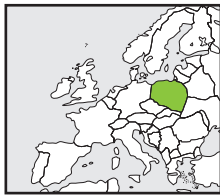


◎ From the grassroots:  
NATIONAL REPORT

## ■ POLAND

# A Green New Deal



The Government favours a neoliberal model of development that has led to growing social stratification and rising pressure on the environment. An alternative could be the Green New Deal, which aims to address global warming and global financial crises by implementing a set of policy proposals intended to secure global sustainable development. Green Growth and environmental protection programmes must act as catalysts to create decent work and sustainable livelihoods for the most disadvantaged Polish citizens.

### ATD Fourth World Poland

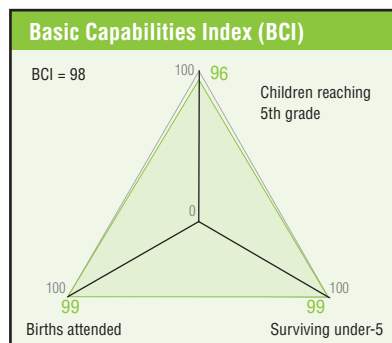
Pierre Klein  
Monika Kalinowska  
The Green Institute  
Dariusz Szwed

### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Poland is one of the very few countries that have introduced the concept of sustainable development at a constitutional level. According to Article 5 of the Polish Constitution: “The Republic of Poland shall safeguard the independence and integrity of its territory and ensure the freedoms and rights of persons and citizens, the security of the citizens, safeguard the national heritage and shall ensure the protection of the natural environment pursuant to the principles of sustainable development.”

Paradoxically Poland is also a country where any reference to the concept of sustainable development is rather difficult to find in public debate. In July 2000, for example, the “Poland 2025 – Long-term strategy for sustainable development” was adopted by the Council of Ministers with the clear objective to “improve the welfare of Polish families.” According to some experts, however, its overall impact is extremely limited: “[It] has met with no response from society and today hardly anybody seems to remember its existence. The average citizen does not know about the concept of sustainable development, nor does he or she have even the vaguest notion of it.” The authors go on to say that even people who have heard of sustainable development often consider it to be synonymous with environmental protection.<sup>2</sup>

In July 2009 the Government issued *Poland 2030. Development challenges*,<sup>3</sup> intended to be the mainstream analysis and strategy line for development over the next 20 years. Written in hard-to-understand jargon it favours the “polarization and diffusion model” as opposed to that of sustainable development. Developed by the Board of Strategic Advisors to the Council of Ministers led by Minister Michał Boni, the report was not discussed in its initial phase and no alternative projects were com-

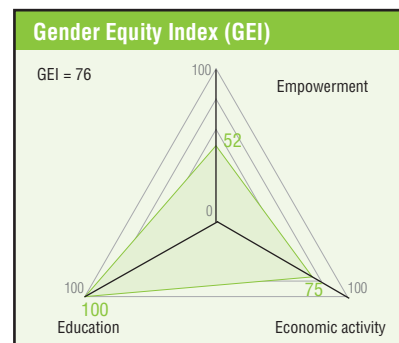


missioned, which made consultations impossible. The power to set the direction for the future of the country was thus given to a narrow group.<sup>4</sup> Moreover in an interview for *Polska* one of the co-authors said that the departure point for the creation of this new model was the observation that “in reality, sustainable development is only a myth.”<sup>5</sup>

### Unsustainability and the neoliberal model

The lack of implementation (or rather comprehension) of the principle of sustainable development inscribed in the Polish Constitution can be illustrated by the fact that subsequent governments have implied the existence of a conflict between environment and economy or between environment and society. Ways of addressing the current state of affairs, as presented by key politicians, seem to have been poorly prioritized. “The economy first, my reasonable Pole,” said Bronisław Komorowski, incumbent President of Poland, during a debate on the future of the Polish and European economies.<sup>6</sup>

In explaining the “polarization-diffusion model,” *Poland 2030* states that “apart from boosting growth polarities (i.e. polarisation processes), we have to primarily create conditions for diffusion – anything and everything which might support the process of equalizing education-related opportunities, improve transport accessibility in all parts of



the country, eliminate the threat of digital exclusion, improve social integration levels, structure and support intergenerational solidarity, and offer a sense of capacity to follow individual ambitions.”<sup>7</sup> However the authors also define economic growth as a solid foundation for Poland’s development, along with “efficient administration and demographic potential,” and state that “current EU policy, as regards energy and climate security, is heading towards the reinforcement of Europe as a world leader in sustainable development. This, however, cannot occur at the cost of the Polish economy.”<sup>8</sup>

Here lies the biggest trap of the Government’s development strategy: Poles ought to tighten their belts in order to achieve a state of economic and social balance in 20 years time. But this model has led instead to increased social stratification, decreasing social capital and rising pressure on the environment measured by the total use of energy and non-renewable resources.<sup>9</sup>

The prevailing ideology was aptly described by Edwin Bendyk in the afterword to *Ecology: Guide for Political Criticism*. Noting that the dominant development discourse rested on neoliberalism and

1 This report is partly based on D. Szwed, “Green New Deal in the World, in Europe, in Poland?” in D. Szwed (ed.), *The Green New Deal in Poland*, (2011), <zielonyinstytut.pl>.

2 K. Kostrzewa and R. Piasecki, “Approaches to Sustainable Development in Poland,” *L’Europe en formation* n° 352, (2009).

3 Available from: <www.polska2030.pl>.

4 E. Charkiewicz, “Rozwój społeczny – próba diagnozy,” *Raport Krajowy Polskiej Koalicji*, (Social Watch, 2009).

5 A. Koziński, “Wojnarowski: Zrównoważony rozwój kraju to tylko mit,” interview in *Polska*, (29 June 2010), <www.polskatimes.pl/opinie/wywiady/275178,wojnarowski-zrownawazony-rozwój-kraju-too-mit,id,t.html>.

6 At the opening of the Second European Economic Congress in Katowice, (31 May 2010).

7 Board of Strategic Advisers to the Prime Minister, *Poland 2030. Development challenges: Report summary*, p. 4., <www.kprm.gov.pl/files/file/Dokumenty/Poland%202030\_%20Development%20Challenges%20-%20report%20summary.pdf>.

8 Ibid.

9 One indicator of total energy use is the ecological footprint. In 2007 there were 1.8 global hectares (gha) of biologically productive space for each inhabitant of Earth. Between 2003 and 2007 usage in Poland rose from 3.3 to 4.35 gha – i.e., an average of 241% of globally available ecospace for each Pole. If everyone consumed this way humanity would need 2.5 planets.

postcolonialism, he writes, "The former means the primacy of growth policy using free market instruments understood as a space for negotiations of private preferences that are only protected and not shaped by the state which is withdrawing from the management of interpersonal relations to the maximum extent. If at all, this can happen only under the influence of external commitments. This dictate, expressed in ideas like the climate and energy package or Natura 2000, is treated like divine retribution, a cost of membership in the club of developed countries. In fact, we are a postcolonial, developing country that was harmed by history and is still being damaged by the hegemonic centre that tries to enforce solutions detrimental to aspirations reflected in a desire to maintain economic growth."<sup>10</sup>

Neoliberal notions of the unfettered free market and of endless economic growth measured by GDP are wearing thin. The GDP does not reflect reality for it does not consider the country's low level of social capital, unpaid housework (done mainly by women) and increasing income stratification. Nor does it take into account environmental devastation, extinction of plants and animals, growing populations or the greatest challenge of the 21st century – the need to implement a global climate deal, which is a critical investment in our common future, as noted by the economist Nicolas Stern.<sup>11</sup>

### The Green New Deal: an alternative

The concept of the Green New Deal appeared first in a July 2008 report by the New Economics Foundation<sup>12</sup> in response to the economic crisis driven by credit bubbles, global climate change and increased oil prices. The authors stated that in order to avoid a deep recession comparable to the Great Depression it is necessary to undertake key structural changes both in the national and international financial systems, including the tax system, as well as make stable investments in energy savings and the production of energy from renewable sources.

The Green New Deal puts forward a set of policy proposals that aims to address issues such as global warming and financial crises by securing global sustainable development and creating a low emission economy. It also supports the development of modern technologies that are human-, environment- and climate-friendly, enhancing energy efficiency and greater use of renewable sources of energy, modern-

izing the building sector and promoting autonomous and sustainable buildings, developing environmentally friendly railway systems on the continent and changing the priorities of the EU Common Agricultural Policy. Like the reforms of the 1930s, the Green New Deal involves an active role for public authorities in the implementation of policies, in this case, for sustainable development.

In March 2009 prior to the European Parliament elections, the European Green Party issued its manifesto, *A Green New Deal for Europe*, which significantly develops this concept. The summary states: "As the economic, social and environmental challenges currently facing the EU are closely interrelated, they must be tackled together as part of a comprehensive package which for us is the Green New Deal. ... [This] is the only way of really delivering the changes to the way we live and work that will result in the reductions in greenhouse gas emissions which science shows will be necessary if we are to avoid the most disastrous impacts of climate change." It goes on to say that the benefits will go beyond the environment "to provide a major boost to the economy, lead to sustainable economic development and result in the creation of millions of new 'green collar' jobs in renewable energy and other future-oriented technologies." It adds that the Green New Deal will ensure that social and labour rights are not sacrificed in the name of competition and that public goods and services are provided so that all citizens can enjoy a good quality of life. "Greens will continue to defend equal rights for all within and outside the workplace, fight all forms of discrimination and intolerance and take the urgent action required to help the most disadvantaged in society."<sup>13</sup>

The Green New Deal in Poland also states that "business as usual" is no longer possible since it merely continues to push economic growth at the cost of the degradation of society and the environment.<sup>14</sup>

### Building sustainable development

It is generally accepted that people living in extreme poverty are the most vulnerable to dangerous environmental conditions. One main issue for the poorest in Poland, for example, is housing quality. Roofs Over Heads,<sup>15</sup> a coalition of 15 NGOs led by Habitat for Humanity Poland, launched a campaign in 2008 to raise awareness about poor housing conditions

in the country. There is no national policy dedicated to building homes for low-income groups, nor for assisting them with home improvements. Nearly 12 million Poles – almost a third of the population – live in overcrowded homes. More than 60% of apartments need serious renovation and more than half of the housing stock is more than 40 years old. Low-quality building materials and poor insulation are resulting in high monthly energy bills, making funds even scarcer for families that need to improve their living conditions.

People facing extreme poverty are often seen as responsible for environmental damage and thus an obstacle to sustainable development. This has to change; in fact, people living in extreme poverty should be included in all levels of policy making. Thus the Polish and international response to the challenge of sustainable development must ensure that new technologies and mitigation and adaptation programmes benefit the most vulnerable populations and build on their capacities and efforts. People in extreme poverty are often at the frontline of development initiatives that aim to transform their living conditions by improving water, sanitation or heating facilities.

### Conclusion

Some authors believe that in seeking an alternative development model, "it is essential to accurately define the goals of economic development, environmental improvement and social cohesion."<sup>16</sup> This gets to the essence of sustainable development. Amartya Sen argues that eliminating poverty and preserving the environment could be considered as "different parts of an integrated task."<sup>17</sup> This means that environmental protection programmes could be used to obtain decent work and training for the most disadvantaged groups while maintaining respect for local cultures.

Green Growth must act as a catalyst for creating decent work and sustainable livelihoods for the most disadvantaged populations, building on efforts they are already undertaking. This is in line with the priority theme of a "green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication" of the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in 2012 in Brazil. ■

10 E. Bendyk, "Ekologia Polityczna dla Polski, czyli w stronę Zielonego Okręgu Stołu," in *Ekologia: Przewodnik Krytyki Politycznej*, Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, (Warsaw: 2009).

11 N. Stern, *Globalny Ład. Zmiany klimatu a powstanie nowej epoki, post pu i dostatku*, Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, (Warsaw: 2010).

12 Green New Deal Group, *A Green New Deal*, New Economics Foundation, (2008), <[www.greennewdealgroup.org/?page\\_id=53](http://www.greennewdealgroup.org/?page_id=53)>.

13 European Green Party, *A Green New Deal for Europe (Summary of Manifesto)*, <[europeangreens.eu/menu/egp-manifesto/](http://europeangreens.eu/menu/egp-manifesto/)>.

14 For a full analysis of the Green New Deal and the possibilities for its implementation in Poland, see <[zielonyinstytut.pl](http://zielonyinstytut.pl)>.

15 See the coalition's website: <[www.dachnadglowa.org](http://www.dachnadglowa.org)>.

16 X. Godinot, Th. Viard and H. de Courtivron, "Extreme Poverty and World Governance," Proposal Paper Series, Forum for a New World Governance, (December 2010), <[www.world-governance.org/spip.php?article662](http://www.world-governance.org/spip.php?article662)>.

17 A. Sen, "Environment and Poverty: One World or Two?" address at the International Conference on Energy, Environment and Development, (Bangalore, India: 16 December 2006), <[www.institut.veolia.org/ive/ressources/documents/1/166.Amartya-Sen.pdf](http://www.institut.veolia.org/ive/ressources/documents/1/166.Amartya-Sen.pdf)>.

# Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 1992

## The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development,

Having met at Rio de Janeiro from 3 to 14 June 1992,

Reaffirming the Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, adopted at Stockholm on 16 June 1972, and seeking to build upon it,

With the goal of establishing a new and equitable global partnership through the creation of new levels of cooperation among States, key sectors of societies and people,

Working towards international agreements which respect the interests of all and protect the integrity of the global environmental and developmental system,

Recognizing the integral and interdependent nature of the Earth, our home,

Proclaims that:

**Principle 1.** Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.

**Principle 2.** States have, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and developmental policies, and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.

**Principle 3.** The right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations.

**Principle 4.** In order to achieve sustainable development, environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it.

**Principle 5.** All States and all people shall cooperate in the essential task of eradicating poverty as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, in order to decrease the disparities in standards of living and better meet the needs of the majority of the people of the world.

**Principle 6.** The special situation and needs of developing countries, particularly the least developed and those most environmentally vulnerable, shall be given special priority. International actions in the field of environment and development should also address the interests and needs of all countries.

**Principle 7.** States shall cooperate in a spirit of global partnership to conserve, protect and restore the health and integrity of the Earth's ecosystem. In view of the different contributions to global environmental degradation, States have common but differentiated responsibilities. The developed countries acknowledge the responsibility that they bear in the international pursuit to sustainable development in view of the pressures their societies place on the global environment and of the technologies and financial resources they command.

**Principle 8.** To achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people, States should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and promote appropriate demographic policies.

**Principle 9.** States should cooperate to strengthen endogenous capacity-building for sustainable development by improving scientific understanding through exchanges of scientific and technological knowledge, and by enhancing the development, adaptation, diffusion and transfer of technologies, including new and innovative technologies.

**Principle 10.** Environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided.

**Principle 11.** States shall enact effective environmental legislation. Environmental standards, management objectives and priorities should reflect the environmental and development context to which they apply. Standards applied by some countries may be inappropriate and of unwarranted economic and social cost to other countries, in particular developing countries.

**Principle 12.** States should cooperate to promote a supportive and open international economic system that would lead to economic growth and sustainable development in all countries, to better address the problems of environmental degradation. Trade policy measures for environmental purposes should not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade. Unilateral actions to deal with environmental challenges outside the jurisdiction of the importing country should be avoided. Environmental measures addressing transboundary or global environmental problems should, as far as possible, be based on an international consensus.

**Principle 13.** States shall develop national law regarding liability and compensation for the victims of pollution and other environmental damage. States shall also cooperate in an expeditious and more determined manner to develop further international law regarding liability and compensation for adverse effects of environmental damage caused by activities within their jurisdiction or control to areas beyond their jurisdiction.

**Principle 14.** States should effectively cooperate to discourage or prevent the relocation and transfer to other States of any activities and substances that cause severe environmental degradation or are found to be harmful to human health.

**Principle 15.** In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there

are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.

**Principle 16.** National authorities should endeavour to promote the internalization of environmental costs and the use of economic instruments, taking into account the approach that the polluter should, in principle, bear the cost of pollution, with due regard to the public interest and without distorting international trade and investment.

**Principle 17.** Environmental impact assessment, as a national instrument, shall be undertaken for proposed activities that are likely to have a significant adverse impact on the environment and are subject to a decision of a competent national authority.

**Principle 18.** States shall immediately notify other States of any natural disasters or other emergencies that are likely to produce sudden harmful effects on the environment of those States. Every effort shall be made by the international community to help States so afflicted.

**Principle 19.** States shall provide prior and timely notification and relevant information to potentially affected States on activities that may have a significant adverse transboundary environmental effect and shall consult with those States at an early stage and in good faith.

**Principle 20.** Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development.

**Principle 21.** The creativity, ideals and courage of the youth of the world should be mobilized to forge a global partnership in order to achieve sustainable development and ensure a better future for all.

**Principle 22.** Indigenous people and their communities and other local communities have a vital role in environmental management and development because of their knowledge and traditional practices. States should recognize and duly support their identity, culture and interests and enable their effective participation in the achievement of sustainable development.

**Principle 23.** The environment and natural resources of people under oppression, domination and occupation shall be protected.

**Principle 24.** Warfare is inherently destructive of sustainable development. States shall therefore respect international law providing protection for the environment in times of armed conflict and cooperate in its further development, as necessary.

**Principle 25.** Peace, development and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible.

**Principle 26.** States shall resolve all their environmental disputes peacefully and by appropriate means in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

**Principle 27.** States and people shall cooperate in good faith and in a spirit of partnership in the fulfilment of the principles embodied in this Declaration and in the further development of international law in the field of sustainable development.