

## **INDIA'S EVOLVING ROLE AND STATURE IN CLIMATE GOVERNANCE UNDER UPA AND NDA: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE**

**Chaitra C**

**Research Scholar**

**Department of Political Science**

**Bangalore University**

**Prof. M J Vinod**

**Research Guide**

**Department of Political Science**

**Bangalore University**

### **Abstract**

India owing to its demographic and energy profile has emerged a key player in the international climate governance regime. Being the world's largest democracy it has voiced its national interest of socio-economic development and poverty eradication vocally. Its developing economy stature and proactive role as a voice of small island countries and international groupings with like-minded countries on the climate-front have been well-acknowledged on global fora. The paper attempts to focus on India's presence at the international realm in climate related negotiations during the ten years of rule by United Progressive Alliance rule and four years under National Democratic Alliance government. The paper consistently argues that India on one hand adheres to international commitments and adopted numerable adaptation and mitigation measures while also emphasizes the historical responsibilities in carbon dioxide emissions. The paper shows how the normative principles narrative has been supplemented by some pragmatic measures. The paper throws light into the role, responsibilities, presence and key-takeaway for India in the international climate governance in the specified timeframe.

**Key Words** Sustainable Development, UNFCCC, Sustainable lifestyles

### **Introduction**

Climate change has far-reaching consequences on global issues like poverty, economic development, sustainable development, erratic weather patterns, population growth, and ecological imbalance, including the extinction of varieties of flora and fauna. Legitimate concerns of climate change, energy security, and food security have been critical concerns with national security and collective consequences. The scientific evidence available witnesses how climate change has emerged as an existential crisis of our times. Hence the emphasis on sustainable, inclusive, climate-resilient development on a low carbon pathway.

India has remained optimistic about receiving enhanced support in addressing global challenges like climate change, given its strong faith in multilateralism. India is vulnerable to climate change and has been a part of international climate change negotiations from the initial days of such negotiations, and continues to be a decisive player in the contemporary climate regime. India has been an integral part of many agreements and protocols, often based on evaluating past trends and future climate change prospects. The history of climate change negotiations involves power relationships and the intricate linkages to economics, politics, security, and science. Such perceptions are driven by facts, shreds of evidence, as well as by narratives and values.

India is an essential stakeholder in international climate governance owing to its emissions profile, economic performance, and emerging leadership role. India's positions and priorities in international climate governance are primarily a product of its historical development/considerations and the contemporary national political economy. India needs to balance its national interests of poverty eradication and developmental agenda on the one hand and effective and judicious use of resources and keeping a check on its carbon footprint on the other hand. These need to be acknowledged while arriving at an all-embracing global agreement on climate change. India's economic position and its emissions, are necessarily prominent in any international climate debate. A large percentage of our population is still dependent on agriculture and its allied activities. Therefore, there is a large dependence on monsoons. These have a significant bearing on our GDP. India has a long coastline with a high population density, and such climate-sensitive livelihoods are influenced by climate change.

As early as the United Nations (UN) conference, 1972 in Stockholm, then Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who was the only head of State to address the conference apart from the Swedish Prime Minister, asserted development and environmental dilemma by questioning the world community-“Are not poverty and need the greatest polluters? For instance, unless we are in a position to provide employment and purchasing power for daily necessities of the tribal people and those who live in and around our jungles, we cannot prevent them from combing the forest for food and livelihoods; from poaching and from despoiling the vegetation. When they themselves feel deprived, how can we urge the preservation of animals? How can we speak to

those who live in villages and slums about keeping oceans, the rivers and air clean when their own lives are contaminated at the source?"<sup>1</sup>

In 1990, the same year as World Climate Conference-2– India hosted the “Conference of Selected Developing Countries on Global Environmental Issues”. The outcome was a clear decision by developing countries to assign the responsibility of climate change to developed countries and to take a firm stand not to agree to any commitments to reduce emissions<sup>2</sup>. At Noordwijk Conference of 1989<sup>3</sup>, the then Secretary to Minister of Environment and Forests (MoEF) Mahesh Prasad’s address set a bench mark of India’s position in the international climate negotiations. He opined global problems require global solutions. Rather, it would be counter- productive to reach agreements to tackle climate change without devising mechanisms to ensure global participation. International goals should be set with utmost case based on technical and financial capabilities of individual countries and also their economic needs and priorities.

The UN General Assembly (UNGA) established the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change (INC/FCCC) to negotiate appropriate commitments for signature at UNCED, June 1992. India had sent representations to the INC since 1990. The head of delegation in the pre-UNCED INC meetings, Additional Secretary (International Organisations) Chandrashekhar Dasgupta, reported to both the environment secretary and the foreign secretary<sup>4</sup>.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was adopted on 9 May 1992 and came into force on 21 April 1994. The 197 countries which have ratified the treaty are called Parties to the Convention. Article 7 of the convention established Conference of Parties (COP) as its “supreme body”. The COP has been meeting annually since 1995 to regularly review its implementation with provision for adequate amendments and protocols. The COP 2009 to COP 2013 under the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) and COP 2014 to COP 2018 under the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has been taken into consideration in the paper.

---

<sup>1</sup>From the text of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s speech at the UN Conference in Stockholm, available at: <<http://lasulawsenvironmental.blogspot.in/2012/07/indiragandhis-speech-at-stockholm.html>> accessed on 18 September 2017

<sup>2</sup>Sharma, 2005

<sup>3</sup>Sadat Anwar, *India’s Treaty practice in Climate Change*, Journal of the Indian Law Institute, 2014

<sup>4</sup>Mohan Aniruddh, *From Rio to Paris: India in Global Climate Politics*, ORF, 14 December 2017

## Indian Representation in Climate Negotiations Under UPA

The 15<sup>th</sup> COP to the UNFCCC took place during 7 December 2009 and 18 December 2009 at Copenhagen, Denmark. India had defined three basic national interests prior to the COP15 in Copenhagen- no legally binding emissions reduction target; no legally-binding peaking year for the country; and c) a distinction between supported and unsupported mitigation actions by developing countries in respect of measurement, reporting and verification (MRV). For India, the main outcome of the COP15 was the consensus to continue the dual-track negotiation process, one under the UNFCCC and the other under the Kyoto Protocol. India has traditionally had a strong interest in multilateral climate-change negotiations taking place under the UNFCCC.

The Copenhagen Accord was arrived at wherein, a large number of developing countries agreed to communicate their efforts to limit GHGs emissions every two years; and the developed countries agreed to support a goal of mobilising US \$100 billion a year by 2020 to address the needs of developing countries. It encompassed a long- term goal of limiting the maximum global average temperature increase to not more than 2 degree Celsius above pre- industrial levels, subject to a review in 2015. Indian Environment Minister, Jairam Ramesh had emphasised that India's approach is entirely anchored on the troika- the UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol and the Bali Action Plan. India once again upheld the sacrosanctity of the principles of CBDR and historical responsibilities. India voluntarily committed itself to reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by 20- 25 per cent by 2020 in comparison to 2005 levels<sup>5</sup>. The report of the Expert Group on Low Carbon Strategies for Inclusive Growth was published in 2014 according to which- the inclusive growth path reduces "average GDP growth rate by 0.15 percentage points, while per capita CO<sub>2</sub> emissions drop from 3.6 to 2.6 tonnes". Jairam Ramesh opined: "International consultations and technical analysis which would respect national sovereignty"<sup>6</sup> is our priority and "scrutiny/review/assessment"<sup>17</sup> is simply unacceptable to the BASIC group. US insisted on omission of the word technical in 'technical analysis' and India agreed to accepting "International consultations and analysis' provided US agreed to 'respect for national sovereignty'. It was instantly accepted by Obama.

---

<sup>5</sup> Panagariya Arvind *The Copenhagen Accord and India*, Brookings, 21 December 2009

<sup>6</sup> Ramesh Jairam, *Hard Choices at Copenhagen*, The Hindu, 17 June 2014

At Copenhagen, India was instrumental in thwarting the attempts of the US and the European Union in diluting the differentiations between Annex I parties (developed countries) and non-Annex I countries (developing and least developed countries) to the UNFCCC along with China, Brazil and South Africa (BASIC) and thereafter was tagged as “spoiler” in the international climate negotiations.

In January 2010, PM Manmohan Singh established an ad hoc 26-member panel to devise a low carbon strategy for India, called the “Expert Group on Low Carbon Strategies for Inclusive Growth” (LCEG). The recommendations of this Group were intended as inputs to the 12th FYP (2012-2017).

The Cancun Agreement was agreed upon during the COP 16 at Cancun, Mexico in 2010. A commitment to a maximum temperature rise of 2 degree Celsius above pre- industrial levels; and to make fully operational by 2012, a technology mechanism to boost the development and spread of new climate- friendly technologies and establishment of a Green Climate Fund evolved during the meet. It is to provide financing for action in developing countries through thematic funding windows. A new Cancun Adaptation Framework to set up an Adaptation Committee to promote strong, cohesive action on adaptation was developed. India fully committed to KP during the Conference. Alongside, South Africa and Like- Minded countries, India submitted a proposal calling for Annex I parties to agree at least 40% emission reduction commitment by 2020 as compared to 1990 levels. India called upon for the strengthening of CDM.

India insisted upon an adaptation fund, which was to include a contribution of 0.5 percent GDP by all rich countries for poor countries. It pushed for guarantees for ‘equitable access to sustainable development’ in the Cancun agreements, along with ‘international assessment and review’ of developed country actions on development and transfer of technology<sup>7</sup>. In order to reassure other parties that it is not averse to negotiations and is not indifferent to climate change, India also announced that it ‘will reduce the emissions intensity of India’s GDP by 20–25 percent by the year 2020, based on a 2005 reference level,’ diversify its energy-fuel mix, launch aggressive strategies on forestry and coastal management and establish a partnership with ‘neighbours and other countries to deal with climate change.’<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Pande Varad, *India at Cancun: The Emergence of a Confident Dealmaker*, Economic and Political Weekly 566:14-15, 2011

<sup>8</sup> Gautum P K, *Climate Change and India’s Position*, IDSA Strategic Comments, 5 December 2017

India also committed to not allowing the country's per capita emissions to rise above the per capita emissions of the advanced countries. Under the Cancun Agreements, the targets set by industrialized countries for reduction of the GHG emissions are recognized as part of the multilateral process which also require carbon development plans and strategies and report their inventories annually. For the developing countries, actions for emissions reduction will be recognized officially; a registry will record and match their mitigation actions to finance and technology support from rich countries; and they will report their progress every two years.

Jairam Ramesh suggested all countries should accept a legally binding carbon emission cuts, "binding commitments in some appropriate legal form". India wants to cut its intensity of emissions relative to GDP. There is a grand national solar power generation plan for 2022 and a goal to double the share of nuclear power in a decade. India played a key role in rescuing and reviving the multilateral negotiating process. India was well appreciated for its constructive contributions and flexibility. Following criticism within India, the Minister explained to all the Members of Parliament in an eight- page letter explaining the context in which the impromptu addition was made. It explained thus, commitments in an "appropriate legal form" are not a "legally- binding commitment" and that the domestic legislations that contain performance targets for mitigation are also, an "appropriate legal form". The commitments at Cancun did not imply that India was agreeing to absolute emission cuts or agreeing to any peaking year for its emissions.

The Durban Climate Change Conference (COP 17) from 28 November to 10 December 2011 marks an important step forward in the climate change negotiations. The Durban outcomes made significant contribution towards fulfilment of the Bali Road Map as they established the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol and operationalized some of the key Cancun agreements related to Green Climate Fund (GCF), Technology Mechanism (TM), and Adaptation Framework.

At Durban, India again posed 'equity as a fundamental issue wherein eradication of poverty and social and economic development' is 'the primary goal' and reiterated that 'since the per capita emission is small in countries as India,' such countries 'cannot be expected to be legally bound to reduce their emissions.'<sup>9</sup> The Green Climate Fund should be established with resources from developed countries. What was important to Indian negotiators was that the carbon market

---

<sup>9</sup> Sengupta Sandeep, *Revisiting Durban: Lessons for India*, The Hindu, 14February 2012

would continue to exist, and that India could indeed be one of the top investment destinations once the 'legally binding' new treaty comes up. India has already announced an ambitious National Mission for A Green India under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (MoEF 2010), and has started its own domestic carbon trading in form of Renewable Energy Trading.

The 18<sup>th</sup> COP to UNFCCC was held during 26 November 2012 and 8 December 2012 at Doha, Qatar. It had resulted in a set of decisions (clubbed together as 'Doha Climate Gateway') aimed at advancing the implementation of the UNFCCC and its KP. The Parties completed the work under the Bali Action Plan to concentrate on new work towards a 2015 agreement under a single negotiating stream, the ADP. A timetable to adopt a universal climate agreement by 2015, to come into effect in 2020 was pondered upon. India aligned with the Group of 77 (G77) and China to protect the overall interests of the developing countries. India succeeded in the inclusion of the issue of equity, technology, IPRs and unilateral measures in the various bodies of the Convention.

At the Doha Conference, the three issues of equity, technology-related IPRs, and unilateral measures raised by India resounded in the decisions. R R Rashmi, chief negotiator from India said the challenge for India at Doha was to make equity a part of the deal and that equity should not just be an idea, it should be operationalised. Equity should be the principle that should 'establish a road map for now and future'<sup>10</sup>. Any ambitious deal should have equity at its core.

With regard to the domestic actions, Man Mohan Singh government had prepared the National Environment Policy (NEP) in 2006 to mainstream environmental concerns into development activities in order to achieve sustainable development goals (Planning Commission, 2012a) and respect ecological constraints (Government of India, 2015a). As a policy it reflected the influence of international norms and standards in it explicitly recommended that future legislation be enacted that is in harmony with multilateral environmental regimes, through the incorporation of the ideas of social responsibility, environmental standard setting and striving for economic efficiency in order to moderate environmental impacts<sup>11</sup>.

In 2007 and 2008 (before and after the Bali COP), Prime Minister Manmohan Singh made a number of institutional decisions that ultimately had a bearing on the country's stance on climate change. In 2007 the incumbent Minister of Environment, A Raja, resigned, and instead of

---

<sup>10</sup> Bose Inderjit, *Doha Getaway: World on Line for New Regime, US on Track to Escape, Down to Earth*, 7 December 2012

<sup>11</sup> Atteridge et al., *Climate Policy in India: What Shapes International, National and State Policy*, PMC 2012

appointing another minister, the Prime Minister's Office took charge of the MoEF; Singh also created a high-level body called the PM's (Advisory) Council on Climate Change (PMCCC).

While apparently important institutional responses due to their association with the PMO, neither the PMCCC nor the Office of the Special Envoy was assigned permanent staff, and had to rely instead on ad hoc assistance from the PMO and external experts, undermining their ability to play a long-term strategic role<sup>12</sup>. The Office of the Special Envoy was instrumental in helping to bring the NAPCC process to fruition; thus, by playing a role at both the national and international levels, it began to compete with the MEA and the MoEF for authority over the issue area, ultimately leading to the dissolution of the Office in 2010, when Minister Ramesh consolidated the authority of the MOEF over the issue. The Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy Sources (MNES) was renamed the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) in 2006 (Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, 2016).

In addition to the PMCCC, the "Inter-Ministerial and Inter-Agency Consultative Mechanism" and the "Expert Committee on Impacts of Climate Change" were established in 2007 (Ministry of Environment and Forests, 2012). As the nodal ministry for Climate Change, the MOEF organised the Inter-Ministerial and Inter-Agency Consultative Mechanism to assist them in the preparation and articulation of policies and strategies. Composed of nationally recognised experts, the consultative mechanism was divided into political, modelling and (later) forest sub-groups (Ministry of Environment and Forests, 2012).

In 2012 India hosted the sixth COP to the Convention on Biological Diversity serving as Meeting of Parties to the CBD's Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety at Hyderabad. This provided India an opportunity to showcase its varied biodiversity and initiatives. The key outcomes of the conference were- international financial resource flow related to developing countries were to be doubled by 2015 and additional financial flows to the developing countries to be about US \$30 billion by 2020<sup>13</sup>. The Indian Prime Minister announced ratification of the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing under the CBD by India and under its presidency launched the Hyderabad Pledge of US \$50 million to enhance capacity building and institutional mechanisms

---

<sup>12</sup>Dubash & Joseph, *Evolution of Institutions for Climate Policy in India*, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol 51, No 3, 16 January 2016

<sup>13</sup> Eleventh Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Earth Negotiations Bulletin, 8-19 October 2012

in developing countries. The Twelfth Five Year Plan whose explicit theme was a 'faster, more inclusive and sustainable growth' process.

The 19<sup>th</sup> COP to the UNFCCC took place in Warsaw, Poland. The parties advanced a timeline for the development of the 2015 agreement. It was decided to initiate or intensify domestic preparations for their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) towards the agreement, to be ready by December 2015 and ideally by the first quarter in 2015. INDCs were to be clear and transparent and that the developed nations should help the developing nations in the process of its preparation. Developed countries emphasised on the reduction of emissions in the agricultural sector in the climate negotiations.

India once again, called for CBDR. India raised its concern against reduction of emissions in the agricultural sector as the poorest and the developing countries had a majority of population engaged in agriculture and allied activities. India opined that emission reductions should be focussed on fossil fuel- based activities. India was supported by many countries and it was decided to delve predominantly on adaptation.

The developed nations urged the developing countries like India and China to reduce emissions whereas the Like- Minded Developing Countries (LMDC) wished to have clear separation between developed and developing countries and differentiated responsibilities. Further, India slammed the rich countries for treating climate change issues with a business perspective, thereby providing markets for their MNCs.

### **Indian Position in Climate Governance Under NDA**

In the COP 20 at Lima, Peru in 2014 it was decided for the first time that the nations would submit their INDCs by March 2015. It was agreed that the contribution of countries has to be more than their current commitments. With regard to INDCs, India was of the opinion that INDCs should 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 degrees Celsius by the end of the century from pre- industrial levels. At Lima, India desired that more weight-age be attached to adaptation measures in the new agreement while the developed world emphasises more on mitigation efforts and goals. With Narendra Modi government, India's narrative that 'adaptation is critical

to the country's development paradigm'<sup>14</sup> has gained momentum. However, mitigation has not been side-lined by India. But adaptation be incorporated in a comprehensive and balanced manner in the new agreement. Such a balance should have 'total parity, in terms of financial flow or allocations, legally binding status, technology transfer or sense of urgency and commitments' with 'a long term global goal for adaptation to be clearly articulated in qualitative and quantitative terms. India opined that developed countries play a greater role in mitigation efforts and with the financial assistance and technology transfer from the developed world, every country in the world should mandatorily engage with adaptation efforts.

The COP 21 under the UNFCCC successfully concluded in Paris during 30 November 2015 to 12 December 2015, with participation from 195 countries. After intense negotiations by the Parties followed by the adoption of the Paris Agreement on post-2020 actions on climate change. This universal agreement will succeed the Kyoto Protocol. Unlike the Kyoto Protocol, it provides a framework for all countries to take action against climate change. Placing emphasis on concepts like climate justice and sustainable lifestyles, the Paris Agreement for the first time brings together all nations for a common cause under the UNFCCC. One of the main focus of the agreement is to hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial level and on driving efforts to limit it even further to 1.5°C. The Paris Agreement comprises of 29 articles and is supported by 139 decisions of the COP. It covers all the crucial areas identified as essential for a comprehensive and balanced agreement, including mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage, finance, technology development and transfer, capacity building and transparency of action and support.

Along with the submission of our INDCs to the UNFCCC, emphasis was given to clean energy. Union Budget 2015 announced to 'quadruple its renewable power capacity to 175 gigawatt (GW) by 2022'<sup>15</sup> with 100 GW to be sourced from solar energy, 60GW from wind energy, 10GW from biomass and 5GW from hydroelectricity. India's outreach to expanding renewable energy sources was welcome on the international stage. India began to bridge nations on the issue of climate change as well as bridged development with climate action.

At the conference, India made four important commitments- reducing greenhouse gases emission intensity of its GDP by 33% to 35% below 2005 levels by 2030, under its Nationally Determined

---

<sup>14</sup> Goswami Urmi, *Lima Climate Conference: India Seems to Have Fallen Behind its BASIC Partners*, The Economic Times, 9 December 2014

<sup>15</sup> Lahiry Samar, *Paris Climate Deal: Ambitions and Actions on the Ground*, Down to Earth, 13 January 2018

Commitments; that 40% of India's power capacity would be based on non- fossil fuel based sources; that India will create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent through additional tree and forest cover by 2030. India became the 62<sup>nd</sup> country to join the deal by ratifying the agreement on 2 October 2016. The agreement was unanimously adopted by 196 parties to keep global warming below 2 ° Celsius above pre- industrial levels and continue efforts to limit it to 1.5 ° Celsius. India being a part of the treaty would provide strength in handling the effects of climate change, assure co- benefits of cooperative climate actions for economic growth and also provide geopolitical benefits. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi along with Francois Hollande, the President of France, launched the International Solar Alliance at the Paris summit and it entered into force in December 2017.

The 22<sup>nd</sup> session of the COP to the UNFCCC took place at Marrakech, Morocco from 7 November 2016 to 18 November 2016. The Parties were urged to continue scaling up their financial contributions towards the pre- agreed \$100bn a year by 2020 goal. The key outcomes during the meet was supporting enhanced action on adaptation as a knowledge hub and strengthening linkages with the Adaptation Committee and the Least Developed Countries Expert Group. It was agreed that in two years' time, by 2012, countries would agree to the rules and procedures for the Paris Agreement. Parties agreed on a five- year work- plan on Loss and damage. Developed countries launched a road map to 2020 on reaching the agreed goal of \$100bn per annum in climate finance for developing countries. The Marrakech Action Proclamation for Our Climate and Sustainable Development was stated. The Climate Vulnerable Forum, an international partnership of countries highly vulnerable to climate change, committed to update their Nationally Determined Commitments (NDCs) before 2020, prepare long- term low emissions development strategies and generate 100% of their energy from renewable sources soon as possible.

Indian delegation was led by Minister of State for Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Anil Madhav Dave by launching India's Pavilion at COP 22 with the theme- Sustainable Lifestyles and Climate Justice. India insisted on a concrete action roadmap for 2016- 2020 and achieving pre- 2020 goals and urged the developed countries to enhance finance, technology and capacity building support before and after 2020<sup>16</sup>. Further, India had ratified the Paris Agreement on 2 October 2016, on the birth anniversary of Gandhiji who symbolised simple living. India

---

<sup>16</sup> Rattani V, Venkatesh S, *Muted Presence*, Down to Earth, 2016

continued its insistence on the principles reflecting climate justice at the conference. Kartikeya Sarabhai, Director, Centre for Environment Education, India referred to how lifestyle was included in Charter of the Paris Agreement by the efforts of Indian Prime Minister. India's Special Secretary, MoEFCC, R R Rashmi shared with the world, India's adaptation related national action plans.

The 23<sup>rd</sup> COP to the UNFCCC was held during 6 November 2017 and 17 November 2017 at Bonn, Germany. Key takeaways for India from COP 23 have been that the agenda of pre-2020 climate change commitments and implementation has found a significant place in COP 23 outcome in the form of a decision with steps for future action on pre 2020 action and ambition. This decision emphasizes that enhanced pre-2020 actions can lay a solid foundation for enhanced post-2020 ambition. India has been able to preserve differentiation in informal notes/texts on various elements of Paris Agreement work programme including nationally determined contributions, adaptation communication, transparency framework, global stock-take, compliance, technology framework, finance and capacity building prepared for further work on rules, modalities and guidelines for Paris Agreement. At Bonn, India showcased its stature as a rising and strong leader on climate action. At Bonn, the rules for implementing the Paris Agreement was to be negotiated.

Indian delegation was led by Dr Harsh Vardhan, the Minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change. India's theme for COP 23 was "Conserving Now, Preserving Future". Indian Pavilion was created with the intention to create awareness about India's positive climate actions in adaptation, mitigation, clean technology innovation and renewable energy. Many of the proposals put forward by India, by being a part of the Like Minded Developing Countries were incorporated in the draft decision text. It was strongly communicated to the developed countries that post- 2020 climate action reflected in the Paris Agreement should very well be a continuation of the pre- 2020 commitments. India had raised concern for early ratification of the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol and suggested mid- 2018 as the deadline. Further, India desired a periodic stock-take of pre- 2020 implementation and ambition at COP 24 in 2018 and COP 25 in 2019. Developing countries, including India and China had asked for an agenda to discuss the emission cuts that developed countries should make prior to 2020 under the

Kyoto Protocol, which was rejected by the developed countries<sup>17</sup>. Parties finally agreed to hold additional stocktaking sessions in 2018 and 2019 to review progress on reducing emissions, and produce two climate finance assessments in 2018 and 2020.

The 24<sup>th</sup> meeting of the COP to the UNFCCC was scheduled during 2 December 2018 to 14 December 2018 at Katowice, Poland. Dr Harsh Vardhan, the Indian minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change led the 17 members' delegation and inaugurated the Indian Pavilion at the conference and announced the theme for the year to be- 'One World One Sun One Grid' as announced by Indian Prime Minister at the first assembly of the ISA. India also released its second Biennial Update Report to the UNFCCC. He addressed the gathering and said, the Pavilion reflects India's ambitious and bold climate actions at international, national and regional levels. He provided insights into the policies and institutional mechanisms related to energy security, food security and capacity enhancement. The Green Good Deeds Movement launched in India campaigned individuals to do small green deeds as car- pooling, energy saving moves, planting of saplings etc. He gave a picture of the renewable energy strides of India. India stood 4<sup>th</sup> in wind power, 5<sup>th</sup> in solar power installed. Efforts are made to harness energy from biomass, biofuel and bio energy. 310 million LEDs are installed countrywide and 58 million households are covered under Ujjwala scheme. In the last two years, India had achieved 1% increase in forest cover<sup>18</sup>. 0.26 million electric vehicles had been sold and India has pledged to eliminate single- use plastic, across the country by 2022. Along with the resolve to make India plastic free by 2022 and for India's leadership role in the ISA, Indian Prime Minister was designated with "Champion of Earth Award" in 2018 by the UNEP. India's approach towards the climate change issue and ensuring climate justice for all was a combination of modern technologies and wisdom of its collective cultural tradition, including climate- resilient and sustainable lifestyles, he stated.

### **Key Take-Away and the Future Course of Action**

Ever since the climate negotiations seriously began at Stockholm, India has been playing an active role. It has been arguing on normative principles of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities based on historical usage of carbon space. India has been insisting on its national priorities of socio-economic development and poverty eradication.

---

<sup>17</sup> Mohan Vishwa *India Questions Rich Nations Sluggish Climate Actions Under Previous Commitments at Bonn Summit*, The Times of India, 7 November 2017

<sup>18</sup> MOEFCCC, Economic Survey 2017-18

India has adhered to its international commitments but never compromised on its principles in the interest of its sovereignty and interests of the citizens.

India with strong environmental ethos has been in the recent times emphasizing on sustainable lifestyles and been opposing the affluent life style of the West. While India has adopted adaptation and mitigation measures, it has also been embarking on the co-benefits of such programmes which address development and environmental concerns. India has been insisting the developed world to provide financial aid, technical assistance and fulfil capacity building needs but on the other hand assisting the third world countries, small island nations and countries susceptible to climate change. India has expressed non-feasibility in phasing-out coal but recently has been diversifying its energy mix. Besides international initiatives like ISA and solar plants nationally, India has been availing economic benefits in clean development mechanisms, international investments in solar and wind installations. In the future course of action, India needs to cater to its national interest but also needs to adopt a pragmatic approach. While it needs to address development concerns it cannot compromise on its energy demands and carbon space.