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## UNIT 6 INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT\*

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### 6.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this Unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the events or situations that paved the way for various international conventions on sustainable development;
- Explain the features and outcomes of different international conventions on sustainable development; and
- Examine the role of international conventions.

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### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

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We all know by now that concept of sustainable development implies meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It can also be viewed as maintaining a pace of economic development that protects the long-term value of the environment (Emas, 2015). Unfortunately, the rapid growth rate of countries has resulted in critical damage to the environment, which is a global common. It is difficult for one or few nations to ensure the sustainable use of this global common. A worldwide cooperation is needed for that.

At the same time, one should not forget that historically, it is the developed countries, which followed energy-intensive growth path leading to more damage to global commons. Developing countries and particularly the less developed countries have contributed the least to this environmental damage. Thus, it is crucial to have international conventions, which could explore the effective solutions of economic growth, environmental protection, and social equality.

By the term International Convention, we mean an agreement or treaty between different countries, which generally takes place under the umbrella of United

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Nations (UN). Till date, many international conventions have taken place on various issues or themes, such as human rights, tariffs and trade, high seas, sustainable development and others. In the context of sustainable development, there have been *three* major Conventions up till now:

- i) United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) of 1992, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (popularly known as Rio Summit or Earth Summit 1992).
- ii) World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) of 2002, held in Johannesburg, South Africa (popularly known as Rio+10 or Earth Summit 2002).
- iii) United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) of 2012, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (popularly known as Rio+20 or Earth Summit 2012).

This Unit examines the relevance, features, and outcomes of these three major International Conventions on sustainable development. The Unit is broadly divided into four Sections. The first Section explains the journey of two decades prior to the Rio Summit or Earth Summit, 1992. The second Section discusses the key components of the Summit. The third Section traces the journey of two decades after the Rio Summit i.e., Rio+10 and Rio+20. The Unit concludes by touching upon the reasons behind the slow progress in the area of sustainable development even after so many conventions.

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## 6.2 JOURNEY OF TWO DECADES PRIOR TO THE EARTH SUMMIT

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Identifying the need of global governance in protecting global commons, the world started organising under the umbrella of UN in early 1970s. The first historical conference about environmental concerns was the United Nations Conference on Human Environment, which was held in Stockholm in 1972. The Conference called upon governments and people to apply common efforts for the preservation of environment for the benefit of all human beings across the globe. The major outcome of Stockholm Conference (1972) was the establishment of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). It became the leading global environmental authority for setting the global environmental agenda and advocating a global environment, as well as the creation of a number of multilateral environmental agreements.

After a decade of UN Stockholm Conference, it was realised that neither the high-income countries in the North, nor the low-income countries in the South were willing to give up on the resource based economic growth that they were focused on. This form of economic growth was unsustainable, as it was leading to serious issues like pollution, acid rain, deforestation and desertification, and the destruction of the ozone layer among others. Thus, an urgent need was felt for a developmental concept that would allow for reconciliation of economic development with environmental protection. Therefore, in 1983 Secretary-General of the UN asked the former Prime Minister of Norway, Gro Harlem Brundtland, to create an organisation independent of the UN, to focus on environmental and developmental problems as well as solutions.

This new organisation was called the Brundtland Commission, or more formally, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). The Brundtland Commission was officially dissolved in 1987 after releasing the Report titled ‘Our Common Future’. The major relevance of this Report lies in its definition of the term ‘Sustainable Development’ and also making it popular thereafter, which we have read in almost all the earlier Units of this Course i.e., development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This definition captures the importance of intergenerational equity, which distinguished sustainable development policy from traditional environmental policy (Emas,*op.cit.*).

The Brundtland Report was first of its kind report in addressing the need for economic development without harming the environment. The Report suggested long-term environmental strategies for achieving sustainable development by the year 2000 and beyond, through cooperation between countries at different stages of economic and social development, by taking into account inter-relationships between people, resources, environment and development.

After releasing their Report, the Brundtland Commission called for an international meeting, where more concrete initiatives and goals could be mapped out. Therefore, UN General Assembly called for United Nations Conference on Environment Development (UNCED) with primary goals of socio-economic development, while preventing environmental deterioration. UNCED finally took place in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

**Check Your Progress 1**

**Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answers.

ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

1. Explain the relevance of international conventions on sustainable development.

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2. Write a note on the three International Conventions on sustainable development till now.

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3. Describe the important aspects of the Report on “Our Common Future”.
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### 6.3 EARTH SUMMIT 1992

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In 1992, the UNCED took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It is also known as the Rio Summit or the Rio Conference, and most popularly the Earth Summit. Various outcomes in the form of treaties, political declarations, and action plans, have been of great significance (Cruickshank *et al.*, 2012). These are the following:

- Rio Declaration on Environment and Development: A political declaration of principles on environment and development.
- Agenda 21: A blueprint for implementing sustainable development.
- Statement of Forest Principles: A non-binding authoritative statement of principles.
- UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC): A Multilateral Treaty.
- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD): A Multilateral Treaty.

#### ***Rio Declaration on Environment and Development***

It was a political declaration, which recognised the integral and interdependent nature of our largest home, which is the Planet Earth. In order to establish equitable global partnership and co-operation among States, key sectors and people, it came up with 27 principles. Some of the important highlights of these 27 principles are as following:

- Human beings are at the centre of concern for sustainable development, and they are entitled to healthy and productive life in harmony with nature;
- In order to achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people, States should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption;
- The special situation and needs of developing countries, particularly the least developed and those most environmentally vulnerable, shall be given special priority.
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) should be undertaken for any proposed activities, which are likely to have a significant adverse impact on the environment;
- Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development; and

- Indigenous people and their communities and other local communities have a vital role in environmental management and development because of their knowledge and traditional practices. States should recognise and duly support their identity, culture and interests and enable their effective participation in the achievement of sustainable development.

### *Agenda 21*

It was basically a non-binding Action Plan of the United Nations or UN regarding sustainable development, where 21 referred to the 21st Century i.e., preparing for the 21st Century. This Action Agenda was planned to be executed at local, national, and global levels by multilateral organisations and individual governments around the world. Successful implementation was primarily made the responsibility of the governments, and national strategies, plans, policies and processes were crucial to achieving this. International cooperation was expected to support and supplement such national efforts. All the goals and issues were clubbed under *four* Sections:

Section I captured the social and economic dimensions like combating poverty (especially in developing countries), changing consumption patterns, promoting health, achieving a more sustainable population, and sustainable settlement in decision making.

Section II covered the conservation and management of resources for development like atmospheric protection, combating deforestation, protecting fragile environments, conservation of biological diversity (biodiversity), control of pollution and the management of biotechnology, and radioactive wastes.

Section III covered the strengthening of the role of major groups e.g., children and youth, women, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), local authorities, business and industry, and workers; and strengthening the role of indigenous people, their communities, and farmers.

Section IV captured the means of implementation like scientific know-how, technology transfer, education, international institutions, and financial mechanisms.

### *Statement of Forest Principles*

This was a non-legally-binding authoritative Statement of Principles for a global consensus on the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. Some of the important highlights of the Statement of Forest Principles are:

- Forests are essential to economic development and the maintenance of all forms of life;
- Forest Principles should apply to all types of forests, both natural and planted, in all geographical regions and climatic zones of the world;
- Forest resources and forest lands should be sustainably managed to meet the social, economic, ecological, cultural and spiritual needs of the present and future generations;
- Appropriate measures should be taken to protect forests against harmful effects of air-borne pollution, fires, pests and diseases etc, to maintain their multiple values;

- National forest policies should recognise and duly support the identity, culture and the rights of indigenous people and forest dwellers;
- The full participation of women in all the aspects of management, conservation and sustainable development of forests should be actively promoted; and
- Forest conservation and sustainable development policies should be integrated with economic trade and other relevant policies.

### ***United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)***

It was an Intergovernmental Treaty to address the problem of climate change, and it opened for signature at the Earth Summit (1992). It acknowledged that human activities have caused substantial increase in the atmospheric concentrations of Greenhouse Gases resulting in climate change. It also noted that the largest share of historical and current global emissions of Greenhouse Gases has originated in developed countries. The per capita emissions in developing countries are relatively low presently, but the share of global emissions will grow to meet their social and development needs. Therefore, the global nature of climate change requires a possible cooperation by all countries according to their common, but differentiated responsibilities, respective capabilities, and their social and economic conditions.

The objective of UNFCCC was to achieve stabilisation of Greenhouse Gas concentrations in the atmosphere in a given time-frame, so that ecosystems can naturally adapt to climate change. This is essential to ensure adequate agricultural food production and sustainable economic development. It was stated that the stakeholders in developed countries should take the lead in combating climate change and the resulting adverse effects. Moreover, the specific needs of developing country, especially those that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change should be given full consideration. Countries have been segregated as *four* Classifications of Parties to UNFCCC:

- 1) Annexure (Annex-I): 43 nations + European Union (EU): Industrialised Nations and Economies in Transition (EITs);
- 2) Annex-II is a subset of Annex-I: 24 Nations + EU members of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which will provide support to the developing nations;
- 3) Non-Annex-I: Low income developing countries; and
- 4) Least Developed Countries (LDCs): 49 Nations, which have been given special status.

The major outcome of UNFCCC was the Kyoto Protocol. In December 1997, delegates in Kyoto, Japan, agreed to a Protocol to the UNFCCC that commits developed countries and countries in transition to a market economy in order to achieve quantified emission reduction targets. Under Kyoto Protocol, Annex-I parties, agreed to reduce their overall emissions of six Greenhouse Gases (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydro-fluorocarbons, fluorocarbons, and sulphur hexafluoride) by an average of 5 per cent below 1990 levels between 2008-2012 (the first commitment period), with specific targets varying from country to country. The Protocol also established *three* flexible mechanisms to assist Annex I parties in meeting their national targets cost-effectively:

- Emissions Trading System, where Annex-I countries can purchase credit from other Annex-I countries.
- Clean Development Mechanism, where Annex-I countries can participate in the green development of the non-Annex-I countries.
- Joint Implementation, where Annex-I can take up projects in other Annex-I countries.

**Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**

The importance of biological resources in economic and social development of present and future generations was realised by world community. At the same time, it was felt that increasing human activities were resulting in the extinction of species and eco-systems at an alarming rate. Against this background, International Convention on Biological Diversity was planned as a legally-binding treaty. Inspired by the world community’s growing commitment to sustainable development, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) had *three* main objectives:

- i) The conservation of biological diversity;
- ii) The sustainable use of the components of biological diversity; and
- iii) The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources.

CBD was opened for signature at the Earth Summit 1992, and entered into force a year later. The major outputs of CBD were: 1) Cartagena BioSafety Protocol, 2) Aichi Targets; and 3) Nagoya Genetic Resource Protocol. Let us discuss these briefly:

The Cartagena Protocol on BioSafety was an international agreement, which aims to ensure the safe handling, transport and use of Living Modified Organisms (LMOs), resulting from modern biotechnology that may have adverse effects on biological diversity and human health. It was adopted in 2000. The basic idea of Aichi Targets was to address causes of biodiversity loss, promote sustainable use, and safeguard ecosystems, species and genetic diversity etc., through some short-term and long-term plans (2011 through 2020) by 2050. Nagoya Genetic Resource Protocol was an international agreement, which aims at sharing the benefits arising from the utilisation of genetic resources in a fair and equitable way. It came into force in 2014.

**Check Your Progress 2**

- Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.  
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the Unit.

1. Discuss the various outcomes of Earth Summit held in 1992.

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## 6.4 TWO DECADES AFTER THE EARTH SUMMIT

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A number of multilateral environmental agreements have taken place since 1992. However, despite of that, the global environment has continued to suffer. Loss of biodiversity has continued, and fish stocks have got depleted. Desertification has claimed more and more fertile land, the adverse effects of climate change are already evident, occurrence of natural disasters is also more frequent and devastating. Besides the air, water and marine pollution has continued to take millions of lives. One of the reasons has been rapid globalisation. Apart from worsening global environment, globalisation also led to other crucial problems like inter- and intra-country income inequality, posing major threat to global prosperity, security and stability.

In the background of these global disparities, an urgent need was felt to act in a manner that will fundamentally change the lives of the poor in the world. The World Summit on Sustainable Development, also known as Rio +10 was organised after 10 years of the first Earth Summit at Johannesburg. It highlighted the importance of poverty eradication, changing consumption and production patterns and protecting and managing the natural resource base for economic and social development, all as essential part of sustainable development.

The major focus of the Johannesburg Summit was human dignity through increased access to basic requirements such as clean water, sanitation, shelter, energy, health care, food security and the protection of biodiversity. At the same time, it was planned that developed countries will help the developing countries regarding financial resources, technology transfer, human resource development, education and training to arrest the condition of underdevelopment.

The major outcome of Rio+10 was Johannesburg Declaration, which was only in the form of a political statement to be agreed by world leaders, reaffirming their commitment to work towards sustainable development. It also planned to serve as a platform for the launch of new partnership initiatives by and between governments, NGOs and businesses, to tackle specific problems and achieve measurable results.

However, despite the growing number of institutions and planning regarding sustainable development, environmental problems kept on intensifying globally. The findings of the 2005 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment showed that ‘over the past 50 years, humans have changed ecosystems more rapidly and extensively than in any comparable period of time in human history’, and that this has resulted in ‘a substantial and largely irreversible loss in the diversity of life on Earth’. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has found that global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions grew by 70 per cent between 1970 and 2004 (Cruickshank *et al., op.cit.*).

Thus, it was felt that there was a need to re-direct and re-energise political commitment to the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic growth, social improvement and environmental protection. In this background, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 2012. It was basically like a ‘review’ Conference, which would assess the progress made since 1992. Therefore, its objectives were

much limited than the earlier two Conferences. However, with growing concerns of environmental degradation and income inequality, the importance of sustainable development kept increasing. It got reflected in the participation in Rio+20. With around 100 Heads of States, many ministers, and more than 40,000 other representatives of governments, NGOs, private sector, and civil society, it was the largest ever UN gathering.

The two themes got the primary focus in Rio+20: a) green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and b) institutional framework for sustainable development. The primary outcome of the Conference was the non-binding Document 'The Future We Want'. This 49 page Document largely reaffirmed the goals of the previous action plan that is the Agenda 21. The major focus areas of this Document revolved on:

- Using the green economy as a tool to achieve sustainable development by focusing on clean energy, food security, decent jobs, and water conservation among others;
- Strengthening of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP);
- Taking steps to go beyond Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to assess the well-being of a country;
- Improving gender equity;
- Recognising the important role that indigenous knowledge plays in sustainable development;
- Prevention of land degradation;
- Planning sustainable cities and urban settlements;
- Developing tools to reduce the risk of disasters; and
- Restoring oceans and marine ecosystems, and maintaining their biodiversity.

Another important issue is that at Rio+20, member States decided to launch a process to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to build upon the Millennium Development Goals post-2015, and to establish a high-level political forum on sustainable development.

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## 6.5 A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS

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Since 1992, the number of multilateral environmental agreements has grown significantly, and there are now many hundreds of binding and non-binding global agreements on environmental issues, as well as a wide range of other agreements that address social and economic aspects of development. Despite this, environmental problems have intensified globally. The question arises, why much progress could not be achieved even after so many international conventions. The following can be cited as few reasons behind that:

- Most environmental problems are global in nature and most national governments often give financial priority to solve national problems rather than global problems.
- Rapid globalisation has had negative impact on global environment, as well as inter and intra-country income inequalities, posing a major challenge to the full realisation of global sustainable development.

- The international decision-making process is quite slow, as it requires many national governments to agree before taking any action. Moreover, there is little democratic accountability at the global decision-making level. As a result, it is difficult to generate effective public pressure for action.
- There have been institutional problems. For example, United Nations Environment Programme or UNEP was conceived to be the ‘environmental conscience’ of the United Nations. UNEP is not a specialised agency, but is attached to the UN General Assembly as a subsidiary programme. Critics of UNEP often suggest that being a subsidiary programme, it restricts the influence and effectiveness of its work and that not having the same stature as other UN organisations makes it more difficult for it to achieve its aims.
- There are many different international organisations, programmes and bodies that govern sustainable development at the global level. Each of these bodies has its own objectives and mandates, and as such can act somewhat autonomously, which often results in fragmented and fractured processes and agreements that govern international environmental issues.
- Last but not the least, historically it was the developed countries, which contributed more to the damage of global commons, compared to developing and least developed countries. Thus, unless and until international conventions ensure more commitment from developed countries like the USA, chances of success in sustainable development area could be bleak.

**Check Your Progress 3**

**Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answers.

ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

1. Explain the journey of two decades after Earth Summit of 1992.

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2. Examine the reasons behind the lack of progress in the area of sustainable development despite so many international conventions.

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## 6.6 CONCLUSION

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Environment being a global common, it is difficult or rather impossible for one or a few nations to ensure its sustainable use. A worldwide cooperation is needed for this. At the same time, since it is the developed countries, which have contributed more to the damage of global commons compared to the developing and least developed countries, it is crucial to have international conventions to explore the win-win solutions of economic growth, environmental protection, and social equality on one hand, and assigning some common and differentiated responsibilities between developed and developing countries on the other.

This Unit has discussed the impact of the major international conventions on sustainable development. It has also explained the background and relevance of each convention, and its outcome. Apart from the institutional problems, the Unit has described those conventions, which could not ensure strong commitments from the developed countries despite sincere efforts.

Outcomes of these conventions were not always in favour of developing countries, which is a major concern from the perspective of these countries. For example, Rio+20 World Trade Organisation (WTO) promoted free flow of goods and services between nations by stating that international trade was important for sustainable development and poverty removal. But USA gives heavy subsidies to its cotton and corn farmers. So if there is a totally free system, USA can export those products in other developing countries like India at a price where Indian farmers cannot compete.

Therefore, India prefers protection, and demands for a fair and equitable global trade regime to achieve development. Regarding green economy, most of the green/environment-friendly technologies are with the developed countries. Therefore, developing countries like India want these international forums to facilitate the transfer of these technologies from the developed countries to developing countries at a reasonable price so that the goal of green economy is achieved. In short, there should be adequate flow of resources and technologies from the developed countries to the developing countries to achieve the concept of some common and some differentiated responsibilities between the two. This Unit discussed these issues against the backdrop of pertinent environment summits and international conventions.

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## 6.7 GLOSSARY

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**Acid Rains:** It is also known as acid deposition. It includes any form of precipitation with acidic components such as sulfuric or nitric acid. When the compounds of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide are released into air, they rise high enough and get mixed with water vapour and other chemicals to form acidic pollutants that then fall on earth in the form of rain, fog, snow, hail, dust etc.

**Intergenerational Equity:** It refers to relationships and transactions between generations. Thus, intergenerational equity implies fairness or justice between generations. In the context of sustainable development, it refers to justice of availability of natural resources for the use across generations.

**Green Economy:** The concept of green economy combines economics and ecology. The focus of an economy should not only be to become internationally

competitive, but also be environmentally friendly and socially acceptable. A green economy is one that enhances social welfare, combats poverty, and strives for social justice.

**United Nations Conference on Environment and Development:** It is also known as the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit, the Rio Summit, the Rio Conference and the Earth Summit. It was held in June 1992.

**United Nations Environment Programme:** It is a programme responsible for coordinating responses to environmental issues within the United Nations system. It came up in 1972.

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## 6.8 REFERENCES

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## 6.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

#### 1. Your answer should include the following points:

- The rapid growth rate of countries resulted in critical damage to the environment.
- Environment being a global common, it is difficult or rather impossible for one or a few nations to ensure its sustainable use. A worldwide cooperation is needed for this.
- Historically, developed countries followed energy-intensive growth path leading to more damage to global commons, compared to developing and the least developed countries.
- Thus, it is crucial to have international conventions and explore the win-win solutions of economic growth, environmental protection and social equality.

#### 2. Your answer should include the following points:

- Till date, three international conventions on sustainable development have taken place.
- United Nations Conference on Environment Development (UNCED) of 1992, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (popularly known as Rio Summit or Earth Summit 1992).
- World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) of 2002, held in Johannesburg, South Africa (popularly known as Rio+10 or Earth Summit 2002).
- United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) of 2012, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (popularly known as Rio+20 or Earth Summit 2012).

#### 3. Your answer should include the following points:

- The title of the Brundtland Commission Report is 'Our Common Future'.
- The Report was first of its kind in addressing the need for economic development without harming the environment.
- The Report defined and popularised the term "Sustainable Development", i.e., development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This definition captured the importance of intergenerational equity, which distinguished sustainable development policy from traditional environmental policy.
- The Report suggested long-term environmental strategies for achieving sustainable development by the year 2000 and beyond, through cooperation between countries at different stages of economic and social development, by taking into account interrelationships between people, resources, environment, and development.

## Check Your Progress 2

### 1. Your answer should include the following points:

- Rio Declaration on Environment and Development was a political declaration of 27 principles on environment and development. It highlighted the special needs of women, indigenous people, and environmentally vulnerable countries. It emphasised on reducing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, and also on undertaking of Environmental Impact Assessment for any proposed activities, which are likely to have a significant adverse impact on the environment.
- Agenda 21, is a non-binding action plan of the UN regarding sustainable development, where 21 referred to the 21st Century. Various goals and issues were clubbed under four Sections - Social and Economic Dimensions, Conservation and Management of Resources for Development, Strengthening the Role of Major Groups, and Means of Implementation.
- Statement of Forest Principles. This was a non-legally-binding authoritative statement of principles for a global consensus on the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.
- UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was an intergovernmental treaty to address the problem of climate change. The objective of UNFCCC was to achieve stabilisation of Greenhouse Gas concentrations in the atmosphere in a given time-frame, so that ecosystems can naturally adapt to climate change. The major outcome of UNFCCC was the Kyoto Protocol (1997).
- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was planned as a legally-binding treaty. The three main objectives were conservation of biological diversity, sustainable use of the components of biological diversity, and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources. The major outputs of CBD were: 1) Cartagena Bio Safety Protocol, 2) Aichi Targets; and 3) Nagoya Genetic Resource Protocol.

## Check Your Progress 3

### 1. Your answer should include the following points:

- Rio +10 was organised at Johannesburg in 2002. It highlighted the importance of poverty eradication, changing consumption and production patterns and protecting and managing the natural resource base for economic and social development.
- The major focus of the Johannesburg Summit was human dignity through increased access to basic requirements as clean water, sanitation, adequate shelter, energy, health care, food security and the protection of biodiversity.
- The major outcome of Rio+10 was Johannesburg Declaration, which was only in the form of a political statement to be agreed by world leaders, reaffirming their commitment to work towards sustainable development.

- United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 2012. It was basically like a ‘review’ Conference, which would assess the progress made since 1992. Therefore, its objectives were much limited than the earlier two Conferences.
- The two themes got primary focus at Rio+20: green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and the institutional framework for sustainable development. The primary outcome of the Conference was the non-binding document “The Future We Want”.
- The major focus of “The Future We Want” was on how the green economy can be used as a tool to achieve sustainable development; strengthening UNEP; assessing the well-being of a country beyond GDP; improving gender equity; providing importance to indigenous knowledge; prevention of land degradation; planning sustainable cities and urban settlements; developing tools to reduce the risk of disasters; restoring oceans and marine ecosystems and maintain their biodiversity.
- In Rio+20, member States decided to launch a process to develop a set of SDGs, to build upon the MDGs post-2015.

**2. Your answer should include the following points:**

- Most environmental problems are global in nature and most national governments often give financial priority to solve national problems rather than global problems.
- Rapid globalisation has/had a negative impact on global environment as well as inter-and intra-country income inequalities, posing a major challenge to the full realisation of global sustainable development.
- The international decision-making process is quite slow, as it requires many national governments to agree before taking any action. Moreover, there is little democratic accountability at the global decision-making level. As a result, it is difficult to generate effective public pressure for action.
- There are institutional problems.
- There are many different international organisations, programmes and bodies that govern sustainable development at the global level, which often results in fragmented and fractured processes instead of a holistic solution.
- Historically, it is the developed countries that have contributed more to the damage of global commons compared to the developing and the least developed countries. Thus, unless and until international conventions ensure more commitment from developed countries like USA, chances of success will be bleak.