

# International Laws and their Implications for Sustainable Growth

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## **Abstract:**

This paper sheds light on how international laws embrace global sustainability goals. Sustainable development has become a focal point in numerous international treaties and conventions, featuring in over 300 agreements, both binding and non-binding. It's widely acknowledged that environmental laws, intertwined with social and economic factors, lay the groundwork for sustainable development objectives, potentially guiding judicial decisions. There's evidence suggesting that international judicial bodies have considered sustainability considerations in their rulings.

Furthermore, the paper delves into strategies for tailoring these objectives to fit regional and local contexts, drawing insights from the practices of neighboring countries. This approach seeks to deepen our understanding of how to effectively integrate sustainability goals across various levels of governance.

## **Introduction**

International laws are like the ground rules for how countries, their people, and businesses from different places interact. They're made up of treaties, agreements, and a bunch of other regulations. These rules touch on all sorts of important stuff, like making sure people's rights are respected, how refugees are treated, dealing with serious crimes that cross borders, controlling weapons, sorting out who owns what land, managing shared resources like water and outer space, making sure trade between countries is fair, keeping the peace, and looking after the environment.

Sustainable Growth means making sure our economy grows in a way that helps both people living today and those who come after us. It's about taking care of things like our environment, the roads and buildings we use, how many people there are, the skills and knowledge we have, and the rules we follow. Big plans like the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) remind us how crucial it is to develop our country in a way that lasts for the long run.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The widespread discussion of sustainable development in international law has sparked significant academic interest. However, defining its legal nature has proven challenging due to its elusive and flexible content, as noted by the ICJ in the *Gabcíkovo-Nagymaros* and *Pulp Mills* cases. This ambiguity has led to various interpretations, with scholars struggling to classify sustainable development within legal frameworks. One compelling perspective, proposed by

Lowe, views sustainable development as an interstitial or modifying norm that judges utilize as an interpretative tool. Its interpretative function holds considerable importance, as judicial bodies have employed it to justify evolutive treaty interpretation, resolve conflicts, and redefine conventional obligations. However, beyond its interpretative role, sustainable development primarily aims to regulate state behavior by setting an objective for nations to strive towards in numerous treaties. As an objective, sustainable development establishes a relative obligation for states to work towards its achievement, known as obligations of means or best efforts. Therefore, legal entities are ultimately tasked with promoting sustainable development within their respective jurisdictions.

The concept of 'constitutionalization' in international trade is gaining traction, but its exact meaning and significance remain unclear. This article aims to propose a plausible interpretation of 'constitutionalization' in the context of international trade law, suggesting that it pertains to the development of constitutional-like norms and structures through judicial decisions in the World Trade Organization's Appellate Body. Unlike previous scholars who focused on institutions, rights, and metaphysics, this article delves into judicial constitutionalization. It identifies four key trends: amalgamation of constitutional doctrines, system constitution, incorporation of subject matter, and association with constitutional values. These trends shed light on the ongoing debate surrounding constitutionalization. Examining the tribunal's rulings reveals the incorporation of fundamental principles of constitutional reasoning, such as democracy, governance, fairness, and policy responsibility allocation. Ultimately, this perspective shifts the discourse from whether the WTO functions as a constitution to speculating on the nature of international trade and the significance of institutionalization.

The essays presented in this collection are part of an ongoing symposium initiated by the Institut des Hautes Études Internationales and the European Journal of International Law. This symposium originated from a conference titled 'The Changing Structure of International Law Revisited,' held in March 1997. The conference aimed to gather European and American scholars to explore the current state of international law in light of doctrinal and practical changes witnessed in recent decades. During the symposium, four main areas of inquiry were identified: the state between fragmentation and globalization; the existence of a hierarchy of norms in international law; the potential movement of international law towards criminalization; and the position of the international community on these matters. The papers addressing the first theme, along with an introduction by Charles Leben, were published in EJIL volume 8, number 3. The subsequent parts of the symposium will be featured in the upcoming two issues of the journal.

Many scholars hold the view that international law does not universally forbid instigation - the act of inducing, inciting, or procuring other states to violate their international obligations. This stance contrasts with the established prohibition on providing assistance to another state, which facilitates an internationally wrongful act. In this article, I challenge the conventional perspective on instigation. I argue that there should indeed be a prohibition on instigation, grounded in a general principle of law as outlined in Article 38(1)(c) of the Statute of the International Court of Justice. I propose the adoption of this principle into the framework of international law. To support my argument, I undertake a comparative analysis by examining a selection of domestic legal systems. In this comparative survey, I investigate whether, in these domestic jurisdictions, it is considered wrongful for one party to instigate another to commit an act that would be wrongful if done by the instigator itself. Based on this analysis, I contend that the transposition of this principle from domestic to international law is both conceptually and normatively justified.

The article provides an overview and evaluation of the key rhetorical strategies employed to promote and justify different models of 'civil-society participation' in international institutions since the late 19th century. It operates on the premise that two primary rationales for 'civil-society' involvement are functionalism and democratization.

Additionally, it acknowledges that, stemming from the democratization rationale, a contemporary trend in the 21st century has emerged, replacing traditional non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with 'affected person's organizations' in international bodies. Within this framework, the article suggests that the field of international institutional law is witnessing the emergence of a participation principle focusing on 'the most affected'. This shift is viewed as an institutional response to the profound legitimacy crisis faced by both international NGOs and the 'global governance' structures established over the past three decades. By considering various theoretical perspectives on representation and affectedness in political philosophy and international law, the article critically examines whether and to what extent the involvement of 'the most affected' in international organizations could influence the legitimacy of international law and its institutions.

Following Donald Trump's election to the US presidency, there has been unprecedented attention on the 'losers' of globalization. While it's widely acknowledged that manufacturing workers in developed countries have suffered in recent decades, President Trump's proposed remedies have been met with a mix of concern and ridicule from the trade establishment. It's becoming increasingly clear, especially in the USA, that politicians and trade officials can no longer persuade voters that international economic agreements will benefit everyone. Instead, there's a growing realization that such agreements create both winners and losers. This article delves into three narratives surrounding the identity of these winners and losers. It argues that the debate between these narratives isn't one that can be settled solely through empirical analysis. Rather, each narrative contains inherent normative elements that defy easy resolution. Additionally, the article explores how these narratives shape the redesign of international economic agreements.

## 1. What can be treated as International Laws?

Sustainable growth is getting a lot of attention in international deals and gatherings. You can spot these goals in many agreements that aren't legally binding. People are realizing that we need to blend environmental rules with social and economic issues to truly achieve sustainable goals. This mix could even become a sort of guide for judges when they're making decisions.

Around the world, one of the ways we've seen real progress in development is when countries team up economically. Take the European Union, for example. It's a great showcase of how different countries can work together, using various rules and agreements to make things run smoothly. And if we look closer to home, groups like the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), BIMSTEC, and ASEAN are doing the same thing. These organizations bring countries together, helping them trade, grow, and cooperate. SAARC, for instance, is all about making sure everyone works together to reach important goals like Sustainable Development, even though there aren't specific international laws telling them how to do it.

Moreover, there have been big meetings and agreements on a global scale that have laid out lots of rules about following sustainable development goals. One treaty that pretty much everyone agrees on is the Rio Summit/Declaration. It talks about things like making sure we grow and develop in a way that's good for the long term. Some of the points it covers are:

- People are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature which means that the people have right to enjoy the nature and feel protected in it.
- Development today must not threaten the needs of present and future generations.
- Nations have the right to exploit their own resources but without causing environmental damage beyond their borders.
- Environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process.

- Eradicating poverty and reducing disparities in living standards in different parts of the world are essential if we are to achieve sustainable development whilst meeting the needs of majority of the people.
- Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens. The polluter should, in principle, bear the cost of pollution.
- Sustainable development requires better scientific understanding of the problems. Nations should share knowledge and technologies to achieve the goal of sustainability. (Rio Declaration)

Another important agreement for making the world better is the 2030 Agenda. It's all about Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are like a big to-do list for the planet. They were set up by the United Nations back in 2015 and are also known as Agenda 2030. These goals cover loads of stuff we care about, like making sure everyone has enough to eat, getting kids educated, tackling climate change, and looking after our planet.

Think of the SDGs as a kind of roadmap that the whole world has agreed to follow, guided by the United Nations. But here's the thing: there's no punishment if countries don't reach these goals by the deadlines. It's more like a friendly reminder of what we should all be working towards

Since the goals one country sets can impact others, it's tough to argue for strict international laws solely focused on achieving and following them. A better way to keep track of progress toward sustainable development goals is through international treaties and agreements. While these deals can hold each country accountable legally, relying solely on international law might not be the best approach.

### 3. Millennium Development Goals: Achievements and Learning

The Millennium Development Goals give us a good idea of how international goals can really push a country forward in terms of growth and development. Back in 2000, 189 countries got together under the United Nations to adopt these goals. There were eight main objectives, all tied together, and they were all about making people healthier. The idea was to get rid of poverty, hunger, diseases, illiteracy, gender discrimination, and environmental problems by 2015, using 1990 as a starting point. And for each goal, there were specific things countries needed to achieve.

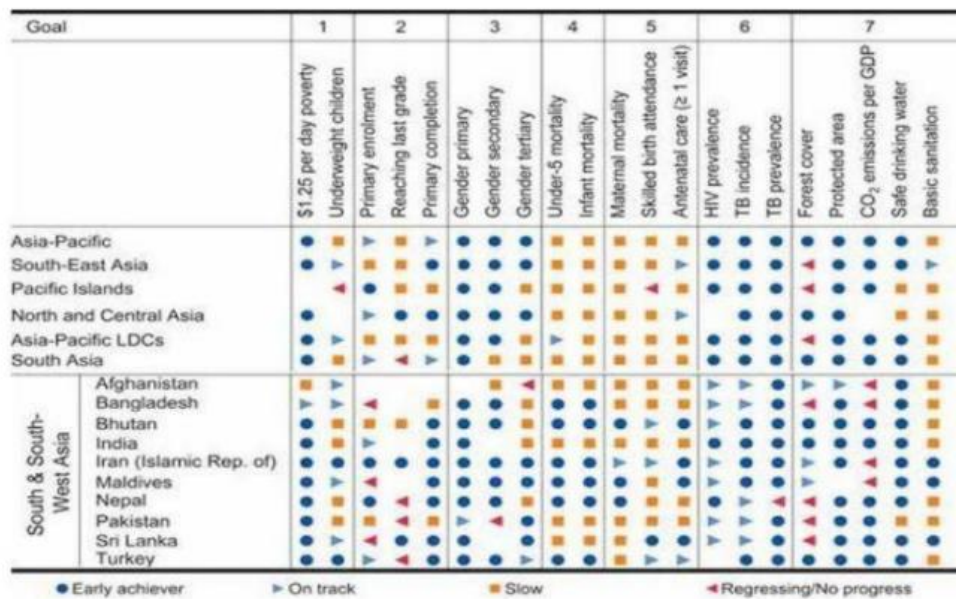
The eight goals under MDGs were:

1. to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
2. to achieve universal primary education.
3. to promote gender equality and empower women.
4. to reduce child mortality.
5. to improve maternal health.
6. to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases.
7. to ensure environmental sustainability.
8. to develop a global partnership for development.

#### 3.1. Achievements

Different countries tackled these goals in their own unique ways, leading to different levels of progress across various nations and regions.

#### (Figure 1) Progress of MDGs



Source: UNESCAP, ADB and UNDP (2015).

Notes: \$1.25 per day represents the national poverty line in Afghanistan. LDCs = least developed countries.

## Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

In 2015, around 14 percent of people in the developing world were struggling to get by on less than \$1.25 a day. But there's some good news too: globally, the number of folks living in extreme poverty has dropped by half, from a staggering 1.9 billion in 1990 to 836 million in 2015. And in South Asia, things have been looking up too, with a significant 54.7% decrease in poverty since 1990.

Table 1. Regional comparison with respect to poverty

Country	Proportion of population below \$1.25PPP per day (Year)	Proportion of population below national poverty line (Year)	Poverty gap ratio at \$1.25 PPP per day (Year)	Share of poorest quintile in national income or consumption(Year)
Afghanistan	...	35.8(2011)	...	9.4(2007)
Bangladesh	43.3(2010)	31.5(2010)	11.2(2010)	8.9(2010)
India	23.6(2012)	21.9(2011)	4.8(2011)	8.5(2009)
Pakistan	12.7(2010)	22.3(2005)	1.9(2010)	9.6(2010)
Nepal	23.7(2010)	25.2(2010)	5.2(2010)	8.3(2010)
Maldives	1.5(2004)	...	0.1(2004)	6.5(2004)
Sri Lanka	4.1(2009)	6.7(2013)	0.7(2009)	7.7(2007)
Bhutan	2.4(2012)	12(2012)	0.4(2012)	6.8(2012)

## Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

Between 1990 and 2015, something really great happened: more young people aged 15 to 24 around the world learned how to read and write. The global literacy rate went up from 82 percent to 91 percent during that time. And it's not just reading—more kids in developing regions were able to go to school too. In 2015, 91 percent of them were enrolled in primary school, which is a big jump from 83 percent back in 2000.



**Table 2 Regional Comparison with respect to Primary Education**

Country	Net enrolment ratio in primary education, both sexes (Year)	Percentage of pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary, both sexes (Year)	Primary completion rate, both sexes (Year)	Literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds (Year)
Afghanistan	28(1993)	87.8(1993)	28.8(1993)	47(2011)
Bangladesh	96.2(2013)	66.2(2009)	74.6(2011)	79.9(2012)
India	98.6(2012)	61.4(2001)	96.5(2011)	76.4(2006)
Pakistan	71.9 (2013)	62.2(2012)	73.1(2013)	70.8(2011)
Nepal	98.7(2013)	60.4(2012)	101.6(2014)	82.4(2011)
Maldives	93.1(2007)	82.8(2011)	132.3(2006)	99.3(2006)
Sri Lanka	94.3(2013)	98.5(2012)	97.4(2013)	98.2(2010)
Bhutan	90.7(2013)	78.9(2012)	98.4(2013)	74.4(2005)

In the South Asian region, they did a great job reaching their goal of making sure every kid gets into and finishes primary school. But when it comes to getting kids into secondary school, they fell a bit short. In 2014, the net secondary enrollment rate was 59% there, while globally, it was at 64%

### Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Back in 2015, we saw more girls getting the chance to go to school compared to 1990. And it's not just about getting them into primary school—developing regions around the world managed to bridge the gap between boys and girls in primary, secondary, and even tertiary education. In South Asia, for every 100 boys going to primary school, there were 103 girls tagging along in 2015, which is a big leap from just 74 girls back in 1990. Plus, there's been some progress in the job market too: the number of women working outside agriculture went up from 35% in 1990 to 41% in 2015.

**Table 3 Regional Comparison on Gender**

Country	GPI at Primary (Year)	GPI at Secondary (Year)	GPI at Tertiary (Year)	Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector (Year)	Seats held by women in national parliament (in 2015)
Afghanistan	0.70(2013)	0.55(2013)	0.33(2011)	18.4(2004)	69
Bangladesh	1.06(2011)	1.14(2012)	0.72(2012)	13.3(2010)	70
India	1.03(2012)	0.95(2012)	0.92(2013)	19.3(2010)	65
Pakistan	0.87(2013)	0.73(2013)	0.98(2013)	12.6(2008)	67
Nepal	1.09(2014)	1.06(2014)	0.81(2013)	14.0(2014)	176
Maldives	0.97(2007)	1.13(2004)	1.13(2008)	40.5(2010)	5
Sri Lanka	0.99(2013)	1.06(2013)	1.60(2013)	32.4(2013)	13

#### Goal 4: Reduce Child mortality

The number of young children dying before they turn five has gone down a lot, from 90 to 43 deaths for every 1,000 babies born between 1990 and 2015. And it's not just about the rates—globally, we've seen a big drop in the total number of kids dying before they reach their fifth birthday, from 12.7 million in 1990 to almost 6 million in 2015.

**Table 4 Regional Comparison With respect to Child Mortality**

Country	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births (in 2013)	Infant mortality rate (0-1 year) per 1,000 live births (in 2013)	Children 1 year old immunized against measles, percentage (in 2013)
Afghanistan	23.8	70.2	75
Bangladesh	41.1	33.2	93
India	52.7	41.4	74
Pakistan	85.5	69	61
Nepal	39.7	32.2	88
Maldives	9.9	8.4	99
Sri Lanka	9.6	8.2	99
Bhutan	36.2	29.7	94

In South Asia, it was tough for countries to hit the marks for child mortality, sanitation, and reducing the number of underweight kids. But Nepal managed to pull it off—they hit all the targets set by the MDGs. They worked hard to bring down the infant and under-five mortality rates and made sure more kids were getting vaccinated against measles. Still, in the rest of South Asia, the under-five mortality rate stayed alarmingly high, sitting at 50 deaths for every 1,000 babies born in 2015.

#### Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health

Between 1990 and 2015, there's been some good news for moms worldwide: the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) dropped by 45 percent. But Southern Asia really stood out with an even bigger decrease of 64 percent in this ratio.

**Table 5 Regional Comparison with respect to Maternal Health**

Country	Maternal mortality ratio per 100,000 live births (in 2013)	Births attended by skilled health personnel, percentage (Year)
Afghanistan	400	38.6(2011)
Bangladesh	170	42.1(2014)
India	190	52.3(2008)
Pakistan	170	52.1(2013)
Nepal	190	55.6(2014)
Maldives	31	98.9(2011)
Sri Lanka	29	98.6(2008)
Bhutan	120	74.6(2012)

In South Asia, there's been a big improvement in maternal health over the years. Between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio dropped by 67%, even though the target set by the MDGs was 75%. Sri Lanka really shone in this area among South Asian countries. They managed to drastically reduce their maternal mortality ratio from 100 per 100,000 women in 1990 to just 33 per 100,000 in 2010.

### Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases

Between 2000 and 2013, we saw some positive changes in global health. New HIV infections went down noticeably, from 3.5 million cases to 2.1 million. And there's more good news: the number of people living with HIV who got the treatment they needed (called antiretroviral therapy or ART) shot up from 80,000 to a whopping 13.6 million by June 2014. Plus, there was a 37 percent drop in the global malaria incidence rate and a big 58 percent decrease in the mortality rate. Similarly, the tuberculosis mortality rate fell by 45 percent between 1990 and 2013.

**Table 6 Regional comparison for HIV, TB and Malaria**

Country	AIDS Death (in 2013)	People living with HIV, 15-49 years old, percentage (in 2013)	Percentage of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS (Year)	Malaria death rate per 100,000 population, all ages (in 2012)	Tuberculosis prevalence rate per 100,000 population (mid-point) (Year)
Afghanistan	292	0.01	Woman-1.8(2011)	0	340 (2013)
Bangladesh	485	0.01	Man-14.4 (2011) Woman-11.9(2011)	14	402 (2012)
India	127,232	0.26	Man-39.1(2006) Woman-19.9(2006)	04	211 (2013)
Pakistan	2,174	0.07	Man-5.2(2013) Woman-4.2(2013)	02	342 (2013)
Nepal	3,251	0.23	Man-33.9(2011) Woman-36.4(2014)	0	211 (2013)
Maldives	2	0.01	Woman-35(2009)	...	57 (2013)
Sri Lanka	92	0.02	-	0	103 (2013)
Bhutan	31	0.13	Woman-21(2010)	58	196 (2013)

### Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

We made some progress in 2015 regarding our world's access to clean drinking water. At that time, 91% of the world's population had easy access to improved water; This was a significant jump from 76% in 1990. And it's not just about drinking water—147 countries hit their targets for clean water, while 95 countries did the same for sanitation. Plus, 77 countries managed to meet both goals. Also, between 2000 and 2014, over 320 million folks living in slums got access to better water, toilets, and sturdy homes



**Table 7 Regional Comparison with respect to environmental sustainability Source**

Country	Proportion of land area covered by forest, percentage (2010)	Carbon dioxide emissions (CO <sub>2</sub> ), metric tons of CO <sub>2</sub> per capita (CDIAC) (2011)	Consumption of all Ozone-Depleting Substances in ODP metric tons (2013)	Proportion of total water resources used, percentage (Year)	Terrestrial and marine areas protected to total territorial area, percentage (2014)
Afghanistan	2.1	0.4209	17.7	31(2000)	0.46
Bangladesh	11.1	0.3733	64.9	2.9(2010)	3.41
India	23	1.6987	956.1	33.9(2010)	3.13
Pakistan	2.2	0.9278	247	74.4(2010)	8.60
Nepal	25.4	0.1596	0.7	4.5(2005)	22.93
Maldives	3.3	3.3250	3.2	15.7(2010)	0.07
Sri Lanka	28.8	0.7279	13.4	24.5(2005)	2.64
Bhutan	69.1	0.7692	0.3	-	47.30

**Table 8 Regional Comparison of population using improved drinking water sources, sanitation and slum population**

Country	Proportion of the population using improved drinking water sources, total (2015)	Proportion of the population using improved sanitation facilities, total (2015)	Slum population as percentage of urban, percentage (2014)
Afghanistan	55	32	62.7
Bangladesh	87	61	55.1
India	94	40	24
Pakistan	91	64	45.5
Nepal	92	46	54.3
Maldives	99	98	...
Sri Lanka	96	95	---
Bhutan	100	50	...

### Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development.

In 2014, a whopping 79 percent of imports from developing countries into developed nations were exempt from duties. During the span from 2000 to 2014, official development assistance from developed countries saw a significant boost, totaling \$135.2 billion—an impressive 66 percent increase. Moreover, a staggering 95 percent of people worldwide had access to mobile cellular signals, ensuring connectivity for nearly everyone. And the internet? As of 2014, 43% of the world's population had access to this service; this rate was only 6% in 2000.

**Table 9 Regional comparison with respect to communication**

Country	Fixed Telephone Lines per 100 Population (in 2014)	Cellular Subscribers per 100 Population (in 2014)	Internet users per 100 population (in 2014)
Afghanistan	0.33	74.88	6.39
Bangladesh	0.69	75.92	9.60
India	2.13	74.48	18.00
Pakistan	14.61	148.83	67.00
Nepal	2.98	82.49	15.44
Maldives	2.65	73.33	13.80
Sri Lanka	12.49	103.16	25.80
Bhutan	3.11	82.07	34.37

### 3.2. Important Learning from Millennium Development Goals

South Asian countries made significant strides in achieving many targets of the MDGs, which contributed to moderate growth in these regions. However, despite their efforts, certain goals were left unmet for various reasons. It was important for these countries to reflect on their shortcomings and learn from their mistakes in order to continue progressing.

- Framework:** In Mishra's article "Millennium Development Goals: Whose Goals and for Whom?", he points out that the MDGs didn't consider the unique regional frameworks and capabilities of countries, especially overlooking governance capacities. Moreover, while countries had national-level departments, they often failed to prioritize implementation at the local level, mainly due to resource limitations. Additionally, a lack of commitment from nations, along with casual disparities and insufficient regional monitoring and review systems, acted as roadblocks to achieving the MDGs.
- Investment:** The investment allotted to the MDGs fell short as countries faced resource constraints. Specifically, spending on education as a percentage of GDP was significantly low, with Sri Lanka at 1.7%, Bangladesh at 2.0%, India at 3.9%, and Pakistan at 2.5%. Similarly, public health expenditure remained inadequate, amounting to only 1.3% of GDP, in contrast to the global average of 6%. It's evident that these countries struggled due to limited financial resources, impacting their ability to effectively address education and healthcare needs.

Infrastructure development played a vital role in our journey towards achieving the MDGs. Yet, despite its significance, numerous people still faced challenges accessing fundamental facilities like good schools, hospitals, electricity, safe drinking water, and healthcare services. The growth of nations is deeply intertwined with infrastructure development, indicating that the goals set in the MDGs play a pivotal role in driving national progress, either directly or indirectly.

Looking ahead, it's crucial to consider and address other important factors in our future agendas.

- Growing together:** Currently, 70% of the population in South Asia does not have access to good healthcare. Additionally, less than a third of working-age workers are eligible for retirement benefits; This points to a huge gap in social security measures. Despite progress in the twenty-first century, female labor force participation remains a disappointing 48 percent. Additionally, only 30% of differently-abled people earn enough money to support

themselves, illustrating the difficulties they face in getting a job. To overcome these challenges and move towards a better world, 2030 will bring a great opportunity for regional cooperation. Through collaboration and pooling of resources, Southeast Asian countries can work to improve access to healthcare, strengthen social protection, promote gender equality in the workplace, and make work accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities.

- **Management of natural resources:** Some natural resources are limited, but we see that most regions use more than half of these resources and create less. If natural resources are not managed correctly, they can harm the environment and directly affect the regional economy. To solve this problem, it is important to establish international laws that advocate the protection of natural resources and control the use of non-renewable resources. By doing this, we can protect our natural resources and encourage the use of renewable resources, ensuring a better life for future generations.
- **Climate change:** Climate and natural resources play significant roles in driving economic development. Significant climate changes can have negative impacts on both a nation's economy and the wellbeing of its citizens. Prioritizing natural preservation is fundamental to combatting worldwide warming effectively. Bhutan stands out as a sparkling illustration, having accomplished carbon nonpartisanship. Over the globe, numerous nations have started actualizing approach changes to moderate the dangers related with climate-related fiascos.
- **Disaster risk reduction and resilience:** Considering the frequent occurrence of natural disasters in this area, it's crucial to acknowledge their substantial impact. Based on information from the UN, it's been reported that since 2005, around 60 percent of global fatalities, 80 percent of affected populations, and 40 percent of economic losses are a result of natural calamities. It's vital to prioritize finding effective ways to lessen the damage caused by these disasters, as a major event can greatly disrupt the entire economy of the region.

#### 4. Sustainable Development Goals and Growth of Nations

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) take the unfinished business of the MDGs in South Asian nations a step further. They not only address existing goals but also introduce new objectives focusing on economic growth, job opportunities, industrialization, and justice. These vital areas are reflected in SDGs 8, 9, 10, and 16, respectively. Additionally, SDGs 11 to 15 emphasize the importance of ecological sustainability, while SDG 17 underscores the significance of fostering robust global partnerships.

In executing the SDGs, South Asian countries have taken different approaches, learning from past mistakes. Nepal, for instance, set up the National Planning Commission, whereas Bhutan centers on the Gross National Happiness Commission. Pakistan's Ministry of Planning, Development, and Reforms is responsible for aligning goals with the Pakistan Vision 2025 and SDGs. Bangladesh depends on its Planning Commission, and India transitioned to the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) in 2015. Sri Lanka set up the Service of Maintainable Advancement and Natural life to supervise SDG usage.

Another important aspect is the urgent need to reform policies and institutional frameworks to hasten sustainable growth. It's crucial to introduce changes in these structures to drive sustainable development forward. This includes setting up local-level organizations and enhancing decentralization efforts. Substantial investment in resources is imperative to facilitate these transformations effectively. Moreover, it's essential to engage all stakeholders in every stage of SDG implementation, monitoring, and review. This entails active participation from both civil authorities and the private sector. Furthermore, promoting greater collaboration among countries is paramount.

a) **Economic Growth through industry, innovation and infrastructure development and eradication of poverty**

When we dive into the realm of Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG) in South Asian nations, it's clear that India and Bangladesh have seen remarkable financial development. However, Nepal's growth trajectory remained stagnant from 1980 to 2015, whereas Pakistan experienced a decrease in development rates. Despite South Asia's rise as the fastest-growing locale in Asia post-global financial crisis, studies demonstrate that this growth isn't sufficient to drive poverty and hunger reduction by 2030. Besides, when it comes to fostering job creation and economic progress, South Asian countries have grappled with generating quality business opportunities. It's concerning that four out of the best five nations with a significant proportion of informal employment hail from South Asia. This underscores the urgent require for collaborative endeavors to handle the challenges postured by casual work and cultivate feasible financial advancement.

It's truly heartening to witness the evolving economic landscape of South Asia, especially with the noticeable decline in the agricultural sector's dominance. However, there's a cause for concern as the industrial sector seems to have stagnated in terms of growth. Despite the service sector boasting a significant share of the GDP, it's disheartening to see that it hasn't been able to absorb the surplus workforce transitioning from agriculture as anticipated. Surprisingly, nearly half of the workforce is still tied to agricultural activities. To tackle this issue effectively, it's imperative to shift our focus towards revitalizing the industrial sector, given its potential to generate a multitude of job opportunities. Goal 9, which emphasizes enhancing the contribution of industry to both employment and GDP, warrants immediate attention. Strengthening the industrial sector holds the promise of not only curbing unemployment but also propelling sustainable economic growth across the South Asian region Figure

Efforts are currently in progress to boost the manufacturing sector, as seen in India's Make in India initiative, which focuses on rejuvenating manufacturing activities. Furthermore, it's crucial to emphasize the promotion of trade and the improvement of transportation infrastructure to fortify the regional value chain.

b) **Universal Access to education and health**

Efforts are currently in progress to boost the manufacturing sector, as seen in India's Make in India initiative, which focuses on rejuvenating manufacturing activities. Furthermore, it's crucial to emphasize the promotion of trade and the improvement of transportation infrastructure to fortify the regional value chain.

SDG 3 emphasizes the significance of advancing great wellbeing and well-being, whereas SDG 4 endeavors to guarantee get to to quality instruction for all. By contributing in these basic segments, we have the opportunity to open the potential of the youth populace. Agreeing to the UNESCAP SDG Report, prioritizing human asset advancement may clear the way for a critical increment in add up to utilization, assessed to reach about \$30 trillion by 2050 in South Asia

c) **Financial Inclusion** South Asian nations have recognized the importance of providing social security to their citizens as a means to combat poverty and stimulate economic activity. Implementing social protection measures not only ensures basic needs are met but also fosters social inclusion within households, leading to greater financial circulation in the economy. However, there are notable challenges in achieving financial inclusion. Currently, only 10.6% of workers in South Asia have social security coverage, and a mere 3% of government transfers are conducted through bank accounts. Utilizing bank accounts for payments can enhance financial inclusion, transparency, and efficiency. Additionally, increasing financial awareness among the population remains a significant challenge that needs to be addressed



South Asian nations have taken steps to enhance financial inclusion through diverse strategies. Pakistan introduced the National Financial Inclusion Strategy, while India initiated the Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana, both aimed at broadening access to financial services and fostering inclusive economic growth.

d) **Energy, sustainable communities, sustainable consumption and production** Promoting sustainable consumption requires lifestyle adjustments. Encouraging the use of public transportation, adopting energy-saving devices, and implementing efficient waste management practices are vital steps. Waste-to-wealth initiatives, embraced by numerous South Asian countries, showcase the potential for both economic and environmental benefits. Through measures like waste recycling and enhanced energy efficiency, industries in the region can decrease reliance on raw materials and energy, thus advancing sustainability efforts.

## 5. Bhutan and Gross National Happiness Index

### 4.1. Gross National Happiness and Sustainable Development

#### a) Bhutanese Concept and Context

The Fourth King of Bhutan once highlighted that "Gross National Happiness holds greater importance than Gross National Product" (GNP). This philosophy of GNH is built upon four key pillars

Ensuring fair socio-economic development.

Upholding environmental conservation.

Preserving and nurturing cultural heritage.

Fostering good governance for the well-being of the people.

### 4.2. Institutional Framework for implementation of GNH

#### a) Central Policy and Planning Support Institutions

Established in 1971, Bhutan's Planning Commission evolved into the GNH Commission in January 2008 with a focus on fully integrating the GNH concept into policy-making and planning. Moreover, the Centre for Bhutan Studies, founded in 1999, actively conducts GNH surveys and develops tools to assess policies and projects in alignment with GNH principles.

#### b) Sectoral Development Agencies

The task of crafting and executing policies, plans, and programs for sectoral growth falls upon government ministries and their various agencies. These entities, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Information and Communication, among others, play pivotal roles in driving development initiatives forward.

#### c) Development Policy-making and Planning Framework

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- The Royal Government guarantees that each national and sectoral arrangement is in concordance with the GNH arrangement system. This system covers a wide extend of angles, counting living benchmarks, instruction,

wellbeing, administration, biological differences, mental well-being, community imperativeness, and social differing qualities. It's a comprehensive approach pointed at cultivating all encompassing improvement and well-being over the country.

- The Five-Year Plans (FYPs) are carefully crafted at various administrative levels, from central to local, ensuring a comprehensive approach to development. These plans are at that point deciphered into yearly improvement plans and budgets, shaping the spine of vital activities over five-year cycles. Over the a long time, there has been a concerted exertion to implant feasible improvement standards into these plans, reflecting a commitment to long-term natural and social well-being. Notably, the concept of a green economy consistently adjusts with Bhutan's GNH improvement reasoning, which underscores all encompassing advance and societal welfare. This philosophy influences development policies and plans at every level, reinforcing Bhutan's dedication to sustainable growth. (Source: Economic Development Policy of Bhutan, 2010)

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### 5.3. Globalizing Happiness for a Sustainable World

Amid the 65th session of the UN Common Gathering in 2011, Bhutan displayed a determination titled "Joy: Towards a All encompassing Approach to Improvement." This determination highlights the significance of bliss as a essential human objective and widespread desire. It emphasizes the impediments of GDP in capturing this basic perspective of human well-being. Besides, it addresses the negative affect of unsustainable generation and utilization designs on maintainable advancement. The determination advocates for a move towards more comprehensive, evenhanded, and feasible improvement hones.

### 5.4. Avenues for Green Economy

#### a) Major Sectors

Absolutely, when we talk about green economic development, there are several key sectors to consider. These include energy, agriculture, forests, biodiversity, sustainable tourism, transportation, industry, education, and knowledge-based enterprises. Additionally, we shouldn't overlook the importance of integrated rural-urban planning, regionally-balanced urban development, human settlement policy and planning, solid waste management enterprises, the green construction industry, and even the entertainment industry. All of these areas play a crucial role in shaping a sustainable and environmentally friendly economy.

#### b) Partnerships with Civil and Private Sector

In this modernization era and democracy, civil societies play a crucial role, as they can effectively complement government efforts and expand the development reach of a society. It also provides an alternative social mobilization mechanism to pursue sustainable development on the ground. The private sector has the immense potential to tackle sustainable development challenges through innovation and the collaboration of ideas and resources. Therefore, various ways of public-private partnership are being explored and sustainable development is being pursued.

## 6. Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI) and Sustainability

The Genuine Progress Indicator is a broader concept than GDP. GPI takes into account the indicators used to calculate GDP. In addition to those indicators, it also takes in more than twenty aspects of the economy which are not included in GDP.

- GDP is the measure of current income but GPI measures the sustainability of that income. Sustainable income means the amount of income that can be consumed in a year by an economy without compromising the consumption need in the next period.
- GPI differentiates between the transactions that add value to well-being which are considered positive elements and those which diminish the well-being which are negative elements.
- GPI adjusts for income distribution, household work and volunteer work. Moreover, it subtracts the cost like crime, pollution, loss of leisure, debt and environmental damage.
- GPI regards the initial pollution as a cost which is usually equal to the cost to clean up the pollutants later and the negative impact of pollution during the period.

GPI can provide the much needed information to the nations to assess the activities they carry out in terms of associated costs involved and know where they stand in terms of sustainable growth

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## Conclusion

International Laws, Treaties and Conventions have taken into consideration the importance of sustainable growth as well as development of the countries. Sustainable growth would mean the use of the existing outputs to increase the real output. The elements of the growth include technology, capital, and human resource, natural resources as well as law. The issue of sustainability has been raised a lot of times in the past but it was first formally addressed in Rio Summit. Apart from international treaties and conventions, the more successful alignment to development has been through economic integration efforts of economies like SAARC and BIMSTEC. Millennium development goals set by United Nations show us how targets set at international level can help individual nations to move towards sustainability. South Asia was able to achieve the targets of eradicating extreme poverty and universal primary education. These two have significance in growth of nations in terms of job creation, skill development and human resource development. There was good progress in empowering women and achieve gender parity. However, the countries were not able to achieve all targets due to limitation of resources and good institutional and policy framework. For the future growth it is necessary for the countries to regionally cooperate and understand the need to save natural resources and preserve climate to ensure sustainable growth. Sustainable Development Goals very well accommodate the issues of economic growth, job creation, sustainable production and consumption, industrialization and justice. The South Asian countries have brought changes in its institutions with greater degree of decentralization and review and monitoring system. All the south Asian countries can learn from the Bhutanese model of growth and development. Learning from the Bhutanese model can help in enhancing the overall welfare of the economies by meeting the needs of current generation without sacrificing the needs of future generation. Gross Happiness Index used by Bhutan is perfectly aligned with the sustainable development goals. Moreover, Bhutan has a good network of policy implementation and it has very well decentralized the authority to the local bodies. This could be an important learning for all the nations. Along with GNH, Genuine Progress Indicator can help to access the sustainability of economies. Finally, international laws, agendas and treaties, though not binding in nature, have effects on the growth of the nations. Nations have adopted international policies targeted for sustainable growth of the nations by carefully altering them to suit their needs and existing resources.