Environmental Justice: What is it?

A condition of environmental justice exists when environmental risks, hazards, investments and benefits are equally distributed without direct or indirect discrimination at all jurisdictional levels and when access to environmental investments, benefits, and natural resources are equally distributed; and when access to information, participation in decision-making, and access to justice in environment-related matters are enjoyed by all.

Coalition for Environmental Justice

International Context for Environmental Justice

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
- Stockholm Conference (1972), Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment
- Kyoto protocol (1997) which follows the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
- EU Strategy for Sustainable Development
- National legislation

ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

A healthy environment - Not just for some, but for everyone
HUMAN RIGHTS are the rights that all people have by virtue of being human beings. HUMAN RIGHTS is defined as the supreme, inherent, and inalienable rights to life, to dignity, and to self-development.

**Characteristics of Human Rights**
- Universal
- Internationally guaranteed
- Legally protected
- Protects individuals and groups
- Cannot be taken away
- Equal and indivisible

**SUSTAINABLE USE OF ENERGY AND RESOURCES**

**RIGHTS**
- People have the right to live in clean areas surrounded by water, without harmful chemical substances and radioactivity.
- Citizens have the right to demand the government to restrict industry and create a cleaner and safer environment and to conserve resources and energy.
- Citizens can ask the government to be informed about the current condition of pollution including water and air pollution.
- Government and industry can be required to set up an international cooperation system to solve issues concerning the environment and save resources and energy across the border.

**RESPONSIBILITIES**
- People are responsible for preserving the resources and energy of the earth for the next generation.
- People must inform themselves about the current condition of pollution and use of resources.
- People must be actively involved in recycling.
- Effective measures regarding recycling resources must be taken by the government, municipal corporations and industries.
- Energy-saving products must be developed and effective use of natural energy, such as solar and wind power must be promoted by the government and industries.
- A cooperative system must be set up to create international environmental standards.

**CORPORATE AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

**RIGHTS**
- It is the citizens’ right to be supplied with safe food products.
- Green and alternative energy should be available to citizens.
- Quality health care based on an international standard should be accessible to all citizens.

**RESPONSIBILITIES**
- Industries and individuals are responsible for producing, using and disposing products in a safe manner for the environment.
- Industries and individuals must have in mind the ecosystem safety when extracting or using the natural resources.
- A clean living and working environment must be provided and sustained by all industries and individuals.
- Citizens are responsible for best defending their health.
DEFORESTATION

RIGHTS
• It is the citizens’ right to ask authorities to supervise all activities in the ecological reservations.
• Citizens are entitled to take part in political decisions about the environment.
• It is advisable to preserve the environment, especially if there is the risk of deforestation.
• Citizens must be notified about their environment and quality of their territories.
• Educational programs in order to become acquainted with ways to improve the land and use the land without destroying it should be available for citizens.
• The government has the right to take measures after any act that can harm the environment.

RESPONSIBILITIES
• All activities in the environmental reservations must be monitored by authorities.
• The government must promote educational programs which can help the audience understand the area they live in.
• All preserved area must be respected by all citizens.
• The sale of chemical products which may damage the environment must be controlled by the government.
• The government is responsible for preserving areas in danger of deforestation.
• The government has the responsibility to provide the citizens with a way to maintain the environment to keep the physical and social integration.
• The government is responsible for the providing ways to maintain the environment.

Categories of Human Rights

• Civil – the right to be treated as an equal to anyone else in society
• Political – the right to vote, to freedom of speech and to obtain information
• Economic – the right to participate in an economy that benefits all; and to desirable work
• Social – the right to education, health care, food, clothing, shelter and social security
• Cultural – the right to freedom of religion, and to speak the language, and to practice the culture of one’s choice

TOXIC WASTE DISPOSAL

RIGHTS
• Any citizen is entitled to live in an environmentally safe community.
• All information held by the governmental, environmental and commercial agencies regarding the disposal of toxic waste and its effects on the environment must be available to all citizens.
• Citizens can take part in the making of decisions concerning the disposal of toxic waste in their community.
• The government is entitled to require and supervise environmentally safe methods to treat toxic waste in industries and communities.

RESPONSIBILITIES
• Toxic materials must be produced, used and disposed by industry and individuals in an environmentally safe manner.
• The public must be informed about the treatment and disposal of toxic waste by both industries and the government.
• The public can be involved in all decisions concerning the treatment and disposal of toxic waste by the government.
• Governments and citizens must treat and dispose their own toxic waste in a manner so as not to negatively affect the environment.
• Industries must create a safe working environment for their workers.

SOCIAL RIGHTS

✓ Clean environment
✓ Housing
✓ Education
✓ Health services
✓ Recreation facilities
✓ Social security
What environmental rights could be protected:
- right to a clean, healthy environment;
- right to clean air;
- right to safe drinking water;
- right to natural food;
- right to clothes without toxins;
- right to adequate standard of living and adequate housing;
- right to a safe and healthy workplace;
- freedom from pollution;
- preservation of unique sites.

Rights and Responsibilities Toward the Environment:

**Land Degradation**

**Rights**
- Access is available to all community members, who have the opportunity to use their land in a sustainable manner.
- The community has the right to a sustainable, free of risks lifestyle.
- Research and monitoring of the land are available so that best practice is enabled and the land is conserved for future generations.
- The government can coordinate and legislate against any act which degrades the land.
- The land/environment should be above the community, and at the same time, the community should come before the individuals.

**Responsibilities**
- The community must maintain the quality and value of the land so that it is available for future generations.
- It is the community’s responsibility to teach and help others how to best cooperate with the land.
- The government is responsible for the understanding of the environmental problem and the coordination, regulation and foundation of programs in order to research, monitor and guide the community in solving problems.
- When deciding how to use the land, its rights must be taken into consideration and respected by the community.