



Environment: Diplomacy & Bangladesh

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What is Meant by “Environment” ?

- Environment means our surroundings, which comprises of land, water and air and other bodies. Environment is affected by the physical properties of these components. It is also affected by the changes in interrelationship prevailing between and among the components ranging from micro-organism to human bodies (ref: section 2 (d), ECA, 1995)



Why is the Environment so Important ?

Our life-support system is maintained by all the species that make up the biosphere-biodiversity. The survival of all these species are interconnected and dependent on each other. Human being is also a part of this biosphere, extinction of one species is really the extinction of many species and the decline of our life-support system for ourselves and future generations.

Development means the interaction of man on natural resources to improve our quality of life by meeting our needs; unrestrained development degrades the environment

“Sustainable Development”

- Sustainable Development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (ref: Our Common Future, World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987)



Environment Policy 1992

- Bangladesh National Environment Policy approved in May 1992, sets out the basic framework for environmental action, together with a set of broad sectoral action guidelines.
- **Key elements of the Environment Policy are :**
 - Maintenance of the ecological balance and overall progress and development of the country through protection and improvement of the environment.
 - Protection of the country against natural disasters.
 - Identification and regulation of all types of activities which pollute and degrade the environment.
 - Ensuring proper Environment Impact Assessment prior to undertaking of industrial and other development projects.
 - Ensuring sustainable use of all natural resources.



What are MEAs ?

International instruments that:

- targets environmental protection
- are concluded between a large number of states or international organizations as Parties
- concluded in written form
- governed by international law
- can be embodied in a single instrument or in two or more related instruments (framework agreements)

Milestones in the evolution of MEAs

- Stockholm Conference on Human Development (1972)
- World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) or the “Brundtland Commission” (1989)
- United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (1992)
- World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), Johannesburg (2002)



Financial mechanisms

- Regime Budgets
 - MEAs can establish one or more of mandatory or voluntary trust funds, most often administered by the international organizations that support the Secretariats. Budgets are proposed by Parties and approved by the COPs
- Development Assistance
 - Funds can be provided via Foundations (e.g. UN Foundation), bilateral arrangements, private sector donors and NGOs
- Other multilateral financing mechanisms
 - Global Environment Facility, The Kyoto Protocol climate-related mechanisms, Montreal Protocol, the World Bank, UNDP, UNEP

Bangladesh Position on MEA's

- It has signed, ratified or accessed a good number of International Conventions, Treaties and Protocols (ICTPs)
- The major ones include –
 - The Climate Change Convention (UNFCCC)
 - The Biodiversity Convention (CBD)
 - Montreal Protocol on Control of Substances that deplete Ozone Layer (ODS)
 - United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)
 - Basel Convention on Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Waste
 - RAMSAR
 - CITES
 - Stockholm Convention on the Control of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)
- MOEF is the designated Ministry to undertake national actions under these Conventions & Protocols and also to take part in international meetings and negotiations concerning these ICTPs



Issues of Importance and ongoing activities of Bangladesh

- **NAPA –**
 - Preparation of National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPA) on Climate Change
 - Project undertaken with assistance from GEF.
- **CDM –**
 - Establishment of a Designated National Authority (DNA) and CDM Board
 - Initiatives already undertaken.
- **Capacity Building –**
 - Development of predictive capacity for risk & vulnerability assessment
 - Project undertaken with assistance from DFID



- **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**

- Project undertaken with assistance from GEF to prepare BSAP (Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan)
- Coordinated efforts undertaken in cooperation with Ministries of Agriculture and Science & ICT to prepare Bio-safety Framework and Guidelines

- **Montreal Protocol**

- Bangladesh has reduced by 60% its consumption of ODS through phase-out of the Aerosol sector
- Country programme has been prepared for meeting the 2010 deadline



- **Basel Convention**

- Technical assistance has been sought to prepare rules under Environment Conservation Act 1995
- A reconnaissance survey has been completed on the generation of hazardous wastes

- **UN Convention to combat desertification (UNCCD)**

- Preparation of National Action Plan initiated
- Further projects shall be submitted to the Convention Secretariat based on the National Action Plan

- **Stockholm Convention on POPs (toxic fertilizers)**

- Initiated a project with GEF assistance to make a detailed survey on the use and identification of their potential substitutes

Recent Events that took place

- **WSSD :**
 - World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002, Johannesburg. The summit took stock of developments since the Earth Summit, 1992 and implementation status of Agenda 21. The outcome of the summit was the “Johannesburg Plan of Implementation”.
 - WEHAB initiatives of UN Secretary General 2002 (Water, Energy, Health, Agriculture and Biodiversity).
- **UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – Target for 2015**
 - Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
 - Achieve universal primary education
 - Promote gender equity and empower women
 - Reduce child mortality
 - Improve maternal health
 - Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
 - Ensure environmental sustainability
 - Develop a global partnership for development

Accomplishments in the Global Forum on ICTPs

- Bangladesh is currently the Chair of the ten-member Implementation Committee of Montreal Protocol
- Bangladesh has been elected Vice President of CBD Bureau
- Role of Bangladesh as an alternate member of the Governing Council of GEF has been activated
- Bangladesh is currently the Vice Chair of the LDC Expert Group under the UNFCCC and has emerged as the leader of the LDCs in the Climate Change negotiation process and a lead member of Group 77 for negotiations with other groups. It successfully organized a three day International Workshop at Dhaka in September 2002 on Capacity Building for the National Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA) for the LDCs
- Bangladesh has been elected as the Chairman of the Global Tiger Forum for the second time
- Bangladesh has been elected Vice Chairman of the Conference of Environment Ministers of Islamic Countries in its first conference held in Jeddah



What is Environmental Diplomacy ?

- Environmental diplomacy is widely used to describe international negotiations (either multi- or bilateral) which address problems of environmental degradation and pollution on a global or regional basis
- Environmental diplomacy truly came of age during the 1992 “Earth Summit” in Rio de Janeiro



Major Factors that distinguish Environmental Diplomacy

1. The nature of the subject matter
2. The role of science and scientists
3. The complexity of the negotiations
4. The unique issues involved; and
5. Innovative features and approaches



1. The nature of the subject matter/ future dangers

- Caused by human activities
 - Linked to economic growth and development
 - Use of fossil fuel energy
 - Consumption and lifestyle
 - Clearing forests
- requires coordinated actions on a global scale



2. The role of science and scientists

- Scientists must occasionally offer judgments on the policy implications of their findings
- The fruitful interaction between scientists and diplomats is an indispensable element



3. The complexity of the negotiations

- Governments, civil societies and private industries associations etc. are all involved in negotiations on environmental issues.
- Likeminded countries attempt to hammer out common principles and positions in advance of the broader global negotiations
- The growing complexity of environmental issues is thus reflected in the structure of the negotiations
- Both UNCED 1992 and WSSD 2002 negotiations took place over a period of more than two years



4. The unique equity issues involved

- Developed countries have achieved remarkable levels of economic prosperity but in the process they have inflicted great damage to the environment
- The much greater number of poorer countries developing in the same economic patterns would thus inflict greater damage to the environment.
- Therefore it is the responsibility of the North to change their policy while at the same time providing new and additional funding and technologies to the South

- within a single nation, approaches to the environment can raise issues of equity between rich and poor, city dwellers and farmers, consumers and industrialists or between different branches of industry and labor



5. Innovative features and approaches

- the noncompliance mechanism, which relies on consultation and assistance rather than confrontation and penalties
- for the technological revolution, both industrialized and developing countries are enabled to cease production and consumption of the damaging substances ahead of the timetable
- “Clean Development Mechanism” to transfer technologies and enhance sinks for carbon dioxide



The Role of Diplomats

- while 24 nations signed the Montreal Protocol in 1987, more than 150 nations signed both the Climate Change & the Biodiversity Conventions in 1992 (Rio Earth Summit)
- likeminded countries attempt to negotiate common principles and positions in advance of the global negotiations forming groups (G77 plus China, EU, US etc.)
- the growing complexity of environmental issues is thus reflected in the structure of the negotiations



The Role of Diplomats today?

- recent days diplomats are no longer just members of an exclusive professional guild as was the case in the past
- participate in various capacities in the management of current international relations, both global and regional
- starting from general diplomatic skills, mainly negotiation and representation, and extending to specialized skills and competencies for dealing with particular issues



- environmental diplomacy is also characterized by complex linkages between foreign and domestic policy and politics
- the connection between foreign and domestic policy inherent in environmental diplomacy bring new actors to the fore
- successful environmental diplomacy requires a cooperative, multilateral approach
- healthy competition for the mantle of international environmental leadership is needed to reinvigorate global environmental diplomacy



Environmental Diplomacy : Need for Bangladesh

- Global Negotiations
- International Waters
- Trans-boundary Cooperation
- Regional Environmental Hazards

Global Negotiations

- Since environment encompasses the total development process, negotiations on all issues require a coordinated and informed negotiating skill, e.g. WTO negotiations.
- There must be greater synergy between the relevant stakeholders both within and outside the government including civil society and academicians
- The role of Bangladesh within the G77 and LDCs need to be strengthened to increase our bargaining strength.



International Waters

- Almost all the major rivers that flow into Bangladesh from India have major parts of their catchments located within China, India, Nepal and Bhutan and are classified as “trans-boundary”. Thus in water sharing issues including Farakka and most recently the Indian river linking project, Bangladesh can lobby for international support by linking these to their adverse impact on the environment
- Bangladesh can not make unilateral changes in its water use practices rather needs to negotiate joint management steps with all its neighbors
- Deforestation in upper catchments lead to increased sediment loads in the deltaic areas resulting in severe floods



Trans-boundary Cooperation

- to conserve the transboundary Hill and forest resources
- to conserve the marine resources



Regional Environmental Hazards

- To mitigate the natural catastrophes like, floods and cyclones
- Earthquakes

- environmental issues are increasingly intertwined with other more traditional areas of foreign relations, including trade and investment, development and human rights and even military security

- environmental diplomacy tries to influence foreign governments and/or multilateral institutions towards certain policies
- environmental diplomacy seems clearly to have emerged as an integral component of international relations



The Way Forward

1. The Report of the Special Committee on Foreign Affairs (1995) mentions on several instances the need for:
 - Closer collaboration between MoFA & MoEF
 - Deputation of officers between these two ministries
2. In many cases GoB depends on mission staff to participate in environmental negotiation. Adequate briefing in such cases is a pre-requisite, as is reporting back (1995 Report)

Some Recommendations

- A policy cell could be developed jointly by MoEF, MoFA, MoP and Prime Minister's Office, who will be responsible for environmental diplomacy
- MoFA can train diplomats in its Missions abroad who can play a vital role in raising international awareness to the environmental problems of Bangladesh

- It should be emphasized that by focusing on environmental issues we are not asking for more aid or charity but rather for international recognition of the environmental importance of Bangladesh
- It is a technical and knowledge-intensive affair and all delegations to international negotiations/conferences should be formed accordingly

- Delegation members should be selected with appropriate background, continuity in participation and institutional expertise/memory developed over time
- By including an expert in senior level delegations, the problem can partially be addressed

Thank You