

SPECIAL DIGEST

on

India and COP 26

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CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES (COP)

Introduction

COP stands for conference of the parties which is a treaty established under the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to address “dangerous human interference with climate system”, by stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. It was initially signed by 154 states during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), informally known as the ‘Earth Summit’ that was held in Rio de Janeiro from 3-14 June 1992. Under the UNFCCC, every country on earth is treaty-bound to “avoid dangerous climate change”, and find ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions globally in an equitable way.

Brief History

The United Nations Climate Change Conferences became the yearly conferences to be held on the framework of the UNFCCC that served as the formal meeting mechanism of the UNFCCC Parties (**Conference of the Parties, COP**) to assess the progress made by signatory states in dealing with climate change. United Nation has worked consistently for almost three decades to bring each country of the world to these climate summits. COP has become the supreme decision-making body of the Convention. All States that are Parties to the Convention are represented at the COP, at which they review the implementation of the Convention and any other legal instruments that the COP adopts and take decisions necessary to promote the effective implementation of the Convention, including institutional and administrative arrangements. Starting from

1995 till date, there have been consistent COP annual meetings with the next annual COP meeting (titled ‘[COP 26 UN Climate Change Conference](#)’) scheduled to take place in **Glasgow, UK from 31 October to 12 November 2021**. COP 26 was initially scheduled to be held from 9 to 19 November 2020, in Glasgow, but it got postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Most experts believe COP26 has a unique urgency.

Goals of COP 26

There are mainly four broad goals that have been highlighted for COP 26. The first goal calls for securing net zero-emission by the mid-century and calls the global states to keep the 1.5 degrees target within their reach. In order to achieve this, COP 26 calls upon the global states to phase out the use of coal, restrict the extent of deforestation in their respective countries, encourage investments in renewable energy resources and to promote electric vehicles technology in the automobile sector.

Secondly, COP 26 aims at developing adaptive strategies to protect communities and their natural habitats that are already bearing the ongoing effects of climate change. COP 26 aims at encouraging the countries to build resilient infrastructure, defence mechanisms, warning systems and adequate agriculture facilities to prevent the homes and livelihood of people.

The third major goal of the COP 26 is to urge the developed countries to fulfil their commitment toward mobilizing at least \$ 100bn climate fund per year by 2020. It also seeks to call upon international financial

institutions to play their part in attaining net-zero emissions.

Lastly, COP 26 aims at seeking global cooperation from states to work together on various climate action deliverables. It also seeks collaboration between governments, businesses and civil society to fight climate change. Finally, the conference indent to formalize the detailed Paris rulebook and make it fully operational.

Key highlights of previous COP meetings:

At COP 1 the concerns regarding the countries' abilities to meet their climate commitments under the Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (BSTA) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) were discussed.

COP 2 accepted the scientific findings on climate change put forward by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its second assessment (1995) and rejected uniform "harmonized policies" in favour of flexibility and called for "legally binding mid-term targets".

At the third United Nation Conferences of Parties, an important landmark was achieved with the signing of an important [Kyoto Protocol](#). This Protocol listed seven greenhouses gases i.e. carbon dioxide, Methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons sulfur, sulfur hexafluoride, and Nitrogen trifluoride as maximum potential contributors to global warming.

The COP 4 meeting was mainly held to address the issues that remained unresolved in Kyoto Protocol. The parties also adopted two year "Plan of Action" to advance efforts

and to devise mechanisms for implementing the [Kyoto Protocol](#).

COP 5 was mainly a technical meeting with no major outcomes achieved in the meeting.

There were basically two meetings for COP 6. The key issues discussed at both the COP 6 meetings relates to Flexible Mechanism that included emission trading, joint implementation and a clean development mechanism. In addition to these, issues pertaining to Carbon sinks, Compliance and financing were some other issues that got addressed in the second COP 6.

COP 7 set the stage for the states to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. COP 7 called for operational rules for international emissions trading among parties. The set of all the combined decisions that were taken on COP 7 were called [Marrakech Accords](#).

COP 8 was held in New Delhi and led to the adoption of [Delhi Ministerial Declaration](#). COP 8 called for efforts by developed countries to transfer technology and minimize the impact of climate change on developing countries.

At COP 9 meeting the parties agreed to use the Adaptation Fund for supporting developing countries in adapting to climate change. The issue of technology transfer for capacity building was also discussed at COP 9.

COP 10 reviewed all the work and progress made since the first COP 1 meeting. COP 10 outlaid the [Buenos Aires Action Plan](#) for developing countries to better adapt to climate change.

COP 11 served as the first meeting of the Parties to Kyoto Protocol since its signing in 1997. It led to the signing of the [Montreal](#)

[Action Plan](#) that extended the life of the Kyoto Protocol beyond its 2012 expiration date and negotiated deeper cuts in greenhouse-gas emissions.

COP 12 discussed key areas of support for developing countries and adopted a five-year plan to support climate change adaptation in developing countries.

COP 13 led to the adoption of [Bali Action Plan](#) that was divided into five main categories: shared vision, mitigation, adaptation, technology and financing. At COP 13 the [Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action](#) under the Convention (AWG-LCA) was also established.

At COP 14 agreement on the issues related to financing and funding the poor nations to cope with the effects of climate change were agreed upon. Mechanisms to incorporate forest protection into the efforts of the international community were also discussed.

The main aim of the COP 15 meeting was to establish a global climate agreement for the period from 2012 when the first commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol expires. The detailed outcome of the COP 15 was reflected in the [Copenhagen Accord](#). COP 15 also led to discussions on [REDD+](#) and drafted decisions on adaptation, technology, and capacity-building.

At COP 16 an agreement was adopted by state parties for setting up US\$100 billion per annum for “[Green Climate Fund](#)”, and a “[Climate Technology Centre and network](#)”. The parties also recognized the [IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report](#) on the goal of a maximum 2° C and called for urgent action to meet this goal.

At COP 17 meeting the parties negotiated on legally binding obligations for countries to be adopted by 2015 for the governing period post-2020. The progress on the creation of the Green Climate Fund was also made at COP 17 meeting for which the management framework was also adopted.

COP 18 resulted in the outcome of the collective set of documents known as the ‘[the Doha Climate Gateway](#)’. One of the key important document was the [Doha Amendment](#) to the Kyoto Protocol that highlighted the second commitment period from 2012 to 2020.

COP 19 led to an agreement that all the states start working on cutting their emission most preferably by the first quarter of 2015. During COP 19 meeting Singapore proposed the new term ‘[Intended Nationally Determined Contributions](#)’. COP 19 also proposed ‘[Warsaw Mechanism](#)’.

No significant development was made in COP 20 apart from European Union’s ambitious call for a legally binding 40% drop in emissions by 2030 from the 1990 baseline.

COP 21 was considered as one of the historic landmarks in the history of COP meetings that resulted in the famous [Paris Agreement](#). The key highlight of the Paris Agreement is to **limit global warming to well below 2, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius**, compared to pre-industrial levels. Paris agreement became a landmark success in the multilateral climate change approach as for the first time it brought 196 parties on a common consensus to undertake ambitious efforts to combat climate change and adapt to its effects.

COP 22 discussed major issues in developing countries and many African states related to

water scarcity, water cleanliness, and water-related sustainability. Issues related to reducing greenhouse emissions and utilization of low-carbon energy sources were also negotiated in the COP 22 meeting.

COP 23 discussed the detailed framework for Paris Agreement after its entering into force in 2020. It also outlined the steps that need to be taken to operationalize Paris Agreement. ‘[Talanoa Dialogue](#)’, which was an important mechanism designed for states to implement their Nationally Determined Contributions by 2020 was also launched at COP 23 meeting.

The main objective of the COP 24 meeting was to have a full implementation of the Paris agreement. COP 24 also set a rulebook for governments on how to measure and report their emissions-cut efforts.

The COP 25 ended with great disappointment as a result of a significant disconnect between science and climate negotiation actions on the ground. A positive hope came from European Union at COP 25 that reached an agreement regarding ‘[European Green Deal](#)’ that sets ambitious targets to lower its emissions to zero by 2050.

India firm on its commitments on Paris Agreement

India is amongst very few countries that is firm on its commitment towards the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and Paris Agreement goals and has taken noteworthy actions to tackle climate change. India has also set up ambitious targets to install [450 GW](#) of renewable energy capacity by 2030. The Government of India is taking concrete actions to meet these targets and out of total installed renewable energy capacity in India (excluding large

hydro), the country has already crossed the milestone of 100 GW.

India’s National Hydrogen Energy Mission

India’s [National Hydrogen Energy Mission](#) (NHEM) aims to boost the Government of India’s mission to provide clean efficient energy solutions to the country. Through the NHEM, India aims to develop a global hub for the manufacturing of hydrogen and fuel cells technologies across the value chain. India is currently undertaking pilot projects to study the prospects of developing Blue Hydrogen, Hydrogen CNG (H-CNG) and Green Hydrogen. For a trial run, 50 buses in Delhi are running on blended hydrogen in Compressed Natural Gas on a trial basis which further would be scaled up in major Indian cities. India is also targeting approximately one million tons of green hydrogen production every year by 2030.

India reminds developed nations at UN about \$ 100 billion climate pledge

India strongly urged the developed states regarding their [\\$ 100 billion commitment](#) to climate finance. Speaking at the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA76), TS Tirumurti, India's permanent representative to the United Nations called upon all the developed states to fulfil their climate finance commitments to developing countries. He asserted that the long-term climate finance to developing countries to mitigate the existing developmental gap in climate action remains to be a key pillar of the Paris Agreement. He also mentioned that India supports member-states driven climate action process in the interest of developing

countries but there is a need to desist from “cherry-picking” of the UNFCCC's structure.

India's REDD+ measures on conserving forest cover

Complying with the norms of the United Nation's climate change body's decision on mitigation action through enhancing green forest cover, the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, Government of India has released a [draft document](#) on Safeguards Information System for REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation) for public comments. REDD+ is an important mitigation mechanism formulated for developing countries for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks. Though India has already developed its REDD+ strategy and Forest Reference level, now a draft on Safeguards Information System for REDD+ remains available for public comments.

India's roadmap for Net zero emissions

The emerging push for net zero emission and the proposed year of 2050 has created a huge debate between the developed and the developing countries regarding the practicality of such ambitious targets. There are also debates on what India's stand should be at the climate negotiations. Speaking on the issue of net zero-emission, recently India's Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Bhupender Yadav mentioned that the need of the hour is ‘deeds’ and not ‘plain words’ to deal with climate change and that reaching ‘net zero’ alone is not enough emphasizing that the

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report published recently is a clarion call for the developed countries to undertake immediate deep emission cuts and decarbonize their economies. As per a recent [report](#) by Council on Energy, Environment and Water, for India to achieve net-zero targets by 2070, the country needs to have installed 5630 GW of solar capacity. The [report](#) further mentioned that India's power generation from coal would need to peak by 2040 which would subsequently drop by 99 per cent between the years 2040 to 2060. Similarly, the report highlighted that India's consumption of crude oil would peak by 2050 and would substantially fall by 90 per cent between the years 2050 to 2070.

COP 26 should focus on climate finance in scope, scale and speed: India at UN

Representing India virtually at the recent UN Secretary General's meeting, Bhupender Yadav, India's Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, called on the developed countries to uphold the principles of the UNFCCC process, for any successful outcome in any climate change negotiations including the upcoming COP 26. Among the various other issues, issues of finance, mitigation and adaptation for tackling the climate crisis were discussed in the meeting. Highlighting the recent [IPCC findings](#) and commenting on the [UNFCCC Synthesis Report](#), Mr. Yadav mentioned that the developed countries have collectively emitted more than their estimated emission allowances in 2008-2020 period. Hence he called upon all these countries to take greater action on mitigation and provide financial support to developing countries. The minister mentioned that COP26 should focus on climate finance in scope, scale and speed and

should develop a suitable mechanism to transfer green technologies to developing countries at a lower cost.

India commissioned 6,530 MW rooftop solar capacity till June 2021

A recent [report](#) by Bridge to India, a leading energy consulting firm outlined that India added a total of 6,530 MW of solar and wind capacities between July 2020 and June 2021 which constitute a nominal 3 per cent year-on-year increase. This report further complements the [estimates](#) that if India's solar installation capacity remained consistent at the rate it has achieved in the last three months, coal-based power generation could peak by the year 2023-24, this increased solar generation alone could meet India's growing electricity demand in subsequent years. The Government of India, recently through its [Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission](#) (JNNSM), has also highlighted the country's aims to achieve the target of 100 GW of solar power by 2022.

Green Grids Initiative - One Sun One World One Grid (OSOWOG)

India's ambitious global grid declaration is expected to be adopted at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow. Recently speaking at an event on the '[Green Grids Initiative-One Sun One World One Grid](#)', India's Union Minister for Power and New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), Shri R K Singh highlighted India's commitment to

the environment and highlighted India's target of achieving 450 GW of installed renewable energy capacity by 2030. He underlined that India is well on its way to achieving its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) relating clean energy and emission reduction well ahead of the target date. Mr. Singh presented the GGI-OSOWOG initiative as a possible solution for driving down the need for storage and in effect reduce the costs of the energy transition. [International Solar Alliance \(ISA\)](#) is the nodal agency for implementing OSOWOG and seeks to transfer solar power generated in one region to feed the electricity demands of others. The Government of India asked ISA to carry out a study to look at the viability of this initiative as OSOWOG offers an opportunity to use solar energy 24 hours a day as even when the sun is not shining over one place of the globe, it is shining somewhere else on the globe. The idea for the One Sun One World One Grid (OSOWOG) initiative was put forth by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi, at the [First Assembly of the International Solar Alliance \(ISA\)](#) in October 2018. He had called for connecting solar energy supply across borders. In May 2021, the United Kingdom and India agreed to combine forces of the Green Grids Initiative and the One Sun One World One Grid initiative and jointly launch GGI-OSOWOG at the COP26 summit being hosted by the UK at Glasgow in November 2021.

Non-Traditional Security Centre

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