NEXT IAS

DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

TOPIC

THE STATE OF CLIMATE GOVERNANCE: INDIA & WORLD

THE STATE OF CLIMATE GOVERNANCE: INDIA & WORLD

Context

- Global climate governance has gained renewed attention due to repeated shortfalls in international climate negotiations, particularly at recent Conferences of the Parties (COPs).
- COP30 reinforced the perception of global climate governance, the gap between climate ambition and real-world action continues to widen, despite decades of negotiations under the **UNFCCC.**

About Global Climate Governance

- It is primarily anchored in the **UNFCCC**, operationalised through instruments such as the **Kyoto Protocol** and the **Paris Agreement**, and administered via COP meetings.
- They rely heavily on **nationally determined contributions (NDCs)** and **consensus-based decision-making** while these frameworks provide near-universal participation.

Current Status & Future Projections

- According to the **Emissions Gap Report 2024 of UNEP**, global greenhouse gas emissions reached about **57.4 GtCO$_2$e**, the highest ever recorded.
  - At the current trajectory, the world is projected to breach the **1.5°C threshold in the early 2030s**, well ahead of political expectations.
- Global emissions continue to rise, and scientific projections indicate that the **1.5°C temperature threshold is likely to be crossed in the early 2030s**.
  - The existing governance system risks becoming a forum for negotiation without delivery without binding commitments, enforceable compliance mechanisms, and adequate finance.
- Developing countries require **$2.4–3 trillion annually** for mitigation and adaptation, while current climate finance flows remain below **$400 billion**.
  - COP30 offered encouragement, **not obligation, no binding timelines, no agreed contributors, and no clarity on scale**.
- Despite this, **no COP decision** has created enforceable obligations that match the scale or urgency of the crisis.
- Future projections suggest that unless structural changes occur, climate governance will continue to generate ambitious language while emissions, vulnerabilities, and inequalities rise in parallel.

India & Climate Governance

- India is a **signatory** to the **UNFCCC, Kyoto Protocol, and Paris Agreement**, and has submitted updated **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)**.
- Its current commitments include:
  - Reducing emissions intensity of GDP by **45% from 2005 levels by 2030;**
  - Achieving about **50% cumulative installed power capacity from non-fossil sources by 2030;**
  - Reaching **net-zero emissions by 2070;**
- India has made notable progress in renewable energy expansion, especially solar and wind, and has emerged as a global leader in solar deployment.
- However, absolute emissions continue to rise due to development needs, coal dependence, urbanisation, and industrial growth.

Concerns & Issues Surrounding Global Climate Governance

- **Politics over urgency**: National interests consistently override collective climate action. Consensus decision-making, often praised as cooperative, effectively grants every country a veto.
- **Science vs Politics:** What persists is not scientific uncertainty but the **politics of uncertainty**, where doubt is repurposed to justify delay and diffuse responsibility.
  - Governing a long-term planetary crisis within short political cycles remains an unresolved contradiction.
- **Economics of opportunism**: Markets reward short-term profits, not long-term planetary stability. Future generations are not market participants and therefore not accounted for.

- **Marginalisation of citizens**: For most people, climate change remains abstract until disaster strikes. Daily needs like food, housing, health, jobs take precedence over distant climate risks.
- **Misuse of uncertainty**: Scientific uncertainty is no longer the problem; political use of uncertainty is. It is repeatedly repurposed to justify delay and deflect responsibility.
- **Inadequate justice mechanisms**: Loss and damage funds exist institutionally, but remain financially insignificant relative to escalating climate disasters.

Related Efforts & Initiatives

- **Mitigation:** Countries were urged to enhance ambition, but no new obligations were created.
  - Even explicit fossil-fuel language failed to make it into binding text.
- **Climate Finance:** While the need is estimated at **$2.4–3 trillion annually** for developing countries, current flows remain under **$400 billion**, with no agreement on who pays, how much, or by when.
- **Adaptation:** Pledges to 'triple' adaptation finance lacked baselines, timelines, or binding sources, rendering them aspirational.
- **Loss and Damage:** A new fund was operationalised, but with limited capitalisation, far below projected needs.
- **Technology Transfer & Capacity Building:** New platforms and programmes were announced, but without the financial backing required for real-world impact.
- **Just Transition:** Rights and principles were acknowledged, but without binding commitments or resources to ensure justice in practice.
- COP30 delivered what it was structurally designed to deliver:
  - The **'Global Mutirão' package** emphasizes cooperation and togetherness, but remaining largely voluntary.
  - Calls to **triple adaptation finance**, without defining baselines, funding sources, or binding commitments.
  - Formal operationalisation of the **loss and damage fund**, though capitalisation remains modest.
  - New platforms and programmes on **technology transfer**, **capacity building**, and **just transition**, all rich in language but poor in resources.
  - Expanded frameworks and indicators, often hastily assembled and disconnected from financing plans.

India's Initiatives

- **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC):** Eight National Missions covering solar energy, energy efficiency, water, agriculture, and sustainable habitats.
- **State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs):** Frameworks for sub-national climate governance, though implementation varies.
- **International Solar Alliance (ISA):** India-led initiative promoting solar deployment in developing countries.
- **Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE):** Behavioural change initiative emphasising sustainable consumption.
- **Green Hydrogen Mission:** Aims to decarbonise industry and transport while building future-ready energy systems.
- **Climate Finance Instruments:** Use of green bonds and blended finance, though scale mains limited.

Way Forward

- The **UNFCCC and the COP process remain indispensable d**espite its flaws. **No alternative forum**, whether the G7, G20, BRICS, or ad hoc coalitions, offers the same universality, legitimacy, or legal foundation. There is a **need for climate stability. Key reforms include:**
  - **Move Beyond Voluntarism:** Binding commitments, especially on emissions reduction and finance, need to replace polite encouragement.
  - **Revisit Decision-Making:** Consensus should not function as a universal veto. Flexible voting mechanisms may be necessary for progress.
  - **Anchor Finance in Obligation:** Climate finance needs to shift from pledges to predictable, assessed contributions linked to responsibility and capability.

- ◆ **Prioritise Adaptation and Loss & Damage:** As warming accelerates, all countries need to prepare to adapt, whether or not global agreements succeed.
- ◆ **Re-centre People:** Climate policy needs to connect with everyday livelihoods, making citizens stakeholders rather than afterthoughts.
- ◆ **Reassert common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR)**: Developed countries need to acknowledge historical responsibility with predictable finance and technology support.

Daily Mains Practice Question

[Q] Discuss the key structural weaknesses in global climate governance and India's climate policy approach. Suggest measures to make climate governance more effective and people-centric.

Source: TH

■■■■