

## **Should developing countries prioritize economic growth or environmental preservation?**

The world is experiencing adverse effects due to climate change and sustainability is emerging as the most essential goal for countries. According to the International Institute of Sustainable Development, "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." For example, in Brazil's Amazon rainforest, the most biodiverse place on earth, hundreds of billions of trees absorb carbon emissions and reduce global warming. However, Brazil is also a developing country where millions live in poverty, depending on industries like logging and ranching for their livelihood. Should Brazil prioritize the conservation of vital ecosystems or focus on development that could improve the lives of many families?

Those who support an emphasis on the economy argue that nations should not be expected to worry about the environment when their people lack basic necessities like food and healthcare. Many developing countries have been centered on the primary sector, which includes agriculture, fishing, and mining. A new industrial project may damage natural resources but can also create thousands of jobs leading to more investment. Additionally, advocates claim that it is unethical for wealthier nations, many who became rich through exploiting nature, to force poorer countries to slow their growth. Some believe that these more advanced countries should pay for environmental conservation abroad, allowing developing countries to focus on their economies. This path might be the best sustainable development for some countries because it meets their own needs.

Opponents contend that environmental damages to nature are irreversible and global. Apart from short-term benefits, industry has led to habitat loss, increased greenhouse gas emissions, and pollution that harms locals as well as global citizens. Climate change disproportionately impacts developing nations, aggravating natural disasters. Furthermore, Brazil may have an ethical duty to protect such a vital place, especially when its effects could spread throughout the world. This decision may be in their best interests, as a failing environment can also destroy the economy. Johannes Zutt, World Bank Director in Brazil, explains, "Climate shocks could push between 800,000 and 3,000,000 Brazilians into extreme poverty as soon as 2030. It is crucial that Brazil accelerate investments towards a resilient and low carbon growth pathway." A potential solution may be to embrace the economic possibilities in a world that is leaning to greener methods, including expanding on renewable energy sources, which have become cheaper with innovation.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. In what circumstances should/shouldn't developing countries prioritize their economic growth over the environment?
2. Can economic growth and environmental conservation be solved together, or are they mutually exclusive?
3. Do developing countries have the same responsibilities to solve issues as wealthier nations?
4. Is it ethical to harm the lives of future generations to benefit those alive now?

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