

## ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS IN THE PROCESS OF INDUSTRIALIZATION AND MODERNIZATION

VŨ HY CHUÔNG (chief editor) **Environmental problems in the process of industrialization and modernization.** H.: Social Sciences, 2007, 226 pp.

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Ecosystems are constantly changing to accommodate the many threats to bio-diversity and the source of human life. As the world's ecosystems continue to be damaged, environmental protection has become an urgent global issue. In Vietnam, many economic projects have been granted licences to operate without proper consideration for environmental protection, which demonstrates the conflict between economic growth and environmental protection in developing countries. An analysis of viewpoints and current policies on environmental issues and sustainable development, especially concerning industrialization and modernization, should be a foremost issue at present.

The book "*Environmental problems in the process of industrialization and modernization*," based on the results of the National Research on Social Sciences No. KX.02.10 "*Social and*

*environmental issues in the process of industrialization and modernization*," was compiled from 2001 to 2005. The research, mainly edited by Professor Dr. Vu Huy Chuong with the assistance of a group of scientists, is hoped to provide scientific explanations on environmental protection policies and to help resolve the conflicts between economic growth and the environment. This will also contribute to the cause for sustainable socio-economic development while allowing industrialization and modernization in Vietnam to move forward.

The book is divided into three chapters.

*Chapter I* : Environmental protection in the process of industrialization and modernization through sustainable socio-economic development.

*Chapter II* : The reality of environmental protection in the process of industrialization and modernization in Vietnam.

*Chapter III :* Recommended environmental policies and solutions for sustainable socio-economic development.

After clarifying the concepts of environmental protection and sustainable development, in **Chapter I**, the authors focus on giving an in-depth analysis of the organic relationship between the environment and rapid growth and sustainable development. The authors believe that the more developed an economy is the more attention it should pay to the environment. Economic activities should take many factors into account besides economic development such as the environmental impact including natural and social environments. If economic development is destructive to the environment, the economy itself will soon come to an end.

Sustainable development is defined differently depending on different viewpoints and methods. However, the most common definition found in research on sustainable development is the definition offered by the World Committee on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987, "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs," (p. 20). The authors believe that to build a model of sustainable development there are some general principles that need to be followed. These are that human beings should be the focus of all considerations, that despite different

abilities and conditions all countries should utilize environmentally friendly technology, that when making decisions concerning investment policies or policies related to natural resources the value of environment, including the price to restore and improve environmental conditions, should be taken into account, and that sustainable development should include the people in decision making and implementation processes. The authors also emphasize that, "The Earth could not be a pure and safe place for each person without everyone's cooperation," (p. 25).

As for industrialization and modernization in accordance with sustainable socio-economic development, the authors stress that development must not only help us obtain our socio-economic objectives but also facilitate environmentally sustainable development. Economic development is inevitable as industrialization and modernization give way to new technologies. This also impacts the usage and exploitation of natural resources as technology is improved. Apart from scientific inventions that allow society to make full use of the natural resources available to them, there are also inventions that can protect and restore the natural environment for the sake of future generations.

Many countries in the world have been paying attention to the study of environmental issues by following and evaluating the deterioration of environmental factors in order to find solutions to pollution and protect the

natural environment. In both rich and poor countries, the impact of human activities is no longer limited to the physical boundaries of a country, which makes protecting the environment a global issue. Attention to the environment is increasing as the world's economy continues to develop.

According to the book many global forums, including the 1992 Earth Summit on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and the 2002 World Summit on sustainable development in Johannesburg, South Africa in particular, have chosen the environment as a central issue. The essence of the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 is that every country is responsible to make sure that their development activities are sustainable and not harmful to other countries and that all countries take responsibility for their development activities, while developed countries must bear greater responsibility and help developing countries with technology and finance (p. 45). The authors also introduced the experiences of specific countries in solving environmental problems for the sake of sustainable development (p. 50-53).

After discussing some key features of the Party's policies to ensure the sustainability of Vietnam's development, the authors commented that the Vietnamese Party and Government have paid considerable attention to environmental protection in the industrialization and modernization of the economy. This viewpoint is supported by the *Socio-economic*

*development strategies of Vietnam 2002-2010* and the authors state, "Rapid, effective and sustainable development and economic growth along with social advances and equality and environmental protection.' Resolution No 41-NQ-TW on 15th November 2004 of the Party Central Committee (6th Congress) mentions five viewpoints, which are summarize the general positions of the Government concerning environmental protection in the cause of industrialization and modernization (p. 54-56).

Sustainable development is not only a theoretical concept but a highly practical strategy for growth as it helps to direct and supervise economic activities. Accordingly, development activities must constantly be adjusted to ensure the health and happiness of society. Overall, neither economic growth nor environmental protection are the only measures of development. It is human progress that is the central objective of development (p. 67).

**Chapter 2** is an assesement of environmental protection in Vietnam throughout the last ten years of intense industrialization and modernization. Vietnam is now in a process of socio-economic development which requires rapid growth to improve living standards. However, there are some prominent environmental problems associated with this. Environmental problems seem to become more urgent and serious as socio-economic development and industrialization take hold. Vietnam must work to solve environmental problems in accordance

with the demand for increased modernization specifically targeting socio-economic development at this time. The main tasks can be summarized as follows:

*Firstly*, that environmental protection for the sake of sustainable development includes an introduction to institutions and policies for environmental protection, and that environmental protection remains closely related to socio-economic development. That scientific research on environmental protection be conducted, and made available through mass, communication and education. That international cooperation and integration in terms of environmental protection be made a priority, as well as supervision of pollution and ecological protection, and the implementation of official positions on sustainable development.

*Secondly*, there are problems specific to urban and rural environments and associated with future and existing industrial zones that must be addressed in the process of industrialization of the country (p. 86-152).

After analysing the positive and negative sides of environmental issues concerning development, the authors concluded that there are many shortcomings in environmental protection. For instance, environmental impact assessment and environmental economic arguments have only been considered briefly in general socio-economic strategies and even in particular projects. There is strong competition among different economic sectors, which has challenged the country's development, and left

environmental issues mostly ignored. As for policies to protect environment, there are many shortcomings. The worst of them is that Vietnam lacks a specific protocol for protecting the environment. Investment in environmental protection takes a much longer time to be promoted than investment in the economy and technology, which need strictly implemented and supervised laws and a clear designation of the responsibilities of central and local sectors, individual businesses, and technological and environmental organizations. Education on environmental protection and social activities have not obtained the desired results, while investment in treatment technologies to protect the environment has been extremely limited (p. 153-161).

After offering a scientific assessment of environmental protection, **Chapter 3** suggests some policies and solutions to protect the environment and to ensure sustainable socio-economic development. In terms of choice, the authors believe that to reduce unnecessary conflicts in choosing a way to institute policies of sustainable socio-economic development and environmental protection the following principles should be followed. *Firstly*, comparative advantages, especially absolute advantages for local areas should be taken first. *Secondly*, one area should not be considered without the acknowledgement of regional neighbours and at the national level other countries in the region and throughout the world must also be

considered. *Thirdly*, when making plans for socio-economic development and considering solutions for environmental protection, addressing environmental problems that may arise as the result of planned development is essential. *Fourthly*, when there are conflicts between socio-economic development and environmental protection, objectives which are not necessary should be compromised. In the case that targets must be reduced, the following two directions should be followed: a) That objectives from each side be compromised, some economic targets or some environmental protection goals; b) That the prevailing trend is only to reduce some requirements from one or several objectives (p.162-165).

In production there is no fixed rule as to how to use modern technology or improve technology step by step. It is clear that rigid policies can stifle the potential benefits and efficiency of upgrading technology. therefore environmental treatment technologies should be selected carefully and environmental factors should always be considered. According to the authors, the ultimate goal of sustainable development is the security of human beings. If environmental problems cannot be solved simultaneously, those which have most negative impacts on human health should be solved first (p. 167).

Based on an analysis of environmental conditions and the demands for environmental protection, the authors suggest some key ways to protect the environmental in Vietnam. The

suggestions include, preventing negative impacts on the environment as a result of socio-economic development, improving the environment in areas that have been seriously polluted, studying natural resources and planning to protect the biological diversity in an appropriate way, promoting a national lifestyle that is friendly to the environment, and meeting the environmental requirements of international agreements (p. 180-190). The authors also recommended some policies for and solutions to environmental protection for sustainable socio-economic development. According to the authors, the following policies and measures should be taken : 1) Enhance the awareness of everyone in society to protect the environment. Each socio-economic development project must spare a part on environmental protection. Each economic project must have a plan to take care of environmental treatment for damage they may have caused, and each business in operation must have a plan for waste and sewage treatment. 2) Implement economic environmental protection measures that regulate that, *"people who do any harm to the environment be responsible for restoration and compensation,"* and to collect the resulting fees and deposits to ensure environmental protection as compensation for environmental damages should be compulsory. 3) Increase investments in environment in a variety of projects and especially in sewage treatment technology. Increase socialization of environmental protection tasks including solutions to environmental protection that can be

implemented by the people and social organizations. The Government and the agents specializing in environmental protection should direct support to the implementation of such projects. 5) Encourage scientific research on environmental protection. Programs and research projects on environmental problems in Vietnam should be carried out regularly in order to provide scientific arguments to introduce policies and solutions to environmental protection. 6) Enhance the environmental protection governing body. So that regulations on environmental protection and socio-economic development can be perfected. There should be general plans on environmental protection in all

the economic zones throughout the country, and an appropriate plan to protect the environment should be constructed. through this plan, the economic value of the environment should be calculated so that economic and technological projects can be the basis for economic measures towards environmental protection. A communication system should be set up to supervise information regarding environmental pollution.

In conclusion, according to the book environmental protection is a global issue and as such, is the responsibility of every country and region for the betterment of human beings and the earth.