

## INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND GLOBAL GUIDELINES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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The article examines the evolution of the concept of sustainable development in international law and its transformation from a theoretical model into a fundamental principle for regulating global socio-economic and environmental processes. The interrelation between the major contemporary global challenges – climate change, social inequality, resource crises, armed conflicts – and the need to develop new legal mechanisms of global governance is analyzed. It is emphasized that sustainable development is no longer viewed solely as an environmental category, but encompasses a wide range of issues – from human rights and social justice to energy, food, and digital security.

The study summarizes the key international political and legal guidelines in the field of sustainable development that define a universal development vector for all states. Regional initiatives are highlighted, demonstrating how global goals are integrated into the legal mechanisms of regional integration frameworks. Attention is drawn to the fact that international environmental and climate agreements, as well as monitoring mechanisms – voluntary national reviews, decisions of climate conferences, and international indicators of sustainable development – form the foundation for overseeing states' compliance with their obligations.

The authors emphasize that an important component of the international legal framework for sustainable development is the development of global financial instruments that ensure the implementation of green economy programs, infrastructure modernization, and ecological transformation of states. It is noted that the activities of international financial institutions significantly influence the formation of domestic policies in partner countries by establishing environmental and social conditions for financing.

The article places special emphasis on the importance of international legal guidelines for sustainable development for Ukraine. It demonstrates that the implementation of global and regional agreements, along with the adaptation of national legislation to EU law, constitutes a key precondition for modernizing the state's environmental, energy, and social policy. At the same time, it is emphasized that the effectiveness of implementing international legal principles depends on the institutional capacity of the state, the availability of financial resources, and the degree of public participation in decision-making processes.

The article concludes that the international legal framework and global guidelines for sustainable development constitute a multi-level and dynamic system that ensures the harmonization of economic, social, and environmental objectives at the global, regional, and national levels. Their further evolution will determine the ability of states and international institutions to ensure environmental security, economic stability, and social resilience in the long term. *Key words:* international law, global guidelines, environmental security, international environmental agreements, international financial institutions, greening of the economy.

### Міжнародно-правові засади та глобальні орієнтири сталого розвитку. Геков М. В., Сакун А. О.

У статті розглянуто еволюцію концепції сталого розвитку в міжнародному праві та її трансформацію від теоретичної моделі до фундаментального принципу регулювання глобальних соціально-економічних і екологічних процесів. Проаналізовано взаємозв'язок між глобальними викликами сучасності – зміною клімату, соціальною нерівністю, ресурсною кризою, воєнними конфліктами та необхідністю формування нових правових механізмів глобального управління. Підкреслено, що сталий розвиток уже не розглядається виключно як екологічна категорія, а охоплює широкий спектр питань – від прав людини та соціальної справедливості до енергетичної, продовольчої та цифрової безпеки.

У роботі узагальнено міжнародні політико-правові орієнтири у сфері сталого розвитку, які визначають універсальний вектор розвитку для всіх держав. Висвітлено ініціативи регіонального рівня, що демонструє приклад поєднання глобальних цілей із правовими механізмами інтеграційного об'єднання. Акцентовано увагу на тому, що міжнародні екологічні та кліматичні угоди, а також механізми моніторингу – добровільні національні огляди, рішення кліматичних конференцій, міжнародні індикатори сталого розвитку – формують підґрунтя для контролю за виконанням державами своїх зобов'язань.

Авторами підкреслено, що важливою складовою міжнародно-правових засад сталого розвитку є розвиток глобальних фінансових інструментів, які забезпечують імплементацію програм «зеленої» економіки, модернізацію інфраструктури та екологічну трансформацію держав. Зазначено, що діяльність міжнародних фінансових інституцій суттєво впливає на формування внутрішньої політики країн-партнерів шляхом встановлення екологічних та соціальних умов фінансування.

У статті окремо акцентовано на значенні міжнародно-правових орієнтирів сталого розвитку для України. Показано, що імплементація положень глобальних та регіональних угод та адаптація національного законодавства до права ЄС є ключовими передумовами модернізації державної екологічної, енергетичної та соціальної політики. Водночас підкреслено, що ефективність впровадження міжнародно-правових засад залежить від інституційної спроможності держави, фінансового забезпечення та рівня участі громадськості у процесах прийняття рішень.

Зроблено висновок, що міжнародно-правові засади та глобальні орієнтири сталого розвитку становлять багаторівневу та динамічну систему, яка забезпечує узгодження економічних, соціальних та екологічних цілей на глобальному, регіональному та національному рівнях. Їхня подальша еволюція визначатиме здатність держав і міжнародних інституцій забезпе-

чувати екологічну безпеку, економічну стабільність та соціальну стійкість у довгостроковій перспективі. *Ключові слова:* міжнародне право, глобальні орієнтири, екологічна безпека, міжнародні екологічні угоди, міжнародні фінансові інституції, екологізація економіки.

**Relevance of the research.** The international legal foundations of sustainable development constitute a key element of the modern system of international relations, as law serves as a universal mechanism for reconciling the interests of states and the global community. The concept of sustainable development received its classical definition at the end of the last century; however, only in recent years has it acquired the status of a fundamental principle of international law. The gradual evolution of this concept has been driven by the fact that global environmental, social, and economic challenges require comprehensive and balanced solutions that can be implemented only through harmonized legal norms and international agreements.

**Relation of the author's contribution to important scientific and practical tasks.** The issue of sustainable development gained particular significance after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015, which established 17 Sustainable Development Goals. These goals have become a kind of roadmap for all countries, regardless of their level of economic development or political models, and have defined priorities in such areas as poverty eradication, ensuring quality education, development of sustainable energy, combating climate change, and protecting terrestrial and marine ecosystems [1].

The international legal nature of this document lies in its universality and its voluntary yet politically binding character. States have undertaken the responsibility to develop national strategies aligned with global goals, and the mechanism of oversight has become the institution of voluntary national reviews submitted to the United Nations.

**Analysis of Recent Studies and Publications.** In contemporary international law, sustainable development has been integrated into various branches, including environmental, energy, trade, financial, and humanitarian law. This is due to the fact that all components of global development are closely interconnected. Economic growth without environmental balance leads to environmental degradation, which in turn reduces the quality of life and generates social conflicts. For this reason, a number of international treaties concluded at the beginning of the twenty-first century – particularly the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement – emphasize the importance of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and transitioning to a low-carbon economy [2]. The legal consolidation of these provisions has made a significant contribution to the development of international environmental law and simultaneously confirmed the integrative nature of the concept of sustainable development.

Global sustainability guidelines are further specified in regional initiatives. The European Union implements

the European Green Deal, aimed at achieving climate neutrality by 2050. This document combines economic, social, and environmental objectives and demonstrates an example of integrating global goals into the legal and institutional mechanisms of a regional union. Similar strategies are being developed in other parts of the world. For instance, in the countries of the African Union, the «Africa 2063» Agenda is being implemented, reflecting the continent's aspiration toward sustainable economic development, poverty reduction, and strengthening social justice [3].

In the context of Ukraine, the international legal foundations of sustainable development have particular importance, as the state has undertaken obligations to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals into domestic policy. The approved National Strategy for Sustainable Development «Ukraine – 2030» defines legal and institutional mechanisms for adapting international approaches to national conditions [4]. At the same time, Ukraine actively cooperates with international organizations in the fields of ecology, energy, and social development, which reinforces its legal integration into global processes.

Thanks to international law, the concept of sustainable development has ceased to be purely theoretical and has transformed into a legally significant category that determines state activities in key areas. In contemporary doctrine of international law, sustainable development is regarded not only as a strategic goal but also as a principle that influences the interpretation and implementation of other legal norms. This is confirmed by the practice of international judicial institutions, which increasingly refer to the provisions of international environmental agreements and UN documents in their decisions. It is important to emphasize that global sustainability guidelines have a comprehensive character. They aim not only at environmental protection or economic growth but also at ensuring human rights, strengthening democratic institutions, and increasing societal inclusiveness. Therefore, sustainable development today is viewed as a multidimensional legal category that unites environmental, social, and economic rights into a single system.

In this context, a particularly illustrative example is the case concerning transboundary air and water pollution. In such situations, international law relies on the precautionary principle and the “polluter pays” principle, both of which are closely connected to the concept of sustainable development. These principles are enshrined in numerous treaties, including EU directives, which also influence the policies of associated states such as Ukraine.

At the global level, climate change remains the key challenge. The 2015 Paris Agreement established the obligation of states to take measures to limit global

warming and introduced the mechanism of «balanced contributions», under which each country declares its nationally determined commitments. Compliance with this agreement is monitored by the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and its implementation directly affects the energy transition policies in all regions of the world [5].

A significant contribution to the development of international legal standards is made by international financial institutions – such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Asian Development Bank – which increasingly introduce environmental and social requirements as conditions for project financing. This encourages states to implement stricter national standards and harmonize legislation with international criteria.

In Ukraine, the implementation of the international legal foundations of sustainable development occurs along several lines. First, the state participates in global and regional environmental agreements. Second, Ukrainian legislation is gradually being aligned with EU law, particularly through the implementation of the Association Agreement. This includes matters related to air protection, waste management, and water resource protection. Third, Ukraine has developed a number of strategic documents, including the National Economic Strategy until 2030, where sustainable development principles are identified as priority areas [6]. Human rights constitute an integral component of the international legal system of sustainable development. The United Nations emphasizes that the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals is impossible without ensuring fundamental rights and freedoms. This is reflected in state obligations to provide access to quality education, healthcare, clean water, and energy. Thus, sustainable development becomes integrated into international humanitarian and social law.

Another important guideline is public participation in decision-making. The Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters is an example of how international law creates mechanisms for public engagement in shaping sustainable development policies. It has been in force in Ukraine since 1999, and its provisions are actively used by civil organizations in environmental monitoring [7].

Therefore, the international legal foundations of sustainable development constitute a multi-level system of norms, principles, and mechanisms that encompass virtually all spheres of global life. They serve as an integrative framework, aligning the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of development. Global guidelines in the form of the Sustainable Development Goals provide a unified vector for the world's countries while also allowing for national and regional specificity. For Ukraine, it is important not only to formally join international agreements but also to effectively implement them into the domestic legal system. This

determines the state's ability to address contemporary challenges, preserve natural resources, ensure citizens' rights, and achieve long-term economic growth [8].

A particularly important role in ensuring sustainable development is played by international mechanisms for monitoring and controlling state compliance with their obligations. Such instruments as the Universal Periodic Review of the UN Human Rights Council, the environmental performance reviews of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, and the regular reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) provide independent assessments of the effectiveness of sustainable development policies and form the basis for strengthening international accountability [9].

A separate direction concerns the development of international legal norms in the field of the “green economy”. This concept was institutionalized in the outcome document of the “Rio+20” Conference (“The Future We Want”), which emphasized the need to green economic processes, increase resource efficiency, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions [10]. Today, the provisions of the «green economy» are enshrined in both global documents and regional EU agreements, which is particularly relevant for Ukraine in the context of European integration.

The growing importance of the principle of inclusiveness in international legal processes should also be noted. This involves the inclusion of various social groups – women, youth, Indigenous peoples, and low-income populations – in the formation and implementation of sustainable development policies. This is reflected in numerous UN documents and international declarations, particularly the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and UNESCO programmatic documents, which define sustainable development as intrinsically linked to cultural diversity and equality [11]. In the scholarly literature, it is increasingly emphasized that international law in the field of sustainable development performs both regulatory and coordinating functions. On the one hand, it establishes minimum behavioral standards for states; on the other hand, it coordinates global efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In this context, the coherence of actions by various international institutions – from the UN and WTO to regional integration organizations – is of particular importance [12].

An important legal guideline is also the development of international norms in the field of energy security and the transition to renewable energy sources. EU directives and regulations, as well as projects of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), establish common standards for countries worldwide. For Ukraine, this is particularly relevant given the need to reduce energy dependence and fulfill climate commitments [13].

**Novelty of the study.** The novelty of the study lies in the systematization of the multi-level international legal mechanism of sustainable development and in outlining the integrative links between global, regional, and

national legal instruments. The research reveals the role of digital technologies, international financial mechanisms, and new environmental standards in shaping the modern legal space of sustainable development. For the first time, the international legal guidelines for sustainable development are systematically analyzed in the context of Ukraine's European integration.

**Methodological significance.** The issue of sustainable development extends far beyond environmental concerns and encompasses energy, food, water, and digital security. In this context, international agreements – such as the Paris Climate Agreement, the Nagoya Protocol, and the European Green Deal – create normative frameworks for the formation of comprehensive policies. They establish common standards while still allowing states room for adaptation in accordance with national specificities [21; 22].

Equally important is the strengthening of the international financial architecture that ensures the implementation of sustainable development programs. Climate finance mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund, the Global Environment Facility, and specialized World Bank programs create opportunities to support countries with limited domestic resources. For Ukraine, the use of such financial instruments is not only a matter of economic feasibility but also a guarantee of integration into global processes [23; 24].

**Presentation of the main material.** In modern international law scholarship and practice, increasing attention is paid to the concept of intergenerational justice. This idea implies that the present generation not only has the right to development but also the obligation to pass on a preserved natural environment and stable socio-economic systems to future generations. This approach is enshrined in numerous UN declarations and resolutions, including the Declaration on the Right to Development and documents concerning the rights of future generations [25]. A separate area is the digital dimension of sustainable development, which is being increasingly incorporated into international legal discourse. The use of artificial intelligence, big data, and geoinformation systems in climate and natural resource monitoring is becoming an important factor in achieving the SDGs. These innovations are already being actively integrated into the practice of international institutions, creating new standards of transparency and information accessibility [26].

Today, the international legal foundations of sustainable development constitute a multidimensional system that combines global guidelines, regional agreements, and local practices. For Ukraine, which is currently undergoing a European integration transformation, these processes have not only formal legal significance but also strategic importance. They define the directions of domestic policy, create opportunities for cooperation with international partners, and provide access to modern financial mechanisms and technologies.

An equally important guideline for states is the work of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which promotes the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at the local level. Its projects focus on enhancing social inclusion, protecting the environment, and strengthening democratic institutions. Such multidimensional support ensures the coherence of an approach in which human rights, economic interests, and environmental requirements reinforce one another.

Contemporary international legal guidelines for sustainable development also encompass issues of digitalization and innovation. EU and UN documents increasingly emphasize the need to use digital technologies for environmental monitoring, natural resource management, and transparency in the energy sector. The use of satellite monitoring systems, blockchain technologies in carbon markets, and artificial intelligence for climate risk forecasting is already being recognized as an important tool for implementing sustainable development principles [21].

In this regard, Ukraine may use international experience to create innovative resource management systems that combine legal norms with digital instruments. This will improve the efficiency of environmental control, minimize corruption risks, and ensure public access to environmental information. Thus, international legal guidelines not only define general principles but also offer concrete tools for modernizing national practices [22].

It is also necessary to emphasize the development of regional initiatives within the UN system. For example, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) has developed a number of conventions with binding effect for participating states: the Aarhus Convention on Access to Environmental Information, the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, and the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes. Together, these instruments form a regional legal framework that strengthens global sustainable development guidelines and specifies them for the European context [23].

Annual Climate Conferences of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change also significantly influence international legal foundations. Decisions adopted at these conferences serve as important benchmarks for updating national climate policies. In particular, the Paris Climate Agreement (2015) and its subsequent implementation decisions adopted at COP-26 in Glasgow (2021) and COP-27 in Sharm el-Sheikh (2022) have played a decisive role in shaping modern international legal approaches to limiting global warming [24].

**Main conclusions.** Thus, international law in the field of sustainable development is undergoing continuous transformation. Its global guidelines are expanding, encompassing not only environmental or social issues but also innovation, digitalization, finance, security,

and human rights. Having evolved from a conceptual idea into a universal principle of international law, sustainable development now defines the strategic priorities of international policy, influencing the formation and implementation of global, regional, and national development programmes.

The analysis of international documents allows us to conclude that they have become key benchmarks for the transformation of the legal systems of different states, setting the framework parameters for economic modernization, environmental protection, the realization of human rights, and the provision of social justice. In the regional dimension, a leading role is played by the initiatives of the European Union, which combine environmental and economic priorities and establish systemic mechanisms for financial and institutional support for partner countries. Global environmental and climate agreements, as well as international mechanisms for monitoring the fulfilment of state obligations, are also of significant importance.

The findings demonstrate that the effectiveness of the international legal foundations of sustainable development depends on the ability of states to ensure comprehensive implementation, which requires harmonization of legislation, strategic planning, interagency coordination, sufficient financing, and public participation in decision-making processes. Another essential condition is the integration of environmental and social criteria into economic regulation, particularly in the areas of international trade, finance, and energy policy.

Therefore, the international legal foundations of sustainable development function as an integrative framework that unites the environmental, economic, and social priorities of modern civilization. The future effectiveness of the global sustainable development system will depend on the ability of states and international institutions to strengthen coordination, deepen cooperation, and ensure equitable access to technologies, finance, and environmental resources.

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