

## **Tackling global environmental challenges: The Debate between developed and developing nations**

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Industrial Revolution which began in the 18<sup>th</sup> century England ushered in a phase of “development” in the West. The cities were covered in smoke from the factories and the workers’ health suffered. The colonies of the western countries helped them to develop and become strong nations. Forests were cleared and the original inhabitants were removed from their land in North America and Australia. The First World War was also fought to maintain control over the resources of colonies. The Second World War, which was many times ghastly and destructive than the ‘First’ one also took the ultimate toll on the environment, especially after atom-bombing on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

After the Second World War, the process of decolonisation started. Most of the newly born States chose the western model of development. Countries like India and Pakistan were agro based industries. Big dams, highways were seen to be important, for having a self-sustaining agricultural sector. However, in order to be a fully self-sufficient economy, the business and the industrial sectors were also to be promoted. The process still continues and the countries of south Asia, on a spree to “develop”, continue to raise high dams, build more highways, industries, gated communities, clear slum areas in order to “beautify” cities etc.

The terminologies that are widely used to designate the “under- developed” or “developing” societies is impregnated with a teleology, which identifies parts of Europe and North America as developed and the rest of the world to be in a primitive state, having no history and now trying to create history prompted by the West. This entire categorization of the world into “developed”, “developing” and “under-developed” countries is ethnocentrically biased.

Though nature has been exploited by man throughout history, but that the planet was warming had entered the public imagination as early as the 1930s. When it was time for the global south to “develop”, many environmental laws were framed which threatened to check the pace of development in those countries. It is interesting to note that prior to the UN Stockholm Conference in 1972 international environmental treaty-making had been clearly dominated by the industrialized states. Though the Rio conference of 1992, talked of sustainable development, it failed to bridge the dichotomy between the global north (developed nations) and south (developing nations). Again, it should be noted that the only remaining signatory not to have ratified the Kyoto Protocol is the United States. Afghanistan, Andorra and South Sudan also did not ratify the protocol, while in December 2011, Canada renounced the Protocol. The idea of a green economy — one of two principal themes at the Rio de Janeiro summit (2012) — has been heavily criticised by some developing countries as there are fears that it could lead to new trade barriers that would work against developing countries.

What should be kept track of is whether the environmental laws are exclusivist or do they benefit all. It should be remembered that global warming or environmental crises would affect all the nations, however it is also true that the poor nations would be hit the most.