

THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES (COP)-26 AT GLASGO : INDIA'S POSITION

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to investigate the major decisions of the Conference of the Parties (COP)—26 and India's position. Climate change has gained global attention, and various efforts have been made to address the issue. The Conference of Parties (COP) is one example of a United Nations initiative of this type. The Conference of Parties (COP26) held its twenty-sixth meeting in Glasgow, Scotland, Great Britain, in 2021. This conference reaffirms the Paris Agreement's goal of keeping global average temperatures below 2 degrees Celsius. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced his goal of reaching net-zero emissions by 2070 at this conference. However, due to Chinese and Indian objections, the final version of the Glasgo text replaced “phase-out” with “phase-down” of coal power during the closing minutes of the conference. India must rely on coal power to accelerate its development. It is not possible for India to impose a time limit on the use of coal in the power sector. The energy transition should be gradual, with large investments required to transition coal regions to non-coal economies. Without adequate financial and technical support, knowledge sharing, and capacity building from developed countries, developing countries such as India will be unable to meet their commitments made at the Glasgo Conference.

Keywords: Climate Change, Conference of Parties, net-zero, energy transition, investments, technical support

The Conference of the Parties (COP)-26

at Glasgo: India's Position

Introduction:

The problem of climate change that the universe is facing involves a variety of obstacles. It occurs as a result of natural phenomena as well as artificial activity. As the pinch becomes more widespread, the issue has risen to the foreground of global politics, piqued the interest of governments, international organisations, industry, non-governmental organisations, and an increasing number of people around the world, and prompted increased international efforts to address the problem. At the global level, enormous efforts are being done to keep warming below 2 degrees Celsius. It is widely believed that, in the absence of such initiatives, the globe will suffer the burden of a 4°C to 6°C warming if emissions continue to rise at their current rate. The world is moving further away from the safe amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere as a result of this increase. Floods, droughts, heat waves, forest fires, shifts in rainfall patterns, the spread of dangerous illnesses, and changes in agricultural production patterns have all become more common as the earth has warmed.

Climate change has gained international attention, and numerous initiatives have been made to solve the issue. The major multinational agreement to reduce emissions was reached in 1992 at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which was ratified by the vast majority of countries and provides the institutional framework for international climate policy to

promote and review efforts to combat global warming. Every year in the month of December, periodic meetings of the parties to the convention on climate change, known as Conference of Parties (COP), were held. Kyoto Protocol (1997), Copenhagen Conference (2009), Lima (2004), Paris Conference (20015), and Glasgow Conference (2021) are notable examples.

The Glasgow Climate Pact was the outcome of COP26, which was negotiated by consensus among the representatives of the 197 parties in attendance. Alok Sharma, a UK cabinet member, served as the conference's president. The summit was the first since the COP21 Paris Agreement in which participants were expected to increase their commitments to combat climate change. This meeting, according to US climate czar John Kerry, is the world's "last best hope" to escape climatic hara-kiri. At the opening ceremony, American President Joe Biden, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and French President Emmanuel Macron were among those in attendance, while Prince Charles spoke at the opening ceremony. Some key leaders were absent from the conference, including Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin. Both President Joe Biden of the United States and former President Barack Obama of the United States criticized Putin and Xi for failing to attend the conference.

Various governments have made a long list of requests on environmental concerns throughout the last few months of the Glasgow Conference. The United Kingdom wants a treaty that will "consign coal power to history." The United States wants a net-zero agreement, and the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS) seeks a 1.5°C statement. Least Developing Countries (LDCs) want climate polluters to pay billions in damages, while Like-Minded

Developing Countries (LMDCs) demand \$100 billion in climate finance and carbon space. Unfortunately, the majority of these expectations will not be realised since the necessary groundwork has not been laid. The G-20 leaders took another initiative before the UN climate summit in Glasgow, offering climate promises rather than real commitments at the end of their meeting. Current national programmes to reduce emissions will need to be strengthened "if necessary," according to the final document, which makes no particular reference to 2050 as a deadline for reaching net-zero carbon emissions. The final G20 statement includes a vow to stop subsidising overseas coal-fired power generation by the end of 2021, but it does not establish a timetable for coal power to be phased out, instead promising to do so "as soon as possible."

Major Decisions of Glasgow Conference:

The participating countries of the Glasgow Conference agreed a new deal, known as the Glasgow Climate Pact, aimed at staving off dangerous climate change. Glasgow Conference has emphasized multiple issues for upgrading of environmental conditions of the world. Some important decisions of the Conference are as follows:

Mitigation:

The mitigation result lays out the measures and commitments that parties will make to speed up their efforts to decrease emissions. This conference reaffirms the Paris Agreement temperature goal of keeping global average temperature rise well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. To meet this target, global greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced rapidly, deeply, and sustainably, including a 45 percent reduction in global carbon dioxide emissions by 2030 relative to

1990 levels. The urgency for parties to intensify their efforts to jointly decrease emissions via rapid action and implementation of domestic mitigation measures is stressed in this agreement. All prominent economists have announced net-zero objectives. Many conference delegates pledged to achieve net-zero carbon emissions, with India and Japan making particular pledges at the event. India, the world's third-largest producer of carbon dioxide, has set a new goal date of 2070 to achieve net-zero emissions. Japan would provide up to \$10 billion in further assistance to help Asia decarbonize. China, the world's most significant producer of carbon dioxide by jurisdiction, said in October that it would achieve net-zero emissions by 2060, and the British government expected India to follow suit.

Adaptation:

Glasgow also launched a work programme to define a worldwide adaptation aim that will identify collective requirements and solutions to the climate problem that is already affecting many countries. In the case of an adaptation, developing nations were able to win a phrase in the Glasgow Climate Pact, pushing wealthier countries to at least double the amount of adaptation financing they provide by 2025. As the meeting progressed, more commitments were made, including \$356 million for the Adaptation Fund and \$413 million for the Least Developed Countries Fund. Parties also established a two-year work programme to operationalize and execute the Paris Agreement's "global target on adaptation" to drive collective adaptation action. Parties have agreed to launch the two-year Glasgow-Sharm el-Sheikh Work Programme on the Global Goals on Adaptation (The GlaSS) to:

1. Enable full and sustained implementation of the Paris Agreement to enhance adaptation action and support.
2. Enhance understanding of the global goal

of adaptation.

3. Review the overall progress made in achieving the global goal of adaptation.
4. Strengthen the global goal of adaptation and the execution of adaptation measures in vulnerable developing nations, among other things.

Moving away from fossil fuels:

Countries eventually agreed to a provision calling for a phase-down of coal power and a phase-out of "inefficient" fossil fuel subsidies in perhaps the most contentious decision made in Glasgow – two key issues that had never been explicitly mentioned in UN climate talks before, despite coal, oil, and gas being the main drivers of global warming. The agreement's wording refers to a desire to "phase-down" rather than "phase out" the usage of unabated coal power. Many countries have expressed dissatisfaction with the agreement's phrasing. Their judgement is that the language on coal has been drastically softened (from phase-out to phase-down) and thus is not as ambitious as it should be. The thirty-four countries, along with several banks and financial agencies, pledged to stop international funding for unabated fossil fuel energy sector by the end of 2022 and increase financing of more sustainable projects to ensure proper implementation of the phase-out of "inefficient" fossil fuel subsidies.

Climate Finance:

One of the main areas of discussion was climate funding for adaptation and mitigation. Poor countries demand more money for adaptation, but donors prefer to fund mitigation since it has a better possibility of producing money. The Paris Agreement contained \$100 billion in yearly funding for underdeveloped nations by 2020. Wealthy countries, on the other hand, have fallen short of their promises. The

Glasgow result expresses “regret,” reaffirming the vow and urging developed countries to meet the US\$100 billion goal as soon as possible. In a report, developed countries expressed confidence that the aim will be met by 2023. The Glasgow Pact calls for a doubling of funding to help developing countries adapt to climate change's effects and create resilience.

Loss and Damage:

Developing countries made a strong demand at COP26 for further action to address loss and damage. Because of the inherent relationship between wealthy countries' historical responsibility for climate change and corresponding calls for compensation from developing countries, issues about loss and damage have been and continue to be highly contentious. Parties decided to establish the Glasgow Dialogue to consider how to fund preventing, mitigating, and correcting loss and harm on a larger scale. The Glasgow Climate Pact also calls for additional support for loss and damage from rich countries and appropriate organisations. However, while Scotland and the Belgian Wallonia area agreed to give specific funding to further the loss and damage agenda, progress on this subject was restricted at the Glasgow Conference.

Methane:

The United States and a number of other countries agreed to set a cap on methane emissions. More than 80 countries have signed a worldwide methane promise, promising to reduce emissions by 30% by the end of the decade. One of the most potent greenhouse gases, methane, is responsible for a third of the present warming caused by human activity.

Transportation:

The conference included electric cars and commitments to electrify vehicles. Twenty-four developed countries' governments, as well as a

group of major car manufacturers including General Motors, Ford, Volvo, BYD Auto, Jaguar Land Rover, and Mercedes-Benz, have pledged to work towards all new car and van sales being zero emission globally by 2040, and by no later than 2035 in leading markets, accelerating the decarbonization of road transport, which currently accounts for about 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions.” The promise was not signed by major vehicle manufacturing nations such as China, the United States, Japan, Germany, and South Korea, as well as Toyota, Volkswagen, Nissan-Renault-Mitsubishi, Honda, and Hyundai.

Forests:

By agreeing to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030, 137 countries have taken a significant step forward at COP26. The pledge is supported by \$12 billion in public funds and \$7.2 billion in private funds. Brazil, which is home to 60% of the Amazon rainforest, has pledged to stop and reverse deforestation by 2030. More than 100 countries, including Canada, Russia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the United States, have vowed to halt deforestation by 2030.

India is a major player in the worldwide effort to mitigate climate change. The country is extremely sensitive to the effects of climate change due to its position and topography. Climate change, according to trustworthy sources, will have a negative influence on fresh water availability, crop output, and soil conservation, as well as a rise in vector and water-borne diseases in India. India has demonstrated resolve towards the global issue when crafting its strategy, having acknowledged the severity of the repercussions of climate change. India, as a developing economy, continues to resist developed-country demands for legally mandated, time-bound carbon reduction objectives. It has argued that, although

being the fourth greatest emitter of greenhouse gases after China, the United States, and Europe, India's emissions are vastly different from those of the first three largest emitters, China, the United States, and Europe. India has long emphasised that industrialised countries are the real offenders in the current status of the world. As a result, they should be responsible for past emissions. India has stated that in order to achieve socioeconomic development goals, it will not allow its per capita greenhouse gas emissions to exceed the developed world's average per capita emissions.

With the goal of projecting itself as a responsible global participant who is severely affected by climate change, India is adamantly in favour of a successful climate agreement. It has always been enthusiastic about putting in place domestic rules and steps to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. India made the most significant announcement during the COP26 climate conference in Glasgow. India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on the opening day of the meeting that the country will achieve net-zero emissions by 2070. He also outlined four significant near-term goals, demonstrating India's commitment and ambition in the fight against climate change. The goals include increasing installed renewable energy capacity to 500 GW (from 450 GW) by 2030, meeting 50% of electricity demand with renewable, reducing total projected cumulative carbon emissions by 1 billion tones between 2020 and 2030, and lowering the carbon intensity of GDP by 45 percent from 2005 levels (up from the 33-35 percent target). Because of India's renewable energy ambitions, coal power will reach its peak before 2030, when renewable energy will account for roughly 70% of the country's electrical generation, and battery and smart grid technology will be dominant.

According to the Centre for Science and

Environment, the goal to reduce emissions by one billion tones by 2030 would necessitate a staggering 22 percent drop in India's carbon output. In terms of Net Zero, the aim of 2070 is two decades after the global goal of mid-century, and would need the world's other rising economies, including China, peaking emissions, preferably by 2030. Renewable energy currently provides roughly 12% of India's electricity, and increasing that to 50% by 2030 will be a tough order. India will be a global leader in combating climate change and guaranteeing sustainable development if the government follows through on Mr. Modi's promises in Glasgow.

However, in the final minutes of the meeting, a dramatic procedure to amend one paragraph of the final text unfolded, which was initiated by China, completed by India, and backed by a number of countries. The paragraph is about the phase-out of coal-fired power. The phrase "phase-out" of coal power was used in the final version of the document. China was the first country to raise a minor objection to this provision. Then India offered a modified version of the paragraph in which "phase-out" was changed with "phase-down" to explain what must happen to coal's use in power generation. While India's suggestion was adopted, other countries protested to the modification, primarily Europeans and tiny vulnerable countries. Phase-down refers to gradually reducing coal consumption, whereas phase-out refers to completely eliminating coal use over a period of time. India recognised that coal power must be lowered but did not commit to entirely phase it out by altering the word to phase-down. The graph clearly depicts India's transition from non-renewable to renewable energy sources. India added 9.39 gigawatts of renewable energy in 2019-20, with more coming from rooftop solar and hydropower. During the same period, just 4.32 GW of thermal energy was added, accounting for one-third of the total

new power created.

India took issue with the fact that only coal was listed in Glasgo's text, rather than oil and gas, which are predominantly used by industrialised countries. The leader of the Indian delegation at the Glasgow conference, Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav, claimed that fossil fuels and their use had enabled regions of the world to achieve significant levels of growth. "Developed countries haven't totally phased out coal yet." Mitigation of GHG emissions from all sources is referred to by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). India further claimed that, unlike industrialised countries that rely on gas for electricity, coal accounts for 70% of India's electrical output and 62% of China's. While it is critical to tackle the climate disaster, coal power must be phased out. However, there was no debate at the Glasgo Conference about how this coal transition will take place or who will pay for the mine closures.

Rich countries grew rich on fossil fuels, as seen by their lion's share of cumulative emissions, and are now better positioned to switch to renewables at scale. In the United States, stagnant power demand combined with cheaper natural gas and renewable energy prices has led to the closure of coal facilities, but the government has provided no guidelines on how to stop coal, as though leaving the transition schedule to the market. Compare this to India, where the IEA predicts the biggest increase in energy consumption of any country over the next 20 years, where coal is abundant, mining employs over 2 million people, and energy transition sensitivity is extremely high. Nuclear energy is one cost-effective solution that we should maximise in order to meet the Glasgo Conference's goals. In India, it accounts for only 2% of energy in power production,

compared to 4% in China, 18% in Russia, 19% in the United States, and 72 percent in France. In terms of how much COP26 provides today, it all relies on how individual states finalise their pledges. The goal of eliminating coal will be contingent on a sincere commitment to phase it out first.

The amendment of Glasgo's final text has no impact on India's energy future or development trajectory. However, India's image has clearly suffered as a result of presenting itself as a coal champion and forcing the change at the last minute. What's more galling is that China, which consumes half of the world's coal and was the driving force behind the demand to remove the passage, sat pretty while we were mocked by western media. And this has been the issue with India's climate-change negotiation strategy.

Conclusion:

We might conclude that, despite the fact that India received a lot of criticism for pushing through a late revision to the Glasgow Climate Pact, many countries opted to continue to phase down coal rather than phase it out. From India's perspective, the summit was a success because it concisely addressed and expressed the problems and ideals of the developing world. At the forum, India paved the way for productive discourse and equitable and just solutions. There is no doubt that climate change is the most critical issue. It has something to do with our very existence. However, for hundreds of millions of Indians living in poverty, more urgent existential issues like healthcare and sanitation, on the one hand, and productive work, on the other hand, are more pressing. India can only be affluent if it maintains double-digit economic growth.

Economic competitiveness necessitates energy that is reliable, plentiful, and inexpensive. The coal economy supports millions people,

many of whom reside in impoverished areas of eastern India. This figure could rise as the freshly auctioned coal blocks go into production. The Indian government needs a transition plan, but given the limits on productive jobs and fiscal constraints, it appears that coal will not be phased out rapidly. Renewable energy sources may not be able to supply all of those demands in the next decade due to technological constraints. India has a large energy demand as a rapidly rising economy with low per capita energy consumption. India's total energy demand will be at least double that of today by 2030. So, both renewable and non-renewable energy need to be scaled up even as their share changes. The recent coal crisis has only served to emphasise the importance of continuing to

invest in coal. The recent surge in global oil prices exerted macroeconomic pressure, emphasising the necessity to discover more oil. India has vast reserves that have yet to be used. The shift to non-coal economies should be gradual, and it will require significant investments. The current situation does not allow the government of India to carry out such large-scale projects. Only a few significant companies in India's private sector have access to capital at a low enough cost to make climate-friendly initiatives profitable. As a result, industrialised countries must provide enough financial and technical assistance, as well as information sharing and capacity building, in order for developing countries like India to meet their obligations made at the Glasgow Conference.

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