

COP 28: India's equity demand

Posted at: 24/11/2023

Context:

There is an almost linear relationship between global warming and cumulative carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992 noted that per capita emissions in developing countries are still “relatively low” and that their share in the global emissions will grow to meet their social and developmental needs.

CBDR-RC Principle:

1. The Convention recognises the ‘common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities’ (CBDR-RC) principle. This means different States have different responsibilities and respective capabilities in tackling climate change.
2. This principle has been reaffirmed in the Paris Agreement, whose main aim is to hold “the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre industrial levels” and pursue efforts “to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre industrial levels”.
3. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s Sixth Assessment Report (IPCC AR6), every 1,000 billion tonnes of CO₂ emissions causes an estimated 0.45 degrees Celsius rise in the global surface temperature.
4. Axiomatically, limiting the rise in global temperature to a specific level means limiting cumulative carbon dioxide emission to within a carbon budget.

What is the global carbon budget?

1. The term ‘global carbon budget’ refers to the maximum cumulative global anthropogenic CO₂ emissions - from the preindustrial era to when such emissions reach net zero, resulting in limiting global warming to a given level with a given probability.
2. The remaining carbon budget indicates how much CO₂ could still be emitted, from a specified time after the preindustrial period, while keeping temperature rise to the specified limit.
3. For a 50% chance of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, the U.S. would have to reach net zero emissions (NZE) in 2025, rather than 2050; and the EU28 bloc by 2031 instead of 2050. India has committed to reach NZE by 2070.

Who's responsible for cumulative global emissions?

1. According to the IPCC AR6, the developed countries have appropriated a disproportionately larger share of the global carbon budget to date. The contribution of South Asia — which includes India — to historical cumulative emissions is only around 4% despite having almost 24% of the entire world population.
2. The per capita CO₂ FFI (fossil fuel and industry) emissions of South Asia was just 1.7 tonnes CO₂ equivalent per capita, far below North America and also significantly lower than the

world average (6.6 tonnes CO₂eq. per capita).

How does the carbon budget matter for India?

1. The global carbon budget for a given temperature limit is a global resource, common to the entire world, but is exhaustible and limited and with only equitable methods of sharing it, consistent with the foundational principles of the UNFCCC.
2. India must recognise a 'fair share of the carbon budget' as a strategic national resource whose reserves are depleting rapidly due to overexploitation by developed countries.
3. In a rapidly depleting global carbon budget, if we fail to deploy resources at our command to forcefully use it as a strategic national resource, we will be short changed by new colonial techniques of developed countries.
4. In almost all the emissions scenarios estimated by the IPCC, the world breaches an increase of 1.5 degrees Celsius from pre industrial levels in the early 2030s.
5. In 2022, oil, coal and gas accounted for 30%, 27% and 23% of the world's total energy, while solar and wind energy together contributed only 2.4%. The world is still largely powered by nonrenewable energy.

What should India's stance be at COP 28?

1. According to the NITI Aayog, U.N. Development Programme's (UNDP) Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) Report 2023 review, India has been able to lift more than 135 million poor out of poverty in less than five years (2015-21).
2. India has also just extended food security welfare measures to more than 800 million people in the country, under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), highlighting the magnitude of the challenge of poverty eradication after COVID-19.

Role of development:

1. Development is the first defence against climate change. How long will developing countries have to divert their scarce resources, manpower, and attention to meeting global problems created by developed countries?
2. It is imperative that developing countries receive a fair and equitable share of their carbon budget alongside stronger and more fruitful commitments from developed countries - including the promised but unmet climate specific new and additional finance.
3. The Indian government has led from the front to foster international consensus to tackle climate change. To this end, India has set up the International Solar Alliance (ISA), Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), and Global Biofuel Alliance (GBA).
4. Through the 'Lifestyle for Environment' (LiFE) mission, the Indian government also aims to spread awareness of good lifestyle practices and establish that sustainable lifestyles are the best way forward.

UNFCCC COP 28:

1. Scientists estimate that at a conservative price of \$50/tCO₂eq, developed countries' carbon debt to the world is pegged at over \$51 trillion. Based on India's historical emissions (1850-2019), it has a carbon credit equivalent of 338 GtCO₂eq., equal to around \$17 trillion at \$50/tCO₂eq.
2. Without finance and technology as promised in 1992 at the Rio Earth Summit, developing countries stare at an even more unfair world. The cover decision of the Glasgow Climate Pact recorded an unprecedented "regret" on the failure of the developed countries to provide US \$100 billion dollars a year, as promised at the COP 15 talks in Copenhagen in 2009.

Conclusion:

At COP 28, India must demand a fair share of its carbon budget or equivalent reparations to bring about fairness within the global order. Only development brings with it an assurance to tide over the roller coasters of climate change.

Dr. Shivakumar's



AKKA IAS ACADEMY
www.akkaias.com