

50 Years After the Stockholm Declaration

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4 Juni 2022 11:15 WIB · 6 menit baca

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After being pressured by many parties and thanks especially to an initiative by the Swedish government, the United Nations held an unprecedented conference on humanity and the environment with the theme “Still only one Earth”.

Despite the boycott from the Soviet Union-led Warsaw Pact, the conference went on to generate calls of concern in the form of recommendations and action plans for the UN to follow up on. Since then, 5 June has been celebrated as World Environment Day. One of the most important outcomes of the conference was the birth of the UN Environment Program (UNEP) in the same year. The conference triggered many follow-up efforts on a multilateral basis, considering that environmental issues did not belong exclusively to territorial domains.

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One important follow-up was the inception of an Earth summit in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992.

Fifty years on, representatives of national governments, international organizations, business organizations and nongovernmental organizations gathered in Stockholm on 2-3 June. Held in a new context and faced with new challenges, the conference carried the theme “A healthy planet for the prosperity of all – our responsibility, our opportunity”.

Stockholm Declaration

The 1972 Stockholm Declaration on the human environment agreed on the recommendation of 26 principles, six of which were related to sustainable development. It showed that the economic paradigm was still dominant.

More concrete implementation of the sustainable development concept followed later, notably with the launch of a document titled “Our Common Future” (1987) by the World Commission on Environment and Development. The document gave birth to the 2000-2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), along with the 2016-2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Environmental issues, including global warming, appeared to be more prominent in the SDGs than in the MDGs.



What was also interesting about the Stockholm Conference was the awareness that environmental problems were not only related to the economy, but also to politics. It was stated explicitly in the recommended principles that in order to protect the environment, law enforcement, international cooperation and appropriate policies were required. Environmental destruction was seen as a structural rather than individual problem. Unfortunately, this reality has so far been neglected.

Awareness but no action

Undeniably, the Stockholm Conference sparked larger-scale awareness about environmental issues. However, despite the high awareness of climate change, it was still difficult for national governments to agree on a common policy to protect the Earth, as was evident in the negotiations on climate change issues during the Conference of the Parties (COP) in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

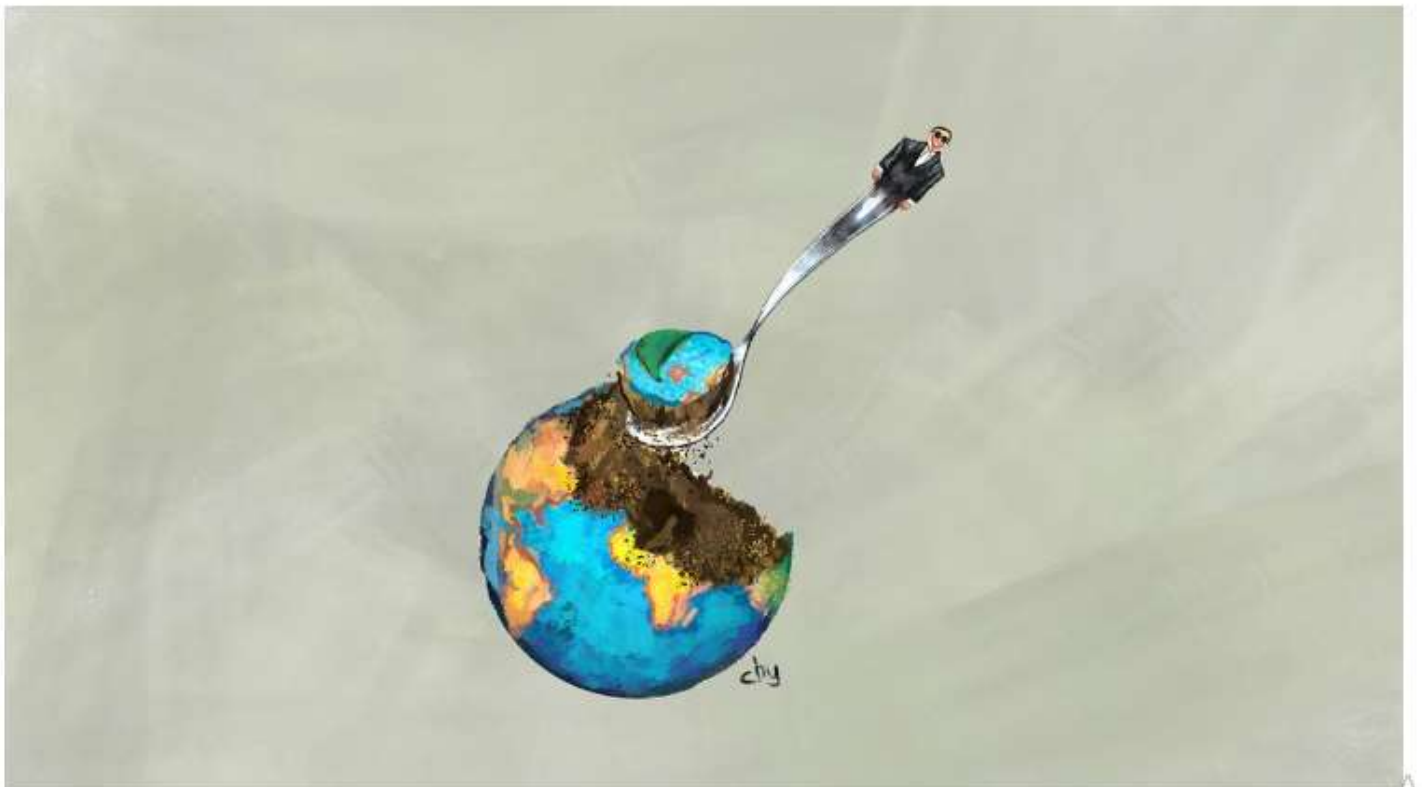
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In addition, the very issues discussed in the recent 2022 event, which coincided with the commemoration of the 50th Stockholm Declaration, could also provide a reflection. The event talked about global warming, environmental destruction and the decline in biodiversity, as well as pollution issues, especially air pollution. The discussion of these three issues, while indicating their urgency these days, shows at the same time that the condition of the earth 50 years after the Stockholm Declaration is getting worse!

It's worth noting that the scientists who are members of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), through UN Secretary General António Guterres, warned in 2021 about the danger of global warming. The warning showed that the political and juridical efforts in the aftermath of the Stockholm Declaration had not been effective enough to change the face of the Earth.

Indonesia has joined the environmental awareness movement. While, at the UN level, the UNEP was formed, Indonesia set up the development supervision and environment ministry in 1978. After 1972, Indonesia issued a number of laws and policies on the environment. Even if the achievement with regard to the SDGs is taken as an indicator of the implementation of environmental policies, Indonesia has made improvements.

In 2021, Indonesia was awarded 66 points on the SDG index, placing it sixth among the Southeast Asian countries. Based on a report by the Environment and Forestry Ministry, Indonesia's SDG index on the quality of the environment went up to 71.43 in 2021, an increase of 1.16 points from the previous year.



On the other hand, some environmentalists, especially those who work at the grassroots, are still concerned about the condition of the soil and water, as well as the air in Indonesia. There is an indication that political and juridical efforts have mostly fallen short of being realized. It also means that the Stockholm Declaration has brought about knowledge and awareness but has generally faltered when it comes to action.

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still far from the perspective of
environmental protection!**

Regarding the policy implementation, the Mining Advocacy Network (Jatam) has observed that there is a close link between environmental destruction and the 2017-2018 regional elections as a result of lavish issuance of mining concessions by local governments. This demonstrates that policymaking is still far from the perspective of environmental protection!

In addition, environmental impact analyses (AMDALs), which were introduced in 1997, are suspected by many of having been poorly implemented or merely a formality. Even the environment minister acknowledged it in 2006. The situation has not changed much today. In 2018, an environmentalist at the Bogor Agricultural Institute lamented the situation in an interview.

Toward 2024

With 2024 expected to see an escalation in political hype and given Jatam's findings about the close link between political activity and environmental damage, the central government needs to tighten mining-related supervision to halt massive destruction, or at least minimize the impact as early as possible. No less important is the involvement of the community and nongovernmental organizations in the monitoring.

The crucial matter is structural and procedural. Therefore, it requires policymakers to care about the environment. It is also necessary to promote political education to the public so that they can elect legislative representatives and regional heads – or even a head of state – who are truly heedful of the environment.

Will the political parties be concerned about preparing environmentally sane cadres? Predictably, the answer will not be encouraging. What about the policymakers of today? Will we have to temporarily compromise or even bury our hopes?



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(This article was translated by Musthofid).

Sumber:

<https://www.kompas.id/baca/english/2022/06/04/50-years-after-the-stockholm-declaration>