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Reversing Ecological Degradation: A Way Forward for Global Environmental Governance

Emmanuel Otutei
Organisation for Livelihood Enhancement Services (OLIVES), P.O. Box NB41, New Abirem, Ghana

Abstract: Environmental governance aims at sustaining earth's ecosystem to be able to cater for the needs of generation unborn as well as protect nature from extinction. However, five decades of environmental governance have yielded abysmal results due to lack of strong institutions to carry out the environmental mandate. Moreover, there is lack of commitment towards environmental negotiations and compliance. There is also little efforts to enforce agreements and regulations while little incentive exists for adherence to these agreements. This paper therefore presents a brief exposition on environmental governance by elucidating its main dimensions and challenges; and proceeds to offer a way forward for environmental governance with insights from multi-level governance, taking into consideration the challenges and (political ecology and ecological economics) critiques of the mainstream.
Keywords: environmental governance, sustainable development, political ecology.

1.0 Introduction

The growth in human populations and industrial economies has led to an unprecedented decline in the natural environment. This phenomenon has informed the pursuit of environmental management regimes since 1949 when the first international effort to arrest environmental degradation was made through the United Nations Scientific Conference on the Conservation and Utilisation of Resources (Pelletier 2000). But mainstream environmental governance took off in 1972 when the first UN decadal mega-conference on the environment was held. Since then, the UN has been spearheading events aimed at sustaining the environment.

It must be noted, however, that decades of environmental governance have achieved abysmal results. The ozone layer keeps on depleting, climate change is becoming more pronounced and biodiversity keeps on shrinking. On the policy arena, regulations to sustain the environment have been limited due to partisan economic interest whiles there is little commitment to the development of workable rules for the extraction of environmental resources. Again, compliance has become an issue since there is little incentive for compliance. That is, there has been little efforts towards the enforcement of negotiations, agreements and regulations making it difficult to achieve desired environmental outcomes. Within this framework of uncertainties and failure, the question this paper tries to respond to is: *how can we achieve effective environmental governance*?

The paper is divided into two main sections. The first section presents a brief exposition on environmental governance by elucidating its main dimensions and challenges. The second section of the paper proposes a possible way forward for environmental governance through the lens of political ecology (and ecological economics). It proposes multi-level governance with institutional and regulatory reforms, full participation of marginalised groups, integrated environmental planning and valorisation of the environment. This section does this by critiquing the mainstream environmental governance through explanations of the reasons for failures and proposing broad strategies to be adopted by formal

environmental managers for conserving the environment for itself and no other else.

2.0 Dimensions of Environmental Governance

Environmental governance refers to "the set of regulatory processes, mechanisms and organisations through which political actors influence environmental actions and outcomes" (Lemos and Agrawal 2006: 298). It is the constellation of environmental actors, policies, regulations, processes and mechanisms at both domestic and global scales with the collective objective of achieving environmental sustainability. From the definition above, one can discern three umbrella dimensions of environmental governance including organisations, regulations and mechanisms;

2.1 Organisations

There are a lot of actors in environmental governance ranging from national and international organisations to environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOs) – including civil societies. Sovereign states have served as the conduit of environmental actions through the attendance of environmental conferences, international negotiations, signing of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs – formal inter-state agreements), implementation of these treaties, and enactment and enforcement of environmental laws and regulations.

Aside from states, the major international organisations involved in environmental governance are United Nations (UN) agencies and programmes. One of the major offshoots of the Stockholm conference in 1972 was the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) "to play the lead role in [global environmental governance] by coordinating environmental activities within the UN agencies and acting as a catalyst for new initiatives" (ibid.). Aside from the UNEP, there are other UN organisations such as the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), and the secretariats of the MEAs (Najam et al. 2004). Other environmentally related organisations include the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and World Trade Organisation (WTO) [ibid.]. Together, the UN has formed an Environmental Management Group

(EMG) consisting of 44 bodies concerned with the crafting of rules, supervising and providing funding for the 'sustenance' of the human environment (Ivanova and Roy 2007).

Apart from these two major categories, cooperate bodies have been an intrinsic part of the governance regime through participation in environmental negotiations, private-public partnerships towards environmental sanity and Cooperate Social Responsibilities (CSR) (Ivanova et al. 2007; Dauvergne and Lister 2012). Similarly, Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations have become the largest category of organisations with the "largest impact on environmental governance" (Najam et al. 2004: 24). They take active part in conferences and negotiations and create public awareness on environmental hazards and best practices (Gemmill and Bamidele-Izu 2002). For instance, NGOS served as part of government delegations as representatives of civil societies or "think tanks" giving technical backstopping. International NGOs such as the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the Foundation for International Environmental Law and Development (FIELD), Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) and Greenpeace have assisted the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) "with policy advice and scientific backup in the climate negotiations and FIELD lawyers have frequently obtained accreditation as members of small islands delegations" (Gulbrandsen and Andresen 2004: p. 56). They also serve as a major check on the state and businesses through the insistence on the adherence to environmental regulations, principles and treaties such as the Kyoto Protocol (see Gulbrandsen and Andresen 2004).

Following the above are the epistemic communities concerned with the production of knowledge on the environment and assisting in designing technical solutions for curbing environmental externalities. Mention can also be made of the local communities who directly manage natural resources through the use of indigenous technologies. Though local communities are recognised as peripheral to mainstream environmental governance, their immense contribution cannot be overemphasised.

2.2 Regulations

These consist of international and domestic policies, laws, norms and documents used as instruments of governance. They include national and sub-national laws and policies, cooperate environmental policies and a plethora of international reports, treaties and agreements that together regulate the use of the commons. In particular, MEAs "have been the primary vehicle" for the achievement of global cooperation on environmental issues (Sampford 2002; 82). Together, more than 1700 international agreements (including about 500 MEAs) have been "brokered" to resolve environmental crises (Lemos and Agrawal 2006; Pelletier 2010; Mitchell 2003). Notable among these are the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora; Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution; Montreal Protocol on the Ozone Layer; Convention on Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal; Rio Declaration (Earth Charter); United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; Convention on Biological Diversity; Kyoto Protocol; Declaration on the Forest; and Doha Declaration (adapted from Goffman 2005). The nomenclatures of these treaties are axiomatic of the respective regulatory functions they perform. Other influential documents are the Brundtland Commission report (1987) and Agenda 21 (1992); serving as the rudders of mainstream environmental governance.

2.3 Mechanisms

The UN uses various mechanisms to propagate the message of sustainable development and as tools for environmental governance. Some of these governance mechanisms have been highlighted and explained under this section. Starting from 1972, the UN organises decadal conferences for environmental actors to meet and deliberate on the state of the ecology, and make treaties and negotiations. The first of these conferences was held in Stockholm (Sweden), the second in Nairobi (Kenya) in 1982, the third was held in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in 1992 while the fourth and fifth were held in Johannesburg (South Africa) in 2002 and Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in (2012) respectively (see also Seyfang 2003). Aside from these mage-conferences, there are other conferences and meetings

held on particular ecological resources and treaties. These serve as the platform for review and drawing of schemas for environmental sustainability.

Moreover, the UN uses market-based and voluntary agreements to manage resource use in member countries. These are incentive-based and voluntary mechanisms usually used at the meso-level to regulate the use of natural resources, and have grown spectacularly in recent years (see Jordan et. al 2003). They include "ecotaxes and subsidies based on a mix of regulation and market incentives, voluntary agreements, certification, ecolabeling, and informational systems" (Lemos and Agrawal 2006:305). Ecotaxes mainly on environmentally sensitive activities and services such as highly-pollutant industrial activities, energy, agriculture and tourism, are enacted to regulate the use of such services and take into account the cost of their externalities (ibid.). Prominent among certifications and ecolabeling is timber certification that helps to regulate logging – especially in developing countries. Again, through the polluter pays principle, carbon trading has become a global bargain mechanism for the regulation of global emissions from the industrialised world (Atkinson 2008). Voluntary trade agreements are also made between national and cooperate bodies for the latter to conform to regulations on pollution (Lemos and Agrawal 2006).

Lastly, to provide a source of assistance as well as incentives for adherence to MEAs, donor countries have tied some development aid with environmental conditionalities. Aside from this, the international community has established funds to help achieve environmental sustainability. One of these is the Global Environment Fund (GEF) which has become a major fund for environmental protection (for related schemes see Pearce 2004). In fact, Rist (2008) indicates that about $125 billion per year is paid to fund environmental 'protection'. Through this mechanism, countries (especially from the Global South) are incentivised to comply with MEAs and enforce domestic environmental regulations.

3.0 Major Challenges to Existing Environmental Governance Regime

Five decades of (global) environmental governance has achieved little since the natural environment keeps on deteriorating. For instance, the Millennium Ecosystems Assessment (2005) painted a rather gloomy picture of the state of the world's ecosystems by indicating that anthropogenic degradation is affecting about 60% of ecosystem services, pointing to the hiatuses in current mainstream environmental governance. Moreover, at the recent Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (2012), participating Heads of States and Representatives acknowledged this failure by indicating that "the 20 years since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 have seen uneven progress" (UN 2012: 4). This failure can be attributed to numerous challenges ranging from institutional to ideological. The gravest institutional challenges include those discussed below;

The major issue militating against environmental governance is weaknesses in its institutional structure at the global level. The UNEP which is to play the leading role in this affair has little power within the UN bureaucracy. As just a programme, competition with powerful agencies such as the World Bank, WTO and the International Monetary Fund for the primacy of environmental concerns in the core UN agenda has been problematic. Due to these asymmetrical relations within the UN, the UNEP "has never been given the resources or the political capital to fulfil its mandate" (Najam et al. 2006: 15). This problem has attained much gravity with the takeover of environmental responsibilities by these powerful agencies (Haas 2004; Gehring and Buck 2002; Downie and Levy 2000).

Again, the gargantuan number of environmental institutions in the UN and outside, coupled with institutional fragmentation, and proliferation and duplication of MEAs, has made the UNEP overloaded and incapacitated to ensure efficient institutional cooperation and coordination for better governance (Ivanova and Roy 2007). For instance, with over 500 MEAs and their secretariats scattered around the globe, it has become difficult for the UNEP and even nation-states to streamline activities for better governance.

Following the above is the issue of lopsided environmental negotiations and non-compliance (i.e. lack of political will for enforcement). Firstly, environmental negotiations are made with the lowest-common-denominator on a single-issue basis, to ensure that the interests of most states are represented (Margerum 1996; Sampford 2002). Sovereign states can, and, hold veto in negotiations that will limit their economic activities. The holding of veto by the US in the UNCED (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development) processes in 1992 and her withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol in 2001 due to its industrial interests are notable examples (Pelling 2008; Atkinson 2008). Thus "politically feasible reduction targets achieved through problem shifting end-of-pipe technologies are favoured over precautionary solutions, fundamental changes in production systems and hard limits on total allowable emissions" (Pelletier 2010: 222). This affects the contents of MEAs since economic growth and political expediency tramp environmental quality in such negotiations.

Secondly, there is lack of political will on the part of sovereign states to comply with MEAs for economic reasons, scientific uncertainties and scepticisms associated with environmental prognoses – plus, there are no serious international efforts for enforcement leading to free-riding (Najam et. al. 2006). The free-rider problem has led to widespread non-compliance even among the industrialised countries (the major pollutants of the earth). For instance, a research by Lafferty and Meadowcroft (2000a) reveals that industrialised countries are violating environmental regulations they spearheaded the UN to formulate. Again, studies by Lafferty and Meadowcroft (2000b) to evaluate the implementation of specific sustainability policies in the industrialised world reveal a widespread inaction among countries such as Australia, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Japan, US, Canada, Sweden, Norway, Germany and other European countries. An earlier research by these authors also revealed that The non-compliance on the side of the supposed 'mentors' and 'propagators' of environmental sustainability has therefore affected the implementation of MEAs as 'mentee-states' have also relented on their efforts to comply with MEAs.

The challenges above, coupled with their derivatives (which will be occurring in subsequent sections of this paper) and the lack of holistic and/or interdependent agreement(s) on all aspects of the ecology to take into consideration inter-linkages and complexities in the environment (O'Connor 2008), are militating against environmental governance, resulting in persistent degradation of the natural environment. There is therefore a need to reform the current system to achieve better results.

4.0 A Way Forward.

The numerous problems combatting environmental governance are to be dealt with if the rapid degradation in environmental governance is to be curtailed. Thus, this section of the article proceeds to offer a possible set of measures that can be adopted by leaders for environmental governance to be effective. These measures include a change in the existing level of governance to a multi-level governance; institutional reforms; participatory governance; integrated environmental planning; regulatory reforms and valorisation of the Environment

4.1 Towards a Multi-level Governance

The search for alternatives to curb the inherent weaknesses within the institutional framework for environmental governance coupled with non-compliance to MEAs has generated polemic debates in academic circles. Some scholars are calling for a World Environmental Organisation (WEO), parallel to the WTO, in order to centralise environmental governance, ensure strict compliance with MEAs and impose sanctions on free-riders (Biermann 2000; 2001; 2002; 2007; Biermann and Bauer 2005; Pelletier 2010; Charnovitz 2002; Esty 1994; Whalley and Zissimos 2002). However, others vehemently oppose this proposition by indicating that there is lack of political feasibility for a WEO since nation-states see its establishment as pernicious to their entrenched sovereignty (see Najam 2003; Hass 2004). From the perspectives of political ecology and political economy, the idea of WEO seems ideal, but becomes more complicated when environmental governance itself is unpacked. For instance, the complexities involved in the management of the environment make monocentric governance a less viable option. The environment consists of several components

covering a very large area making it very complex for one organisation to manage effectively. Again, there is high possibility that such a superstructure will be captured by the powerful nations to advance their economic interest whilst limiting that of weaker nations through eco-imperialism. Just as the WTO, powerful nations will deploy their agencies to use such a mega structure to restrict the use of the environment by less powerful ones for their partisan gain. The above therefore calls for a more nuanced governance regime incorporating complexity, political, and compliance concerns and capable of addressing key flaws – that is, a Multi-Level Governance (MLG) or network governance.

Multi-Level Governance refers to "political structures and processes that transgress the borders of administrative jurisdictions, aiming to cope with interdependencies in societal development and political decision making which exists among territorial units" (Benz 2006: 95). This network model will comprise of "formally independent, yet mutually interacting governance levels, which can be distributed either vertically or horizontally" with active and full participation of all non-state actors (Newig and Fritsch 2009: 199; see also Paavola 2007; Benn et. al. 2009; Streck 2002; Heuer 2012). Such a collaborative governance regime has three major characteristics – it is "non-exclusive, non-hierarchical, and post-territorial" (Karkkainen 2004: 75: emphasis in original). That is, it should bring on board all environmental stakeholders (states and non-state actors) through a system of created actor-equality with veracious concerns for the ecology that transcends sovereignty but with high legitimacy. An econometric-cum-empirical analysis by Newig and Fritch indicates that such a "system comprising many agencies and levels of governance yields higher environmental outputs than rather monocentric governance" (2009: 210; see also Waddell 2000; Selsky and Parker 2005; Starik and Heuer 2002; Heuer 2010).

In a sharp contrast to the establishment of a superstructure, the feasibility of a Multi-Level Governance is epitomised in the nascent emergence of environmental governance from a state-centric affair to a more participatory and collaborative governance (see Najam et. al. 2004; Haas 2004; Sanwal 2004; Bulkeley and Mol 2003). However, the major constraints to the emergent regime

are the lack of coordination and the subjugation of less powerful actors such as poor countries and local communities. Thus, here, MLG will only "involve the streamlining and improvement of existing governance efforts rather than creating new governance bodies" (Haas 2004: 8). What is needed here is an invigorated agency serving as a "switchboard institution" (ibid.) to connect and coordinate activities and policies and to ensure that the interests of marginalised actors are represented. With this governance system in place, the practical recommendations below could help improve environmental governance;

4.2 Institutional Reform

There is the need to upgrade and invigorate the UNEP from its current status as a programme to a UN agency that can command the needed human, financial, political and technological resources to achieve its mandate efficiently and serve as a global switchboard institution for stakeholder management (see Najam et al 2006; Najam et al. 2004). Again, regional level switchboard institutions are also needed for regional coordination. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is doing well in networking for environmental governance (see Lian and Robinson 2002; Elliott 2011) and more are needed to achieve holistic environmental sustainability. Thus, existing regional-level agencies such as the European Union and the African Union must also take up these environmental networking roles for the betterment of the earth. Moreover, with the enabling environment for MLG already in place, there is the need for improvement in the capacities of actors to perform their functions more effectively and efficiently. The state in particular must perform the lead role through the devolution of some core functions to decentralised institutions. Again, the capacities of sub-national actors should be built (financially and technically) to identify environmental concerns and act accordingly.

4.3 Full Participation of the Marginalised (Local Communities and NGOs).

Political economists and political ecologists indicate that the emergent environmental governance system is an effort to thwart the development of the poor (see Goldman 1998). This is because local communities, especially forest people are usually (and ironically) touted as sources of degradation and thus

must be stopped (Adams 2009). However, research indicate that local communities have systems of managing common-pool resources more effectively (see Ostrom 1990; 2009; Ostrom et. al. 1999) and that degradation are mostly exacerbated by bad governance (Jarosz 1996). For instance a study by Robbins (2012) in Rajasthan in India about common property forests found that some actors degraded forest due to their dissatisfaction with governance structures. His conclusion was that "degradation and marginalisation are interrelated, but mediated by local power relations" (ibid: 74). Similarly, my research into the political ecology of forest management at the local level in Ghana revealed that forest communities and dwellers (less powerful actors who are the actual managers of the forest) are marginalised in forest use and control (Otutei 2012; 2014). This results in resistance from these less powerful actors through unsustainable practices such as arson and destruction of young economic trees. Again, according to Kull (1999; 2004), the criminalisation of traditional slash and burn methods of farming in Madagascar as a forest governance mechanism has worsened the degradation plight of the country. Here, farmers set fires on their farms and blame them on some "evil people". These studies have consistently provided evidence that without these bad governance strategies from conventional (formal) management regimes, forest people would have managed natural resources better.

Aside from marginalising local communities and local people in the governance process, there have been concerns of side-lining NGOs in final negotiations and procedures of compliance. Commenting on the participation of NGOs in negotiating the Kyoto rules, Gulbrandsen and Andresen revealed that:

> "While NGOs have been formally accredited as observers to the climate change negotiations since the talks began in 1991, actual participation in the negotiations has in practice varied widely, and has usually been restricted to the following forms: access to the conference venue, presence during meetings, interventions during debate, face-to-face lobbying of delegations, and distribution of documents. Somewhat paradoxically, most of the final negotiations of the compliance procedure, where most delegates agreed on the need for transparency, were conducted behind

> closed doors. Although participation does not equal influence, it was certainly a drawback for the green NGOs to be shut out from important forums. NGOs therefore had to rely on traditional "corridor politics," face-to-face lobbying and distribution of documents during session breaks" (2004: p. 59).

This implies formal environmental managers have been undermining local communities and NGOs – actors with genuine concern for the environment – so as to achieve their partisan interest of sustained unrestricted economic development. Local people and NGOs have been made peripheral actors in Environmental governance.

Thus for environmental governance to be successful through the multi-level governance regime, there should be collaborations between formal environmental governors such as states and businesses on the one hand and local communities and NGOs on the other hand. Evidence in the forestry sector indicates that there is emergent collaborative forest management in countries such as India, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Ghana and others (FAO 1999). However, this has become exploitative since communities become marginalised in such collaborations leading to vehement resistance from local communities, especially in forest areas (Adams 2009; Adger et. al 2001). Thus in this MLG system, there is the need to incorporate the interests of these local communities and delegate the management of some ecological resources (especially forests) to them to avoid conflicts and achieve better results because as Elinor Ostrom (op. cit.) indicates, local communities (with their indigenous knowledge) can manage these resources better.

4.4 Integrated environmental planning

The interconnectivity in the natural ecology demands comprehensive management strategies. Thus integrated environmental planning should be a major tool in MLGs (Sampford 2002). States and non-states actors in this regime must collaborate to draw up integrated management plans at the domestic level to be harmonised at the global scale for a composite plan of action covering all aspects of the environment. This will help to deal with single-issue based

negotiations and strategies. Again, the implementation of such an Integrated Plan should be monitored and evaluated annually to track progress and ensure compliance.

4.5 Regulatory reforms

Intrinsic to MLG is the commitment of all actors (especially states) to ensure compliance to MEAs and environmental policies. However, for such an assumption to hold, MEAs should be streamlined and managed effectively since the proliferation and fragmentation of treaties have become a recipe for mediocre performance (Hass 2004). This could be achieved by grouping related MEAs under parent treaties and secretariats and maintaining interdependence and congruence among them. Again, there should be a shift from the lowest-common-denominator mantra to MEAs that reflect actual environmental concerns. More studies are also needed to ascertain the veracity of apocalyptic predictions to do away with cynicisms that have been the main refuge for free-riders.

Moreover, mega-conferences should move away from the endemic negotiation stage to ensuring implementation of and compliance with MEAs. There should be the creation of positive incentives for ecocentric states while strictly punitive sanctions should be meted out to free-riders (including hegemonic states in the Global North). Conferences should also serve as platforms for evaluating the implementation of MEAs and the Integrated Plan proposed earlier to address anomalies and chart the way forward. Finally, UNEP should create a mechanism, modelled after that of the WTO, for settling inter- and intra-state disputes that may arise in such strict enforcement of environmental regulations.

4.6 Valorisation of the Environment

Central to every governance regime should be the acknowledgement of the protection of the environment as a compulsion. However mainstream environmental governance, predicated on environmental economics and ecological modernisation, has long ignored this. Environmental economists hold that “capitalism accelerates environmental degradation for a while...but then leads to much higher levels of environmental quality if growth is allowed to

continue" (McCarthy 2004:327). Similarly, ecological modernisation indicates that "the ongoing, internal dynamics of capitalist modernity can be harnessed to improve environmental quality" (ibid:328). These ideological perspectives combined, the underlying assumption of mainstream environmental governance is that "human ingenuity will always lead to novel substitutes for increasingly scarce resources, and that free markets will ensure that, as specific resources become depleted, rising prices will prevent their over-exploitation" (Pelletier 2010:223). This has been the premise of institutions such as the World Bank and WTO and thus neoliberalism has taken centre stage in environmental governance, followed by the pursuit of technological solutions to treat just the symptoms of degradation, without tackling the major sources of such degradation (ibid; Gareau 2008).

Consequently, developmental concerns have taken primacy in environmental governance. The incessant quest for everlasting growth has resulted in the subordination of environmental concerns in environmental governance to that of development (Escobar 1996; Rist 2008). In the words of Najam et al (2004:29), "environmental governance is not an end in itself; it is a means to an end, which has to be the attainment of sustainable development". This is epitomised in the names of the succeeding mega-conferences on the environment: the 1972 conference was UN Conference on the Human Environment, that of 1992 was UN Conference on Environment and Development, that of 2002 conference was World Summit on Sustainable Development whiles that of 2012 conference was the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD). To Najam (2005: 313), "the nomenclature of these mega-conferences is not just of semantic importance, it demonstrates a significant evolution in the very content of what constitutes the substance of global environmental governance". It must be noted that sustainable development itself is officially defined as "development [not environment] that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland 1987:43). Furthermore, at the recent Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (2012), it was resolved by participants that

> "We recognize that poverty eradication, changing unsustainable and promoting sustainable patterns of consumption and production and protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development are the overarching objectives of and essential requirements for sustainable development. We also reaffirm the need to achieve sustainable development by promoting sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth, creating greater opportunities for all, reducing inequalities, raising basic standards of living, fostering equitable social development and inclusion, and promoting integrated and sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems that supports, inter alia, economic, social and human development while facilitating ecosystem conservation, regeneration and restoration and resilience in the face of new and emerging challenges." (UN 2012: 2)

The above clearly indicates that the environment has been and is still a subject of economic development and all efforts are still towards economic development with little emphasis on the welfare of nature. To this end, even MEAs negotiations are "regularly monitored to ensure that they do not contravene WTO rules" (Pelletier 2010: 225).

However, ecological economists indicate that this presumption is devastative since the earth has a finite capacity and any production (whether for consumption or as an alternative to natural resources) leads to entropy (waste) (ibid). Thus, technological solutions will just exacerbate environmental degradation. Again, the postulation of environmental economists is flawed because empirical evidence indicates that there is large and incessant growth in calculated "ecological footprints" in industrialised (highly capitalist) countries with more pronounced adverse impacts on the global environment (Stern 2001). Thus, the persistent growth of the hegemonic capitalist paradigm without any limitations will eventually push humankind to the brink of ecological collapse due to forecasted high industrial anthropogenic degradation, even in the current 'less-polluted' Third World.

Hence, the underlying ideologies of mainstream environmental governance need to change to embrace a rather ecocentric presumption that will help sustain the planet. In fact, sustainable development is an evil in itself and therefore must be abolished. With environmental concern taking primacy of such a regime, precautionary strategies should be implemented to halt human activities that degrade the natural environment; including malign scientific and technological exploration. Such strategies call for a radical shift from the current neoliberal orthodoxy (that is, sustainable development) to regarding environmental carrying capacities and their limitations as a major constraint to development. In fact, Rist (2008: 182) concludes that "from the point of view of environmental protection, sustainable development is the evil in itself" (emphasis in original) and thus must be dealt with.

Thus environmental values should be the major indicators of development. There should be concerted efforts to manage materialistic values to ensure that they are subordinate to environmental values. Research indicates that this will be a more effective way of arresting unsustainable practices (see Sampford 1991; 1995; 2001; 2002; Sampford and Wood, 1993).

5.0 Conclusion

Environmental governance has attained momentum since the past four decades but with abysmal results due to challenges such as institutional weaknesses, inactions, contempocentrism and anthropocentrism and the general disregard of environmental limits. Contempocentrism as used here refers to the "tendency to disregard the welfare of future generations and believe in the power of technology and technological change to take care of environmental degradation and scarcities" (Lemos and Agrawal 2006: 309). Due to the above, there has been a deliberate shift in the focus of environmental governance from the environment to development. Thus, instead of making radical changes in the prevailing capitalist production systems (the main culprit of ecological degradation), environmental governance is just concerned with palliative measures to sustain these systems through 'green washing' and 'blue washing' under the guise of

'sustainable development'. This shift, coupled with institutional weaknesses, has become the recipe for poor results.

However, above I have argued that in order to effectively achieve environmental governance, we must strengthen the emergent participatory system through Multi-Level Governance by invigorating the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), streamlining MEAs and improving the capacities of the existing institutions and ensuring full participation of local communities. Again, serious efforts are to be put in place to ensure compliance to streamlined MEAs at the national level, whiles integrated environmental planning at both domestic and global levels should be a major tool in the governance process. Another area of serious concern should be the full participation of indigenous people and direct dependants of natural resources in the governance process at the micro and meso-levels. The most important, however, should be the valorisation of the environment as the nexus of environmental governance. The concerns of the environment have been relegated to the background subject only to the achievement of developmental objectives. However, if environmental governance is to be effective and yield results, the environment itself should be valorised.

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Emmanuel Otutei is a native of Akatakyiwa, Mfansteman Municipality, Ghana and was born in 1987. He is a development practitioner, working for the Organisation for Livelihoods Enhancement Services (OLIVES) as the Program Officer for its Newmont Akyem Community Development Program. He graduated from the University of Edinburgh as a Commonwealth Scholar and the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana as a Valedictorian. This paper is an extended version of a Coursework Essay submitted to the Centre of African Studies of the University of Edinburgh.