

Key events in the history of sustainable development

Adapted from IISD's [Sustainable Development Timeline](http://www.iisd.org/timeline/) (<http://www.iisd.org/timeline/>)

Date	Milestones	Description
1972	UN Conference on Human Environment	The first major attempt to reach a concerted international agreement on environment matters, focussing mainly on regional pollution and acid rain issues in Northern Europe.
	Limits to Growth, Club of Rome	The report predicted that continued patterns of growth would cause the Earth to reach its natural limits within 100 years. The work became an international bestseller.
1973	OPEC Oil Crisis	Surges in worldwide oil prices add to 'limits to growth' fears.
1980	World Conservation Strategy, IUCN	Helped to coin 'sustainable development'. Argued that development is a threat to the biosphere unless resources are effectively conserved.
	Independent Commission on International Development Issues	Publishes report 'North-South: A Programme for Survival (Brandt Report)' recognising the need to reassess the notion of development based on economic growth, because it shows little concern for the quality of growth.
1985	Ozone Hole Discovery	British and American scientists discover hole in the ozone layer above the Antarctic.
	Climate Change Recognised	The World Meteorological Society predicts 'global warming' as they report on the build-up of 'greenhouse gas' in the atmosphere.
1986	Chernobyl Nuclear Accident	Major accident at Chernobyl's nuclear power station leads to toxic radioactive fallout across Europe and beyond.
1987	The Brundtland Report	The report of the World Commission on Environment and Development - <i>Our Common Future</i> - popularises the term sustainable development, providing an integrated approach towards the problems of the environment and development.
	Montreal Protocol	International agreement reached to limit the use of substances harmful to the Ozone Layer.
1989	Exxon Valdez Disaster	Exxon Valdez tanker dumps 11 million gallons of oil into Prince William Sound in Alaska as it runs aground.
1992	Earth Summit	The UN Conference on Environment and Development is held in Rio, Brazil, attended by over 100 heads of state with 178 governments represented in all. A total of five agreements are reached: Agenda 21, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Rio Declaration, and Forest Principles.
1997	Kyoto	The Kyoto Protocol is signed by delegates of the UN Framework

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	Protocol	Convention on Climate Change Third Conference of the Parties. Sets greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, emissions trading for 'developed' countries, and the clean development mechanism for 'developing' countries.
	Earth Summit +5	A special session of the UN General Assembly met to review and appraise progress on Agenda 21 since Rio. Despite some progress, it is "deeply concerned" that the overall trends had got worse since 1992.
2000	UN Millennium Summit	Eight Millennium Development Goals are agreed. 191 countries have subsequently signed up to achieving these goals - such as eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and ensuring environmental sustainability - by 2015.
2002	World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg	Meeting of 191 national governments, UN agencies, multilateral financial institutions and other major groups to assess progress since the Rio Summit. New initiatives included those on sustainable consumption and production, water and sanitation, and energy.
2005	Kyoto Protocol Becomes Law	The Kyoto Protocol came into force on 16 th February 2005. The pact needed to be ratified by countries accounting for at least 55% of 1990 carbon dioxide emissions. The key to ratification was agreement from Russia, who eventually signed up to the agreement on 5 th November 2004.