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Essay on Sustainable Development of Ethiopia in Relation to Environmental Policy

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ABSTRACT

In the developing countries like Ethiopia most of the environmental problems are caused by underdevelopment. Millions continue to live far below the minimum levels required for a decent human existence, deprived of adequate food and clothing, shelter and education, health direct their efforts to development, bearing in mind their priorities and the need to safeguard and improve the environment. For the same purpose, the industrialized countries should make efforts to reduce the gap themselves and the developing countries, environmental problems are generally related to industrialization and technological development (Yared, 2017:17).

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Ethiopian Environmental protection Authority

Environmental Organs Establishment Proclamation, Proclamation No. 295/2002 was enacted in 2002. This proclamation repealed Proclamation for the Establishment of the EPA, Proclamation 12 No. 9/95. According to this proclamation EPA is accountable to the Prime Minister. This proclamation has also established the Environmental Protection Council (EPC). EPC oversees EPA's activities, as well as the activities of sectoral agencies and environmental units with respect to environmental management. It also ensures coordination among sectoral ministries and agencies on environmental matters. This proclamation also mandates the EPA to undertake studies and research, to develop action plans etc, in the area of combating desertification (EPA, 2004).

Stated differently, the mandate of the Ethiopian Environmental Protection Authority is to manage, protect, conserve, and sustain the environment and the natural resources of the country. Through sustainable management of the environment and natural resources, it is expected that the economic and social conditions of Ethiopia will be greatly improved and all Ethiopians will lead productive lives in a healthy environment. More specifically, keeping in mind the organization's overall aim and principles of action such as compliance and regulatory requirements, the policy objectives of the Ethiopian Environmental Protection Authority seek to communicate the following environmental priorities:

- Ensure that essential ecological processes and life support systems are sustained
- Preserve biological diversity.
- See that renewable natural resources are used in such a way that their generative and productive capabilities are maintained.
- Ensure that the exploitation of non-renewable resources is managed wisely to extend the benefits far into the future.

- Identify under-utilized natural resources by finding new technologies for their development.
- Incorporate the full economic, social, and environmental costs of natural resources development into the planning, implementation, and accounting process by a comprehensive evaluation of the environment and the services it provides.
- Improve the environment of human settlements to satisfy the physical, social, economic, and cultural needs of their inhabitants on a sustainable basis.
- Ensure the empowerment and participation of the people and their own organizations in all levels of environmental management activities.
- Raise public awareness with educational programs to promote understanding of the essential linkages between environment and development (EPE, 1997:3-4)

Environmental policy of Ethiopia

In April 1997, Ethiopian Environmental Protection Authority prepared environmental policy by considering own specific duties like;

- To prepare environmental protection policy and laws, and upon approval, follow up their implementation.
- To prepare directives and systems necessary for evaluating the impact of social and economic development projects on the environment; monitor and follow up their implementation (EPA, 2010).

Then, by proclamation No. 9/1995 the Ethiopian Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has created an environmental policy, as well as legal and regulatory reforms to manage its environmental and natural resources. To improve and enhance the health and quality of life of all Ethiopians, and to promote sustainable social and economic development through the sound management and use of natural, human-made and cultural resources and the environment as a whole, so as to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations

to meet their own needs, the first comprehensive statements of Environmental Policy for the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia were approved by the Council of Ministers in April 1997” (EPA, 2004:9).

The Environmental Policy of Ethiopia constitutes eleven-sectoral and eleven cross-sectoral policy elements. The policy's section on Soil Husbandry and Sustainable Agriculture, Forest Wood Land and Tree Resource, Genetic Species and Ecosystem Biodiversity, Water Resource, Energy and Mineral Resource address the issue of combating desertification (ibid: 9).

The Environmental Policy of Ethiopia (1997) is the overarching policy for the environment and natural resource management in Ethiopia. It was developed to address an identified gap in the policy framework. The importance of sustainable development was recognized in national policy and laws however there was no overall comprehensive policy formulation to address the cross-sectoral and sectoral issues that concern the environment and natural resource management. The Environmental Policy addresses this by setting out specific policy directives for different sectors concerning the environment and natural resource management

(<https://thereddesk.org/countries/policies/environmental-policy-ethiopia> accessed on 24/11/2017).

One sectoral policy specifically addresses climate change and atmospheric pollution, through promoting a climate monitoring programme, acknowledging a commitment to mitigate emissions, even at low or even insignificant levels of contribution to global emissions, actively participating in protecting the ozone layer, as a means to reduce vulnerability of the highlands of Ethiopia, encouraging re-vegetation, monitoring grazing and rehabilitating degraded land to compensate for high biomass-fuel consumption (<http://www.lse.ac.uk/GranthamInstitute/law/env>

[ironment-policy-of-ethiopia/](#) accessed on 22/11/2017).

Based on the goals of the Ethiopian Environmental Policy, it is worth mentioning that its *vision* statement should have highlighted what Ethiopia aspires to achieve in the future. Through the establishment of sound management of renewable and non-renewable resources, Ethiopia should have envisioned development that ensures a secure and sustainable environment. Similarly, the *mission* of the environmental policy should have been designed to raise the awareness and empowerment of the Ethiopian people to use environmentally sound technology and the best practices in order to achieve sustainable development. This would include using good management, conservation, and monitoring in order to protect the natural resources of the country (EPA, 2006). There are several specific objectives stated in environmental policy to:

- A. Ensure that essential ecological processes and life support systems are sustained, biological diversity is preserved and renewable natural resources are used in such a way that their regenerative and productive capabilities are maintained and where possible enhanced so that the satisfaction of the needs of future generations is not compromised; where this capability is already impaired to seek through appropriate interventions a restoration of that capability;
- B. Ensure that the benefits from the exploitation of non-renewable resources are extended as far into the future as can be managed, and minimize the negative impacts of their exploitation on the use and management of other natural resources and the environment;
- C. Identify and develop natural resources that are currently underutilized by finding new technologies, and/or intensifying existing uses which are not widely applied;
- D. Incorporate the full economic, social and environmental costs and benefits of natural

resource development into the planning, implementation and accounting processes by a comprehensive valuation of the environment and the services it provides, and by considering the social and environmental costs and benefits which cannot currently be measured in monetary terms;

- E. Improve the environment of human settlements to satisfy the physical, social, economic, cultural and other needs of their inhabitants on a sustainable basis;
- F. Prevent the pollution of land, air and water in the most cost-effective way so that the cost of effective preventive intervention would not exceed the benefits;
- G. Conserve, develop, sustainably manage and support Ethiopia's rich and diverse cultural heritage;
- H. Ensure the empowerment and participation of the people and their organizations at all levels in environmental management activities; and
- I. Raise public awareness and promote understanding of the essential linkages between environment and development (EPE, 1997:3-4).

Again as stated in EPE (1997: 4-5), all above stated specific objectives has own a number of key principles. Establishing and clearly defining these guiding principles is very important as they will shape all subsequent policy, strategy and programme formulations and their implementation. Sectoral and cross-sectoral policies and environmental elements of other macro policies will be checked against these principles to ensure consistency. These key guiding principles are:

- 1) Every person has the right to live in a healthy environment.
- 2) Sustainable environmental conditions and economic production systems are impossible in the absence of peace and personal security. This shall be assured through the acquisition of power by communities to make their own decisions on

matters that affect their life and environment;

- 3) The development, use and management of renewable resources shall be based on sustainability;
- 4) The use of non-renewable resources shall be minimized and where possible their availability extended (e.g. through recycling);
- 5) Appropriate and affordable technologies which use renewable and non-renewable resources efficiently shall be adopted, adapted, developed and disseminated;
- 6) When a compromise between short-term economic growth and long-term environmental protection is necessary, then development activities shall minimize degrading and polluting impacts on ecological and life support systems. When working out a compromise, it is better to err on the side of caution to the extent possible as rehabilitating a degraded environment is very expensive, and bringing back a species that has gone extinct is impossible;
- 7) Full environmental and social costs (or benefits foregone or lost) that may result through damage to resources or the environment as a result of degradation or pollution shall be incorporated into public and private sector planning and accounting, and decisions shall be based on minimizing and covering these costs;
- 8) Market failures with regard to the pricing of natural, human-made and cultural resources, and failures in regulatory measures shall be corrected through the assessment and establishment of user fees, taxes, tax reductions or incentives;
- 9) Conditions shall be created that will support community and individual resource users to sustainably manage their own environment and resources;
- 10) As key actors in natural resource use and management, women shall be treated equally with men and empowered to be totally involved in policy, programme and

- project design, decision making and implementation;
- 11) The existence of a system which ensures uninterrupted continuing access to the same piece(s) of land and resource creates conducive conditions for sustainable natural resource management;
 - 12) Social equity shall be assured particularly in resource use;
 - 13) Regular and accurate assessment and monitoring of environmental conditions shall be undertaken and the information widely disseminated within the population;
 - 14) Increased awareness and understanding of environmental and resource issues shall be promoted by policy makers, by government officials and by the population, and the adoption of a "conservation culture" in environmental matters among all levels of society shall be encouraged;
 - 15) Local, regional and international environmental interdependence shall be recognized;
 - 16) Natural resource and environmental management activities shall be integrated laterally across all sectors and vertically among all levels of organization;
 - 17) Species and their variants have the right to continue existing, and are, or may be, useful now and/or for generations to come;
 - 18) The wealth of crop and domestic animal as well as micro-organism and wild plant and animal germplasm is an invaluable and inalienable asset that shall be cared for; and
 - 19) The integrated implementation of cross-sectoral and sectoral federal, regional and local policies and strategies shall be seen as a prerequisite to achieving the objectives of this Policy on the Environment.

Environmental Impact Assessment

Unlike the Environmental Protection Policy which lacks specific vision and mission statements, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), begun by the Environmental Protection Authority includes procedural guidelines as a prerequisite for the approval of

new development activities and projects in any sector. To be well-designed, the EIA has very specific vision and mission statements. Its vision is to "see a clean and healthy environment by eliminating or, when possible minimizing pollutants at their sources. Its *mission* statement is to enforce the Pollution Control Proclamation and related laws, in order to eliminate or minimize pollutants that generated from industries, agricultural activities, service rendering organizations and urban areas and enhance the health and wellbeing of the citizens". To realize the mission statements, the EIA included the following objectives and goals:

- ▶ Promote development that is sustainable and optimize resource use and management opportunities
- ▶ Protect the productivity and capacity of natural systems and ecological processes which maintain their functions
- ▶ Ensure environmental concerns are explicitly addressed and incorporated into the decision-making process
- ▶ Develop, implement and measure programs that promote management systems for the environment
- ▶ Prevent or minimize or offset the adverse impacts of municipal waste and other potential pollutants
- ▶ Prevent the adverse effects of developmental proposals that may generate hazardous substances or waste (EPA, 2006).

EIA in Ethiopia is voluntary and is not legally binding. It is only applicable to large projects, and ascertains environmental impacts of development activities and how to mitigate negative impacts early in the project planning cycle. The developers of these large projects are required to take an "Initial Environmental Examination (IEE)" in order to determine whether or not a given project requires full Environmental Impact Assessment.

As narrated by Tekelemichael (2006), however, the EPA was created to assist developers in addressing environmental issues related to the

development of their projects and in meeting environmental impact assessment requirements. It is further alleged by the Ethiopian Government that the environmental impact assessment process included the participation of local populations in project planning and design. Thus, properly-conducted EIA lessens conflicts by promoting community participation and informing decision makers, thus helping to lay a suitable foundation for environmentally sound projects (Tekelemichael, 2006).

Development and Environment issues in relation to FDRE Constitution

The constitution of the FDRE, which was enacted in 1995, is the umbrella for all legislative frame-works in the country. The concept of sustainable development and the environmental rights of the people are clearly stipulated in the constitution, along with many other provisions. The concept of sustainable development and environmental rights are explicitly stated in **article (43)** the peoples of Ethiopia as a whole and each nation, nationality and people in Ethiopia in particular have the right to improved living standards and to sustainable development. Again under sub article (3), all international agreements and relations concluded, established or conducted by the state shall protect and ensure Ethiopia's right to sustainable development. Under sub-article (4) the basic aim of development activities shall be to enhance the capacity of citizens for development and to meet their basic needs.

Environmental sustainability is recognized in the constitution and in the national economic policy and strategy as a key prerequisite for lasting success. The right to live in a clean and healthy environment has been promulgated in the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. On **FDRE Constitution (1995) article (44)**; sub-article;

1. All persons have the right to a clean and healthy environment.

Again **FDRE Constitution (1995) article (92)** stated under sub-article;

1) Government shall endeavour to ensure that all Ethiopians live in clean and healthy environment.

(2) The design and implementation of programmes and projects of development shall not damage or destroy the environment.

(3) People have the right to full consultation and to the expression of views in the planning and implementation of environmental policies and projects that affect them directly.

(4) Government and citizens shall have the duty to protect the environment.

Environmental Challenges of Ethiopia

The protection and improvement of the human environment is a major issue which affects the well-being of peoples and economic development throughout the world; it is the urgent desire of the peoples of the whole world and the duty of all governments (Yared, 2009: 4).

In Ethiopia, land degradation is a serious problem affecting agricultural productivity. Overgrazing and the expansion of farming into marginal lands caused by an increasing population pressure without increasing economic productivity have been leaving the land bare.

Present key problems in land degradation include loss of vegetation cover and biodiversity followed by escalating soil erosion, declining soil fertility, expanding salinization as well as aridity through hydrological cycle disruption caused by unsustainable anthropogenic practices exacerbated by climate change (BSAP, 2005 cited in FDREPA, 2011:1). Typical pressure factors leading to land degradation include nutrient depletion from agricultural lands, overgrazing and deforestation.

Water and soil pollution, especially by agrochemicals, are becoming important in some areas.

Pollution caused by municipal and industrial waste is also a seriously growing environmental problem in urban and downstream areas. Conversely, the urban solid waste collection and disposal system is inadequate. In the major urban centers throughout the country, less than half of the solid waste generated is collected, and the remaining increases urban dirt. The sanitation infrastructure is poor. The sewerage disposal service is very limited in its coverage. There is, however, a growing perception and commitment towards improved environmental management (EPA, 2011:2).

The government has prioritized ensuring environmental sustainability in its development plans and programmes. Over the last four decades, serious concerns have been expressed pertaining to the accumulation of poorly stored, banned and obsolete pesticides, which pollute the environment and affect human health. These stocks have accumulated for a number of reasons, including owing to lack of co-ordination in the donations and procurement of pesticides, inappropriate product supply, poor storage conditions and poor management, including oversupply and a poor registration system. With regard to industrial chemicals, the study conducted by EPA in 2006 in 28 organizations revealed that various types of chemicals and contaminated containers have been stored either as unwanted or obsolete chemicals (ibid:2).

Many regions in Ethiopia are affected by deforestation and a high degree of desertification. Greenhouse effect, warming (rising of atmospheric temperature), loss of biodiversity, air, water and soil pollution, soil degradation, reduction of surface water and fresh water problem, an increase number of crop failures, wind and ice damage to crops, erosion, industrial pollution, hazardous chemicals and pesticides, coastal and marine pollution and general climate change etc. are major environmental problems of Ethiopia like most African countries (Yared, 2009:18).

Ethiopia is ancient country practicing crop cultivation for centuries. As a consequence and because of population growth coupled with changing climate conditions over the past several decades, environmental degradation has drastically affected the natural resources and socioeconomic infrastructure of the country. It is worthwhile to consider the environmental challenges of Ethiopia in the rural and urban setting (ibid, 17).

In the rural setting, massive deforestation and de-vegetation takes place for want of cultivable land to accommodate the increasing rural population. This has exposed the soil for wind and running water erosions thus depleting the soil nutrients. Timber, lumber and other forest products demands of the urban centers are also a major cause for deforestation in Ethiopia (ibid, 18).

Although the industrial sector is said to be at its infant stage in Ethiopia, the few that are in and around the urban centers especially **Addis Ababa, the capital city**, are releasing untreated effluent/discharge into the stream and other water bodies. For example, the textile, tannery and iron tools industries are polluting the environment of the **Akaki river** systems and underground water in south-east of Addis Ababa. Lack of sufficient system and regulation for the management of hazardous wastes, chemicals and radioactive substances. In addition lack of environmental awareness concerning the linkage between environment and development in general, weak participation of the people and community based organizations in environmental management activities are some of the environmental challenges, Ethiopia is facing now-a-day (ibid, 19).

The serious deficiencies in sanitation services and the inadequacy of sewerage infrastructure and random defecation in urban areas have created dangerous health and environmental problems. Rivers and streams in the vicinity of Addis Ababa and other large urban centers have become open sewers and is one of the

main sources of infections resulting in diarrhea and other diseases (EPE, 1997:2).

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