

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ECOTOURISM AS THE MAIN MECHANISM OF BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION

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Abstract. In the work “Sustainable development and ecotourism as the main mechanism of biodiversity protection”. Key issues such as the Sustainable Development Goals are discussed, which is a global strategy, it applies to the whole world, both developing and developed countries, therefore all countries of the world have supported the fulfillment of all seventeen Sustainable Development Goals at the national level until 2030. The UN Sustainable Development Goals are integral to the internal reforms of the Government of Georgia. is part of Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals requires an integration. The author discusses one of the most important goals of sustainable development, the protection of biodiversity, its role on various vitally important resources, and he also covers the world's hotspots of biodiversity, which are thirty-six worldwide, and among them is Georgia, where there is a great diversity of species and the threats faced by the existing species, every year Biodiversity is being lost, the author notes that the mechanism of biodiversity protection is determined by protected areas, they represent habitat and shelter for species. Therefore, it is necessary to dramatically increase the various categories of protected areas. Protected areas condition the development of ecotourism, which is the realization of sustainable development and implies renewal of tourist resources as well as socio-economic well-being rated.

Keywords: *Biodiversity, ecotourism, sustainable development, threats.*

Sustainable development encompasses the path towards the sustainable well-being of current populations, which also meets the needs of future generations. It involves economic and

social sustainability, which seeks to balance the reduction of natural resources with the long-term prosperity of society.

Sustainable development requires the creation of policies that prioritize economic sustainability, considering the conservation of the environment as a paramount concern.

With the rapid growth of the world's population, the demand for resources is increasing, making the use of sustainable development crucial. It is important to note that achieving sustainable development is impossible without addressing existing patterns and trends of change.

Today, global mass consumption and ecological issues are prevalent. Deforestation, biodiversity loss, air pollution in urban areas, climate-induced natural disasters, and others are all significant ecological problems. Therefore, it is essential to have a rapid global response and innovative approaches to finding solutions, in order to change individual behaviors, institutional structures, and policies effectively for the principles of sustainable development to be realized and implemented.

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On September 25, 2015, the leaders of 193 nations gathered in New York and adopted an ambitious agenda for global sustainability. They agreed on the new framework for sustainable development called “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

The new agenda for sustainable development consists of 17 global goals and 169 targets that must be defined to prioritize the achievement of sustainable development worldwide over the next 15 years, from 2016 to 2030 [2].

The goals of sustainable development are a global strategy that applies to the whole world, including both developed and developing countries. Therefore, every country in the world has a stake in achieving the seven objectives of sustainable development by 2030.

The achievement of sustainable development goals requires an integrated approach that addresses the interdependence of all goals. The goal emphasizes “partnerships for the goals”, recognizing that the realization of the goals of sustainable development is impossible without global, regional, and local partnerships. These partnerships are oriented towards the principles of global solidarity. They involve the balancing of interests and the sharing of responsibilities and benefits. The main aim is to achieve the objectives of sustainable development by focusing on the preservation and sustainable use of ecosystems, including biodiversity. Specifically, the goal serves the conservation of biodiversity and the proper management of various ecosystems, including forests, as well as the effective integration of biodiversity concerns into our main agenda, which is the achievement of sustainable development and the role of ecotourism in biodiversity conservation.

Biodiversity is the variety of all living organisms distributed on Earth. It includes the diversity of genes, species, and ecosystems.

Each component of biodiversity is significant because it serves its own function. The loss of any particular component of biodiversity can result in the elimination of ecosystem functions, such as water purification, pollination, medicinal resources, and more.

Biodiversity plays a crucial role in the creation of vital resources through complex processes. It not only addresses ecological problems, conservation, and protection but also contributes significantly to climate change mitigation, maintaining biodiversity reserves, and sustaining indigenous populations [1].

Forests cover approximately 30% of our planet's land area. They are essential not only for solving environmental problems but also for playing a major role in addressing climate change challenges. They provide habitat preservation and ensure the survival of indigenous populations.

Annually, about 13 million hectares of forests are being destroyed, while deforestation continues to occur in 3.6 million hectares of land due to human activities. The degradation and deforestation of forests, along with climate change, pose serious threats to the achievement of sustainable development goals and negatively impact the livelihoods of millions of people.

In 1992, the United Nations held the Earth Summit, which led to the establishment of the main mechanism for the protection and conservation of biodiversity and ecological processes on three-quarters of the Earth's surface.

Since 1992, the protected areas' coverage has significantly increased, and according to data from 2020, various categories of protected areas cover more than 26 million square kilometers, protecting different ecosystems, species, and genetic resources [2].

Therefore, since 1992, the coverage of protected areas has expanded considerably, and based on data from 2020, the coverage of protected areas represents various categories that preserve the diversity of ecosystems, species, and genetic resources.

For the implementation of ecotourism, it is necessary to consider the following factors together with other elements: product, price, location, and connection with the community.

As a result of our research (tourist surveys) conducted prior to the pandemic in 2018, the three most important elements of ecotourism that influence client's choice are as follows:

Uniqueness of various biodiversity in a region.

Guide professionalism, meaning extensive knowledge about a specific object or region.

Opportunities for active engagement.

Based on this research, it is essential to select the diverse biodiversity available in Georgia, which has the potential to strengthen ecotourism more effectively than before, as the progressive integration of ecotourism with biosphere reserves remains unattainable.

In Georgia, the currently protected territories are categorized as follows: 14 nature reserves, 13 national parks, 24 protected landscapes, 40 wilderness areas, 3 protected wetlands, and 2 biosphere reserves.

However, active work is ongoing to increase these numbers. The preserved territories of Georgia, which represent 75% of the country's territory, are home to diverse ecosystems and habitats of numerous species.

Within these protected territories, there are 90 species of mammals, accounting for 67% of the “Red List” species in Georgia.

Of note are the following: Eastern Caucasus lynx, Caucasian tur, Caucasian black grouse, Caucasian snowcock, Caucasian chamois, Caucasian salamander, Caucasian toad, and others.

Fourteen species of reptiles in Georgia are endemic to the Caucasus, while the majority of about 30 globally threatened species are also present in the region.

It should be noted that within the protected territories, 27 species of birds considered globally threatened are found. Based on available information, the entire protected territories constitute habitat areas for 314 species of protected flora.

In the past 50 years, the environment has undergone unprecedented changes worldwide, affecting natural territories, living organisms, climate, biodiversity, and the integrity of ecosystems. The increasing utilization of biological resources coincides with a reduction in the overall sustainability of ecosystems. The rapid decline in the population of plants and animals, which are vital for maintaining ecological balance, continues to be a concern. Based on recent assessments, the positive trend in the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services will

persist and improve further if the existing practices of energy consumption, food production, water supply, and resource management are modified.

Therefore, the preservation and conservation of the environment are possible in a way that aligns with social goals and enhances the quality of life. However, this requires proactive and effective measures at local, national, and global levels.

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წარდგენილია ცხუმ-აფხაზეთის მეცნიერებათა აკადემიის I საერთაშორისო კონფერენციის სამეცნიერო კომიტეტისა და გეოგრაფიისა და ტურიზმის ინსტიტუტის მიერ

აბსტრაქტი. ნაშრომში “მდგრადი განვითარება და ეკოტურიზმი, როგორც ბიომრავალფეროვნების დაცვის ძირითადი მექანიზმი”. განხილულია ისეთი ძირითად საკითხები როგორცაა მდგრადი განვითარების მიზნები, რომელიც გლობალური სტრატეგიაა, იგი ეხება მთელ მსოფლიოს, როგორც განვითარებად, ისე განვითარებულ ქვეყნებს, ამიტომ მსოფლიოს ყველა ქვეყანამ მხარი დაუჭირა მდგრადი განვითარების ჩვიდმეტევე მიზნის შესრულებას ეროვნულ დონეზე 2030 წლამდე. გაეროს მდგრადი განვითარების მიზნები საქართველოს მთავრობის შიდა რეფორმების განუყოფელი ნაწილია. მდგრადი განვითარების მიზნების მიღწევა მოითხოვს ინტეგრირებულ მიდგომას ყველა მიზნის ერთობლიობის მიმართ.

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