

Sustainable Development Policy on the Example of Foreign Leaders

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ABSTRACT

Today, with the COVID-19 pandemic, the sustainable development agenda has come into focus from a new angle. Issues of inequalities as well as themes of transparency, of effective engagement of different stakeholders to overcome common global challenges, on the other hand, have become increasingly relevant. All countries in the world are affected in varying degrees by global and local environmental problems. They are addressed by supranational institutions such as the UN and its subordinate agencies, national governments, non-profit organizations, and private companies. The paper assesses the current environmental policies of different countries and their willingness to take strategic decisions to prevent negative environmental impact. The main contributors to environmental pollution and their investments in the environment are considered.

Keywords: Sustainable development, environmental policy, sustainability.

1. INTRODUCTION

Almost all world leaders suffer from local and global environmental problems. Supranational institutions, such as the UN and its subordinate agencies, non-profit organisations, national governments and private companies are engaged in solving these problems. In most cases investments into "green" initiatives are irretrievable. But there are projects that not only benefit the environment, but also make good money on them. They are launched in the format of public-private partnerships.

In recent times due to the ongoing changes in the economy on a global scale affects all components of local economies around the world. [1]

Environmental problems exist in all countries, and most of them - such as ocean pollution or climate warming - are global problems. They are destroying ecosystems, weakening public health, and costing countries financially. Governments are implementing multi-billion-dollar programs to minimize or prevent damage to the environment.

UN data shows that key environmental issues of major concern include ozone depletion, climate

warming, accumulation of waste (including toxic waste), extinction of species, deforestation, air and water pollution.

Plans for the implementation of large-scale problems, which are associated with sustainable development and ecology in general, are enshrined in many international documents.

The Declaration on Environment and Development adopted at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) refers to a new course of humanity towards sustainable development.

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development involves improving the quality of life for all of the world's population without increasing the use of our natural resources to an extent that would exceed the Earth's capacity as an ecological system.

In September 2015, at the United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development in New York, 193 UN Member States formally adopted a new global sustainable development agenda, Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development. The agenda includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets.

The participating countries, including Russia, decided to implement 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aimed at increasing the protection of the planet's population and its well-being. Among them are availability and rational use of clean water; creation of basic infrastructure; safety and environmental sustainability of cities; universal access to affordable, sustainable, reliable sources of energy; combating climate change; rational consumption (energy, food, etc.); preservation of terrestrial and marine ecosystems, etc. The Sustainable Development Agenda sets out 17 SDGs and 169 targets.

Over 230 indicators have been developed to measure progress towards their achievement, and each of the 192 signatory countries is required to submit at least two voluntary reports in this area by 2030. Sustainable development seeks to improve the quality of life of people and aims to meet current needs in a way that does not compromise the ability to meet them for future generations. In addition to these - the best known international instruments - there are others that aim to protect and restore the environment in specific areas. For example, in 1987, the Montreal Protocol came into force, banning the production and use of certain substances that deplete the ozone layer.

Global sustainable development issues are attracting increasing attention from the world community and international organizations, and are documented in OECD, IMF, World Bank, WTO and corporate reports.[10]

The main goal of the Paris agreement is to prevent

the temperature on the planet by 2100 from rising by more than 2 degrees over the average of 1850-1900 (it is now 0.75 degrees higher). Solving the problem of global warming is becoming a matter of survival for the world. Climate change threatens entire countries with extinction and is already killing tens of thousands of people. The World Health Organization considers it a major threat to human life. Rising temperatures cause hunger and damage the economy. By 2050, the world may lose a fifth of its GDP. The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change believes that within the next decades the problem will affect all countries: rising temperatures will become critical for agriculture and public health.

The main reason for global warming is human activity, the experts have proved. Temperature rise is caused by greenhouse gas emissions, and last year their level became record-breaking. The deadly threat to the planet has taken on new proportions, and action is required immediately. If the goals of the Paris Agreement are not met, the world is in for a "hell of a temperature increase." [2]

In order to solve the problem of global warming it is necessary to implement national plans and strategies for the reduction of pollutant emissions, introduction of green technologies, transition to a carbon-free economy and others.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The work contains the results identified in the framework of published reports and analytical materials of international organizations, specialized analytical publications, data from foreign and Russian news

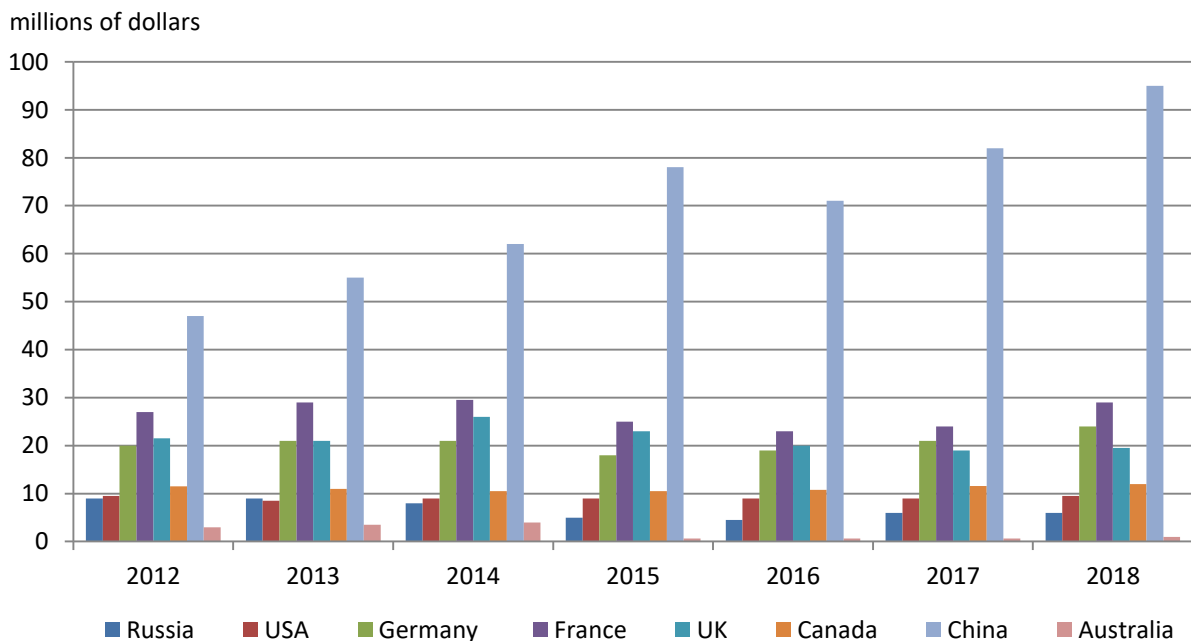


Figure 1 Federal budget expenditures on Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) activities [3]

agencies, as well as interviews and articles of leading analysts and experts. The methods of the performed research contain theoretical and empirical parts, description methods and are supported by graphical methods of data illustration.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

Budgetary expenditures on environmental protection in nominal terms vary from country to country, with their share in GDP usually being around 0.5-1% (see Figure 1)

Most of the expenditure structure is dominated by expenditure on waste management (e.g. 81% in the UK, 25% in Germany in 2018), air and water treatment. Lesser amounts of financial expenses - 4-10% each - are allocated to scientific research in the field of environmental protection and biodiversity conservation. This priority positioning in the environmental policy of the world's dominant countries has been maintained for the last 10 years and is unlikely to change in the near future.

Pollution quotas. The European Commission has introduced the "Fit for 55" climate programme, which envisages the introduction from 2023 of a first phase carbon tax on imports of steel, fertilizers and aluminium, as well as CO₂ emissions trading and the use of renewables and electric vehicles.

The goal of this climate change programme is to reduce CO₂ emissions in the European Union by at least 55% from 1990 levels by 2030 and to zero by 2050. This will require a complete restructuring of the EU economy.

The program calls for the increased use of clean technologies, including renewable energy and electric vehicles, by European companies and homeowners. The proposed measures are designed to reduce emissions in all segments of the European economy, including power generation, the automotive and residential sectors, as well as shipping, aviation and agriculture.

One of the key points of the reform is the introduction of a cross-border carbon regulation (TUR) mechanism, which will levy charges on EU imports based on their carbon footprint. Under the first three-year phase of the TUR, which starts in 2023, charges will be levied on imports of steel, cement, fertilizer and aluminium.

By introducing such a mechanism, the EC seeks to protect its producers, as tougher climate regulation in the EU increases their costs and worsens their competitive position compared to producers from countries with less stringent regulation. In addition, the mechanism should contribute to the reduction of emissions outside the EU.

Another pillar of the EC's climate agenda is the expansion of the current CO₂ trading system (ETS) to include new sectors, which should accelerate the pace of decarbonisation. For example, Brussels wants to introduce quotas for emissions produced by the automotive sector and in the heating of buildings.

The ETS sets a price on emissions and reduces the emission limit in certain sectors every year. The European Commission has proposed to reduce the limits at an even higher rate.

In addition, the EU intends to significantly tighten emissions standards for new cars over the next 15 years. The goals set will effectively mean banning the sale of new cars with diesel and gasoline engines by 2035. Regulations will also be introduced to increase the availability of charging stations and encourage consumers to switch to electric vehicles. On major highways, there should be electric vehicle charging stations every 60 kilometers and hydrogen charging stations every 150 kilometers.

The aviation and shipping sectors will also be penalised for pollution - as part of the reform, a corresponding tax will be proposed for these sectors for the first time. The shipping sector will also fall under the enhanced ETS scheme from 2023.

EU member states also share responsibility for removing CO₂ from the atmosphere, so the regulation on land use, forestry and agriculture sets a common EU target of removing the equivalent of 310 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions by 2030 by natural sinks.

«Electricity generation and use accounts for 75% of EU emissions, so accelerating the transition to a greener energy system is crucial. The Renewable Energy Regulation sets a higher target of producing 40% of our energy from renewables by 2030».

Plastic Recycling. Canada has been increasingly active in the fight against plastic pollution in recent years. The country produces about 3 million tons of plastic waste per year, of which only 9% is recycled. In 2018, the Canada-wide Strategy on Zero Plastic Waste was approved. The basic principle is to move towards a closed-loop economy where plastic is in use for as long as possible, significantly reducing the burden on the environment. The goal is to recover 100% of plastic waste by 2040. Measures to reduce plastic waste are not only for the public, but also for businesses and all government agencies and authorities in the country. In addition, Canada has already invested \$100 million to help developing countries improve waste management and thereby reduce the amount of plastic that ends up in the world's oceans.

Ocean Protection. The Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan, which aims to protect and conserve the Great Barrier Reef, a UNESCO World Heritage Site,

stands out among specialized environmental plans and programmes. It has been jointly implemented by the Australian Government and the State of Queensland since 2015. The budgeted investment for 2015-2025 is more than A\$2 billion (about \$1.5 billion). (about \$1.5 billion). Funds are used to improve water quality, restore coral reef habitat, research and encourage businesses to use greener technologies in industry and fisheries, among other things. The document is updated every five years: the revision process began in August and should be completed by the end of 2020.

Ecology and the crisis. To date, the crisis has brought changes to environmental policy as well. The global economic recovery process will inevitably be linked to an increase in pressures on the environment. As an example, in the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis the CO2 emissions have rapidly returned to their previous level amid growing hydrocarbon production. Measures to overcome the crisis triggered by the pandemic must therefore include the achievement of environmental sustainability in the long term.

A Bloomberg estimate indicates that as of early June 2020, the governments of the world's 50 largest economies have already allocated about \$12 trillion to combat the effects of the crisis, of which only \$18 billion, or 0.2%, is related to developing renewable energy and addressing climate issues. [9]

Discussion of results. Vivid Economics analysts who assessed the stimulating measures of the 17 leading countries of the world and the European Union on the whole, concluded in July 2021 that about \$3.5 trillion was spent to support the spheres that have direct impact on the environment. And only three countries out of 17 - France, Great Britain and Germany - as well as the European Union, described the anti-crisis measures as having a positive impact on the environment. There is considerable variation among global countries in the extent to which sustainable development goals are included in national strategies: from their virtual absence to their complete localization. In terms of the impact of these goals on environmental policy, according to the UN Economic Commission for Europe, a positive trend can be observed, for example, in increasing the area of forests, wastewater treatment and increasing energy-efficient economy. At the same time, the issues of increasing CO2 emissions, atmospheric pollution, and preserving biodiversity in marine ecosystems remain relevant. Countries in the Asia-Pacific region are finding it difficult to make the transition to renewable energy sources: purifying air and water and reducing waste in large cities. Consequently, the sustainable development goals have directed the attention of national Governments to the key environmental issues of the day, but they have not had a radical impact on the environmental policies of the countries. The most progress has been seen in achieving the 'social' Sustainable Development Goals.

Table 1. Effects of some planned and launched megaprojects [4]

Country	Sector	Description of measures to reduce CO2 emissions	Financing volume, bln USD
Germany	Energy	Financing of activities of the National Hydrogen Strategy aimed at the transition from fossil to renewable energy sources	8,27
	Transport	Equity contribution to Deutsche Bahn, the country's main railway operator, for modernisation, expansion and electrification of the German railway network	5,91
		Development of infrastructure for electric vehicles: charging stations for electric vehicles are planned to be installed at all petrol stations in every region of the country	2,95
France	Transport	Government support for Air France, which is committed to terminating domestic flights between French cities connected by rail (on routes where travel time by rail is less than 2.5 hours)	8,27
		Provision of subsidies for the purchase of hybrid and electric vehicles to replace vehicles with gasoline or diesel engines (the amount of the subsidy depends on the cost of the vehicle purchased)	1,35
UK	Energy	Funding for energy efficiency improvements in buildings. The Green Homes Grant Scheme (£2 billion, or about \$2.6 billion) will provide homeowners with vouchers worth up to £5,000 (up to £10,000 for the poorest) to implement energy efficient technologies	3,78
	Transport	Development of a network of bicycle lanes, widening of sidewalks and bus corridors	2,5
South Korea	Energy	Support the implementation of RES, digitalization of the energy sector, including the development of an intelligent network for the management of residential buildings, creation of a database on energy consumption diagnostics for old buildings, etc.	0,19
Finland	Biodiversity conservation, ecotourism	Financing of measures for preservation of forests, aquatic ecosystems, development of ecotourism	0,08

Sustainable development of ecology implies the organization of life activities, in which emissions of pollutants should not be higher than the assimilative capacity of ecosystems. The preservation of biodiversity and quality of environmental components (air, water, soil, etc.) at the level that ensures the preservation of human health and life is especially important in the framework of environmentally sustainable development. [8].

4. CONCLUSION

Sustainable development is increasingly at the top of the global policy agenda, and its achievement requires joint efforts of economic actors around the world - states, financial institutions and businesses. Infrastructure plays an important role in achieving SD and is a prerequisite for sustainable economic development. Its sustainability and adaptability are indispensable factors in the 21st century. Achieving sustainable economic development on a global scale will require prudent use of resources, technology, economic incentives and strategic policy planning at local and national levels. [5]

Economically developed countries are primarily responsible for the pollution of the natural environment. They are home to less than 20% of the world's population. But in order to maintain a high level of well-being of their citizens, these states consume 70% of all energy produced in the world, consume about 75% of all metals, 85% of wood. Developed countries account for over 65% of global pollution, including 2/3 of global carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere over the past two decades[6].

Countries with a "dirty" energy balance or heavily dependent on fossil energy resources will try not to make real commitments or set targets so that they were easy to achieve, writes Bloomberg.

China's new goals differ little from those of the Paris Agreement. The country will "make every effort" to reach peak emissions by 2030 and net neutrality by 2060, reduce the energy intensity of GDP by more than 65%, and increase the share of non-fossil energy sources to 25% instead of 20%. "This can only be called a disappointment. The world expected more from China, and in turn it has missed the chance to lead the environmental agenda," says Chatham House sustainability expert Bernice Lee. However, China has pledged to strictly limit coal consumption growth as early as FY14 (2021-2025), start withdrawing coal-fired thermal power plants in FY15 and not build them overseas. Independent estimates show that, so far, China's emission reduction policy is consistent with a warming of 3 degrees.

India, the world's third largest emitter after China and the US, has refused to accept zero emissions commitments at all. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is going to the summit - he is expected to urge developed

countries to finance the energy transition, remind the global community that India's per capita emissions are far below the global average and that it is intensively developing alternative energy. India remains the only one in the world's top 10 economies that has not surrendered updated NDCs to the UN at all.

Russia (fourth in emissions) and Saudi Arabia, which together produce a quarter of the world's oil, have long ignored the fight against climate change, often questioning its scientific basis - but now both countries have turned to the climate agenda and will push for solutions that involve maximizing demand for fossil energy resources, Bloomberg forecasts. Ideologically, the essence of their proposals would be that oil, gas and coal could be consumed in one place and sequester greenhouse gases in another. President Putin has repeatedly talked about the enormous absorption potential of Russian forests. Scientists, however, have pointed to the flaws of counting in the form of bloated "managed forests" and underestimating emissions from forest fires.

The world's largest coal exporter, Australia, did set a carbon-neutral target for 2050, but did not make increased commitments for 2030 (which was almost required of it). However, the country indicates that it is likely to exceed the Paris commitments anyway.

Brazil, like India, will hammer out international funding to at least begin to actually reduce emissions and curb deforestation in the Amazon.

Iran, the world's eighth-largest emitter, remains outside even the Paris Agreement. The country's authorities have promised to consider environmental targets if sanctions are lifted. [7]

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