

India's Integral Role in Climate Negotiations: Balancing Development and Sustainability

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Abstract:

This article explores India's contributions to climate negotiations, highlighting its commitment to equitable development and its transition towards renewable energy. India's role in global climate negotiations is crucial, as it grapples with the dual challenge of pursuing economic development while ensuring environmental sustainability. Balancing the imperative of lifting millions out of poverty with the urgent need to mitigate climate change presents a complex dilemma for policymakers. India has taken substantial steps to address climate change on the domestic front. The National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), launched in 2008, outlines comprehensive strategies to enhance climate resilience and promote sustainable development. The plan consists of initiatives like the National Solar Mission, which aims to increase solar capacity, and the National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency, focusing on energy conservation. Furthermore, India is actively investing in renewable energy sources to reduce its carbon footprint. The International Solar Alliance, launched in 2015 in partnership with France, aims to promote solar energy and reduce dependence on fossil fuels. India's commitment to renewable energy aligns with its pledge to increase the share of non-fossil fuel energy capacity to 40% by 2030, a significant and ambitious target. India actively participates in international climate negotiations, advocating for a collective approach to tackle climate change. The country emphasizes the importance of technology transfer and financial support from developed nations in adopting sustainable practices. India's negotiation strategies in international climate policy have considerably changed over the past decade (Michaelowa, Katharina & Michaelowa Axel, 2012).

Keywords:

Climate, negotiations, UNFCCC, UN & commitment

Introduction

India plays a significant role in climate negotiations as a major developing country. It emphasizes the need for developed nations to take greater responsibility due to their historical emissions. India aims for sustainable development while addressing climate challenges and advocates for fair and equitable solutions in international forums like the UNFCCC. India's historical perspective on climate change negotiations is rooted in the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities". This principle acknowledges that while all countries share a responsibility to address climate change, developed countries, historically responsible for the majority of greenhouse gas emissions, should bear a great burden. In the global discourse on climate change, India emerges as a pivotal player, not just due to its sheer size and population but also because of its unique position as a rapidly developing nation. Balancing sustainability with development imperatives, India's role in climate negotiations is crucial, reflecting the intricate interplay between environmental concerns and socio-economic aspirations.

Contextualizing India's Position

At the heart of India's climate policy lies the commitment to sustainable development. India recognizes the urgency of climate action but insists that it must not impede its developmental goals. The country aims to balance economic growth with environmental stewardship, striving for inclusive development that uplifts the lives of millions while ensuring a sustainable future.

Renewable Energy Transition

India has emerged as a global leader in renewable energy deployment. The government has set ambitious targets for renewable energy capacity, aiming to achieve 450 gigawatts by 2030. Investments in solar, wind, and other clean energy sources not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions but also drive economic growth, create jobs, and enhance energy security.

Climate Adaptation Measures

Given India's vulnerability to climate change impacts, adaptation measures are paramount. From implementing resilient infrastructure to promoting climate-smart agriculture, India is actively enhancing its adaptive capacity. Initiatives like afforestation programs, water conservation schemes, and disaster management strategies demonstrate India's proactive approach to building resilience against climate risks.

Technological Innovation and Collaboration

India recognizes the pivotal role of technology in addressing climate change. The country actively engages in international collaborations for technology transfer and capacity building. Initiatives like the International Solar Alliance (ISA) exemplify India's commitment to harnessing innovation for sustainable development, fostering global partnerships to accelerate the transition to clean energy.

Challenges and opportunities

Despite its proactive stance, India faces challenges on multiple fronts. Balancing the energy needs of a growing population with environmental concerns requires innovative solutions. Additionally, financial constraints and technological barriers pose significant challenges to India's climate efforts. However, these challenges also present opportunities for innovation, investment, and collaboration to foster sustainable development.

Sustainable Development Imperatives

At the heart of India's climate policy lies the commitment to sustainable development. India recognizes the urgency of climate action but insists that it must not impede its developmental goals. The country aims to balance economic growth with environmental stewardship, striving for inclusive development that uplifts the lives of millions while ensuring a sustainable future.

India stands at a critical juncture in the global fight against climate change. As one of the world's fastest-growing economies and home to over 1.3 billion people, India faces the formidable task of balancing economic development with environmental sustainability. Central to this endeavor is India's climate policy, a multifaceted framework that aims to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, enhance resilience to climate impacts, and foster sustainable growth.

India's Role in Climate Negotiations; Context and Subtext

India, as one of the world's largest and most populous countries, plays a crucial role in global negotiations. Its stance in these discussions is shaped by a combination of historical context, developmental priorities, and geopolitical considerations. Understanding India's position requires delving into both the explicit arguments it presents on the international stage and the underlying subtext that informs its approach to climate action.

Historical Context : India's historical context in climate negotiations is characterised by a legacy of colonialism and a struggle for development. Like many other developing nations, India contends that industrialized countries bear a significant responsibility for current climate change due to their historical

emissions. This argument is rooted in the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR), which acknowledges that developed countries should take the lead in addressing climate change while supporting developing countries in their efforts.

Geopolitical Considerations: India's geopolitical position also influences its stance in climate negotiations. As a rapidly growing economy and emerging global power, India seeks to maintain its sovereignty and autonomy in decision-making while balancing its international obligations. Additionally, India's relationships with other major players in climate diplomacy, such as China and the United States, shape its negotiating strategies and alliances.

Subtext: Domestic Concerns

Beneath India's official positions in climate negotiations lie a set of domestic concerns that inform its approach. These include:

1. **Energy Access:** India faces the dual challenge of meeting its growing energy demand while transitioning to cleaner sources. Access to affordable and reliable energy remains a top priority, particularly for rural communities. As such, India advocates for technology transfer and financial support to facilitate the adoption of renewable energy technologies.
2. **Adaptation and Resilience:** With its vulnerabilities to climate impacts such as extreme weather events, sea-level rise, and agricultural disruptions, India emphasizes the importance of adaptation and resilience measures. Investments in climate-resilient infrastructure, agricultural practices, and disaster management are crucial for safeguarding livelihoods and economic stability.
3. **Equity and Justice:** India consistently emphasizes the principles of equity and justice in climate negotiations, arguing that any global climate agreement must consider the needs and aspirations of developing countries. This includes ensuring access to climate finance, technology transfer, and capacity-building support to facilitate sustainable development pathways.
4. **Technology Transfer:** Access to clean and affordable technology is essential for India's transition to a low-carbon economy. The country advocates for the transfer of environmentally sound technologies from developed to developing countries on fair and equitable terms, including intellectual property rights and licensing arrangements.
5. **Finance:** Adequate and predictable financial support is critical for developing countries to undertake ambitious climate action. India calls for the fulfilment of the commitment by developed countries to mobilize \$100 billion annually in climate finance by 2020, as well as additional resources beyond 2020. It also emphasizes the importance of climate finance being provided as grants rather than loans to avoid adding to the debt burden of developing nations.

India's Climate Policy

Presently India's climate policy and action can be understood through two dimensions – domestic and global. The domestic component of India's climate policy is articulated in the National Action Plan for Climate Change (NAPCC) 2008 and its 8 National Missions which have formed the basis for India's progressive actions towards climate mitigation and adaptation. Domestically, India's development aspirations, critical need for energy access and security to sustain its economic growth, and formulation of comprehensive climate mitigation and adaptation strategies, formed the basis for its tilt towards the 'co-benefits' paradigm and concomitant flexibility in its negotiating stance. The international component comprises India's commitments by way of Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC) submitted to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in October 2015 in the run up to Conference of Parties 21 (COP-21) - Paris Agreement. Internationally, with the newfound status of an 'emerging' economy, India found itself aligning proactively with new coalitions and negotiating blocks to fulfil its desire to play a strategically important role in the new global order.

Incidentally, 2015 was a determinant year for three separate global sustainable development processes aimed at long term cooperation and agreements within the world community – Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) 2015 replacing the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005 – 2015; Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2015 – 2030, replacing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2000 – 2015; and, Paris Agreement to the UNFCCC replacing the Kyoto Protocol of 1997. Even though these were conceived within separate intergovernmental processes, synergies among the three have been widely acknowledged since the success of their outcomes would depend on each other's achievements.

The COP 28 of UNFCCC

The Green Credit Initiative has been conceptualized as a mechanism to incentivize voluntary pro-planet actions, as an effective response to the challenge of climate change. It envisions the issue of Green Credits for plantations on waste/degraded lands and river catchment areas, to rejuvenate and revive natural eco-systems.

The 28th Conference of Parties (COP-28) was held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE), from 30th November to 12th December 2023, where the representatives from 197 countries showcased their efforts to limit global warming and held discussions to prepare for future climate change. This was the first time when the countries formally assessed their progress under the 2015 Paris climate agreement. The delegates at COP-28 also discussed the adaptation and mitigation efforts required to achieve significant positive outcomes in the coming years towards tackling climate change. Such efforts are especially crucial for countries that are highly vulnerable to climate change and also for the fragile ecosystems of the world such as the Himalayan Mountain range in Asia.

Conclusion

In the realm of global climate negotiations, India stands as a pivotal player, wielding influence that extends far beyond its borders. India's integral role in climate negotiations can not be overstated. From its historical narrative of colonial exploitation to its contemporary quest for sustainable development and global leadership, India occupies central position in shaping the global response to climate change. As the world grapples with the urgent imperative of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and building resilience to climate impacts, India's engagement and cooperation are indispensable for forging inclusive, equitable, and effective solutions that safeguard the planet for future generations.

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