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**EXPLOITATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES, THE AFTERMATH AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

Natural resources are those that our planet offers us without the need for human intervention. They are essential for survival, but if they are consumed at a faster rate than their natural regeneration, as is currently the case, they can be exhausted. As suggested by Boulding (1993), the well-known fact that today's production activities are imposing a heavy burden on the earth's capacity has led to an increasing interest in environmental issues. It has been emphasized that rapid production growth depletes the current stock of natural resources and damages the environment, and there are clearly limits to this process. Daly (2008) affirms that "The limits to growth, in today's usage, refer to the limits of the ecosystem to absorb wastes and replenish raw material in order to sustain the economy" . There are two types of natural resources: renewable and non-renewable. The former are inexhaustible, like solar radiation, or their renewal is relatively rapid, as is the case with biomass. Non-renewable resources are those that exist in nature in a limited way because their regeneration involves the passage of many years, such as minerals and fossil fuels (oil, natural gas and coal).

If Human beings keep depleting the planet's natural resources , standards of living will begin to decline by 2030 unless immediate action is taken. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) warns that the current overexploitation of natural resources is generating an enormous deficit, as 20% more than can be regenerated is consumed each year and this percentage is growing steadily. Thus, if we continue at this rate, we would need 2.5 planets to supply ourselves in 2050, according to the latest Living Planet report (2016). This publication shows that the world's population of fish, birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles declined by 58% between 1970 and 2012 due to human activities and predicts that by 2020 this percentage will soar to 67%. Exploitation of these resources of nature will obviously come with its consequences and even if it does not occur now it will eventually occur in the long run. Some of these consequences include;

Extinction;The disappearance of habitats which are essential for survival will lead the extinction of species. There are some 30 million different animal and plant species in the world, and of these, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) says that in 2018, 26,197 species are threatened with extinction. If these animals are pushed into extinction ,not only will the human race suffer due to lack of food but the natural ecosystem will be greatly affected as it will lose the balance it has maintained for centuries, causing problems in the surrounding habitat.

Added to this, if we do not take care of the forests there will be fewer CO2 Nota sinks and therefore more air pollution. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), nine out of ten people worldwide breathe air with high levels of pollutants and seven million people die each year from ambient (outdoor) and domestic air pollution. The most recent case of wrong use of forest habitats are the cases of the Amazon fire . The Amazon supplies over 30% of the world’s oxygen and is a very important carbon sink. If a forest this important for the survival of mankind is turned to ashes, then so will our survival rate.

More so, economic crisis will break out as 33% of the world's soils are moderately to highly degraded, according to a United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) report published in 2017. If the erosion of fertile soil continues at the same rate, agricultural commodity prices will inevitably soar and this will not just affect our cost of living but standard too as scarcity of food will grossly increase mortality rate around the world.

The future, as stated in the United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, poses a double challenge to human beings: conserving the many forms and functions of nature and creating an equitable home for people on a finite planet. However, If we want to reverse this situation, we need, among other things, to:

First and foremost, controlling deforestation will go a long way to aid the situation. Programs such as REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) created by World Bank, the New York Declaration on Forest and the United Nations should be encouraged and financed to help stop exploitation and depletion of our forest and its resources. The initiatives may also act incentives for encouraging the general public to conserve forests as these are habitats and protectors of some of the world’s most unique animal species and plants.

Also, more renewable energy sources should be used as they are not just unable to deplete but also they are easy to obtain compared to the expenses and time needed to obtain nonrenewable energy sources which are getting depleted as time goes on.

Most importantly, public awareness should be the order of the day in order to educate and enlighten people on how some of our daily activities put strain on the natural resources around us. The public awareness programs should also enlighten people on how to preserve these resources.

In conclusion, it will be tough to manage every finite resource on this planet, but for our sake and the sake of generations to come we should put effort to reducing our strain on mother nature as we continue to use these wonders of nature we call “resources”.