



Welcome Kit for Parliamentarians

Policy Brief

'Copenhagen 2009: UNFCCC Negotiations on Climate Change'

Introduction

In December 2009, governments from around the world will gather in Copenhagen for a United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This conference (also referred to as COP 15 and CMP 5) will provide a platform for governments, from both developing and developed countries, to come together to develop and adopt a new global framework to address climate change. Two years ago, states met in Bali (COP 13), where they agreed to step up their efforts to combat climate change and reached an accord: the 'Bali Road Map'. This 'Map' offers an outline for long-term cooperative action on climate change among developed and developing countries. The Bali Action Plan identified four pillars (Shared Vision; Mitigation; Adaptation; Technology Transfer & Finance) that laid the foundations for an agreement to be signed in Copenhagen this year between states to act at a global level to combat climate change.

This policy brief seeks to outline the background and objectives of the UNFCCC, and identify how and where India plays an absolutely vital role in the negotiations.

What is the UNFCCC?

The UNFCCC is an overall framework for intergovernmental efforts to tackle the challenge posed by climate change. It was formed over a decade ago, when governments came together to sign a treaty to assess how to reduce global warming and rising temperatures. Presently 192 countries around the world have signed this international treaty.

The UNFCCC was one of 3 treaties signed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil-otherwise known as the 'Rio Earth Summit'. The Convention sets an ultimate objective of stabilising greenhouse gas concentrations "at a level that would

HISTORY OF MEETINGS HELD UNDER UNFCCC

1995 - Berlin

The Conference of the Parties (COP1) in Berlin was the first after the Climate Change Convention went into force. The parties decided to initiate negotiations for what later came to be known as the Kyoto Protocol. The goal for COP1 was that countries should take on legally binding obligations for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

1997 Kyoto KYOTO PROTOCOL

The Kyoto Protocol is an international agreement linked to the UNFCCC. The major feature of the Kyoto Protocol is to set binding targets for 37 industrialised countries and the European community for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. These amount to an average of five per cent against 1990 levels over the five-year period 2008-2012.

After difficult negotiations, in particular between the EU and the USA, the Kyoto Protocol was passed at the third Conference of the Parties (COP3). The Kyoto Protocol was adopted in Kyoto, Japan, on 11 December 1997 and entered into force on 16 February 2005. 184 Parties of the Convention have ratified its Protocol to date. The detailed rules for the implementation of the Protocol were adopted at COP 7 in Marrakesh in 2001, and are called the "Marrakesh Accords."

2000 - The Hague

At the sixth conference (COP6) in The Hague, negotiations collapsed. Amongst other reasons, this was due to insoluble disagreement between the EU and the USA. Afterwards, President George Bush declared in the spring of 2001 that the USA would not ratify the Kyoto Protocol.

2001 - Bonn and Marrakech

To get the process moving again after the collapse in The Hague, the UN Climate Change Secretariat called an extraordinary conference of the parties in Bonn (COP6) in the spring. At this conference, and at the following one in Marrakech (COP7), the remaining countries succeeded in agreeing on most of the outstanding questions.

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."

The Convention requires precise and regularly updated inventories of greenhouse gas emissions from industrialised countries; indeed the first step towards addressing the issue of these excessive emissions is by knowing its dimensions. In addition, all countries that agree to the treaty ('Parties to the Convention') are acknowledging their commitments to consider agriculture, industry, energy, natural resources, and activities involving coastal areas- they share consensus to develop national programmes to slow climate change.

An important feature of the Convention is that it recognises itself as 'framework' document, one that can be amended or augmented over time to ensure that efforts to combat global warming can be focused and developed to be made more effective. It also recognises two important principles 'Common but Differentiated Responsibility' (CBDR) and Capability and 'Polluters Pay', which enforce equity and justice in action towards climate change.

The Kyoto Protocol

The UNFCCC laid the basis for the signing of the Kyoto Protocol in Japan on the 11th December 1997, it eventually came into force on the 16th February 2005. The Kyoto Protocol is an international agreement linked to the UNFCCC that sets binding targets for 37 industrialised countries and the European community for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This amounts to an average of five per cent against 1990 levels over the four-year period 2008-2012.

The major distinction between the Protocol and the Convention is that while the Convention encouraged industrialised countries to stabilize GHG emissions, the Protocol commits them to do so. Recognising that developed countries are principally responsible for the current high levels of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere as a result of more than 150 years of industrial activity, the Protocol places a heavier burden on developed nations under the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities".

The Kyoto Protocol is generally viewed as an important first step towards a truly global emission reduction regime that will stabilise greenhouse gas emissions, and provide the essential structural design for any future international agreement on climate change.

2002 - Delhi

Under the Danish presidency of the EU, the EU tried unsuccessfully at the eighth conference (COP8) to get the ministers to agree to a declaration about the need for further initiatives to limit climate change.

2003 - Milan

The focus of the ninth conference in Milan (COP9) was finding technical clarifications for some of the outstanding issues remaining from Marrakech. It concerned, for example, to what extent the giving off and absorption of CO₂ in soil and forests should be calculated, and how the Flexibility Mechanisms Joint Implementation (JI), the international quota trade as well as the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) should be put together.

2004 - Buenos Aires

In Buenos Aires, the parties worked further at finding technical solutions, just as they also started informal discussions about what should happen after 2012. The conference of the parties in Buenos Aires was the tenth under the Climate Change Convention (COP10).

2005 - Montreal

When the parties met for the eleventh conference in Montreal (COP11), it was to ensure that there would be an international agreement for after 2012. Agreement was reached that the process would continue on two tracks. The first was a global dialogue about a future long-term climate co-operation with all countries participating, including the USA and the large developing countries (China, India, Brazil, etc.). The second was concrete negotiations under the Kyoto Protocol about industrialised countries' obligations after 2012 would be established, which would help developing countries in adjusting to climate changes.

2006 - Nairobi

The positive momentum from Montreal to start work towards a new binding agreement for after 2012 was maintained at the twelfth conference of the parties in Nairobi (COP12). At the same time, a series of milestones for a forthcoming agreement were set, just as a series of outstanding issues in the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol were finalized.

2007 - Bali

In Bali (COP13), the Parties reached an accord - the Bali Roadmap, concerning the future process towards signing an agreement at the conference in Copenhagen (COP15). Furthermore, it was agreed that an Adjustment Fund

2008 - Poznan

COP 14 conference agreed solid work programmes on future action which maps out negotiations for the year leading up to Copenhagen. They mean that a draft text of a new global agreement must be tabled by June. Developed countries in the Kyoto Protocol are required to put forward their targets for limiting or reducing emissions.

Source: www.UNFCCC.int

By the end of the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol in 2012, a new international framework needs to have been negotiated and ratified that can deliver the stringent emission reductions the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has clearly indicated are needed.

Copenhagen Summit (COP 15)

In December 2009, states will come together in Copenhagen seeking to adopt a new global framework to address climate change. This meeting is to follow up on commitments made in the signing of the 'Bali Road Map' in 2007. The overall objective for this summit is to establish an ambitious climate agreement for 2012 onwards, when the first commitment under the Kyoto Protocol expires.

Four main questions need to be answered prior to Copenhagen to ensure a fair global deal on climate change:

1. Based on historic responsibility, what amount of deeper reductions are acceptable to industrialised countries as midterm targets (2012 to 2020).
2. Based on the CBDR principle of the Convention, how much are developing countries willing to deviate their emission growth from business-as-usual (BAU) trajectories.
3. Based on the 'Polluters Pays' principle, how much are industrialised countries willing to pay to developing countries to enable a transition from a fossil fuel intensive path to green alternatives, such as renewable energy sources. Some estimates indicate that in order to ensure a smooth transition, approximately 160 billion USD/ year will be required for Mitigation; Adaptation; limiting emissions from deforestation and to promote technology transfer.
4. Based on the principles of adequacy, predictability, accessibility and accountability, how will it be possible to generate such large sums from industrialised countries and manage these amounts through democratic and accountable global financial architecture.

India's Position in UNFCCC Negotiations

India's stance in the climate change negotiations has been that developed countries need to agree to greater reductions based on their historic responsibility and per capita emissions. Though India is the 4th largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the world and its emissions are expected to almost triple by 2050, its priorities are to develop at a faster rate to achieve poverty reduction goals that will ensure adaptation capabilities of vulnerable communities.

Under the Kyoto Protocol, no developing countries have agreed to any reduction obligations, including India, however in the post 2012 regime India will need to take on voluntary emission reduction targets based on measurable, reportable, verifiable (MRV) finance and technologies from developed countries through the UNFCCC mechanism. India need not take unconditional, legally binding targets that may hamper its economic growth but should use this as an opportunity to shift its growth pathways towards greener sources of energy that ensures energy security.

In order to limit the global average temperature rise below 2 degrees, it is necessary that global emissions peak and decline well before 2015 to 2017. This can be achieved only through deeper cuts by developed countries and substantial deviation by large developing countries. Simultaneously, the global community should provide sufficient financial and technological resources to small developing countries, which are already facing the impacts of climate change, to build resilience against frequent human induced disasters.

In June 2008, India's National Action Plan for Climate Change (NAPCC) was launched. This plan emphasises the need for sustainable development through clean energy technology, however it does not set targets for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. The NAPCC further mentions that India's per capita will at no stage matches that of developed countries. The action plan did state that 'India will engage actively in multilateral negotiations in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in a positive, constructive and forward-looking manner.' Indeed, the Special Envoy of the Prime Minister for Climate Change expects that Copenhagen will result in 'an ambitious outcome, representing a cooperative global response to the challenge of Climate Change, but an outcome which is also fair and equitable.' Various nodal ministries are preparing Mission documents that will outline low carbon development pathways for various energy intensive and impacted sectors.

Recommendations: India's Role in Climate Change Negotiations

India has a crucial role to play in negotiations at Copenhagen. The following recommendations for parliamentarians are to ensure an equitable and sustainable agreement to combat Climate Change in the long term, both in the lead up to Copenhagen and beyond:

1. **Agreement that 2 degrees is an appropriate level of growth at Copenhagen.** A 4 degree increase in

temperatures over the next decade will be devastating and set back progress towards reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In order to achieve a 2 degree increase, India needs to adopt ambitious targets to deviate from BAU, and its progress needs to be monitored by the Climate Change Committee headed by the Prime Minister's Council, which is also answerable to the Lok Sabha.

2. **Support of low carbon growth is in the interests of business in India and not a threat to India's economic growth.** For example, TATA BP Solar and SUZLON have become pioneers of solar lighting, both advocating that solar energy technology makes financial sense- especially for the poor. Thus India needs to frame policies that promotes investments for green businesses and jobs.
3. **Share best practice from legislators across the world, in terms of the kinds of policy instruments that are needed to tackle climate change.** There are many best practice examples and it is important to learn global lessons from this information sharing. Initiating technology transfer at district and state level can set best practices for national government to follow.
4. **Mainstream climate concerns into development activities at constituency level.** The issue of climate change is cross cutting and will have a huge impact on human development prospects in India, from health to education to rates of mortality.
5. **Further support for the development of Technology Innovation Centres to help accelerate research and deployment of low carbon technologies.**

Climate Change is an issue for parliamentary constituents here and now. It is important for all of us to address the issue of climate change with

immediacy, failure to act swiftly will serve further to contribute to the adverse long term impacts of Climate Change.

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Author:
Freya Seath
CLRA

Editor:
Shailey Hingorani
CLRA

Peer Reviewers:
Siddharth Pathak, Greenpeace India
Sanjay Vashist, CAN-SA

In Partnership with:
Oxfam India*

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For more information, contact: Centre for Legislative Research and Advocacy (CLRA), C/o IMPF, 9, Ferozeshah Road, New Delhi-110001. Telefax: +91-11-23070756, E-mail: info@clraindia.org, Website: www.clraindia.org

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