
INDIA IN THE INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE NEGOTIATIONS: INITIATIVES AND CHALLENGES UNDER THE NEW REGIME**Chaitra C****Abstract**

Climate change primarily considered an environmental issue gradually has evolved as a security issue. With the need for global community to collectively address the common goods problem, the rift between developed and developing countries in the utilisation of carbon space emerged. The historical responsibilities argument of developing countries like India is seen as such emerging economies 'hiding behind the poor' narrative while India asserts its national interest of poverty eradication and providing basic needs to its large population. The survival emissions and luxury emissions argument and later India's criticism of the West on its affluent lifestyles and insisting on its own sustainable lifestyles. The paper looks into reasons and extent to which India is susceptible to climate change and the key adaptation and mitigation efforts adopted. The paper throws light into the decisions and initiatives taken by the National Democratic Alliance government in the national domain in accordance with the international commitments. It further ponders over several bilateral and multilateral initiatives propelled by the government.

Key Words Greenhouse Gases, Multilateralism, sustainable development**Introduction**

Climate change has emerged an existential threat and non-traditional security concern in the contemporary times. It is primarily caused due to building up of Green House Gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere which is primarily attributed to the use of fossil fuels and land use change. Increased population and the subsequent processes of urbanisation and industrialisation have caused substantial adverse effects on our natural ecosystem. Today it is clearly evident that every individual directly or indirectly is responsible for climate change and are also victims of the hazards of climate change. In India, the impacts of climate change are evident in the melting of Himalayan glaciers, low agricultural yield, rising sea levels threatening long coastlines and habitations and increased frequency of extreme events like floods and droughts. Legitimate concerns of climate change, food security and energy security have driven international

negotiations and every nation is fighting tooth and nail to protect its national interests and India is no exception. However, degradation of environment has been a natural corollary to development. India is an emerging economy wherein it has to keep pace with industrialisation. India is as well a developing nation and therefore has to imperatively emphasis the building of socio- economic infrastructure. India's contribution to global emissions between 1850 and 2010 has been a mere 2.7% whereas that of US has been 27%. India's per capita GHG emission are estimated to be 3.5 tonnes of carbon di oxide equivalent in 2030 which compares favourably with the global average per capita GHG emissions of 4.22 tonnes of carbon di oxide equivalent in 2005. India has voluntarily committed to an endeavour to reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by 20- 25% in comparison with 2005 levels, by 2020.

The following are certain facts which clearly project the seriousness of the problem of climate change for India. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports projected that the earth's surface temperature increase would be 2- 4 degree Celsius and sea level rise to be 18 to 59cm, warming of about 0.2 degree Celsius per decade due to rising levels of GHGs. Further, The IPCC also points out that global temperatures have gone up 0.75 degree Celsius in the last century with Himalayas warming at a rate upto three times as high and rise of sea level doubled in 3 decades. Furthermore, India constituting 2.4% of world's area accounts for 7- 8% of recorded plant and animal species of the world. India is home to one- sixth of entire plant species of the world and of 12 biodiversity hotspots of the world, 2 are in India. There is a growing fear of extinction of certain species of such varied flora and fauna.

Climate change is a concern for India for the following reasons. India like many developing countries, has not even utilised its fair share of the earth's carbon space nor has it achieved basic minimum standards of living for its entire population. Per capita energy use in developing countries is only about 25% of that in developed countries on an average. About 400 million Indians still do not have electricity in their homes. There is the issue of access to clean fuels for a sizeable proportion of the rural population. About 800 million use some form of biomass as their primary and only energy source for cooking, which is worrisome. UN panel in March 2014 has warned that Asia is facing the brunt of climate change and will see severe stress on water resources and food grain production in the future which would increase the risk of armed conflict among South Asian nations. India may lose upto 17% of its GDP if the annual mean temperature

rises by 1 degree Celsius compared to pre- industrialisation level, hitting the poor the most. The current per capita energy consumption in India is about 0.6 tonnes oil equivalent per year, which is a fraction of the figures for the developed world. With today's technologies and living standards, the energy consumption in India would need to increase by 4 times as India's HDI increases from the current value of 0.5 to a value of 0.9.

New Government, New Hopes, New Initiatives

The National Democratic Alliance government under the leadership of Narendra Modi has given a new nomenclature to the Environment Ministry as the *Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change*. This was followed by a serious pledge on the World Environment day (June 5) 2014 that 'India would provide a new vocabulary to the world in environment conservation'. Over time, we can judge if these are mere rhetoric or serious proactive steps in the area of climate change. Arun Jaitley in the *Union Budget 2014* proposed 3 major initiatives-National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change with an initial amount of ₹100 crores. This fund will focus on innovative methods of water conservation, use of hybrid seeds etc. to help agriculture rearieries of climate change. This would help farmers adapt to climate change. National Centre for Himalayan Studies to be set up at Roorkee, Uttarkhand which would work towards extending science based inputs to policy makers for conserving Himalayan ecology. USD 80 million allocated to the Ultra-Mega Solar projects in the various states of India, USD 100million allocated to the Ultra-Modern Critical Coal Based Thermal Power Technology and USD16 million allocated for the development of 1 MW solar parks on the banks of canals reflect the commitment towards renewable and clean technology based economic growth.

Prakash Javadekar, the Environment Minister, in the *High Level Segment of First UN Environment Assembly held at UNEP Head Quarters, Nairobi on 26th and 27th June 2014* which focussed on the Sustainable Development Goals and post 2015 Development Agenda put forward India's view point strongly that we need to take a balanced view with respect to economic, social and environmental issues to ensure sustainable development. India lobbied with Arab countries, G- 77 plus China and BRICS to defeat US position that Rio principles should not be made part of its final outcome document. However, despite US opposition, Rio principles were part of the final outcome document. India will strengthen its climate change negotiation

team and will intensely lobby for a good strategic relationship with like-minded nations on the matter. India also pledged to do more meaningful representation in the world events.

The 18th BASIC Ministerial Meeting on Climate Change was hosted by India at New Delhi on 8th August, 2014 which resulted in substantial outcomes as, Emphasis on a comprehensive, balanced, equitable and fair convention in order to enhance the full, effective and sustained implementation of the convention; International negotiations to be balanced and carried out in a comprehensive manner through an open, transparent, inclusive, party driven and consensus process according to the two basic principles of Equity and Common But Differentiated Responsibilities; Developed countries to implement their commitments towards developing countries for provision of finance, technology and capacity building support; Need to secure IPRs of relevant climate friendly technologies for deployment in developing countries; Reiterated that public financial sources should be the mainstay of climate finance and that private finance could only play a supplementary role; and Promised to continue the traditional solidarity with Small Island Developing States in their efforts to meet development challenges and vulnerabilities.

In the Santa Cruz summit of G 77 and China in June 2014 to mark 50th anniversary of the group India reaffirmed the importance of multilateralism in addressing climate change. Alongside, strongly opposed unilateral measures as shipping and aviation. The Global Environmental Facility (GEF) serves as a financial mechanism for Convention on Biological Diversity and UNFCCC. In the 6th cycle of GEF (July 2014 to June 2018) 30 donor countries have pledged USD 4.43 billion. India pledged a contribution of US \$12 million which is a 33% increase over its contribution to GEF cycle 5.

The Environment Minister after completion of 100 days in office had summarised the actions taken during the time period-The Environment ministry which was considered the speed breaker ministry had cleared 240 of the 325 projects including 17 infrastructure projects which not only spurred investments but were accompanied by green steps as upgrading emission standards. The slogan put forward was: *Paryavaran Raksha aur Vikas saathsaath*, which meant environmental protection to go hand in hand with the development process. Further, to ensure *transparency and quick decision making*, online system for applying and tracking of environment and forest

clearances were introduced. *Decentralisation* of certain powers to the state governments to ensure development without destruction would be emphasised. Outdated rules were assured be removed but *compliance* with mandatory conditions would be emphasised to ensure efficiency. A *web portal for grant of recognition and monitoring of zoos* was launched on 12th September, 2014. *E-Archival and retrieval management system for Central Zoo Authority* and a book on ‘*Zoos in India 2014*’ were launched. The *Corporate Fuel Average Savings standard* was introduced to yield potential savings of over 20 million tonnes of fuel by 2025.

The main objective of 12th Five Year Plan has been- faster, sustainable and more inclusive growth. A new central sector scheme *Climate Change Action Programme* with 8 components including implementation of State Action Plans on Climate Change have been allocated ₹290 crores by the Planning Commission which intends to build and support capacity at central and state levels for assessing climate change impacts and formulating and implementing adequate response measures. India has been a signatory to the set of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Goal 7 of MDGs states, Ensure Environment Sustainability and Target 10 aims to halve by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. In September, 2014 the PMO initiated a *special cleanliness drive* in its premises and observed cleanliness week from September 25th to October 2nd. The *Swachh Bharat Mission* was unveiled on Gandhi Jayanthi with a pledge to clean India as a gift to Gandhi’s 150th birth anniversary in 2019. It was attempted to pay tribute Gandhiji through a swachagraha for his strategy of satyagraha which was instrumental in gaining independence. New Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation has been constituted to implement *the Namami Gange programme* which has a budgetary allocation of ₹2037 in order to conserve river Ganga. As a part of the programme, already 48 industrial units around Ganga have been shut down by the Government of India.

In the *UN Climate Summit at New York on September 2014* the Environment Minister has asserted that India will take action against climate voluntarily and not at the behest of any other country. He also pointed out that India remains committed to pursuing a path of sustainable development through eradication of poverty both of income as well as energy. India signed the Minamata Convention on Mercury, a global treaty to protect human health and environment from the adverse effects of mercury. Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his speech at the 69th

Session of UN General Assembly on 26th September, 2014 emphasised the need for access to basic sanitation, electricity and clean drinking water. He opined that ‘we must seek a more habitable and sustainable world’. With regard to climate change he stressed the following points- CBDR should be the basis of collective and continued action. We must make honest efforts to shoulder challenges and responsibilities and that the developed nations must fulfil their commitment for funding and technology transfer; Individual national action is indispensable. He said India is prepared to share its technology and capabilities just as we have announced a free satellite for the SAARC countries; and We must change our lifestyles and give up reckless consumption. Respect for nature has been an integral part of spiritualism. Yoga which embodies restraint and fulfilment and harmony between man and nature could help us in this regard. Such consciousness can help us deal with climate change.

During Chinese Premier Xi Jinping’s visit to India in September 2014 both nations expressed the need for 2015 Agreement to be in accordance with equity, CBDR and respective capabilities. Both nations called for an expansion of civil nuclear energy programme to ensure energy security. Thus, both nations will carry out bilateral cooperation in civil nuclear energy in line with their respective international commitments, including working level consultations between Department of Atomic Energy of India and the China Atomic Energy Authority. During his visit to US in September 2014, PM Modi spoke of the Roof Top Policy to install solar implements which is being prepared. He called for India- US cooperation amongst the governments, science and academic communities. He also forged that both nations need to partner in ensuring that both countries have affordable, clean, reliable and diverse sources of energy, including through efforts of bringing American origin nuclear power technologies to India. The two leaders Modi and Obama reaffirmed their commitment to implement fully the U.S.-India civil nuclear cooperation agreement. They established a Contact Group on advancing the implementation of civil nuclear energy cooperation in order to realize early their shared goal of delivering electricity from U.S.-built nuclear power plants in India. They looked forward to advancing the dialogue to discuss all implementation issues, including but not limited to administrative issues, liability, technical issues, and licensing to facilitate the establishment of nuclear parks, including power plants with Westinghouse and GE-Hitachi technology.

Recognizing the critical importance of increasing energy access, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and improving resilience in the face of climate change, President Obama and Prime Minister Modi agreed to a new and enhanced strategic partnership on energy security, clean energy, and climate change. They agreed to strengthen and expand the highly successful U.S.-India Partnership to Advance Clean Energy (PACE) through a series of priority initiatives, including a new Energy Smart Cities Partnership to promote efficient urban energy infrastructure; a new program to scale-up renewable energy integration into India's power grid; cooperation to support India's efforts to upgrade its alternative energy institutes and to develop new innovation centres; an expansion of the Promoting Energy Access through Clean Energy (PEACE) program to unlock additional private sector investment and accelerate the deployment of cost-effective, super-efficient appliances; and the formation of a new Clean Energy Finance Forum to promote investment and trade in clean energy projects. Both leaders are committed to working towards a successful outcome in Paris in 2015 of the conference of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), including the creation of a new global agreement on climate change. The leaders recalled previous bilateral and multilateral statements on the phase-down of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs). They recognized the need to use the institutions and expertise of the Montreal Protocol to reduce consumption and production of HFCs, while continuing to report and account for the quantities reduced under the UNFCCC. They pledged to urgently arrange a meeting of their bilateral task force on HFCs prior to the next meeting of the Montreal Protocol to discuss issues such as safety, cost, and commercial access to new or alternative technologies to replace HFCs. The two sides would thereafter cooperate on next steps to tackle the challenge posed by HFCs to global warming. They launched a new U.S.-India Partnership for Climate Resilience to advance capacity for climate adaptation planning, and a new program of work on air quality aimed at delivering benefits for climate change and human health. They also launched a new U.S.-India Climate Fellowship Program to build long-term capacity to address climate change-related issues in both countries. The President and Prime Minister instructed their senior officials to work through the U.S.-India Energy Dialogue, U.S.-India Joint Working Group on Combating Climate Change, and other relevant fora to advance these and other initiatives. The leaders welcomed the conclusion of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Export-Import Bank and the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency, which would make up to \$1 billion in financing available to bolster India's efforts to transition to a low-carbon and

climate-resilient energy economy, while boosting U.S. renewable energy exports to India. The two leaders reiterated the importance of conserving India's precious biodiversity and agreed to explore opportunities for collaboration on national parks and wildlife conservation.

The Way Ahead for the New Government

India has already committed that its per capita emissions will not exceed those of the developed countries under any circumstances. A key challenge is whether India is prepared to accommodate more global targets, given its domestic obligations of basic development including minimum needs of the poor. The principles of Equity and CBDR must continue to be the bedrock of ongoing and future negotiations on climate change. Reconciliation of the three pillars of sustainable development namely, social equality, environment protection and economic growth through various strategies is underway within the domestic framework; between the developing nations and vis- a- vis the developed nations. The various adaptation and mitigation measures are being employed and refined in this regard. Two global deals on climate change and sustainable development are being negotiated. 190 countries including India need to pledge emission cuts for post-2020 period. India needs to make an assessment of its Intended Nationally Determined Contributions as an essential pre- requisite for the upcoming 21st Conference of Parties under UNFCCC at Paris in December 2015. Global community is working to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) possibly to be integrated with unfinished Millennium Development Goals when they end in 2015. The Open Working Group of 30 members has been working on thematic focus areas for SDGs for consideration by the UN General Assembly. India's relations with China across the regional groupings as BRICS, IBSA and BASIC are varied in nature. There is competition in the economic sphere and convergence of ideas in the climate change issues. Also, US- China alignment via the bilateral agreements risks our ongoing alliance with China. India is currently allied with some oil producing countries that have more to lose than to gain from successful climate talks, while India, along with other vulnerable countries could have much to gain in terms of diminished vulnerability. What larger geo political strategy should inform our climate stance needs to be explored. There is a need for a National Climate Legislation to spur concrete adaptation and mitigation measures on a co-benefit approach. However, there are economic risks as mitigation obligations could hamper growth; could also cause political costs as loss of support in constituencies. Parliament's

competence to implement a treaty by passing a law covering matters relating to state list is a challenge. Institutional reforms to keep pace with legislations and enhancing institutional capacities and strengthening implementation alongside mainstreaming a science based approach and appropriate technological applications. Promotion of inter-sectoral and integrating safety, health and environment. Climate policies have implications on agriculture, water, energy policies and several others. Need to discover to what extent sub-national actors like panchayats and municipal corporations could be made a part of the planning process to tackle climate change. India continues to pitch for early ratification of the second commitment period of Kyoto Protocol so that it would be legally binding on rich nations to cut their emissions of GHGs under specified targets till 2020. India needs to strengthen its negotiating team and make preparations as meetings and exhibitions to strengthen lobbying as underway to the Paris summit of 2015 where post-Kyoto Protocol framework will be decided. Serious steps need to be taken to ensure synergy between adaptation and mitigation measures and the related policies and institutions. There is a need to comprehensively assessing costs and benefits of such actions through a co-benefit lens. Thrust should be given on promoting recycling and re-use of waste, incentives for use of non-conventional sources of energy, utilise biodegradable wastes in agriculture and industry, efficient management of non-biodegradable waste. There is a need to have strong think tanks with academicians, researchers and experts who have interdisciplinary knowledge in order to provide substantial inputs to decision making, policy making, policy implementation, monitoring and analysis, feedback mechanism and suggestion of alternatives. A repository of all the related data could promote further initiatives in handling the menace of climate change.

The financing needs of sustainable development through domestic resource mobilisation and international sources of finance; immediate and substantial capitalisation of the Green Climate Fund needs to be emphasised. Traditional environment friendly practices and religious beliefs concerning ecological balance could sensitize people towards protection of the environment. Civil society groups and the media too should facilitate people's participation in tackling the adverse effects of climate change. The Union government has assumed a proactive role by asserting that India will provide a new vocabulary to which the world will react and we will take the climate discourse to a new height unlike till date when the world has provided a

vocabulary on climate change and we reacted. India invokes the *Right to Grow* to send strong signals to rich nations on the issue of climate change. However, India reiterates its commitment to reduce emissions but cannot address challenges of climate change unless it eradicates poverty through economic growth wherein the net emissions may increase. For India, poverty is an environmental disaster; poverty is the major polluter. The protection of national interest and national priorities are key to any kind of response to international environment agenda. Therefore, the new government has to ensure development via maintaining ecological balance.