

BEYOND RIO +20

No future without justice! And the advocates of ‘green economy’ who gathered at Rio with flying colours to do justice to the planet earth and make the summit a grand success were actually playing with the gallery. The decision-makers of the North were there to push their unilateral trade barriers under the cloak of green economy while denying the South the much sought-after democratisation of the summit process itself. Faced with dim prospects of early recovery in world economy they took a break to talk something different and beautiful as well—sustainable development. The 2-day all important global meet, officially called the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development under the pompous banner of Rio +20 was held after the first summit was convened 20 years ago at the Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro. At the first summit all of them pledged in no uncertain terms to save the earth from catastrophe because of alarming environmental and ecological degradation. Twenty years later they voiced the same concerns showing no political will and urgency to save the earth from the impending disaster. In truth most of the 191 UN members who gathered at Rio, were mere passengers, rather tourists as the decision-making remained in the hands of the industrialised North. What was sold as ‘green economy’ agenda by UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organisation) was actually framed by the West and America well in advance, albeit instead of Barack Obama, the US was represented by their Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

In other words the very absence of Barack Obama and British Prime Minister David Cameron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel signified in all fairness that Rio +20 business was a low-key affair.

That the earth is in grave danger does no longer require statistical jugglery to prove. “The earth system behaves as a single, self-regulating system with physical, chemical, biological and human components”. Any intervention and encroachment in any form hinders the self-regulating mechanism threatening the very existence of the planet and living organisms it sustains. For all practical purposes the over-all health of the earth has worsened beyond recognition in some regions since they convened the first summit 20 years ago. And at the next summit they would in all probability express their helplessness to arrest the steady decline.

There is every reason to believe that major polluters will continue to burn fossil fuels without reducing their emissions at the source, summit or no summit. They are also talking about REDD+ which stands for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation. In reality REDD+ means eviction, land grabs and destruction of ecological balance. Inaction on climate change, marked by vague, if not false, solutions like REDD has literally forced the earth to become hotter by 2 degrees or more already. Nine countries are said to be disappearing under the waves as the sea level gradually rises defying all high-sounding UN resolutions.

They gathered at Rio to save the earth and humankind without any sincerity to stop massive deforestation that has been on the rise in the name of development and in some cases in the

name of sustainable development. The global economic downturn, rampant speculation in every branch of trade and commerce, poverty and climate change—all are aggravating deforestation.

The progressive disappearance of forests is reducing the planet earth's capacity to absorb carbon-dioxide released into the atmosphere as a result of human interference. This problem is getting not manageable due to lack of adequate laws to protect forests and indigenous peoples who depend on them for mere survival or to these laws not being implemented and enforced rigorously in countries that do have them. This is a vicious circle.

Now European Union, the most vocal campaigner of green economy at Rio is dependent on imports of feed for livestock, and this has created a growing demand for land abroad, which in turn has caused deforestation and other social and environmental damage all over the world. Despite tall talk of sustainable development unsustainable production and consumption patterns are the order of the day. All this has led to rapid depletion of natural resources of the earth, hastening global warming while making more frequent extreme climate events, massive desertification and deforestation irreversible. The industrial North is in the main responsible for deforestation that has reached a panicky situation in some countries. The demand for palm oil by Nestle Oil, a multinational company that is mainly state-owned and is striking to become world leader in bio-fuel production is executing land conversion and deforestation in peat-land rain forest in Indonesia and Malayasia which experts say contain “arguably the world's most concentrated carbon stock...”

Right now millions of indigenous people across the globe are the worst victims of deforestation. They are forest refugees, they are destitutes with no hope of sustenance though debate over sustainable development gets louder with every passing day. “As the forest disappears, so does their culture”.

Ironically side-shows at every international conference is more crucial than the main show. So India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh discussed nuclear business with the newly elected French President Francois Hollande and Russian President Putin. By sticking to their notorious plan of nuclear energy at any cost—and all this alter Fukushima and Chernobyl—they are trying to make the earth a dangerous place, not a safe place, for future generations to live in. And Rio +20 can at worst mock at itself! □□