Agenda 21 came up with an integrated agenda covering all three dimensions of sustainable development, namely economic development, social development, and environmental protection. However, the implementation process bifurcated into two tracks. While economic and social development agenda took the form of advocacy for “human development,” and subsequently gelled into the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the environmental protection agenda largely moved along the processes represented by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Convention on Biodiversity (CBD). The bifurcation also led to very different “domain configurations” for human development agenda and the climate agenda, with the former limited to developing countries and the later limited to developed countries. However, this bifurcation had its undesirable effect, as manifested in the unsatisfactory progress regarding climate change mitigation, on the one hand, and the gaps and weaknesses in the achievement of MDGs, on the other. Yet, the bifurcation lingers, as illustrated by the two streams of discussion of post-2015 agenda, one represented by the UN Task Team (UNTT) Report and the other by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) formulation process, triggered by the Rio+20 conference. A closer analysis shows that sustainable development is difficult to achieve without developed countries moving towards a changed social model, which can then inspire developing countries to follow a more sustainable course of development. The agenda for sustainable development needs to be reintegrated.

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