



On the climate change convention at Katowice, Poland

This article is related to General Studies-
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Writer - T. Jayaraman (Professor, School
of Habitat Studies, Tata Institute of Social
Sciences)

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"Katowice signals a global climate regime that leaves the fate of the world hanging in the balance."

The 24th Conference of the Parties (COP-24) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), held at Katowice in Poland, brings little cheer on the climate front for developing countries. With the passage of the so-called "rulebook" for the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the developed countries have largely succeeded in establishing a global climate regime that gives them the strategic advantage and assuages some of their core concerns. This signals the making of a new, contradictory situation where the scope and complexity of the regime are fundamentally at odds with the very purpose for which the regime has been constructed.

Rollback of differentiation

At the heart of this strategic success is the substantial rollback of differentiation between the global North and South in climate action. The first step of this process began with the Paris Agreement, when the developed nations were allowed to make voluntary commitments to climate mitigation, on par with the developing nations, without any benchmark to ensure the relative adequacy of their commitment. At Katowice this process went further, with uniform standards of reporting, monitoring and evaluation for all countries. These reporting requirements, while superficially impressive, appear in their true light when we realise that in their uniformity they are intended as much for Maldives as the U.S. The real targets of this uniformity are, of course, not the poorest nations, who have been provided exemptions, but the larger developing nations. While all developing nations are ostensibly allowed flexibility in these reporting requirements, the concession has been hedged in with a number of conditions, with the intention of forcing them to full compliance in short order.

The reporting requirements are also marked by a pseudo-scientific concern for stringency, which is far in excess of the accuracy of climate science itself. Indeed, the recent Special Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on global warming at 1.5°C estimates substantial uncertainties in the quantum of cumulative global emissions that are still allowed before the global carbon budget of the world is exhausted. In the face of such uncertainty, the requirement of reporting as little as 500 kilo tonnes or 0.05% of national emissions per country has little scientific significance. More pernicious is the uniformity of the stringency in reporting being expressed in percentage terms. Elementary mathematics informs us that a smaller percentage of the emissions of a large emitter will be a larger quantity in absolute terms compared to the larger percentage of emissions of a small emitter.

But the crux of the problem is the contradiction between the onerous nature of these universal rules and the total lack of initiative by the developed countries in taking the lead in climate mitigation. All developed countries continue to invest in fossil fuels either through direct production or imports. Some do so because of the downgrading of nuclear energy due to domestic political pressures. Others are still trying to wean themselves off coal by shifting to gas. Overall, as the International Energy Agency reports, the use of fossil fuel-based electricity generation continues to rise for OECD countries.

In the event, the dispute that broke out at COP24 over whether the Special Report of the IPCC should be welcomed or merely noted must be considered a red herring. Despite the vociferous pleas of the Least Developed Countries and the Small Island Developing States for the former choice, in the absence of adequate action, such symbolic gestures are clearly of little value. Indeed, the report itself appears to have been used to generate a sense of urgency in stampeding countries into approval of the "rulebook" rather than point the way to more substantial mitigation by the developed nations.

The Special Report, for instance, did little to inspire the developed countries to increase the quantum of climate finance as well as speeding up its delivery. It has been the long-standing argument of the developing world that the bulk of climate finance must be from public sources. In contrast, the developed countries have succeeded in putting other sources of finance, including FDI and equity flows, on par in the accounting of the flow of climate assistance that developing countries need. As the "rulebook" stands today, private sector flows or loans, which will increase the indebtedness of developing countries, are to be considered adequate fulfilment of developed country obligations under the UNFCCC.

Much of the pressure exerted by developed countries at COP24 had the active backing and instigation of the U.S. Despite the public posturing by other G-8 heads of state outside the climate summits, the marked synergy between the U.S. and its political and strategic allies in pushing through several critical elements of the "rulebook" was no secret.

India, despite its articulation of the need for equity in climate action and climate justice, failed to obtain the operationalisation of these notions in several aspects of the "rulebook". Even though it pushed for equity, particularly in the benchmarks for the



periodic review of the Paris Agreement, it failed to press home its point. Successive dispensations in New Delhi have fallen short of doing the needful in this regard. In contrast, Brazil held its ground on matters relating to carbon trading that it was concerned about and postponed finalisation of the matter to next year's summit. Regrettably, while India has not been shy to hold out against the global nuclear order it has not extended this attitude to protecting its interests in the emerging global climate regime.

Poor articulation of needs

It is now evident that New Delhi underestimated what was at stake at Katowice and the outcome portends a serious narrowing of India's developmental options in the future. A number of environmental and climate think tanks, NGOs and movements have also done their share to disarm the government in the negotiations. Buying uncritically into the climate narrative of the developed nations, they have been continually urging unilateral domestic action on moral grounds, while ignoring the elementary fact that global warming is a global collective action problem. Despite the significant number of Indians at COP24, the broad articulation of India's needs was at the lowest ebb seen in the last several years.

At the final plenary of COP24, the Like-Minded Developing Countries grouping echoed India's reservations on the neglect of equity and climate justice in the final form of the "rulebook", while the broader G77 plus China combine expressed its regret at the unbalanced nature of the outcome, with its undue emphasis on mitigation by all. But with the "rulebook" nevertheless having been adopted, COP24 signals a global climate regime that benefits and protects the interests of the global rich, while leaving the climatic fate of the world, and the developmental future of a substantial section of its population, still hanging in the balance.

GS World Team...

COP-24

Why in the discussion

- Recently, the 24th Convention of the Parties (COP-24) of the United Nations Climate Change Framework (UNFCCC) concluded in Katowice City, of Poland.
- An Indian Pavilion was also organized in this conference which was inaugurated by Dr. Harshvardhan, Minister of Environment, Government of India.
- The theme of Indian Pavilion was "One World, One Sun, One Grid .
- World of India's leadership for activities related to global climate.
- In this sequence, this year, the United Nations gave India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi "Champion of the Earth Award".
- This award was given to him for the International Solar Alliance and for his determination to free India from plastics until 2022.

What is COP?

- COP is called a conference of parties related to the United Nations Climate Change Framework (UNFCCC).
- This institution ensures the implementation and review of the provisions of the UNFCCC.

What is UNFCCC?

- UNFCCC is an International Environmental Treaty which is applicable from March 21, 1994. Now, almost all the countries of the world have become member.
- By December 2015, it had 197 members.
- The purpose of this treaty is to prevent the menace of dangerous interference in the climate system by humans.

\$ 200 billion investment for climate change

References

- Recently, the World Bank has announced to increase investment in tackling the problem of climate change.
- According to the World Bank, for the year 2021-25 has been decided to double the funding to deal with the problem of climate change.
- The World Bank has announced this amount to be increased to \$ 200 billion.
- The World Bank has announced this amount to be increased to \$ 200 billion.
- The World Bank announced the doubling of the funds in the Summit of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- The World Bank issued statement said that approximately \$ 100 billion will be funded directly by the World Bank.
- Apart from this, the balance will be mobilized by two World Bank agencies.

Main Point

- To combat climate change, developed countries agreed to invest in developing countries.
- \$ 100 billion is to be given by the year 2020. \$ 48.5 billion in 2016 and \$ 56.7 billion in 2017 were given.
- The amount of 100 billion dollars out of 200 will be given by the World Bank. Apart from this, the remaining money will be mobilized with the World Bank's associated agencies.
- According to John Rume, senior director of the World Bank, if we fail to reduce emissions, then 10 million people will be in poverty by 2030.
- 13 million people have fled from Africa, South Asia and Latin America.
- To help reach the most affected areas of developing countries, the World Bank wants to make a framework.
- World Bank will invest in smart farming and water availability.



Expected Questions (Prelims Exams)

1. 1. Consider the following statements-

1. COP-24 related to climate change has been organized in Katowice, Poland.
2. A pavillion has been setup in COP-24 conference, the theme of which was "One World, One Sun, One Grid".

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) Only 1
- (b) Only 2
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

2. 2. Consider the following statements regarding UNFCCC-

1. It is an international treaty related to environment, which was implemented in 1994.
2. The objective of this treaty is to restrict the dangerous human intervention in climate system.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) Only 1
- (b) Only 2
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Expected Questions (Mains Exams)

- Q. Recently concluded COP-24 in Katowice city of Poland related to climate change gives importance to the developed nation over developing nation. How this shows the serious narrowness of developmental options for India? Discuss. (250 Words)**

Note: Answer of Prelims Expected Question given on 14 Jan. is 1(b).

