Combating climate change within the framework of the United Nations

مكافحة التغيرات المناخية في إطار هيئة الأمم المتحدة



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Abstract:

The absence of a real sense of security is the logical consequence of climate change, whether at the regional or international level. Accordingly, countries have taken the initiative to develop legal means and mechanisms to prevent its violation. As a result, numerous international organisations have emerged with the aim of protecting the environment in general and the climate in particular, in order to preserve them and protect the rights of future generations. The United Nations is considered the most important organisation working in the field of climate protection, as one of its main objectives is to maintain international peace and security and take all measures to prevent threats to peace, which can only be achieved through environmental security. The United Nations has therefore worked

to help countries reduce pollution by dedicating itself to numerous programmes, the most important of which is the United Nations Environment Programme, which monitors environmental issues around the world and improves the quality of life for nations, peoples and future generations. In addition, it has established numerous affiliated bodies, agencies and organisations concerned with addressing climate change at the international level.

Keywords: environmental security; climate protection; United Nations; climate change.

ملخص:

إن انعدام الشعور بالأمن هو النتيجة المنطقية المترتبة عن تغير المناخ سواء على المستوى الإقليمي أو الدولي، وعلى هذا الأساس بادرت الدول لاستحداث وسائل وآليات قانونية لمنع التعدي عليه، وكنتيجة لبلورة ذلك ظهرت العديد من المنظمات الدولية التي تهدف إلى حماية البيئة بصفة عامة، وحماية المناخ بصفة خاصة للمحافظة عليهما وحماية حقوق الأجيال المستقبلية. وتعتبر هيئة الأمم المتحدة أهم منظمة تعمل في مجال حماية المناخ باعتبار أن من أبرز مقاصدها حفظ السلم والأمن الدوليين واتخاذ كافة التدابير لمنع الأسباب التي تهدد السلم، فهذا الأخير لايمكن أن يتحقق إلا بتوفر الأمن البيئي، لذلك عملت هيئة الأمم المتحدة على مساعدة الدول من أجل الحد من التلوث وذلك من خلال تكريسها للعديد من البرامج أهمها إنشاء برنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة والأمن البيئي والذي يعنى بمتابعة الشأن البيئي في العالم وتحسين نوعية الحياة للأمم والشعوب والأجيال المستقبلية، بالإضافة إلى تأسيس العديد من الهيئات والأجهزة والوكالات التابعة لها والتي تعنى بمواجهة التغيرات المناخية على المستوى الدولي.

كلمات مفتاحية: الأمن البيئي، حماية المناخ، هيئة الأمم المتحدة، التغيرات المناخية.

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INTRODUCTION

The environment has experienced serious and harmful threats to its safety in an unprecedented manner in our current era, as soil, forests, water and natural resources have been irrationally depleted for industrial and commercial purposes aimed at profit. The oceans, seas and rivers have been affected by huge amounts of human-caused pollution, and toxic gases have spread into the atmosphere due to the terrible spread of industrial pollutants, causing noticeable damage, the most serious of which is the resulting ozone hole. This has prompted the international community to take the necessary measures, reconsider its position, and emphasise the importance of protecting the environment.

This has pushed international governmental and non-governmental organisations and countries to make huge efforts to protect the environment from dangers and threats to its safety, by using different tools, means, programmes, organisations, conferences, and agreements aimed at protecting the environment.

The United Nations Charter was formulated in 1945, and the intention of protecting the environment was not among the topics discussed in international affairs at that time[1]. The Charter did not include any explicit text authorising the United Nations to concern itself with environmental matters, and the concept of the environment had not developed into its current form, With the increase in international interest in environmental protection, the United Nations was able to include the environment as one of its concerns, based on the general provisions of the Charter.

According to Article 1/3 and Article 56 on international cooperation, the United Nations began to address environmental issues in the late 1960s on the basis that environmental protection is one of its main objectives [2].

The United Nations has strengthened international efforts to reduce pollution by proposing many international agreements and holding many international conferences to get the international community to protect the global environment without affecting development goals. These international conferences have helped to develop the legal rules that form the International Environmental Law, specially the 1972 Stockholm Conference, which led to the United Nations Environment Programme, which works to follow up on environmental issues and find solutions to environmental degradation.

Therefore, based on the above mentioned, we have decided to put forward the following question:

How effective are the mechanisms established by the United Nations in preventing from environmental issues?

In line with this question, and in order to cover most aspects of our study, we have divided our study into the following sections:

Section 1: Efforts by the General Assembly to reduce climate change

Section 2: The United Nations Environment Programme

Section 3: The Green Climate Fund

Finally, we included a conclusion in which we presented the most important results drawn from the study, and we tried to put forward some recommendations based on our point of view.

1. Efforts of the General Assembly to reduce climate change

In its efforts to establish international cooperation for climate protection, the United Nations has focused on several objectives, such as:

- Legal documents related to climate protection.
- Supporting developing countries' measures to adapt to climate change, especially with regard to the transfer of advanced and clean technology to them.
- Preventing or reducing deforestation.
- Providing all kinds of support for regional and national efforts to protect the climate, especially financial, scientific and health support, and everything related to enhancing the assessment, monitoring and early warning of problems related to climate change.
- Ensure that the United Nations and its agencies do not contribute to the increase in the rate of greenhouse gas emissions. Although the United Nations General Assembly only adopts recommendations on international issues that are not obligatory, it has not made any effort to take political, economic, social and legal measures that have affected the lives of millions of people [3].

The United Nations General Assembly began its efforts to protect the climate in the early 1970s, when it decided to hold an international conference on the human environment under the

slogan: 'We only have one Earth.' The conference was organised by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and was attended by official delegations representing 113 countries, as well as representatives from specialised United Nations agencies and several non-governmental organisations. This conference is considered one of the most important international meetings concerned with measures to protect the environment and preserve its natural resources. It also set the foundation for the development of international environmental law, even though it did not result in binding international agreements [4].

The Stockholm Conference endorsed the establishment of an international mechanism to deal with environmental issues internationally, and the United Nations General Assembly responded to this idea by establishing an international organ concerned with environmental affairs, which is the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), based in Nairobi, Kenya, where it is responsible for monitoring environmental pollution and organising international cooperation in the field of environmental protection [5].

Efforts have continued with the adoption of a number of resolutions on climate change. The preamble to Resolution 43/53 states that "the General Assembly is concerned that certain human activities may alter the global climate system, threatening present and future generations with serious economic and social consequences... It also recognises the need for further scientific research and studies addressing all sources and causes of climate

change, and is concerned about the emission of certain substances that deplete the ozone layer and expose the Earth's surface to ultraviolet radiation, which could pose a threat to human health, agricultural productivity, and animal and marine life.

In 1988, the United Nations General Assembly also established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to conduct scientific research and assess information related to climate change from scientific, technical, economic and social perspectives.

In its decision number 45/212 dated December 1990, it admitted that most of the emissions of pollutants into the environment and the atmosphere come from developed countries, and that the main responsibility for combating this pollution belongs to those countries. It decided to establish an intergovernmental negotiating committee to draft a framework convention on climate change. After having held four meetings in 1991 and two meetings in 1992, the committee finalized the draft convention, which was adopted on 9 May 1992 and opened for signature during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Sustainable Development [6].

The General Assembly also held numerous international conferences and events on climate change in an effort to capitalise on the momentum generated by the Bali meetings in December 2008. It was also aware of and informed about all the latest efforts to combat climate change, which it observed and mentioned in its discussions. Among these events, we can find its welcome of the

Soviet Union's initiative to hold the World Conference on Climate Change in Moscow from 29 September to 3 October 2003, as a platform for the exchange of views among the scientific community, governments, international and national organisations, the private sector and representatives of civil society to facilitate and implement existing policies, and its ratification of the Kyoto Protocol in 2005, which led to its entry into force [7].

This body has played a major role in raising awareness among the international community about the dangers of climate change. It has adopted five reports on climate change, the most recent of which was in 2014, confirming that climate change is an indisputable fact and that there is no longer any doubt that these climatic changes are caused by the increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

In 2015, it released the Sustainable Development Agenda, reflecting the growing understanding among member states that a sustainable development model for this and future generations offers the best path forward for reducing poverty and improving the lives of people everywhere at the same time. Climate change has begun to have a deep impact on human consciousness with the melting of polar ice caps, rising global sea levels, and increasingly severe catastrophic weather events. No country in the world is safe from the effects of climate change.

The creation of a more sustainable global economy will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change. It is therefore important that the international community meets the

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the emission reduction targets set out in the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement.

In addition, the Climate Change Summit was held in September 2019, where 65 countries and major subnational economies committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050, while 70 countries announced that they would strengthen their national action plans by 2020 and began the process of doing so.

More than 100 business leaders presented practical steps to respond to the Paris Agreement goals and accelerate the shift from a grey to a green economy, including asset owners with over $2 trillion in total assets and leading companies with a combined value of over $2 trillion.

Several countries and more than 100 cities, including many of the world's largest cities, also announced significant new steps to combat the climate crisis, with small island developing states and least developed countries among those making the largest pledges [8].

2. United Nations Environment Programme

The establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme is one of the most important achievements of the Stockholm Conference. As a United Nations body, it works to evaluate the state of the global environment and support and coordinate environmental programs in countries around the world [9]. In this context, we will first define the United Nations

Environment Programme and its organs, then present the most important functions and responsibilities of this program.

2.1 Definition of the United Nations Environment Programme and its organs:

We will cover its definition and its organs.

2.1.1 Definition:

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was established during the United Nations Conference of the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972, in accordance with United Nations General Assembly Decision No. 2997 dated December 15, 1972. The programme stands as a facilitator and supporter for the promotion of the rational use and sustainable development of the global environment. The program is located in the city of Nairobi, Kenya, and has six regional offices in different parts of the world [10].

2.1.2 Its organs:

This programme is composed of the following organs:

2.1.2.1 The Board of Directors or Governors: It prepares an annual report on its activities and submits it to the Economic and Social Council, which in turn sends it to the United Nations General Assembly. It consists by 58 members elected by the General Assembly for a term of three years on the following basis: 16 seats for Africa, 13 seats for Asia, 6 seats for Eastern European countries, 10 seats for Latin American countries, and 13 seats for Western Europe and other countries [11].

The Council works to promote international cooperation in

the field of environmental protection and assess the impact of national and international policies.

2.1.2.2 General secretary: Its mission is to supervise programmes related to the environment and coordinate work with United Nations bodies and specialised agencies or other international organisations working to implement projects approved by the programme's governing board.

2.1.2.3 Environment Fund: Its resources are affected by contributions from UN member states. The fund aims to encourage the implementation of environmental protection measures by providing the necessary funding.

2.1.2.4 Coordination Committee: Its mission is to achieve cooperation and coordination between the agencies involved in implementing environmental programmes. It submits an annual report to the Governing Council [12]

2.2 Functions and responsibilities of the United Nations Environment Programme

The United Nations Environment Programme was established to provide coordination of environmental activities under the United Nations framework. To achieve its objectives, the Programme performs the following functions and responsibilities:

- International environmental cooperation and policy recommendations for this purpose.
- Receiving and examining the Executive Director's international reports on the implementation of environmental programmes within the United Nations system.

- Providing general policy guidance for the direction and coordination of environmental programmes within the United Nations system [13].

- Developing a strategy for environmental management and promoting technological cooperation.

- Promoting environmental activity around the world and increasing community awareness of environmental issues.

- Monitoring, assessment and early warning in the field of the environment.

- Providing technical, legal and institutional advice to governments and regional organisations.

The United Nations Environment Programme has been working to address challenges in order to promote and protect environmental security in several domains, including:

- Contributing to the development of environmental law by issuing numerous resolutions that express the close link between the environment and development and consistently emphasise the concept of environmentally sustainable development. The Programme monitors the international body responsible for negotiations to establish environmental agreements [14].

- Encouraging the conclusion of international agreements addressing global environmental issues. Among the most important international environmental agreements concluded under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme are:

• Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer,

1985.

• Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, 1987.

• Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, 1989.

• Protocol on Liability and Compensation, 1999.

• Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, 10 January 1998.

• Convention on Cooperation for the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Coastal Environment and the Mid-Ocean Area of the North-East Pacific, 2000.

• Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, 2001 [15].

The efforts of the United Nations Environment Programme in developing the rules of international environmental law has had a significant impact on states in two ways: First, through the adoption of many guidelines in national legislation, and second, through the position of states towards environmental problems [16]. Since the Rio Conference in 1992, it has been able to assist more than 100 developing countries in preparing environmental legislation and establishing institutions concerned with the environment.

However, international agreements and national legislation still do not have effective implementation. The Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme said: 'There are

more than 200 international and regional agreements covering all areas... and national legislation, but they are not respected by states and are only formal [17].'

The programme has also dedicated its efforts to preparing an action plan for sustainable development by providing scientific guidance and developing new and modern technologies that do not cause damage to the environment. The most important of these programmes are:

- the implementation of the PLAN VIGIA monitoring programme, which aims to track and monitor the environment at the global level;
- The Bali Plan for Clean Technology, adopted in 2005.
- A plan to protect the marine environment.
- A plan for the management of shared financial resources.
- A plan to combat desertification.
- The activities of the United Nations Environment Programme for Peace and Security.

Finally, the United Nations programme is considered the largest provider of services in the United Nations system on adaptation to and mitigation of climate change at the global level. The programme includes 22 National Adaptation Plans (NAPS) and National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs), and has approved a new four-year strategic plan for 2018-2021 that is in line with its current adaptation efforts and that will provide continued support for the achievement of the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda (keeping people out of poverty, promoting effective,

inclusive and accountable governance, developing national capacities for prevention and recovery for resilient communities, supporting nature-based solutions for a sustainable planet, closing the energy gap, promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls) [18].

3. Green Climate Fund

Established under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Cancun, Mexico, by 194 countries, as an operating entity of the financial mechanism to assist developing countries in adaptation and mitigation practices to combat climate change. The main fund is located in Incheon, South Korea, governed by a 24-member board and supported by a secretariat, established in 2010.

The Green Climate Fund is the main multilateral mechanism for financing climate change policies in developing countries. As one of the financing mechanisms of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, it contributes to financing the commitments made under the Paris Agreement.

The Green Fund is essential for building trust and attracting private investors. In addition, to increase the visibility of the Fund's contribution and stimulate investment in the low-carbon economy, it is also necessary to strengthen long-term climate finance and clarify its mechanisms.

3.1 Fund management and budget size

The Green Fund's Board of Directors is composed of donor and beneficiary countries in equal numbers, and has been co-chaired

by France and Mexico since 2021. The Green Fund's initial funding amounted to US$10.3 billion for the period 2015-2019.

The process of replenishing the Fund's resources began in 2018, during the 21st meeting of the Green Fund's Board of Directors, and concluded with a replenishment conference held in France in October 2019, which resulted in 28 countries contributing to the new fundraising campaign, which raised US$9.8 billion for the period 2020-2023.

Three-quarters of participating countries have increased their contributions in their national economies since the seven-nation summit held in Biarritz in August 2019. Half of these countries have doubled their contributions, with Britain, France, Germany, Sweden and Japan among the largest contributors to the fund.

The Green Fund continues to receive contributions, with some commitments announced since the replenishment conference. The total amount raised is approximately US$10 billion, which is close to the initial capital, even without the contribution of the United States. As of October 2021, 190 projects in nearly 100 countries have benefited from the fund's financing, with the Green Fund providing US$10 billion in funding[19].

3.2 The Fund's objectives and guiding principles

The decision to establish the Green Climate Fund, based in South Korea, was taken at the Conference of the Parties in Copenhagen in 2009, and the Fund began operations in 2015. The fund is the main multilateral fund dedicated to financing climate change financing in developing countries and plays a catalytic role

in large scale climate change mitigation and adaptation activities through the following three value-added aspects:

- Increase the volume of financing for combating climate change.
- Provide financial instruments such as grants, concessional loans, guarantees, equity contributions,

insurance, risk sharing, performance improvement incentives, budget support, etc., through a wide range of implementing and intermediary entities at the international, regional or national level.

- Increase the response to needs that are not adequately addressed, such as helping the most vulnerable groups adapt to climate change.

The Green Fund finances projects and programmes with the highest potential for transition to low-carbon and resilient economies, in line with the needs of countries.

- **Investment selection criteria**

The Green Fund selects its investments according to the following criteria:

• The expected impact of the project
• The project's potential to bring about sustainable change in the prevailing model
• Sustainable development potential,
• Beneficiary needs,
• National ownership,
• Efficiency and effectiveness.

Allocations are not predetermined for each country; rather, the

allocation rules pursue indicative targets aimed at achieving the following:

• Ensuring a balanced distribution between climate change mitigation and adaptation;

• Provide a minimum allocation of 50 per cent of adaptation resources to the most vulnerable countries, including least developed countries, African countries and small island developing states.

• Provide significant allocations of resources to private sector facilities that seek to increase the participation of private sector actors in projects aimed at climate change mitigation and adaptation.

• Ensuring equitable and balanced geographical distribution that maximises the impact of the transition to a low-carbon economy and maximises the scale of projects [20].

The latest projects undertaken by the Green Fund in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organisation, worth US$145.3 million, are for climate action in Bolivia, Cambodia and the Philippines. The funding was announced during the 35th meeting of the Green Climate Fund Board held in Songdo, Incheon, Republic of Korea, from 13 to 16 March 2023 [21].

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be said that the environment in general and its protection in particular have received considerable international and national attention, which is increasing day by

day. This is due to the awareness of the international community, states and individuals in the current era of the importance of the environment and the repercussions of the problems affecting it on human life, living creatures and the human environment, and the serious and unprecedented increase in threats and dangers to environmental safety as a result of industrial pollution and unfair practices against environmental components and elements, the spread of wars and armed conflicts, and the failure to observe standards that would raise awareness and knowledge in various areas. The conservation of natural resources to ensure their sustainability is the duty of the Middle East to protect the environment from all risks and threats.

This has prompted international governmental and non-governmental organisations, most notably the United Nations, as well as countries, to make great efforts to protect the environment from dangers and threats to its safety, by resorting to different tools, means, programmes, institutions, conferences, and agreements aimed at protecting the environment.

Based on the aspects of the study we have addressed, we have reached the following conclusions:

-International governmental organisations, especially the United Nations and its specialised international organisations and agencies, contributed an important role as institutional mechanisms in the field of international environmental protection.

-International agreements have been formed and have produced many international legal mechanisms for the protection and

preservation of the international environment.

-The efforts of the United Nations General Assembly have produced the first building blocks for international environmental law, even though they will not result in binding international agreements.

-The Stockholm Conference adopted the establishment of an international mechanism to deal with environmental issues internationally, and the United Nations General Assembly responded to this idea by establishing an international body concerned with environmental affairs, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), based in Nairobi, Kenya, which monitors environmental pollution and organises international cooperation in the field of environmental protection.

-The Green Climate Fund is the main multilateral instrument for financing climate policies in developing countries. As one of the financing mechanisms of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, it contributes to financing the commitments made under the Paris Agreement.

Based on the results of the above study, we have formulated the following recommendations:

-Governments must plan for future generations by establishing a financially sustainable budget. The cost of addressing today's climate challenge may seem high, but it is small compared to the financial and societal costs to future generations if left unaddressed.

-The institutional structure of the global environment must be

reformed, given the incapacity of the United Nations, and in particular the United Nations Environment Programme, to halt the deterioration of the global environment.

-Reconsidering the role of the United Nations in creating and enforcing global legislative frameworks and reforming some of its programmes, especially environmental ones, so that it can play a profound and effective role in saving the planet.
-The resulting climate change dilemma is the responsibility of the entire international community, which requires all countries to cooperate seriously in order to limit or at least reduce the severity of the effects of climate change disasters.
- All countries, especially developed countries, must ratify international agreements on environmental protection and climate change, assume their international responsibilities, and establish the principle of differentiated responsibilities regarding the obligations of industrialised and developing countries.

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