

A framework for addressing protection of interests of future generations through tripartite principles may be that of 'conservation of options', 'conservation of quality' and 'conservation of access'. This requires a thorough reorientation of legal structures which currently encourage unsustainable resource conversion. Thus inter-generational equity is an ethical principle that restrains the greed of the present generation and suggests long term assessment of natural resources in framing commercial and trade policies.

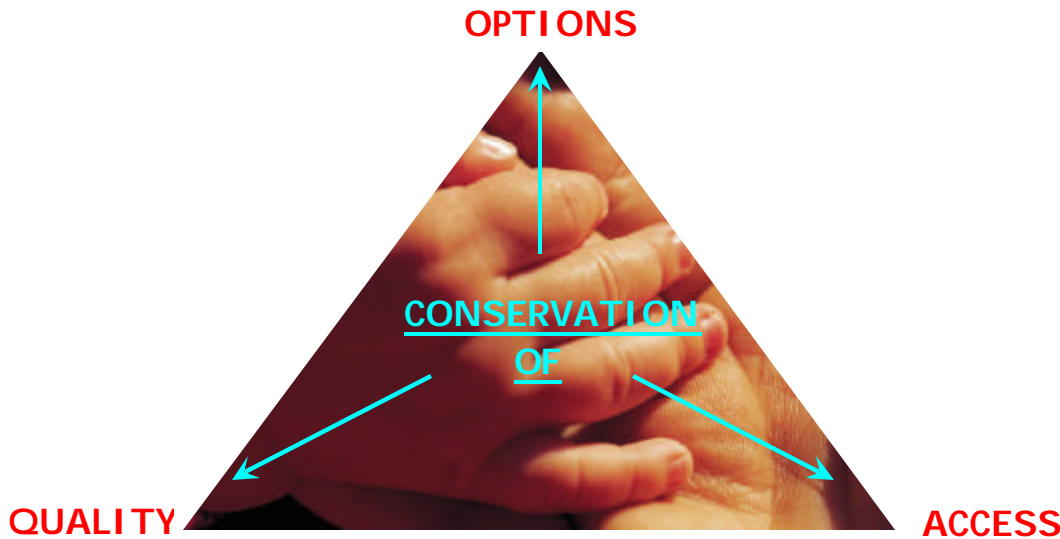


Fig.2.2: A framework for protecting the interests of future generations

2.4 INTRA-GENERATIONAL EQUITY AND JUSTICE (GLOBAL, REGIONAL AND COUNTRY LEVELS)

Another concept of equity in resource use is referred to as 'intra-generational equity', which is fairness in utilisation of resources among human members of present generations, both domestically and globally.

Natural resources are now exploited in unprecedented quantities and rates of consumption are continuing to increase. In relation to their population sizes, the 'Northern' industrialised countries are responsible for a vastly disproportionate amount of the natural resources being consumed or adversely impacted. Issues concerning the access to and consumption of global resources, and responsibility for the resulting environmental degradation and depletion, have become focal points for much current thinking on intergenerational equity and have taken on a distinctly 'North' versus 'South' dimension. A great deal of environmental debate on issues of global scale damage like ozone depletion, global warming, biodiversity, forests and biotechnology has taken on a North-South polarisation.

Some developing countries have coined the term 'green imperialism' to refer to the efforts of outside countries to limit the use of their native rain forests, or to ask the countries to forego the advantages of using chlorofluoro carbons (CFCs) when the rest of the world has taken advantage of these for decades. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) backfired at the Seattle Meet in December 1999 and later at the Geneva Conference which indicates that intra generational equity is becoming centre stage in the design of all trade agreements internationally. Globalisation today has to confront the serious challenge of intra-generational equity.

The developing countries have sought to rectify perceived asymmetries in international law regarding resource access, distribution and consumption calling for the creation of a 'New International Economic Order' (NIEO).