

## **Sustainable Development Terminology Glossary (UN/SDG-Aligned)**

### **1. Core Concepts**

#### **Sustainable Development**

Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (as defined in the United Nations report *Our Common Future*). Integrates economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection.

#### **Sustainability**

The long-term maintenance of environmental, social, and economic systems in balance.

#### **Natural Resources**

Materials and ecosystem services provided by nature (e.g. water, minerals, forests) that support human life and economic activity.

### **2. Environmental Processes & Issues**

#### **Climate Change**

Long-term shifts in temperature and weather patterns, primarily caused by human activities such as fossil fuel combustion (as recognised by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change).

#### **Greenhouse Effect**

The process by which greenhouse gases trap heat in the Earth's atmosphere, contributing to global warming.

#### **Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions**

Release of gases such as CO<sub>2</sub>, methane, and nitrous oxide that contribute to climate change.

#### **Ozone Layer Depletion**

Reduction of the ozone layer caused by substances like chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), increasing exposure to ultraviolet radiation.

#### **Air Pollution**

Presence of harmful substances in the atmosphere that pose risks to health and ecosystems.

**Acid Rain**

Precipitation containing sulphuric or nitric acid formed from industrial emissions, damaging ecosystems and cultural heritage.

**Water Pollution**

Contamination of water bodies, reducing water quality and threatening ecosystems and human health.

**Deforestation**

Permanent removal of forests, often for agriculture or development, contributing to biodiversity loss and climate change.

**Desertification**

Land degradation in arid and semi-arid areas due to climate change and human activities.

**Biodiversity Loss**

Decline in the variety of living species, threatening ecosystem stability and resilience.

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### 3. Resource Use & Management

**Overexploitation of Natural Resources**

Unsustainable extraction or use of resources beyond their capacity to regenerate.

**Water Scarcity**

Insufficient availability of freshwater resources to meet demand.

**Waste Management**

Collection, treatment, and disposal of waste, including hazardous and nuclear materials.

**Circular Economy**

Economic system aimed at eliminating waste and promoting the continual use of resources through reuse, recycling, and regeneration.

**Ecosystem Services**

Benefits humans derive from ecosystems (e.g. clean water, pollination, climate regulation).

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### 4. Development Models & Economic Approaches

**Conventional Development Model**

Growth-focused model based on intensive resource exploitation and industrial expansion.

**Sustainable Development Model**

Development approach integrating environmental protection with economic and social progress.

**Green Economy**

An economy that improves human well-being while reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities (as promoted by United Nations Environment Programme).

**Green Growth**

Economic growth that is environmentally sustainable and resource-efficient.

**Environmental Governance**

Policies, regulations, and institutions that manage environmental protection and resource use.

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## 5. Global Frameworks & Agreements

**Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

A set of 17 global goals adopted by the United Nations in 2015 to address global challenges including poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation.

**Rio Declaration on Environment and Development**

A set of principles guiding sustainable development worldwide.

**Kyoto Protocol**

An international treaty committing countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

**Paris Agreement**

Global agreement aiming to limit global warming to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels.

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## 6. Social & Human Dimensions

**Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP)**

Efficient use of resources and reduction of waste across product life cycles (linked to SDG 12).

**Urbanisation**

Growth of cities and migration from rural to urban areas, with implications for sustainability.

**Environmental Justice**

Fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens across all social groups.

**Intergenerational Equity**

Principle that future generations should have access to the same resources and opportunities as the present generation.

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**7. Risks & Global Challenges****Environmental Degradation**

Deterioration of the environment through resource depletion, pollution, and ecosystem destruction.

**Global Environmental Risk**

Environmental threats that transcend national boundaries and require international cooperation.

**Climate Crisis**

Urgent framing of climate change as a critical global threat requiring immediate action.

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**8. Energy & Technology****Renewable Energy**

Energy derived from naturally replenishing sources (e.g. solar, wind, hydro).

**Clean Technology (Cleantech)**

Technologies that reduce environmental impact through improved efficiency or reduced emissions.

**Decarbonisation**

Reduction of carbon emissions, especially in energy and industrial systems.

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**9. Key Policy Principles**

### **Precautionary Principle**

Action should be taken to prevent environmental harm even if scientific certainty is not complete.

### **Polluter Pays Principle**

Those responsible for pollution should bear the costs of managing it.

### **Sustainable Resource Management**

Use of resources in a way that maintains their availability for future generations.

