

# Sustainable Development in Russia: Specific Features of Transition Procedure

Ph. D. Candidate Ekaterina Grigoreva (Kazan Federal University, Russia)

## Abstract

Current issues on economic security, preventing new challenges and threats to its strength and stability along with sustainable development of the regions require scientific background and scientific justification. New conceptual approaches to the mechanisms and methods are being searched for the purpose of the Russian Federation, as well as its constituent entities', enterprises' and organizations', public and entrepreneurship activity spheres' economic interests protection, which is reflected in the strategy of socio-economic development of the Russian regions.

The article considers conceptual frameworks of sustainable ecological and economic development at a global level. It defines the concept of sustainable development in terms of economic science and the range of its problems. It also discusses debating points of experts and volunteer environmentalists concerning the transition procedure to sustainable development models in Russia.

## 1 Introduction

The laws of ecological and economic balance are realized within the concept of '*sustainable development*', which received public recognition, particularly at an international level, at the beginning of the 1980s. The necessity and background to establishment of the '*sustainable development*' concept date back to the beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> century. Notably, in 1907 Theodore Roosevelt in his message to the US Congress declared the following: "To waste, to destroy our natural resources, to skin and exhaust the land instead of using it so as to increase its usefulness, will result in undermining in the days of our children the very prosperity which we ought by right to hand down to them amplified and developed". This assumption has been justified nowadays, since humanity is facing two major global problems: economic decline and environmental crisis.

It is at the global level where in the early 1990s, environmental impact on economic development has been defined as the concept of '*sustainable development*', which in turn was immediately recognized by major industrialized countries. The basic idea was outlined in the report of the secretary general of the UN Conference on Environment and Development, Maurice Strong (Brazil): "The concentration of population growth in developing countries and economic growth in the industrialized countries has deepened, creating imbalances which are unsustainable, in either environmental or economic terms. Sustainable development - development that does not destroy or undermine the ecological, economic or social basis on which continued development depends/- is the only viable pathway to a more secure and hopeful future for rich and poor alike" (Strong, 1992).

## 2 Theoretical Background

There are various usages of the term "sustainable development". However the very first implementation of the concept was registered in the "Reviewing the International Order (RIO)" report to the Club of Rome, prepared by a group of researchers under the supervision of J. Tinbergen. The scholars came to the conclusion that there was a great necessity in a new social development strategy foundation. That strategy had to be determined for the entire humanity and was necessarily bound to take into account all the significant social impacts (employment, environmental status, etc.) in the process of economic growth efficiency calculation.

The term '*sustainable development*' is quite controversial. Moreover, even recent academic publications devoted to the issues of eco-economic balance do not have one universally recognized interpretation of this concept in terms of economic category. Some Russian scientists claim that the English word «sustainable» doesn't inevitably imply to something which is "steady" and can also be defined as – "long, continuous, long-term, supportive" (Ursul, 1995). Others believe that it would be better to translate the term as a "valid development, inexhaustible development or development that preserves the integrity" (Rosenberg, et al., 1995). Some researchers support the idea of referring to "sustainable development" as "sustained development" (Gorshkov, et al., 1992).

Defining the concept of '*sustainable development*' in terms of categories in economic science, it should be noted that the process of scientific research in this field for Russian scholars was hampered over a long period of time due to the low level of the academic community awareness in the field of international experience on sustainable development conceptual foundations design as well as its basic principles realization. The greatest interest in this sense are such basic documents as the Declaration of Principles, developing and supplementing a similar document of the UN Conference in Stockholm (1972) and Nairobi (1982), global conventions and Agenda 21.

Within the framework of economics the category of 'sustainable development' is primarily considered by us as a qualitatively new stage in the evolution of ecological and economic relations, reflected in new patterns of interaction between economic development and environmental status in the context of the economic and ecological crisis. We are emphasizing the fact that the major premise of a new stage emergence in the development of ecological and economic relations reasonably belongs to the processes associated with certain quantitative changes in the eco-economic system, the accumulation of which in modern times has resulted in serious qualitative changes.

One of the most common and generally accepted definition of '*sustainable development*' is reflected in the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development ("Brundtland Commission", established with the participation of the United Nations): Our Common Future: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts: the concept of 'needs', in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organisation on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs" (Report of the WCED, 1987). Thus, sustainable development is associated with a self-sufficient, non-self-disruptive development. Therefore, we underline the fact that sustainable development of the country can be achieved only within the system ensuring satisfaction of the people's needs, retaining the same opportunities for future generations. This interpretation is general, declarative and therefore requires clarification and specification through apparatus criticism of economic theory.

The essence of the definitions and interpretations mentioned above reduces itself to the principle of natural resources as well as natural conditions of equitable distribution between the generations with the development focus on the population's welfare improvement rather than on consumption expansion.

### 3 Results and Discussions

Sustainable development in Russia within the existing economic, political and institutional frameworks presupposes its advancing motion along the set path. This type of strategic development will enable the achievement of objectively progressive social purposes system. From this, we may deduce that the change of emphasis in social development towards the natural along with the labour potential effective development and preservation plays a vital role, since any human being acts as a main consumer of public benefits, as well as a main participant of eco-economic system evolution. This development is principally aimed at preservation and improvement of a human being together with the qualitative parameters of his life, at creation of all the indispensable frameworks for his creativity and spirituality realization (Grigoreva, 2013).

The report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, defines 'sustainable development' as a number of target areas including: the human right to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature, protection of the environment as an integral element of the social development process, decrease of the disparities in standards of living and the needs satisfaction of the majority of people of the world (UN report on ED, 1992). Sustainable development in these documents, is considered in the perspective of *anthropogenic approach*, that is, the basic principles are the survival and the possibility of an extended development of civilization.

The decisive factor in the mankind development at this time is the biosphere frontiers, whereas the sustainable development of mankind, the world system and the countries worldwide is the development taking place in the conditions of a sustainable biosphere. This is a type of economic development that fully corresponds to the biota capabilities to protect the environment and preserve its enabling characteristics. From now on we assume that 'sustainable development' (Voznyak, 1995; Fedotov, 1995) is a deliberate anthropogenic shift in the natural environment and social position, aimed at assisting the society in the overcoming process of the limitations of its existence within the biosphere conditions.

As can be vivid from the definitions outlined above, sustainable development is presented from the point of biosphere-centered approach, which is focused on the environment and sustainability preservation as well as possibility of the biosphere evolution.

Orientation towards the *noosphere approach* lies at the basis of the sustainable development model transition concept. This approach is focused on the progress within society itself, particularly on economic relations, acceptable for the human being ecological niche preservation, and hence the conditions for the civilization development. Painstaking attention should be paid at the practical implementation of the 'sustainable development' concept.

Thereby, there are strong debates on the topic of 'sustainable development' among domestic scholars, practitioners, social activists as well as environmentalists (Tisyachnyuk, 1999). In particular, the author of the alternative "Concept of Sustainable Development in Russia", the leader of the Socio-Ecological Union, S. Zabelin, criticizes the provisions adopted within the framework of the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. He denies the fact that the introduction of innovative legislation system together

with innovative environmental policies will lead to the world depopulation as well as consumption standards reduction processes. We support the author's viewpoint on the country's resources policy: the land and natural resources cannot be privately owned, since they belong not only to the present but also to the future generations. Natural resources should be in public ownership, whereas resources management should be primarily carried out by the constituent entities of the Russian Federation.

New concept has been devised from the perspectives of ecocentrism. The author is certainly accurate in outlining the following propositions: economic policy should be developed with the purpose of benefits provision for all those who preserve the nature; tax policy should be flexible, take into account all the reserves available and consider the biosphere economic capacity and its ability to assimilate the pollution arising due to the resource withdrawal from the soil. However, there seems to be no compelling reason to argue that there's a great necessity in the world economy reorganization in terms of the economy development intensification at a local level, leaving only the information flow functioning at a global one. We should not detract from the advantages of international division of labor and the development of international relations in the various fields of the nation's social and economic life. Natural resources' and finished goods' international exchange should become a constant procedure which has to be mutually beneficial for both parties in the national economy specialization processes within the context of global economic integration.

The ecological system acts as a resource base for the efficient functioning of the economy. Wasteful attitude to the nature usually leads to the depletion of natural resources. It is the natural resources which perform constituent basis for the ecological and economic systems development. Another key thing to remember is that any developed economy lives not at the expense of the basic capital but at the expense of dividends from it. Thus, in this paper we put forward the claim that sustainable development involves a specific pattern of the economy management, which expends not the basic natural capital but the interest gained from it (Gubaidullina, 2000).

The concept of sustainable development implicates that one has to apply to the economic development criteria, rather than to the categories of economic growth, since the model of sustainable development implies to a new stage of ecological and economic interaction, which is characterized by an innovative approach to the ecological and economic problems solution.

The concept of 'sustainable development', based on the trends and patterns of ecological and economic balance, is intended to create necessary conditions for ensuring economic methods of environmental safety at the macro- and microeconomic levels.

The problems of sustainable development are analyzed and investigated by many scholars and prominent public organizations. To give an illustration of sustainable development strategy relevance, let's examine the following principles, determined by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD):

- population growth rate control;
- technological and scientific development of all action programmes grouped under the title of "Green Accounting";
- efficient management of the resources and their value determination;
- environmental problems exacerbated by poverty-linked population pressure such as over-exploitation of natural resources, and inadequate technological capabilities;
- sustainable and equitable development of widespread participation in the productive and decision-making processes, in access to education, health and other public services and in access to the benefits of development;
- shift in operating mode as well as consumption patterns for preserving scarce reserves and equal access maintenance (OECD, 1990).

The concept of 'sustainable development' in Russia was officially declared in the Presidential Decree № 236, February, 4, 1994, "On State Strategy of the Russian Federation on environmental protection and sustainable development". It goes without saying that in terms of the Russian Federation geographical position and vast natural resources potential, the development of this concept seems to us particularly relevant.

## 4 Conclusions

A complex approach to the study of the concept of '*sustainable development*' in Russia allowed us not only to analyze precisely the materials but also to reach specific conclusions. The macro aim of ecological and economic system sustainability should be focused on the stable and balanced economic development with a glance to the ecological restrictions of a given region by means of balanced interaction between various economic entities of ecological and economic relations. In contrast to the traditional approaches to the investigation of acute economic issues, the concept of 'sustainable development' should maintain direct relation of the economic growth objectives to the environmental status of a given region. This requires a certain shift in the key points of

social-economic development: the emphasis should be put not only upon the quantitative criteria of a human well-being, but also upon the qualitative characteristics such as quality of life, life expectancy, and primarily prevention of the negative impact of environmental factors on the health of present and future generations as an essential factor in the labour force reproduction procedure under the conditions of economic and ecological crisis.

### References

- “The problem of sustainable development in Russia in the light of V.I. Vernadskiy’s scientific heritage”, in Proceedings of an International symposium 1997, Moscow, 155p.
- Fedotov, 1995. “Earth, mankind, economics”, *Economist*, **11**, p. 43-56.
- Gorshkov, Kotlyakov, Losev, 1994. “Economic growth, environmental status, wealth and poverty”, *Izvestiya RAN: Seriya Geographicheskaya*, **1**, p.12.
- Grigoreva, 2013. “Conceptual framework of sustainable ecological and economic development”, in Proceedings of International research-to-practice conference, 2013, p. 188.
- Gubaidullina, 2000. **Ecological and economic system’s sustainable development: issues of theory and methodology**. KFU press, Kazan, p.96.
- Maurice Strong, 1992. **Speech to UNEP-UK Committee**. London.
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1990. **The Economics of Sustainable Development**. Paris, p. 7
- Rosenberg, Gelashvili, Krasnoschekov, 1996. “Tricky steps of transition to sustainable development”, *Vestnik RAN*, **66 (5)**, p.436.
- Tisyachnyuk, 1999. “Sustainable development: Moscow NGO CEOs’ viewpoint”, *Green World*, **5**, p.5.
- Ursul, 1995. “Noospheric strategy of the RF transition procedure to the sustained development model”, *Scientific and technical aspects of environmental protection: background information of VINITI*, **10**, p.4.
- Voznyak, 1995. “Social development and ecology: interdependence, antagonisms, crises”, *Voprosy ekonomiki*, **2**, p. 129-138.
- World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987. **Our common future**. Progress, Moscow, 1989, p.50.