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The Policy of Sustainable Development in the Face of Contemporary Social Threats – Selected Aspects

Abstract

Civilizational threats considered from ecological, economic and social aspects are the rudimentary reference point for theoretical studies on sustainable development. Manifold concepts and interpretations of the risk issue were converted into proposals for solutions that are primarily reflected in strategic documents on sustainable development and programs related to security. Mutual interactions, or even interpenetration of some threats on other may affect the efficiency of implementing preventive and corrective programs. Consequently, scientists point to the need of adopting more systemic solutions whose implementation requires a specific policy and properly selected tools of its realization. The key initiator and promoter of sustainable development is the United Nations. The objectives and directions of activities indicated by that organization and including prevention of such threats as poverty, hunger and environmental degradation, were proposed in the United Nations Millennium Declaration. The 15 years of implementing the document's resolutions concluded in the preparation of a report summarizing the project, i.e. The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015.

The present paper outlines the issue of threats in the context of international striving for security and reduction of global, primarily social, problems. It provides an evaluation of the ways in which the UN policy is conducted as well as practical realization of this policy, at the example of the Millennium Declaration. The conducted analysis allowed to define the future prospects for the implementation of this policy, especially with respect to preventing social threats.

Streszczenie

Zagrożenia cywilizacyjne rozpatrywane w wymiarze ekologicznym, ekonomicznym i społecznym stanowią rudymentarny punkt odniesienia dla teoretycznych opracowań idei zrównoważonego rozwoju. Wiele ujęć i interpretacji problemu zagrożeń przełożyło się na propozycje rozwiązań, które odzwierciedlają się przede wszystkim w dokumentach strategicznych zrównoważonego rozwoju i programach z zakresu bezpieczeństwa. Oddziaływanie na siebie czy wręcz przenikanie jednych zagrożeń na drugie sprawia, że wdrażanie programów prewencyjnych i korektywnych nie zawsze jest efektywne. W związku z tym wskazuje się na rozwiązania bardziej systemowe, których zastosowanie wymaga określonej polityki i właściwie dobranych narzędzi jej realizacji. Kluczowym inicjatorem i propagatorem polityki zrównoważonego rozwoju jest Organizacja Narodów Zjednoczonych. Wyznaczone przez ONZ cele i kierunki działań obejmujące przeciwdziałanie takim zagrożeniom, jak np.: nędza i głód czy degradacja środowiska naturalnego, zostały zaproponowane w Deklaracji Milenijnej Narodów Zjednoczonych. Po 15-letniej realizacji dokumentu został opracowany raport podsumowujący przedsięwzięcie (The Millennium Development Goals Report, 2015).

W artykule zaprezentowane zostało zagadnienie zagrożeń w kontekście międzynarodowych dążeń do bezpieczeństwa i redukcji globalnych problemów, przede wszystkim społecznych. Ocenie poddano sposoby prowadzenia i praktycznej realizacji polityki ONZ, na przykładzie Deklaracji Milenijnej. Dokonana analiza pozwoliła następnie na określenie dalszych perspektyw wdrażania tej polityki, zwłaszcza w wymiarze przeciwdziałania zagrożeniom społecznym.

Keywords: *sustainable development, policy of sustainable development, contemporary social threats, millenium development goals*

Słowa kluczowe: *zrównoważony rozwój, polityka zrównoważonego rozwoju, współczesne zagrożenia społeczne, milenijne cele rozwoju*

Introduction

Contemporary threats implicated by civilizational development which has slipped out of control, various forms of discrimination and exclusion as well as abuse of human rights, violence, moral indifference or degradation of natural environment require ongoing registration and, above all, reaction on the part of the ruling parties with simultaneous well-organized international cooperation. In the knowledge of these problems, UNESCO explicitly emphasized that: "Responsibility of the political factor is essential" (Mayor, 2001, p. 31) for anticipating the future and implementation of adopted

visions and action plans. Programs aimed at protecting man against broadly understood threats, including social threats, were recurrently worked upon by representatives of countries from all over the world who met at international summits. These events were crowned by global agreements, sometimes in the form of contracts. All those undertakings were inspired by the idea of sustainable development, not infrequently referred to as utopian and expressing a load of wishful thinking, such as: protection of life and health, elimination of hunger and poverty, providing education and halting environmental degradation. It is, therefore, worthwhile to ask the question whether implementation of sustainable development policy in the face of contemporary threats constitutes a confirmation of the utopian character of that idea, or, contrarily is actually realized?

The concepts of threat and security in the idea of sustainable development

The origin of the concept of sustainable development is closely linked with the issue of broadly understood threats. Any anxieties and problems signalized in the frames of, among others, the Club of Rome or U Thant reports, highlighted specific threats to the social and natural environment, including those endangering future generations. Although, the idea of sustainable development originated principally from ecological issues and was functionally associated with conservation, it nevertheless always revolved around man (the subject of sustainable development) who has the right to lead a healthy and creative life in harmony with nature. Despite the existing variances in manifold approaches and interpretations of this idea, sustainable development can surely be considered as having a socio-philosophical character and a strong political coloring and, what is more, it emphasizes the need to replace the existing values with new ones which would allow to take into account various socio-economic needs and ensure fair and efficient use of natural resources with simultaneous respect for the environment (Skowroński, 2010, p. 114–115).

The hitherto adopted models of socio-economic development or of public space functioning, have induced numerous threats. The 21st century is a period particularly characterized by an increase of threats of anthropogenic nature which often take on a global form. This was clearly highlighted by

Z. Hull who wrote: "We are living nowadays in specific times, in a breakthrough period marked by emergence of such civilizational barriers and threats which – if they are not overcome – can lead to social disintegration and political chaos on a global scale, and even to self-destruction of mankind" (Hull, 2011, p. 38). Those threats reinforce the sense of fear and instability in economic, social and political as well as existential dimension.

Identification and analysis of threats, which provides some knowledge about them, enables development of preventive or corrective actions. Numerous states have been involved for years in the implementation of those actions. A set of specific threats led to defining three basic areas of sustainable development, i.e. economic, social and environmental, which are mutually compatible with them in terms of content and range. Economic threats can most generally be described as relating to the issue of production and distribution of particular goods within a country and to rational management of capital leading to its accumulation and increase of general wealth. Phenomena generating economy-related threats include, among others, financial instability, economic crime, widening disparity between the rich North and the poor South, unemployment, etc. Social threats can be defined as manifold factors threatening human existence, health, national identity, security of the social sphere or public safety. This category comprises such threats as, for example, violation of human rights, a crisis of values, all kinds of discrimination of minorities and prejudice towards given religions or cultures, social pathologies, excessive migration and demographic problems. Today, the catalog of that type of threats comprises also the phenomenon of social polarization, that is, huge disparities related to income and property ultimately leading to marginalization of a large number of people and disruption of social ties (Sadowski, Kozłowski, 2010, p. 24). Environmental hazards should, in turn, be considered in the context of the consequences for the life and health of living beings arising from changes that occur or may occur in the environment. For example, they can consist in natural and industrial disasters, pollution of any kind of environmental resources, inadequate waste management, overexploitation of natural resources, etc. Those types of threats are often analyzed in relation to the ecological crisis understood as excessive human interference

in nature which impairs nature's ability to adapt to new conditions. In this way, the generated threats affect not only individual ecosystems, but also the holistically understood biosphere. Emergence of the ecological crisis gave rise to a global debate on possible means of preventing further destructive changes. This issue was also brought up at international summits on sustainable development, since the arising threats, regardless of their type, finally affect man himself, penetrating the socio-economic, as well as personal sphere of his life. Moreover, the anthropological dimension of the crisis invokes the principles of sustainable development – accountability, justice, common good or moderation, which highlights the need for undertaking corrective actions and, additionally, for undertaking efforts to ensure decent living conditions for present and future generations.

The issues of sustainable development and broadly understood threats, real and potential, are directly linked with the category of security especially, in the conditions of changing social, economic and cultural spheres. Security and the sense of security are nowadays included among the most important values. The term "security" is derived from the Latin word *securitas* and, today, is bears a variety of meanings. Security is, above all, identified with the sense of confidence, safety, lack of threats (Web-01). Today, the word is often understood in a wider sense which emphasizes not only its general meaning, but also the one which takes into account the specific nature of international relations, or the so-called holistic approach. Therefore, security begins to mean more than a sense of freedom from threats and fear, since it is additionally referred to as lack of political or economic pressure, conditions allowing one's self-development, possibility to maintain or improve the quality of life or an ability to survive in the face of existential threats. Security is, therefore, not only a need or a value, but also a dynamic social process. Consequently, we can observe a shift in the approach towards the concept of security, i.e. instead of being perceived as a static phenomenon, it begins to be understood as a dynamic one (Pietras, 2000, p. 14–17). Without a doubt, this process was significantly influenced by events, scientific studies or reports which directed general attention to global threats, to the ecological crisis (e.g. *The Limits to Growth*, or Brundtland's Report) and thus imposed a future-oriented approach and implementation of defined preventive and organizational

actions. It is the size and nature of the changes that took place in Europe in the second half of the twentieth century, which influenced the scope and the formula of "security". In result of the developing interdependence of states, an increasing role of international institutions and non-governmental organizations as well as the evolution of threats, the paradigm of security changed. Transformations taking place in the world require international co-operation also in the processes of ensuring security. Today, however, security is understood as a dynamic phenomenon taking into account the long-term perspective (Pietraś, 2000, p. 36–37).

Development of the category of security was thus related to a certain degree with the reflection on global environmental threats. In this sense, the concept of security or ecological security is closely connected with the idea and individual concepts of sustainable development. The discourse related to the issue of ecological or, in a wider sense, environmental security, gained special significance with the intensification of threats, primarily ecological ones, which increasingly permeated the social, political, economic and cultural sphere. At that time also, the consequences of improper relationships between man and the natural environment began to be taken into account. The end of the 60s can, therefore, be considered as a turning point in the perception of environmental problems, which resulted in particular in taking measures aimed at eliminating those changes in the environment which immediately affected man. In other words, measures were taken to minimize the threats to human health and life potentially posed by the environment (Zięba, 1998, p. 44). The issue of environmental security developed in this context, along with the growing importance of sustainable development, was expanded to include economic, social and political aspects. Therefore, environmental security is understood in a wider sense than merely protection of social systems through the care for the environment and is thus inscribed in activities conducive to strengthening the external national or transnational security. Reinforcing the significance of the anthropogenic profile of threats and putting emphasis on international cooperation in the development of environmental laws as well as in changing social behaviors can be considered as compatible activities which support the majority of sustainable development strategies.

Social threats in sustainable development policy

The policy of sustainable development, which is carried out in connection with the specified threats to socio-natural environment is formulated with the help of strategic and legal documents drawn up especially for this purpose. The policy is, moreover, realized through specific projects, declarations and programs of both local and global range. The policy of sustainable development should be perceived as a concept going beyond the tasks undertaken in the context of conservation policy. The key role in the creation and promotion of sustainable development is attributed to the United Nations. There is even a belief that "(…) the only real significant policy of implementing sustainable development is inspired by the United Nations" (Papuziński, 2011, p. 110).

The organization took a stand in relation to a number of global issues, including social ones, stressing the need for reorganizing social life, shaping attitudes, changing certain habits and introducing a new order. It is worth highlighting the importance of the social dimension of sustainable development which is conceived of as:

- A model of enduring that will ensure a decent life for all inhabitants of the globe, and eliminate self-destruction of mankind,
- Development aimed at self-improvement of individuals instead of civilizational development for its own sake,
- Development of human culture,
- Intergenerational justice,
- Self-sufficiency of communities,
- Development ensuring satisfaction of the higher (spiritual) human needs,
- Social changes aimed at creating conditions conducive to physical and mental health of man,
- Strengthening the natural process of evolution as a result of its intellectualization,
- Maintaining the global community in a relative, dynamic equilibrium,
- Improving health state and nutrition level,
- Increasing the level of education,
- National self-sufficiency in terms of food, water, energy,

- Introducing non-antagonistic relations between different systems and social groups,
- Fight against hunger and poverty (Pawłowski, 2008, p. 322–328).

The above-listed aims express the need for change and permanent improvement of the living conditions of communities around the globe. These attempts were recorded in key international documents which regulate the issue of sustainable development and specify the major challenges, including social ones. Particular attention was paid to the need of establishing new and equitable global partnership, based on proper cooperation at all levels, i.e. that of the states, nations and social groups. Such cooperation should take into account the needs of individual countries, especially those from the poorest areas and consist in successive work on eradication of poverty and destitution. "Poverty defies human dignity and constitutes a form of exclusion (…). Development strategies not aimed principally at elimination of poverty are senseless. Fighting poverty requires urgent and bold political decisions (…)" (Mayor, 2001, p. 67). In fact, threats related to destitution and poverty constitute the essential part of the documents from the area of sustainable development. It suffices to mention here the Earth Charter, in which the fight against poverty was recognized as an ethical, social and environmental duty. Efforts should be made to improve the social situation of people and ensure the right to drinking water, clean air, safe food, uncontaminated soil or adequate sanitation. The document mentions the term "sustainable livelihoods" which means the need to strive for equitable distribution of goods within a nation and between nations, as well as providing help in the fight against debt (The Earth Charter, 2000). According to R. Fűcks: "World justice can only be satisfied by redistribution of what is available: economic growth in the South requires its contraction in the North" (Fűcks, 2016, p. 88). The threats and problems mentioned above were also reflected in the provisions of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which clearly imply a commitment to "(…) freeing of the entire human race from want" and determination to "(…) deal comprehensively and effectively with the debt problems of low- and middle-income developing countries, through various national and international measures designed to make their debt sustainable in the long term" (United Nations Millennium Declaration, 2000).

The social dimension of sustainable development comprises, moreover, the question of threats related to the quality of life which is deteriorating in result of over-consumption, unsustainable production and urban problems. Most of the threats which affect the quality of life have already been identified which allows to take actions aimed at minimizing those threats and their consequences. For the most part, however, the presented ideas can be brought down to wishful thinking and they address the issue of life quality by means of mere catchphrases. There are no reliable analyzes of the category of life quality or detailed studies specifying, for example, the "addressee of the quality of life" as M. Leźnicki pointed out. Even addressees who are in a similar life situation and live in similar conditions can differ in their perception of the quality of their own lives, adopt different measures to strive for improving their situation and express different needs. It is extremely difficult to define the concept of life quality in an objective way even in the case of specific groups, potentially the same addressees, because of their often extreme expectations (Leźnicki, 2011, p. 201). The quality of life belongs to the category, which can be associated with most of the problems dealt with in the context of discourse on the postulates of sustainable development. Threats that arise due to lack of access to education and medical services, i.e. a high rate of mortality, the spread of infectious diseases and unequal access to education, drastically reduce the degree of one's sense of life quality. In the face of such difficult existential conditions, which occur mainly in the Third World countries, it is hard to assume that environmental programs function properly or to think about future generations. There is, therefore, no doubt that the fight with civilizational threats, including social threats requires adopting a systemic approach. Threats are interrelated – the risk of poverty is related to the ecological crisis, lack of education with the development of HIV / ADIS, etc. For example, poor people who occupy an ecologically vulnerable area, will continue its exploitation as a result of continuous demographic growth. Interpenetration of threats should also be taken into account when drawing up documents related to implementation of the sustainable development policy. It is necessary to predict the consequences of adopting long-term strategies to prevent reducing chances for its execution, e.g. in a situation

in which "(…) poor people are forced to fight for survival, while vast geographical areas are subjected to unbridled industrial exploitation, which does not bring any benefits to the local population" (Mayor, 2001, p. 71).

Taking into account the complex character of problems faced by, among others, the United Nations, it seems expedient to examine selected projects to assess their effectiveness and prospects for implementing further practical solutions in accordance with the demands of sustainable development. According to the authors, it may prove important to assess the degree of fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals with respect to social threats, and refer them to future strategies.

The Millennium Development Goals and their implementation

As mentioned above, progressive degradation of the environment, limited character of the biosphere and its resources, growth of population, or disparities in access to goods, have a global character and are interrelated on multiple levels. The United Nation's Millennium Declaration constitutes a response to the rising number of contemporary social threats in the twenty-first century. This resolution was adopted at the 55th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations on 6–8 September 2000 at the Millennium Summit, which referred to the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The Millennium Summit was preceded by a publication, signed by UN Secretary General Kofi A. Annan and entitled *We the Peoples. The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century*, known under the abbreviated name of the Millennium Report (Papuziński, 2008, p. 55).

The Millennium Declaration put emphasis on building a more peaceful, prosperous and just world. Its creation is to take place on the basis of such values as freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for the environment, shared responsibility. The document revolves around the process of globalization and the associated challenges. The main challenges of the early twenty-first century include providing conditions in which globalization would be beneficial for all the inhabitants of Earth. That, as Koffi Annan contends, could be possible thanks to the so-called inclusive globalization, which assumes a more equitable distribution of wealth. It should also be noted that the values set out in the Millennium Declaration constitute a strong reference

to the values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and apply to everyone regardless of their sex, color, language, religion, property, social origin, nationality, without distinction of any kind.

The Millennium Declaration comprises, among others, the Millennium Project, which is aimed at the development of global political solutions that would help to reduce disparities between the inhabitants of the poor South and the wealthy North. The Millennium Project, which includes the Millennium Development Goals, is focused on such issues as war and peace, health, poverty, education. Millions of people live below the minimum level to live in human dignity. They are deprived of food, clothing, shelter, or education. It is the responsibility of the developed countries to help the developing countries and those in the period of transition. The eight Millennium Development Goals are to:

1) "Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
2) Achieve universal primary education.
3) Promote gender equality and empower women.
4) Reduce child mortality.
5) Improve maternal health.
6) Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.
7) Ensure environmental sustainability.
8) Develop a Global Partnership for Development" (The Millenium Development Goals).

The signatories of the Millennium Development Goals committed themselves to implement the above provisions by 2015. The document assumed to:

- Reduce by half the proportion of people whose income is less than $ 1.25/day,
- Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger,
- Ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling,
- Eliminate gender unequal access to primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015,
- Reduce by two thirds the mortality rate among children under the age of 5,
- Reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio,

- Halt the spread of HIV / AIDS and reduce the number of new infections,
- Halt the spread of malaria and other major diseases and reducing the number of new infections,
- Taking into account the principles of sustainable development in national strategies and programs and implementation of methods halting depletion of natural resources,
- Reduce by half the proportion of people without permanent access to safe drinking water,
- Elaborate a trading and financial system available to all, based on clear rules, predictable and not discriminatory to anybody, taking into account in particular the needs of the least developed countries (Millennium Development Goals).

It should be emphasized that human activities lead to social progress, create social welfare, contribute to the development of science and technology. With the gained knowledge a person is able to realize the goal of protecting and improving the life of present and future generations. This intention can be achieved with the involvement of all countries. The assumptions made in the Millennium Development Goals were ambitious and progress was recorded in all areas, however, not all goals were fully realized in the course of fifteen years.

In 1990, almost half of the population (47%) lived on less than USD 1.25 a day. In 2015, this ratio decreased to 14%.

Table 1.
The number of people all over the world living in extreme poverty

Year	Number of people [mln]
1990	1,926
1999	1,751
2015	836

Source: The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015, p. 6

The largest decrease in the number of people living in extreme poverty took place after 2000. The proportion of undernourished people in developing

countries fell almost by half (1990–1992 – 23.3%; 2014 to 2016 – 12.9%). The population of the so-called working middle-class living on more than USD 4 a day tripled in the years 1991–2015.

Considerable progress was reported in universal access to primary education.

Table 2.
The number of children all over the world not attending school at the primary level

Year	Number of children [mln]	Number of children [%]
2000	100	17
2015	57	9

Source: The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015, p. 6

The greatest success was recorded in sub-Saharan Africa, but it is still a region where the goal has not been fully achieved. The risk of not completing school among children from the poorest homes is four times higher than among children from the richest families.

Table 3.
The net enrollment rate (primary school) in sub-Saharan Africa

Year	Ratio [%]
1990	52
2000	60
2015	80

Source: The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015, p. 6

It was also possible to eliminate gender disparity at all levels of education in developing countries. In 1990 in South Asia, for every 100 boys attending primary school there were 74 girls, now for every 100 boys there are 103 girls. In the last 20 years an increase was noted in parliamentary representation of women in 90% of countries. It should be remembered, however, that women still constitute only one fifth of parliament representatives worldwide.

As far as mortality rate is concerned, it was reduced by more than half. Approximately, 84% of children all over the world received at least one dose of measles vaccine in 2013. There was an 11% increase compared to 2000. Vaccines against measles saved the lives of nearly 15.6 million children in the years 2000–2013.

Table 4.
Under-five mortality rate all over the world

Year	Child mortality [mln]	Child mortality per 1000 births
1990	12,7	90
2015	6	43

Source: *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015, p. 7*

In the region of sub-Saharan Africa the mortality rate of children under five years of age decreased five times faster in the years 2005–2013 than in 1990–1995.

Similarly, maternal health care was improved. Since 1990, the maternal mortality rate has fallen by 45% all over the world, the greatest reduction was recorded after 2000.

Table 5.
The number of maternal deaths during childbirth in the world [per 100 thousand live births]

Year	Mortality rate
1990	380
2000	330
2015	210

Source: *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015, p. 8*

Over 71% of births in 2014 were assisted by skilled health professionals. Thus, there was an increase of 12% compared to 1990. In North Africa, the percentage of women who received min. four visits during pregnancy increased from 50% (in 1990) to 89% (in 2014).

A significant progress was also recorded with regard to reducing the

spread of infectious diseases. The number of HIV infections between 2000 and 2013 fell by 40% from 3.5 million to 2.1 million. In the period of eleven years, the number of people infected with HIV who received antiretroviral treatment (ART) increased seventeen times. This prevented the death of 7.6 million people between 1995 and 2013.

Table 6.
The number of people who received anti-retroviral treatment (ART)

Year	Number of people [mln]
2003	0.8
2014	13.6

Source: The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015, p. 8

More than 6.2 million children under five years of age, who contracted malaria were saved from death in the years 2000–2015. Thanks to prevention, diagnosis and effective treatment of tuberculosis it was possible to save 37 million people. Mortality due to tuberculosis incidents fell by 45%, and its prevalence by 41% in the years 1990–2013.

In 2015, 91% of the world population had access to drinking water sources, in 1990 it was 76%. The proportion of people living in slums fell from 39.4% (in 2000) to less than 29.7% (in 2014).

The efforts of developed countries were also directed at providing development aid for underdeveloped countries. In the years 2000–2014 the funds allocated for this purpose increased by 66%, reaching USD 135.2 billion (in 2000 it was USD 81 billion). In 2014, 79% of imported products from developing countries to developed countries was not duty-free (in 2000 – 65%). The number of mobile subscribers increased from 738 million (in 2000) to 7 billion (in 2015). Access to the Internet has increased from 6% (in 2000) to 43% (in 2015).

It should be noted that, despite great success in fulfilling the commitments contained in the Millennium Development Goals, there are still areas that need immediate and effective action. 800 million people in the world continue to live in extreme poverty (The Sustainable Development Goals Report, 2015, p. 4). The disproportions between the inhabitants of the rich and poor regions

are huge. There are also inequalities between the residents of rural and urban areas. Discrimination against women at work and in public life also remains a big problem. Women are more often affected by poverty than men. Without a doubt, a great success was noted in reducing mortality in children under the age of five, mainly through better access to medical care, but still 16 thousand children die every day from causes that can be prevented.

Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals as a chance to reduce contemporary social threats

Highly developed countries have taken measures aimed at, among others, eliminating social inequality, reducing poverty and hunger, or improving access to education. It should be noted, however, that those actions had to be continued and significantly expanded. "The successes of the MDG agenda prove that global action works. It is the only path to ensure that the new development agenda leaves no one behind" (The Millennium Development Goals Report, 2015, p. 11).

On 25–27 September 2015, at the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly in New York the Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030 was adopted. It comprised 17 Goals for Sustainable Development which should be implemented by 2030 (www.unesco.pl/662, access 4.08.2016). The goals The goals are to:

1. "End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries.
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development" (The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, p. 14).

What draws special attention in the above-mentioned purposes is the word "all". No man can be excluded, omitted. Activities planned for the years 2015–2030 assume complete elimination of hunger and poverty in the world, providing every person with conditions enabling them to realize their potential in dignity, equality and in healthy environment. All people should enjoy a prosperous and satisfying life. Social, economic and technological progress must take place in compliance with the environment. The interrelations that occur between social inequality, poverty and environmental degradation constitute an integral part of the Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030. The 17 Goals for Sustainable Development and the 91 tasks are focused on economic and social development as well as environmental protection. "(…) they are goals for all peoples. They illustrate the scale and universality of human ambitions expressed in the new Agenda" (Ban Ki-moon, www.unic.un.org.pl access, 8.04.2016).

Actions should seek to ensure that all people around the world, including the inhabitants of the most poor regions can benefit from a basic standard of

living and social assistance. It should be noted that, although the percentage of people living in extreme poverty decreased significantly, poverty still remains widespread in sub-Saharan Africa, where 40% of the population in 2012 lived on less than USD 1.9 a day. More than half the population of the region still does not have access to safe food. Malnutrition results in inhibition of the development of children, 1/4 of children under five years of age (158.6 million) is too short. 663 million people do not have access to "safe" water. 2.4 billion people remain without improved sanitation. It should be noted that these threats include the inhabitants of the least developed regions. Particularly noteworthy is the area of sub-Saharan Africa, where the residents do not only suffer from lack of food and access to water, but are at the highest risk of becoming ill with malaria. 89% of cases in 2015 occurred precisely in this area. Another problem is the lack of access to education. 59 million children do not attend school at the primary level. 757 million adults cannot read or write, 2/3 of that number are women (The Sustainable Development Goals Report, 2015, p. 3–6).

Implementation of the provisions of the Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals contained in it is only possible with the help of scientific achievements. The conclusions of the Global Sustainable Development Report 2016 highlight the need to build a bridge between science and politics. The report points to the necessity of undertaking new research that will determine what action should be taken to enable every person to benefit from the achievements of development. It is also necessary to determine who has been neglected so far and how to prevent it. The concept of inclusiveness must become an integral part of institutional programs and be included in research and development processes.

In the course of implementing the ambitious provisions of the Sustainable Development Goals, which undoubtedly represent a real opportunity to reduce contemporary social threats, it is necessary to develop integrated national strategies and engage non-governmental, business, academic organizations as well as local authorities. It should be noted that such activities have already been initiated. For example, in Poland a draft of the Strategy for Responsible Development was prepared by the Ministry of Development. Currently, public consultation is carried out and the document is to be adopted by the

Government in October 2016. The principle of sustainable development in economic, social, environmental and territorial aspect, plays a pivotal role in the document and that the benefits resulting from the implementation of the strategy will embrace all citizens (www.mr.gov.pl access, 4.08.2016).

Summary

The policy of sustainable development, so strongly emphasized in UN documents, undoubtedly constitutes a great chance to reduce the prevalence of social threats. The political factor seems to be crucial for the implementation of corrective programs or specific visions of the world's future. The modern policy of sustainable development cannot be based solely on protecting and restoring the environment, but on actual improvement of conditions and quality of life, particularly with regard to people living in conditions of extreme poverty and in marginalized communities. Moreover, protection of fundamental, universal values, such as health, freedom, equality, justice, solidarity, education, tolerance, peace on the local and global scale, will certainly translate into implementation of the principles defined in conservation projects. Anticipation of threats and ways of responding to them devised by the United Nations, reinforced by issued documents allow for positive evaluation of the implementation of priorities and objectives set out, among others, in the Millennium Declaration. However, involvement on part of the United Nations will not suffice without international cooperation and fulfillment of global commitments, since there are countries which are not able to take independent actions. The group of such countries can include states with the lowest Human Development Index (HDI). The components of this index comprise such data as average life expectancy, illiteracy, level of education and standard of living on the global scale. The ten least developed countries comprise: Niger, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Sierra Leone, Eritrea, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mozambique, Burundi, Liberia. However, it must be taken into account that the group of underdeveloped countries consists of 43 states (The Human Development Report, 2015, p. 245).

The UN policy aimed at reducing the current threats and successive pursuit of broadly understood security, confirms that it is possible to carry out effective implementation of the theoretical principles of sustainable

development into the realm of praxis. The degree of achieving each of the Millennium Development Goals seems to be satisfactory, which can be a motivating factor for undertaking equally effective measures, e.g. in the framework of implementing Agenda Post-2015. The goals listed in the Sustainable Development Goals document are not a response to new threats, but continuation of the activities to the already diagnosed problems. The form in which the goals were expressed is worth noting. It was reinforced by the words "end" or "all". We do not seek, therefore, to reduce the number of poor people, but to eliminate the number of people – all people – living in conditions of extreme poverty. Moreover, adjustments were made to our ways of thinking, since the need to use scientific achievements was clearly emphasized. Difficulties in assessing the scale of the phenomena indicated in the article point to the urgency of enabling scientists to work, among others, in the role of stakeholders or experts responsible for measuring the degree of inequality and poverty or the quality of life of individual social groups. Moreover, the scientific community can prove to be valuable in the process of humanizing globalization, which, in this new dimension, has a chance to have a better control the future.

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