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Environmental Issues

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The issues affecting the globe



Environmental issues are negative aspects of human activity on the biophysical environment. Currently due to human activity many environmental issues affects the globe. Let's discuss some of them.

Soil Pollution

- Undesirable change in the physical, chemical and biological properties of soil that reduces productivity of plants.



Sources:

- Fertilizers and pesticides from crop lands.
- Solid wastes from industries and household pollute soil.
- Rains may wash-down heavy metals and other toxic chemicals prevent in the solid wastes into the soils and pollute them; they may cause acid rains.

Harmful effects

- Pesticides may cause biomagnifications by pesticides
- Soil becomes acidic and the decrease in crop growth is the result of acid rain.
- Chemicals added to soil affects many living organisms of the soil.

Radioactive Wastes

Radioactive wastes are of three types depending on the amount of radioactivity.

1. Low level radioactive wastes.
2. Intermediate level radioactive wastes.
3. High level radioactive wastes - consist of spent fuel and generate a lot of heat and require cooling.

Nuclear energy:

Has two most serious problems:

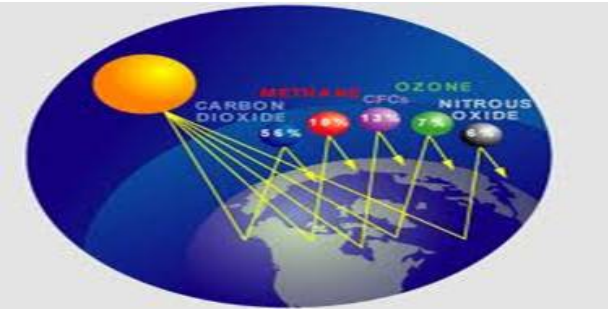
1. The accidental leakage of radioactivity and
2. The safe disposal of radioactive wastes.

Greenhouse Effect



- A naturally occurring phenomenon that is responsible for heating earth's surface and atmosphere.
- Earth's surface emits heat in the form of infrared radiation to the space, but most of it is absorbed by gases like carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, chlorofluorocarbons and methane (greenhouse gases).
- The molecules of these gases radiate heat energy that comes back to earth's surface and heats it up.

Global Warming



- Increase in the level of greenhouse gases is mainly responsible for global warming.
- The measures to control global warming include:
- Reducing the use of fossil fuels to reduce emission of greenhouse gases.
- Improving energy efficiency
- Reducing deforestation and planting more trees.

- Reducing the use of nitrogen fertilizers.

Ozone Depletion



- Ozone gas is formed by the action of UV rays on molecular oxygen and is also degraded by UV rays into molecular oxygen; so there should be a balance between the formation and degradation of ozone in the stratosphere.
- This balance is disrupted by chlorofluorocarbon (CFC_S), which break into active chlorine in the presence of UV. The C1 atoms degrade ozone into molecular oxygen. This depletion of ozone is marked over Antarctic region in spring and the thinning of the ozone layer is called ozone hole.
- As a result, the UV-B radiation reaches the earth and the following are the consequences:
- Damage DNA and mutations arise.
- Causes ageing of skin, damage to skin cells and skin cancers.
- Causes inflammation of cornea and cataract.
- Lethal to microorganisms.

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Reference Links:

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_issue
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_environmental_issues
- http://www.globalissues.org/issue/168/environmental-issues
- http://www.globalstewards.org/issues.htm

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