with. Earth Summit conference indeed recognized the environmental challenges including pollution, damages to the ozone layer, global warming, climate change, etc. and adopted rules by which the environment can be saved by the various sustainable development programmes. Achievements were made through Agenda 21 and other internationally recognized measures to sustain development in the fight against climate change. Although some states, non-governmental groups and inter-governmental organizations have shown worries that many environmental conferences for cooperation or solution on climate change challenges proved difficult to yield desired results, partly because global collective interest requires individual national interest of states to take action on issues such as climate change challenges that affect the whole world. Cooperation among states to achieve global



interest is also complicated by division between states in the North and states in the South over what economic development is sustainable as well as conflicts between environmental issues and business interest.

However, the international environmental politics of the major powers in relationship with the lesser powers differed considerably to the realization of the aims and objectives embodied on the Earth Summit. Thus, national interest of the various states of the world influenced the genuine collective action statement toward the fight against climate change. Consequently, this paper recommends that international environmental cooperation to achieve sustainable development should be encouraged against the existing political and economic divisions and inequitable global economic relations envisaged between North-South perceptions. Collective interest of the world arising from the earth summit 1 and 11 and other environmental regimes to forestall the challenges of climate change should be adhered to against the national interest of states that tend to pollute, cut down forests, and exploit cheap resources.

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