



Resolution 1318 (2003)¹

Globalisation and sustainable development

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Globalisation and its effects have caused anxiety worldwide about the direction that society is taking. Traditionally seen as an economic phenomenon linked with the appearance, development and consolidation of the global market, it has become connected with areas previously regarded as bearing little relevance to economic development.
2. Today globalisation may be said to be covering the expansion, deepening and acceleration at planetary level of the reciprocal connections between all aspects of community life, from culture to crime, and from finance to religion. The world is turning into a single social space, shaped by complex economic and technological forces.
3. New problems and challenges for society have emerged. Events occurring, decisions taken and measures introduced in one part of the world can have profound effects on the lives of individuals or communities in another. The impact of these changes is so immeasurable that governments and individuals can do little to contest or resist them.
4. Globalisation is characterised by four major trends: increased flows of commodities and persons; expansion and diversification of financial activities; development of communication, networks, knowledge and relationships; and increasing disparities, even though it must also be recognised that overall wealth has increased enormously as a result of globalisation and of the more open trade it has brought – both globally and for many rapidly evolving countries such as China and India, and in the transition countries in central and eastern Europe.
5. While recognising these positive developments, the Parliamentary Assembly is nevertheless concerned about the sometimes growing disparities between developed and other societies, and within societies themselves, leading to stratification between rich and poor in countries with poor governance.
6. The Assembly regrets that the opposition to globalisation is sometimes manifested in violent outbursts, causing considerable human and material damage, and strongly condemns any such actions. The Assembly, in this context, recalls its [Resolution 1269 \(2002\)](#) on managing globalisation: the role of the World Trade Organisation in the world economy, in which it said that it “condemns violence in all its forms and holds the right to peaceful reunion, as enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights, to be sacrosanct and to require full respect also by the opponents of globalisation.
7. The Assembly is convinced that the world order should not be based on business management dominated by purely financial considerations, where living organisms can be patented and pollution rights bought and sold, and where human relations are based primarily on the principle of free trade. The world needs an alternative definition of wealth and a new means to measure it. It needs sustainable human development to take pre-eminence.
8. The concept of sustainable development was first given prominence at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Unced) (the “Earth Summit”) in Rio in 1992, following which the notion of sustainable development rapidly gained wide currency and encouraged a greater awareness of the major

1. Assembly debate on 30 January 2003 (7th Sitting) (see [Doc. 9660](#), report of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs, rapporteur: Mr Etherington). Text adopted by the Assembly on 30 January 2003 (7th Sitting). Text adopted by the Assembly on 30 January 2003 (7th Sitting).



environmental problems and disparities in the world. It marked a decisive stage by recognising the existence of challenges and problems that were common to the entire planet and all of humankind, and by seeking to identify cases where joint responsibility could be established. It thereby considerably widened the scope of global problems to include such matters as the environment, health, trade and poverty. It also highlighted the links between globalisation, planet-wide risks and shared responsibilities that created a need for concerted action by the international community.

9. However, in recent years, two opposing but equally restrictive tendencies have emerged in the understanding of the concept of sustainable development: for some, it has become the subject of an excessively economic bias, often being used as a justification for faster growth on the grounds that this will help to reduce poverty and achieve ecological sustainability, whilst at the same time serving the purpose of promoting the opening up of markets, financial deregulation, privatisation of natural resources and biopiracy. For others, sustainable development has undergone a form of ecological over-simplification in which the concept is restricted to environmental sustainability.

10. These trends always need to be counter-balanced by a form of sustainable development that focuses on human beings, and is both more comprehensive and more radical.

11. Sustainable human development may be defined as the capacity of all human communities, including the most deprived, to meet their fundamental needs – for accommodation, drinking water, food, satisfactory conditions of health and hygiene, participation in decision-making, social cohesion, a social fabric, cultural and spiritual expression, etc. This entails the adaptation of technologies and lifestyles to the social, economic and environmental potential of each region, internalising costs and establishing systems that are compatible with the biosphere

12. Such an approach makes sustainable human development a multifaceted process. It seeks a balance between the ecological, economic and social spheres, while also taking account of political (participation and democratisation), ethical (responsibility, solidarity, social justice and sufficiency) and cultural (local diversity and artistic expression) considerations.

13. Sustainable human development also calls for a fundamental re-evaluation of our basic principles and lifestyles, and of the way our societies function, particularly regarding production and consumption. This implies significant changes in attitudes and behaviour, in which an awareness of living in a common space, individual responsibility for actions, and learning to identify long-term perspectives and partnership between players in different regions of the world, including governments, international institutions, business and civil society, take precedence over material factors.

14. The Assembly believes that the recent expansion of the “solidarity economy” offers an instructive illustration of a new development model and a new form of economic activity. It includes all aspects of production, distribution and consumption that help to democratise the economy, based on citizens’ commitment to a greater social responsibility, cohesion and justice.

15. The Assembly notes the increasing role of dual delegation (to those who have expert knowledge and to elected representatives) and the growing professionalisation of politics through it. Furthermore, participatory democracy requires further “proximity” responsibility and a wider involvement of the population in decision-making. This could be promoted through appropriate bodies, which are already in existence in some countries, such as the citizens’ juries, citizens’ forums or “consensus conferences”.

16. The Assembly recognises that, in order to cope with the challenges of globalisation, it is necessary to ensure a form of global governance which would be capable of perceiving the complexity and interdependence of the issues to be addressed, and seek to resolve them through a comprehensive approach involving all the players concerned. It should involve representation systems, institutions, procedures, social bodies and information systems which would enable human communities to manage their different forms of interdependence and their integration into the biosphere in a peaceful and sustainable manner.

17. The Assembly deems it essential that the environment should lie at the heart of the debate on the renewal of world governance. Multilateral agreements today have had little impact and are very disparate, each one covering a specific area. Codification of these agreements would promote the formulation of basic rules of sustainable development and would make these rules more accessible, both to understanding and to adoption and effective implementation. Environmental issues should be automatically addressed from a global perspective and solutions found involving a wide range of partners and countries. In this respect, the establishment of a single international environmental institution in charge of following up the implementation of international protocols and their coherence, an idea formulated but not maintained at the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in 2002, should be envisaged, along with the future

endowment of such an institution with responsibility for preparing the codification of existing multilateral instruments, so as to promote the formulation of basic rules of sustainable development and to make them more accessible

18. The Assembly is convinced that sustainable human development can lead to a form of social organisation that offers everyone genuine freedom of choice between alternative forms of consumption, work, saving and time management, each of which is compatible with their human and natural environments.

19. It also believes that the adaptation of the global economy to make it socially, ecologically and economically sustainable presents the greatest investment opportunity in human history.

20. In the light of these elements, the Assembly recommends that member states:

20.1. put human beings at the centre of all development policy;

20.2. implement socio-economic policies which are compatible with life and welfare, that is, a system which gradually reduces the perverse effects of subsidies and introduces taxation that reflects social and ecological values;

20.3. promote new patterns of consumption and production, as defined at the Johannesburg Summit, which would help further democratise the economy, based, inter alia, on citizens' commitment to greater social responsibility, with an emphasis on social cohesion and justice;

20.4. support international trade in such a way that it is consistent with the required changes and bearing in mind the need to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor worldwide;

20.5. ensure that in both policy and legislation the dominance of commercial law over environmental law is replaced with an equivalence, particularly by setting up an arbitration procedure for disputes with both environmental and economic components; reassert the political will to implement environmental regulations, notably with regard to economic interests;

20.6. initiate and support, particularly in co-ordination with the Committee of Ministers, steps towards the codification of existing international legal instruments so as to create an accessible text containing basic rules which can be universally applied and collaborate in the implementation of these rules;

20.7. support the proposition formulated at the Johannesburg Summit as regards the setting up of a single international environment institution within the structures of the United Nations;

20.8. undertake to support and promote cultural and linguistic diversity as a vital factor in sustainable human development and ensure, through an international legal instrument, that cultural property is not treated merely as merchandise in multilateral trade agreements;

20.9. encourage new forms of participation in civil society by involving both citizens and non-citizens in the policy-making process, promoting dialogue at national and regional levels and within communities themselves;

20.10. encourage the involvement of the opponents to globalisation in the policy-making process via peaceful means in an effort to counter the violence which some anti-globalisation protests have led to;

20.11. promote global governance that would enable human communities to manage their different forms of interdependence and their integration into the biosphere in a peaceful and sustainable manner;

20.12. promote global education to strengthen public awareness of sustainable development, bearing in mind that global education is essential for all citizens to acquire the knowledge and skills to understand, participate in and interact critically with our global society, as empowered global citizens.