

Paris Agreement and India's commitment to it

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Despite its accomplishments, global pressures are intensifying on India to commit more towards the Conference of the Parties (COP26), scheduled for November 2021 in Glasgow. That brings us to the question. Is it fair to apply pressure on India to raise its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) committed in the Paris Agreement?

In news: China opens first road-rail transport link to Indian Ocean

Placing it in syllabus: Environment

Dimensions

- Evolution of UNFCCC and important COPs of it
- Paris Agreement
- India's INDCs
- India's compliance to its INDCs
- Assessment of other countries

Content:

Evolution of UNFCCC and important COPs of it

- 1988 – The **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** is set up to assess the scientific, technical and socioeconomic information relevant for the understanding of the risk of human-induced climate change.
- 1990 – IPCC's **first assessment report released**. IPCC and the second **World Climate Conference** call for a global treaty on climate change. United Nations General Assembly negotiations on a framework convention begin.
- 1992 – The **Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC)** adopts the UNFCCC text. At the **Earth Summit in Rio**, the

UNFCCC is opened for signature along with its sister Rio Conventions, **UNCBD and UNCCD**.

- The UNFCCC Convention was adopted on 9 May 1992 and opened for signature on 4 June 1992 at the **United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)** in Rio de Janeiro (known by its popular title, the Earth Summit).
- The UNFCCC entered into force on 21 March 1994. Today, it has near-universal membership.
- The 197 countries that have ratified the Convention are called Parties to the Convention. Preventing “dangerous” human interference with the climate system is the ultimate aim of the UNFCCC.
- The ultimate objective of the Convention is to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations “at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic (human induced) interference with the climate system.”
- It states that “such a level should be achieved within a time-frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened, and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner.”

Important COPs:

- The **Conference of Parties (COP)** is the **decision-making body of the UNFCCC**. All States that are party to the Convention are represented at the COP.
- They **review the implementation of any legal instrument** that the Convention adopts.

1997 – COP 3 – Kyoto, Japan

- The Kyoto Protocol was adopted in Kyoto, Japan in 1997 and came into force in 2005.
- It aimed at cutting GHG emissions across the developed world by about 5% by 2012 compared with 1990 levels.
- It is based on the principle of **“common but**

differentiated responsibility” (CBDR) and is the only global treaty with binding limits on GHG emissions.

- Kyoto Protocol **binds only the developed countries** because it recognizes that they are largely responsible for the current high levels of GHG emissions in the atmosphere, which are the result of more than 150 years of industrial activity.
- Countries bound to the Kyoto targets can meet a part of their targets through **three “market based mechanisms”** i.e. **Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), Emission Trading/Cap and Trade, and Joint Implementation (JI)**
- Kyoto Protocol emission target gases include **CO₂, SF₆, CH₄, HFCs, N₂O and PFCs.**
- The Kyoto Protocol has **two commitment periods: 2008-12 and 2013-20.**

2005 – COP 11/ CMP1 – Montreal, Canada

- Entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol.
- The **first Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (MOP 1/CMP 1)** takes place in Montreal.
- In accordance with Kyoto Protocol requirements, Parties launched negotiations on the next phase of the Kyoto Protocol under the **Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP)**
- These were named as the **Nairobi Work Programme**, after their adaptation a year later.
- After this COP were held together with CMP: Conference of Parties Serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol

2007 – COP 13/CMP 3 – Bali, Indonesia

- **IPCC’s Fourth Assessment Report released.** Climate science entered into popular consciousness.
- At COP 13, Parties agreed on the **Bali Road Map**, which charted the way towards a post-2012 outcome in two work

streams:

- the AWG-KP, and
- the Ad-Hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action Under the Convention.
- Governments adopted the Bali Road Map which included reviewing the financial mechanism to fund climate change initiatives.

2009 – COP 15/ CMP5 – Copenhagen, Denmark

- **Copenhagen Accord** drafted at COP 15 in Copenhagen among a five nation accord between **US and BASIC countries (India, China, Brazil and South Africa)**.
- This was taken note of by the COP.
- Countries later submitted emissions reductions pledges or mitigation action pledges, all non-binding.
- A **legally binding agreement could not be arrived at** in this Summit due to disagreement between developed and developing nations.

2010 – COP 16/ CMP6 – Cancun, Mexico

- Parties agreed to establish a **Green Climate Fund (GCF)** to provide financing to projects, programmes, policies and other activities in developing countries
- GCF is intended to be the centrepiece of efforts to **raise climate finance of \$ 100 billion by 2020**.
- A **Technology Mechanism** was also established in this Summit.
- It was expected to facilitate the implementation of enhanced action on technology development and transfer in order to support action on mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

2012 – COP 18/ CMP8 – Doha, Qatar

- The **Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol** was adopted by the CMP at CMP 8.
- They reached an agreement to extend the commitment

period of the Kyoto Protocol till 2020.

- Government **agreed to work further towards a Global Climate Change Agreement.**

2013 – COP 19/ CMP9 – Warsaw, Poland

- Key decisions adopted at COP 19/CMP 9 include:
 - **decisions on further advancing the Durban Platform, the Green Climate Fund and Long-Term Finance,**
 - the **Warsaw Framework for REDD Plus** and
 - the **Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage.**
- The Parties **agreed to submit “intended nationally determined contributions”,** known as INDCs, well before the Paris conference.
- Governments also **decided to close the “pre-2020 ambition gap”**– the gap between what has been pledged to date and what is required to keep the global temperatures below a maximum average of 2 degrees Celsius.

2015 – COP 21/ CMP11 – Paris, France

- Intensive negotiations took place under the **Ad Hoc Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP)** throughout 2012-2015 and culminated in the **adoption of the Paris Agreement** by the COP on 12 December 2015.

Paris Agreement:

- The **Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty** on climate change.
- It was **adopted by 196 Parties at COP 21 in Paris,** on 12 December 2015 and entered into force on 4 November 2016.
- Its **goal is to limit global warming to well below 2, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius,** compared to pre-industrial levels.
- To achieve this long-term temperature goal, **countries aim to reach global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions**

as soon as possible to achieve a climate neutral world by mid-century.

- The Paris Agreement is a landmark in the multilateral climate change process because, **for the first time, a binding agreement brings all nations into a common cause** to undertake ambitious efforts to combat climate change and adapt to its effects.
- Implementation of the Paris Agreement requires economic and social transformation, based on the best available science.
- The Paris Agreement **works on a 5- year cycle of increasingly ambitious climate action** carried out by countries.
- By 2020, countries submitted their plans for climate action known as **nationally determined contributions (NDCs)**.
- In their NDCs, countries **communicate actions they will take to reduce their Greenhouse Gas emissions** in order to reach the goals of the Paris Agreement.
- Countries also communicate in the NDCs actions they will take to build resilience to adapt to the impacts of rising temperatures.
- The Paris Agreement **provides a framework for financial, technical and capacity building support to those countries who need it**.
- With the Paris Agreement, countries established an **enhanced transparency framework (ETF)**.
- Under ETF, starting in 2024, **countries will report transparently on actions taken** and progress in climate change mitigation, adaptation measures and support provided or received. It also provides for international procedures for the review of the submitted reports.

India's INDCs:

India has submitted its Intended Nationally Determined

Contribution (INDC) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Salient features of India's INDC:

- To put forward and further propagate a healthy and sustainable way of living based on traditions and values of conservation and moderation.
- To adopt a climate-friendly and a cleaner path than the one followed hitherto by others at corresponding level of economic development.
- To reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by 33 to 35 per cent by 2030 from 2005 level.
- To achieve about 40 per cent cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel based energy resources by 2030, with the help of transfer of technology and low cost international finance, including from Green Climate Fund.
- To create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.
- To better adapt to climate change by enhancing investments in development programmes in sectors vulnerable to climate change, particularly agriculture, water resources, Himalayan region, coastal regions, health and disaster management.
- To mobilize domestic and new and additional funds from developed countries to implement the above mitigation and adaptation actions in view of the resource required and the resource gap.
- To build capacities, create domestic framework and international architecture for quick diffusion of cutting edge climate technology in India and for joint collaborative R&D for such future technologies.

Key elements and focus areas of India's INDC

- **Sustainable Lifestyles** – To put forward and further

propagate a healthy and sustainable way of living based on traditions and values of conservation and moderation.

- **Cleaner Economic Development** – To adopt a climate friendly and a cleaner path than the one followed hitherto by others at corresponding level of economic development.
- **Reducing Emission intensity of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** – To reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by 33 to 35 percent by 2030 from 2005 level.
- **Increasing the Share of Non Fossil Fuel Based Electricity** – To achieve about 40 percent cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel based energy resources by 2030 with the help of transfer of technology and low cost international finance including from Green Climate Fund (GCF).
- **Enhancing Carbon Sink (Forests)** – To create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.
- **Adaptation** – To better adapt to climate change by enhancing investments in development programmes in sectors vulnerable to climate change, particularly agriculture, water resources, Himalayan region, coastal regions, health and disaster management.
- **Mobilizing Finance** – To mobilize domestic and new & additional funds from developed countries to implement the above mitigation and adaptation actions in view of the resource required and the resource gap.
- **Technology Transfer and Capacity Building** – To build capacities, create domestic framework and international architecture for quick diffusion of cutting edge climate technology in India and for joint collaborative R&D for such future technologies.

India's compliance to its INDCs

- Even with all its challenges, India is setting a global

example in meeting its Nationally Determined Contributions

- Even at the fifth anniversary of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (December 2020), India was the only G20 nation compliant with the agreement
- India has been ranked within the top 10 for two years consecutively in the Climate Change Performance Index, released by an independent international organisation that evaluates the performance of countries emitting 90%+ of global greenhouse gases (GHGs)
- The **Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All (UJALA)** scheme is the world's largest zero-subsidy LED bulb programme for domestic consumers
- India is **on track (as reports/documents show) to meet and exceed the NDC commitment to achieve 40% electric power installed capacity** from non-fossil fuel-based sources by 2030; this share is 38.18% (November 2020).
- Similarly, **India has reduced the emission intensity of GDP by 24% between 2005-2016**. This is against the voluntary declaration for reducing the emission intensity of GDP by 20%-25% by 2020.
- As part of its mitigation efforts, **India is implementing one of the most extensive renewable energy expansion programmes to achieve 175 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2022 and 450 GW by 2030**. India has also coupled its post-pandemic revival with environmental protection.
- As part of the **fiscal stimulus, the Government announced several green measures**, including a \$26.5-billion investment in biogas and cleaner fuels, \$3.5 billion in incentives for producing efficient solar photovoltaic (PV) and advanced chemistry cell batteries, and \$780 million towards an afforestation programme.
- India provided leadership for setting up:
 - the **International Solar Alliance** – a coalition of solar-resource-rich countries, and
 - the **Coalition for Disaster Resilient**

Infrastructure, a partnership of governments, United Nations agencies, multilateral development banks, the private sector, and knowledge institutions.

Assessment of other countries:

- Examining World Bank data for CO₂ emissions (metric tons per capita) over two decades since the Kyoto protocol informs that at the current rate, both China and the U.S. could emit five times more than India in 2030.
- The U.K.'s emission levels could be more than 1.5 times that of India.
- Brazil, with its dense forests, may end up at similar levels.

China:

- Among recent efforts, last year, China, the world's largest GHG emitter, joined the 'race to zero' and targets carbon neutrality by 2060.
- Interestingly, it hopes to peak CO₂ emissions by 2030 to bend the emissions curve.
- The Climate Action Tracker, an independent scientific analysis tracking governments' actions, also expressed its concern stating, "Most worryingly, China remains committed to supporting the coal industry while the rest of the world experiences a decline, and is now home to half of the world's coal capacity."

The USA:

- Recently, the U.S. rejoined the Paris Agreement and committed to reducing emissions by 50%-52% in 2030 and reaching net-zero emissions economy-wide by 2050.
- While they re-energise their fight on climate change, legislation may not be straightforward, given the Democrats' strength in Congress.
- Such ambitions will also require much more near-term

investment than even the U.S. President Joe Biden's \$2.3 trillion infrastructure package.

France:

- The French government, during the novel coronavirus pandemic, set green conditions for bailing out its aviation industry.
- However, the analysts say that no baseline for reducing emissions from domestic flights was fixed, and it is unclear what measures were adopted to promote rail for domestic travel.

Australia:

- An Australian Prime Minister, in 2018, lost his chair on a proposal to address climate change through an emissions-reduction target.
- The complicated domestic politics prevented them from addressing the problem, despite the country being vulnerable, and stretches of the famous Great Barrier Reef having died in recent years.
- It was, at least, the third instance in Australia when climate issues brought down its Prime Minister.
- It illustrates how difficult it is for governments to develop policies to mitigate climate change.

Mould your thought: The responsibility of sustaining the entire planet does not rest on a few countries; everyone has to act. Evaluate.

Approach to the answer:

- Introduction
- Discuss how climate change is a global problem
- Briefly discuss the failure of Kyoto Protocol
- Discuss the India's progress made on NDCs under Paris Agreement so far
- Compare them with other nations

- Conclusion