Global Environmental Agreements

1. Introduction

Global Environmental Agreements (GEAs) are **legally binding or non-binding international treaties** formed between countries to address global environmental challenges.

Key Features:

- Involve multiple countries (multilateral agreements)
- Focus on **global environmental protection**
- Include **rules, targets, and commitments**
- Often supported by international organizations

Examples of Issues Addressed:

- Climate change
- Ozone depletion
- Biodiversity loss
- Marine and air pollution

2. Need for Global Environmental Agreements

Environmental problems are not confined to national boundaries. Hence, global cooperation is essential.

Reasons:

- **Transboundary nature**: Pollution spreads across countries
- **Global warming** affects the entire planet
- **Shared resources** (oceans, forests, atmosphere)
- Need for **uniform regulations and policies**

Benefits:

- Promotes cooperation
- Enables funding and technology transfer
- Strengthens environmental governance

3. Types of Global Environmental Agreements

3.1 Climate Change Agreements

Objective:

Reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and limit global warming.

Kyoto Protocol (1997)

- Under the UNFCCC
- Binding targets for developed countries
- Focus on reducing CO_2 and other GHGs
- Introduced:
    - Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)
    - Emissions Trading

Paris Agreement (2015)

- Aims to limit temperature rise to **below 2°C (preferably 1.5°C)**
- Applies to all countries
- Countries submit:
    - **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)**
- Focus on:
    - Adaptation
    - Mitigation
    - Climate finance

3.2 Biodiversity Agreements

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (1992)

Focuses on:

1. Conservation of biodiversity
2. Sustainable use of its components
3. Fair and equitable sharing of benefits

Additional Points:

- Promotes conservation strategies
- Supports indigenous knowledge
- Encourages sustainable practices

3.3 Ozone Protection Agreements

Montreal Protocol (1987)

- Controls substances that deplete the ozone layer (e.g., CFCs)
- Legally binding
- Timeline-based phase-out

Importance:

- Highly successful treaty
- Ozone layer is recovering

3.4 Wildlife Protection Agreements

CITES (1973)

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species

Key Features:

- Regulates international trade of endangered species
- Uses a classification system:
    - Appendix I (most endangered)
    - Appendix II
    - Appendix III

3.5 Pollution Control Agreements

Basel Convention (1989)

- Controls transboundary movement of hazardous waste
- Prevents dumping in developing countries

Stockholm Convention (2001)

- Targets **Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)**
- Eliminates or restricts harmful chemicals

4. Principles of Environmental Agreements

1. Sustainable Development

Development that meets present needs without harming future generations.

2. Precautionary Principle

Take preventive action even if scientific certainty is not complete.

3. Polluter Pays Principle

Polluters must bear the cost of pollution control.

4. Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)

- All countries are responsible
- Developed countries have greater obligations

5. Role of International Organizations

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

- Coordinates environmental activities
- Helps in treaty development

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

- Provides scientific assessments
- Supports climate policy decisions

Other Bodies:

- UNFCCC Secretariat
- World Bank (funding support)

6. Challenges in Implementation

Major Issues:

- Lack of enforcement mechanisms
- Insufficient funding
- Economic inequality between nations
- Political conflicts
- Weak compliance

Example:

- Some countries fail to meet emission targets

7. Importance of Global Environmental Agreements

- Promote international cooperation
- Protect biodiversity and ecosystems
- Reduce environmental degradation
- Help achieve **sustainable development goals (SDGs)**
- Encourage innovation and green technologies

8. Case Study Example

Montreal Protocol Success:

- Reduced CFC production significantly
- Ozone layer recovery observed
- Strong compliance and global participation