



## MAPPING INDIA'S POSITION IN UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCES (UNFCCC) - WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COP-26

**DR. JESMINE AHMED**

Assistant Professor & Head  
Department of Political Science  
Government Model College, Borkhola, Cachar, Assam  
Email: jesmine.jes@gmail.com

**Abstract:** *One of the crucial challenges of the 21st century is Climate Change that has severe impact all over the world. It is a universal phenomenon with local effects. So, the issue should be determined by collective efforts. The United Nations voiced concern about this in the 1970s and called for an international summit in Stockholm, which caused in the establishment of global environmental governance in 1972 and the creation of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). Later, The First Global Climate Conference was planned for in 1979. From October 29 to November 7, 1990, Geneva hosted the Second International Climate Conference. Its primary duty was to evaluate the WCP (World Climate Program) that WCC-1 had established. It was an important phase towards a inclusive climate accord. The WCC-2 called for the establishment of a climate convention along with foster international efforts to address climate change that led to the establishment of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992 that implemented in 1994 by signing of 154 countries. Since then from 1995 onwards Parties to the Convention, i.e., called Conference of Parties (COP), the ultimate body have met annually to access and review in dealing with climate change. Significantly, from the starting, India has been very concern in the environmental degradation and took part every global environmental conferences with binding commitments. However, this paper seeks to study India's Response in United Nations Climate Change Conferences in General and trying to analyse India's stance in COP - 26 that was held in Glasgow, Scotland in particular.*

**Keywords:** *Climate Change, United Nations, UNEP, UNFCCC, COP 26*

### INTRODUCTION

Climate change is one of the key long-term challenges every country faces today. It led a vigorous menace to sustainable development and also impacts on the economic growth of a country. Therefore, climate change is a global phenomenon but with local consequences. The United Nations expressed concern about this in the 1970s and called for an international conference in Stockholm, which resulted in the establishment of global environmental governance in 1972 and the creation of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP).

As a populous, tropical developing country, India also faces a bigger challenge in coping with the consequences of Climate Change. Therefore, since the beginning, India has always played an important and influential role in this regard. In 1972, when United Nations for the first time called upon the countries for the protection of environment, among the 114 delegates India was one of them. Consequently, it is to be noted that India became the first country in the world to pass the amendment in the Parliament to safeguard the environment. By passing the 42th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1976, which incorporates article 48 (A) and 51A (g) in Part IV for environmental protection. Since then India had been participating in the Global Conferences with full cooperation. In this paper, an effort has



been made to study India's role in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conferences in general and with a specific focus on Conference of the Parties-26 that was held at Glasgow, Scotland on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct- 12 Nov, 2021.

### OBJECTIVES

The following are the objectives of the concerned study:

1. To study India's Response in United Nations Climate Change Conferences in General.
2. To discuss the outcome of the Conference-26 .
3. To analyse India's Role in Conference of Parties UNFCCC (COP) - 26 in particular.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

So far as the review of literature is concerned about my study, many writers have written and given their views on the respected area. In this regard, I have chosen some of the important writings done by some authors towards my study:

Shoko Noda, in her article, "Delivering Climate Action: The Road ahead for India after COP 26, (6 December, 2021), talked about how India as an emerging global leader concern about climate change and India has always done more than its fair share of responsibilities.

Marina Ioannou & Theo Stylianou, in their article, "International COP 22-25 Key outcomes and developments", ( November, 2021,) analyse about the significant outcomes of the UNFCCC conferences from COP 22-COP 25 and how they can be implemented in practice that has also a matter of concern.

Ravi S. Prasad & Ridhima Sud, in their article, "The pivotal role of UNFCCC in the International climate policy landscape- a developing country perspective", (23 April, 2021), shades light from a developing country perspective on the action of climate change.

Simrin Sir & PIA Krishnan, in their article, " What is COP 26, why it is important & India's role at the climate change conference", ( 29 October, 2021), discuss about the importance, negotiations, its commitments of India towards COP 26.

Mohammad Mohnish in his article, "Outcome and India's stance in COPs 1-21", (27 June 2016), shows the key outcomes and stance of the first UNFCCC conferences to COP-21, Paris Climate Talk.

Peter Jackson in his article, "From Stockholm to Kyoto: A Brief History of Climate Change", (June 2007), look into the matter of emerging environmental issues on international agenda. It also discuss a critical issue of Environment and development.

### METHODOLOGY

The study has been followed the historical, analytical, and descriptive methods. At the same time, this paper is heavily dependent on secondary sources of data. The secondary sources of data has been collected from periodicals, journals, books, magazines, government reports, newspapers, and think-tank report etc.



## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Before 1970s, development such as re-building their economy due to the devastating consequences of Great Depression of 1939 and World War II was the main concern for most of the countries. Thus, due to the prime concern for concentrating on economic upturn, the need for environmental governance at the global level was not universally accepted, particularly by developing countries. But after the 1970s, many countries gradually realised the degrading of environment that threatens all mankind and agreed that international cooperation is needed in order to raise resources to support the developing countries in carrying out their responsibilities in this respect.

Likewise, due to the need for a common outlook and for common principles to inspire and guide the peoples of the world in preservation and enhancement of the human environment, the United Nations (UN) that was formed as an intergovernmental organization on 24 October 1945, called for a 'Conference'. Accordingly, the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held at Stockholm, Sweden, from 5 to 16 June 1972, attended the by delegates from 114 governments. It was the first United Nations summit on the environment and set the underpinning for global environmental governance. As a result, many countries subsequently created Ministries for the Environment. Later, as an outcome, the *United Nations Environment Program UNDP* was established. It promotes international cooperation on environmental issues, provides guidance to UN organizations. Along with it assesses global, national and regional environmental conditions.

Later, from 12 to 23 February 1979, the *First World Climate Conference* was organised. It was the first prominent international summits on climate change that held in Geneva. The Conference identified the main cause of global warming as increased level of carbon dioxide emitted from the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation and changes in the land use. It led to the creation of *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (IPCC) by World Meteorological Organisation in 1988.

The Second World Climate Conference was also held in Geneva from 29 October to 7 November in 1990. Its main task was to review the WCP (World Climate Program) set up by WCC-1. It was an significant step headed for a global climate treaty. The WCC-2 called for the establishment of a climate convention along with foster international efforts to address climate change that led to the establishment of *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC) in 1992.

The WCC-3 was held in Geneva, Switzerland from 31st August to 4 September, 2009. The theme of the Conference was "Climate Prediction and Information for decision making". Its purposes is to speed up universal action on climate associated risk that threatens the well being of society. The participants in WCC-3 included food creators, water managers, public health employees, national developers, tourism managers and high level policy makers. The WCC-3 convinced to create a global agenda for climate services. The four main element of such background are: Observation and Monitoring; Research, Modeling and Prediction; a Climate Services Information System; and a User Interface Program.

## UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

It is a global environmental agreement assigned at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro from 3 to 14 June, 1992 and came into force on 21 March 1994. It was recognized to bring together global efforts to inspire sustainability and safeguard of the natural environment. The main objective is to "stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system." UNFCCC has 198 parties as of 2022. However, the Parties to UNFCCC are classified as:



**\*\*Annex I countries** (43- industrial countries and economics in transaction who have compulsory binding targets to reduce green house gas emissions);

**\*\*Annex II countries** (It is a sub-set of Annex-I countries, i.e., 24-developed countries which needed to provide financial & technical support to EITs and developing countries to assist them in their green house gas emissions);

**\*\*Non-Annex 1 or B countries** (developing countries who are not required to reduce emission levels unless developed countries supply enough funding and technology. But developing countries may volunteer to become Annex I countries when they are sufficiently developed;

**\*\* Least- developed Countries** (49 countries that are given special status under the treaty in response to their limited capacity to adopt to the effects of climate change; so no binding targets towards reduce GHG)

### OUTCOME OF THE CONVENTION AND OBLIGATIONS

The UNFCCC inveterate the countrywide greenhouse gas records of greenhouse gas emissions. It bound for to the obligation of Annex-I countries to GHG reductions. Thus, later 1995 parties to the convention have gathered annually to examine in dealing with climate change i.e called Conference of Parties. The Convention acknowledged that required steps should be employed that are based on pertinent scientific, technical, economic deliberations and must be re-evaluated in the consideration of new outcomes in those area so that they can be environmentally, socially and economically most operative. It also documented the requirement for developed countries to take direct action to lessen the effect of degrading environment.

The establishment of UNFCCC recognized, Article 3(1) of the Convention conditions that Parties should acting to safeguard the climate system on the basis of “common but differentiated responsibilities”, and developed country Parties should “take the lead” in constituent of climate change. Under article 4 of the Convention, the requirement for developed countries to take immediate action to lessen the affect of degrading environment. Moreover, all parties decided to develop and periodically show national inventories of anthropogenic emissions by sources and eradications by sinks of all greenhouse gases not measured by the Montreal Protocol.

The Annex-I countries are dedicated to implement national policies and yield mitigating procedures of climate change. Each of these nations will periodically assessment its own strategies and practices.

The countries under Annex-II rendering to article 12, paragraph 1 of the conventions were asked to deliver new financial resources to bear the expenses by developing country Parties in fulfilling with their obligations. The developed countries have to take full account of the specific needs and specific situations of developing countries as well least developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change in meeting the costs of adaption especially on small island countries; countries with low-lying coastal areas, countries with areas with fragile ecosystem etc. in regard to provide fund and transfer of technology.

It is significant that article 7 of the convention recognized the Conference of Parties as its decisive body. Its obligation is to periodically scrutinize the commitments of Annex-I, Annex-II and developing countries; to study and obtain regular reports on the execution of the convention and ensure



their publication; to seek to mobilize financial resources. Consequently, since 1995 *Parties to the Convention*, i.e., called Conference of Parties, the decisive body have gathered yearly to assess and analyse the impact of climate change.

## DISCUSSION

India has been highly vulnerable to climate variability. India is a disaster prone area that poses a vast diversity of temperature. The course of global warming has increased in the frequency and intensity of climate disaster. Climate disaster provides a challenge on Indian economy. Majority of its population of India live in poverty and with malnutrition. Thus, effective mitigation and adaptation plan required to be implemented as a response to climate disasters that are the outcome of global warming. India is of the view that industrialized nations required to commit long term legally binding GHG reductions consistent with certain level of GHG stabilization. There also a need to enable the developing countries for implementation of mitigation action plans by financial transfers and technology from developed countries. Here mentioned some of the important the Conference of Parties (COP) from COP 1 (1995)- COP 26 (2021) and India's stance in these conferences are-

1. **COP 1 (Berlin, 1995)**- India's stand was based on pragmatic view that the reduction in emission must be initiated by the industrialized countries to provide necessary space for the developing countries to increase their emission. India's proposed 20% cut in carbon-dioxide emission of the industrialized countries by year 2005.
2. **COP 3 (Kyoto, 1997)**- Most industrialized countries and some central European economies in transition agreed to legally binding reductions in greenhouse gas emissions of an average of 6 to 8% below 1990 levels between the years 2008-2012. India endorsed the Kyoto Protocol as a Non-Annex I member, which carried no responsibility towards emission mitigation.
3. **COP 5 (Bonn, 1999)**- Indian Environment and Forests Minister pointed out that the Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC) too acknowledges that the FCCC explicitly underlined the conspicuous North-South disparities by recognizing the "common but differentiated responsibilities" and respective capabilities.
4. **COP 7 (Marrakech, 2001)**- India played a major role in codification of Kyoto Protocol at this meet. Further highlighted the fact that the impacts of climate change will affect the developing countries more adversely than the developed countries and called for greater attention to adaptation needs of the developing countries.
5. **COP 8 (New Delhi, India 2002)**- India laid emphasis on the need of financial resources to help developing countries to adopt the adverse impact of climate change. At the same time remained firm in its rejection of emission commitment for developing countries. Fully embraced CDM.
6. **COP 11 (Montreal, 2005)**- The Montreal Protocol was established to extend the life of the Kyoto Protocol beyond its 2012 expiration date and negotiate deeper cuts in greenhouse-gas emissions. The Indian delegation played an important role in drafting the decision providing further guidance relating to the CDM.
7. **COP 13 (Bali, 2007)**- India demanded that the rich countries compensate developing countries for afforestation drive & for avoiding deforestation, this demand was accepted by key decision making Contact Group of conference.



**8. COP 15 (Copenhagen, 2009)** - A number of developing countries agreed to communicate their efforts to limit GHG emissions every two years. On long-term finance developed countries agreed to support a goal of mobilizing US\$100 billion a year by 2020 to address the needs of developing countries. India is also widely accepted principles of CBDR.

**9. COP 16 (Cancun, 2010)** - India fully committed to Kyoto Protocol. Along with some countries, India had submitted a proposal calling for Annex I parties to agree at least 40% emission reduction commitment by 2020 as compared to 1990 levels.

Further advocated for strengthening of CDM.

**10 .COP 20 (Lima 2014)-** In regard to submission of INDC, India was of view that the INDCs would be mitigation centric and that after countries submit their INDCs, these would be aggregated to ascertain whether the sum total of contributions is adequate to achieve the global goal of containing temperature rise to below 2 degree Celsius by the end of the century from pre- industrial levels.

**11. COP 21 (Paris, 2015)-** The main goal of the Paris Climate Accord is to limit global warming to well below 2° Celsius and preferably limit it to 1.5° Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels. It is a legally binding international treaty on climate change. India's first pledge, also known as a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), had three primary targets. The first was to reduce emissions intensity of the economy by 33-35 per cent below 2005 levels. The second was to have 40 per cent of installed electric power from non-fossil-based energy resources by 2030.

**12. COP25 (Madrid, Spain)** - Emphasised on the transition of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) credits earned under the Kyoto Protocol to the Paris Agreement. India played a strong role in critiquing the developed world's continuing poor record on climate action.

#### UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE COP26, GLASGOW

This International Climate Conference took place in Glasgow from 31 October to 12 November 2021. The main goal was- to secure global net zero (the balance between the amount of greenhouse gas produced and the amount removed from the atmosphere) by 2050 and keep a maximum of 1.5 C degrees of warming within reach .Other goals encompassed speeding up the phase-out of coal and mobilizing US\$100 billion by the developed countries in climate finance per year for the developing countries.

After 13 days of negotiations between nearly 200 countries, the *Glasgow Climate Pact* was signed. It is a “series of decisions and resolutions that build on the Paris accord”, set out what necessities to be done to tackle climate change. Also another focus of COP26 was to secure agreement between all the Paris signatories on how they would set out their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) to reduce emissions. The *Paris Rulebook* gives the guidelines on how the Paris Agreement is delivered.

The finalised Rulebook, includes agreements on:

- An enhanced transparency framework for reporting emissions.
- Common time frames for emissions reductions targets.
- Mechanisms and standards for international carbon markets. Commitments in a range of other areas such as forests, methane, car emissions, and private finance were also made.
- Acknowledging that continuous change of the climate has impacted largely specially on developing countries, all countries admit for the starting of a network called ‘Santiago Network’ that links vulnerable nations with supporters of technical assistance and resources to meet up climate hazards. A number of 137 countries made a significant step towards discontinue and converse forest loss and land degradation” by 2030.





## FINDINGS

### India's Stance on COP-26:

Our Prime Minister, Narendra Modi expressed his happiness that a developing country like India, which is working to lift crores of people out of poverty, despite being 17 % of the world's population, whose responsibility has been only 5 percent in emissions, it has left no stone unturned to show that it has fulfilled its obligation. Today, India ranks 4th in the world in installed renewable energy capacity. India's non-fossil fuel energy has increased by more than 25% in the last 7 years and now it has reached 40% of our energy mix.

Along with this, India has also given institutional solutions to cooperate with the world at the international level. As a revolutionary step in solar power, we initiated the initiative of International Solar Alliance. We have created a coalition for disaster resilient infrastructure for climate adaptation.

Prime Minister proposes a One-Word Movement. This One-Word, in the context of climate, can become the basic foundation of One World. He also added that, the word LIFE...L, I, F, E, which means Lifestyle For Environment should go forward as a campaign, wherever resources should be processed with 'Mindful and Deliberate Utilization, as an alternative of Mindless and Destructive Consumption'. These movements together can set goals that can revolutionize many sectors in diverse areas such as Fishing, Agriculture, Wellness, Dietary Choices, Packaging, Housing, Hospitality, Tourism, Clothing, Fashion, Water Management and Energy.

India also stand for Five elements, i.e, 'Panchamrit', to deal with climate change challenge that is the updated Intended Nationally Determined Contributions.

**First-** India will take its non-fossil energy capacity to 500 GW by 2030.

**Second-** India will meet 50 percent of its energy requirements from renewable energy by 2030.

**Third-** India will reduce the total projected carbon emissions by one billion tonnes from now till 2030.

**Fourth-** By 2030, India will reduce the carbon intensity of its economy by more than 45 percent.

**And Fifth-** by the year 2070, India will achieve the target of Net Zero.

These 'Panchamrits' will be an unprecedented contribution of India to climate action. Thus, COP 26 gives an opportunity for the various countries to assess the present landscape, reflect on whether previous pledges have been met, and also introduce new and decisive actions to reduce emissions and combat the moves of climate change.

Apart from this, from the discussions it is clear that India is aware about the environmental issues. Since COP 1, India has been actively taken part and raise its voice from time to time. Global warming and climate change requires all societies to work together. While the major responsibility for the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere lies with the developed countries, its adverse effects are felt most severely by developing countries like India. India also shows concern about the suffering of all other developing countries and how it is difficult to maintain a balance between environment and development. India also urges developed countries to provide climate finance of \$1 trillion annually to meet the climate commitments of the developing countries at the earliest to move forward with a new energy.

Thus, India is gradually taking a leadership role in climate change negotiations. Significantly, India gives importance to the *equity, climate justice and Common but Differentiated Responsibility, global net zero* which is the prime concern for the successful implementation of the all aspects. It is to be noted that earlier Intended Nationally Determined Contributions has set a target of achieving 40% of power (175 GW) from renewable sources by 2030 on the strength of the outstanding success of the



National Solar Mission. It is reported that the target of this has already been achieved in November 2021. The government is committed to raise its target to 500 GW for 2030.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- An adoption approach should be taken into consideration.
- Developed countries should come forward to facilitate green technologies and climate funding to cope up with the issue.
- Since balancing between development and environment is quite challenging task, efforts should be made to the increase use of renewable energy sources and phasing down the use of coal.

### CONCLUSION

India is increasingly taking an influential role in climate change negotiations. By adopting the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibility (CBDR) that focused on the need for equity and fairness. It also carry out a more pro-active, ambitious and forward looking approach that is reflected in the country's INDC. It links India's commitment to ecologically sustainable economic development with its age old civilizational values of respecting Nature, incorporating a sense of inter-generational equity and common humanity. Moreover, At COP-26 also India has played a crucial role in order to achieve the completion of Paris Agreement implementation guidelines; the mobilization of climate finance; actions to strengthen climate adaptation, technology development and transfer; and keeping in reach the Paris Agreement goals of limiting the rise in global temperatures. It is due to India's growing concern over the demands for mitigation and adoption to climate change are important for their growing economies, enhanced political power and rapidly rising greenhouse gas emissions.

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