Global Sustainability Initiatives

Over the past 50 years, the global community has explored the concept of sustainability in the context of the environment, society and the economy. As our knowledge and understanding of the world has developed, alongside our increasing global interdependence, our understanding of what sustainability might mean and involve has also developed.

This bridging work is designed to help you explore the ways in which sustainability as a concept has evolved; what the global community has done collectively to achieve a more sustainable relationship with our world, and what still needs to be addressed as we start the third decade of the 21st century.

*The knowledge and understanding developed through the completion of this bridging work will support both your Physical Geography and Human Geography studies at A Level. For example, in Physical Geography you will consider climate change and the steps taken by the global community to collectively mitigate this environmental challenge (especially within the context of the water and carbon cycles), and in Human Geography you will consider the concept of ‘population ecology’ – in which many of these ideas will be directly analysed – as well as the role of global systems and governance in responding to global challenges.*

ACTIVITY 1:

Using the following websites and articles, complete the table to explore how our understanding of sustainability has evolved over time and who has been involved in tackling global sustainability issues.

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/climate-negotiations-timeline/>

**Greenpeace, 1971 to present**

<https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/about-greenpeace/>

**The Limits to Growth, 1972**

You can access a digital copy of this publication here: <http://www.donellameadows.org/wp-content/userfiles/Limits-to-Growth-digital-scan-version.pdf> It is perhaps too much to ask you to read it all (!) so I would recommend reading the Introduction – but feel free to read it all if you so wish 😊

<http://sustainablescale.org/ConceptualFramework/UnderstandingScale/MeasuringScale/LimitstoGrowth.aspx>

<https://limits2growth.org.uk/revisited/>

***Our Common Future -* The Brundtland Report, 1987**

You can access a digital copy of this publication here: <http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm> If you hover your mouse over each section, you can click hyperlinks to the different sections. I would suggest reading ‘The Concept of Sustainable Development’ section as a starting point.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Brundtland-Report>

<https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/brundtland-commission-sustainable-development-rio-2012>

***Earth Summit* Rio de Janeiro, 1992 and Agenda 21**

<https://www.sustainable-environment.org.uk/Action/Earth_Summit.php>

<https://www.britannica.com/event/United-Nations-Conference-on-Environment-and-Development>

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2012/jun/13/rio-earth-summit-1992-archive>

<https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/video-rio-1992-reflections-sustainable-development>

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/outcomedocuments/agenda21>

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/641Synthesis_report_Web.pdf>

**Kyoto Protocol, 1997**

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Kyoto-Protocol>

<https://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol>

<https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/public-environment-climate/documents/kyoto-protocol-united-nations-framework-kyoto-1997>

**UN Millennium Development Goals, 2000**

<https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

<https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sdgoverview/mdg_goals.html>

<https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/mdgmomentum.shtml>

**COP15 Copenhagen Accord, 2009**

<https://www.climate-change-guide.com/copenhagen-accord.html>

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/8422307.stm>

<https://www.c2es.org/content/cop-15-copenhagen/>

**COP17 Durban Platform for Enhanced Action, 2011**

<https://unfccc.int/process/conferences/the-big-picture/milestones/outcomes-of-the-durban-conference>

**UN Sustainable Development Goals, 2015**

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2015/12/sustainable-development-goals-kick-off-with-start-of-new-year/>

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>

**COP21 Paris Agreement, 2015**

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Paris-Agreement-2015>

<https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/what-is-the-paris-agreement>

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/09/what-is-the-paris-agreement-on-climate-change/>

<https://www.theccc.org.uk/2015/12/21/the-good-the-bad-and-the-ugly-of-the-paris-agreement/>

**Extinction Rebellion, 2018 onwards**

<https://rebellion.earth/>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-48607989>

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/oct/08/what-are-extinction-rebellion-key-demands-climate-emergency> This gives one side of the story…other newspapers report in very different ways! For instance: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/10/12/extinction-rebellion-primeval-anti-capitalist-cult/>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/science-environment-46626582/extinction-rebellion-the-story-behind-the-activist-group>

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Key Event, Organisation or Publication** | **How is/was sustainability understood by this organisation / publication?** | **Who has been involved in furthering the sustainability agenda? (Specific countries etc.)** |
| Greenpeace, 1971 - |  |  |
| Limits to Growth, 1972 |  |  |
| Our Common Future, 1987 |  |  |
| Earth Summit and Agenda 21, 1992 |  |  |
| Kyoto Protocol, 1997 |  |  |
| UN MDGs, 2000 |  |  |
| Copenhagen Accord, 2009 |  |  |
| Durban, 2011 |  |  |
| UN SDGs 2015 |  |  |
| Paris Agreement, 2015 |  |  |
| Extinction Rebellion, 2018- |  |  |

ACTIVITY 2:

**What has been achieved in terms of environmental sustainability?**

For each of the protocols / agreements, outline the progress that has been achieved by collective global action e.g. reduced reliance on fossil fuels, impacts on emissions, impacts of the ozone layer etc. You could organise your notes in a table similar to the one below (if more than 2 achievements have been made, extend the table!):

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Protocol / Agreement** | **Key Achievement 1** | **Key Achievement 2** |
| Earth Summit, Rio / Agenda 21 |  |  |
| Kyoto Protocol |  |  |
| Copenhagen Accord / Durban |  |  |
| Paris Agreement |  |  |

ACTIVITY 3:

**What has been achieved in terms of social and economic development?**

For each of the Millennium Development Goals, summarise the key areas in which progress has been made. Support your notes with statistical / specific information.

Again, you may find the following table a useful way in which to organise your notes:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Millennium Development Goal** | **Social development progress 1** | **Social development progress 2** | **Economic development progress 1** | **Economic development progress 2** |
| 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger |  |  |  |  |
| 2. Achieve universal primary education |  |  |  |  |
| 3. Promote gender equality and empower women |  |  |  |  |
| 4. Reduce child mortality |  |  |  |  |
| 5. Improve maternal health |  |  |  |  |
| 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases |  |  |  |  |
| 7. Ensure environmental sustainability |  |  |  |  |
| 8. Global partnership for development |  |  |  |  |

\*Note – if one of the goals is more focused on social development / economic development rather than both, ignore the columns that don’t apply!

ACTIVITY 4:

**What still needs to be developed / improved?**

Using the UN Sustainable Development Goals to help you, create a mind map (similar to the one on the next page) to explore what still needs to be tackled at a global and regional scale in order to achieve social, economic and environmental sustainability.

ACTIVITY 5:

**Why might there be a conflict between the pursuit of social and economic development and the achievement of environmental sustainability?**

Thinking about everything you have learnt so far – not just from completing this work, but from your GCSE studies too – write a short essay response (no more than one side of A4 typed, normal margins and font size) to discuss why there may (or may not) be a conflict of interests when attempting to pursue social and economic progress at the same time as protecting the environment. You may also like to consider why it is important for all three elements to be tackled simultaneously (i.e. how environmental degradation may impact on quality of life etc.)

The following blogs and articles might give you some food for thought:

<https://intpolicydigest.org/2016/10/06/social-justice-environment-sustainability-goes-beyond-politics/>

<https://soapboxie.com/social-issues/The-Environmental-Economic-and-Social-Components-of-Sustainability>

<https://www.ecologic.eu/2047>

<http://www.iynf.org/2018/08/a-guide-to-sustainable-development-and-its-challenges-in-developing-countries/>

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2843WESS2013.pdf>

<https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/talk-point-systemic-solutions-change>

When writing your response, please give a brief introduction and then use the point-evidence-explain-link format to discuss 2 or 3 key points that relate to the question. Finally, complete your response with a brief conclusion to explicitly answer the question.