



# Global Stock Take and India's Climate Commitments at COP

Challenges, Strategies, and Global Impact

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# Foreword



**C. K. Mishra**

*Former Union Secretary, Ministry  
of Environment, Forests and  
Climate Change, Gol  
Former Union Secretary, Ministry  
of Health and Family Welfare, Gol*

As countries of the world gather once again for the annual Conference of Parties (COP), it is an opportune time for the world to reflect on this juncture collectively, where we find ourselves with global climate challenges.

At this pivotal moment, we stand at the crossroads of possibility and responsibility. The time is ripe for COP to transition from the traditional geopolitical discussion platform to a more action-oriented approach. While discussions and alignment on priorities such as adaptation and mitigation, Loss and Damage (L&D) are undeniably important, it is important to acknowledge that conversations must build pathways for tangible action.

The role of COP must extend to acting as a catalyst for countries to develop concrete plans of action and assume accountability for their contribution to climate change and climate action commitments on a global stage. Now, more than ever, countries need to shift their focus from building futuristic plans for the long term to implementing immediate and impactful actions over the next couple of years to cover up for missed opportunities and milestones.

A central aspect of this shift involves establishing an institutional mechanism to support countries in preparing costed plans for their respective Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). The upcoming COP28 agenda, notably establishing the Loss and Damage fund that the World Bank will host, provides a unique opportunity for nations to align their strategies and take advantage of the available resources. Acknowledging that some countries may lack the necessary capacity to devise comprehensive plans, COP could potentially be an avenue for introducing a mechanism to support and guide countries in creating their respective climate action plans.

In the global context, India's recent leadership within the G20 and positioning as the Voice of the Global South allows it to favourably lead and contribute significantly to these crucial conversations. India's global positioning as one of the fastest developing countries and outlook towards climate challenges make it an invaluable partner in the pursuit of actionable solutions. As the world navigates the complex landscape of environmental challenges, India is pivotal in shaping the future narrative around fighting climate change.

To that end, COP28 must mark a departure from the past, focusing on tangible and immediate actions rather than laying thrust on aspirations for the future. It is the time for parties to COP to collectively seize this opportunity to ensure that the discussions translate into plans and plans into impactful actions, fostering a future where our commitments are not just spoken but realized.

I commend Chase India for their efforts in putting together this note, which sets a context for COP and India's journey within that. It is a useful reference report to understand India's evolving climate action stance and the key priorities emerging for COP28 from an Indian perspective.

# Introduction

It gives me immense pleasure to present this comprehensive note on the Conference of the Parties (COP) and India's commendable journey within the global climate change negotiations.

As one of the world's most populous and fastest-growing economies, India plays a pivotal role in global climate action. It faces both opportunities and challenges in its pursuit of sustainable development while representing the interests of the Global South.

Over the years, India has played a significant role in global climate change negotiations, particularly in the Conference of the Parties (COP) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). As we look ahead to COP28, this note prepared by the team at Chase India endeavours to provide an overview of India's evolving climate action stance and the key priorities emerging for COP28 from an India perspective.

India's initial focus in COP negotiations was primarily on equity and the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC)." This principle recognized historical emissions disparities and emphasized that developed nations bear greater responsibility for climate action. As a developing country, India sought support for its efforts to address climate change while prioritizing economic growth and poverty eradication.

In COP21, held in 2015, India played a crucial role in negotiating the Paris Agreement. India's commitment to reducing its emissions intensity of GDP by 33-35% by 2030 compared to 2005 levels while actively working towards non-fossil fuel energy sources was a significant step. It signaled India's willingness to take on a more proactive role in addressing climate change.

In subsequent COP meetings, India continued to emphasize its commitment to sustainable development and renewable energy. The country launched initiatives like the International Solar Alliance (ISA) to promote solar energy globally. India also worked on building alliances with other developing nations to strengthen the CBDR-RC principle in climate negotiations.

Similarly, India's leadership within the G20 has been instrumental in shaping global climate discussions. From India's stance on climate change at the G20 Summit held in 2017 in Hamburg, where it emphasized the importance of carbon markets, technology transfer, and financial support for developing countries, to the Osaka Summit in 2019, where India reiterated its commitment to renewable energy and sustainable development, to India's leadership in the G20 during the COVID-19 pandemic where it highlighted the need for a green recovery and advocated for integrating climate action into economic stimulus packages, underscoring the interconnectedness of health, economy, and climate - India's position on climate action has continuously strengthened supported a balanced approach between climate action and development.

Even in the recently concluded G20 Leaders' Summit in New Delhi, under India's Presidency, a sense of urgency to address climate change was visible when the G20 nations committed to prioritizing acceleration of their actions to address environmental crises and challenges, including climate change.

As India's stance on climate change continues to evolve, the country faces the dual challenge of reducing emissions while addressing developmental imperatives and ensuring a balanced approach that accommodates the needs and aspirations of the country. India's climate action journey in the lead-up to COP28 is marked by significant progress and ambitious commitments. While challenges remain, India's dedication to addressing climate change through sustainable development, renewable energy expansion, promotion of technology and innovation, initiatives like the National Clean Air Programme, Mission LiFE, and international cooperation are promising signs for the global effort to combat climate change.

With India emerging as a strong leader of the global south, the international community will look to India for its continued commitment to ambitious climate targets, increased climate finance contributions, and leadership on critical issues around climate action. The world will be watching closely as India plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of climate action.

Warm regards,



**Suryaprabha Sadasivan**

*Vice President,*  
*Chase India*

## Conference of Parties

The Conference of Parties (COP), organized under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), is a crucial annual event that serves as a platform for countries to negotiate, collaborate, and set international agreements on climate action, emissions reductions, and environmental policies. Each year, representatives from countries worldwide gather to address climate challenges at COP. Over the years, the COP Summits have allowed governments to collectively work towards limiting global warming and protecting the planet's future while mitigating the impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities and ecosystems. While the climate change crisis impacts the entire world, India and other developing and under-developed countries are particularly vulnerable to climate change, making COP outcomes all the more important to the developing world.

## India's early involvement at COP

Historically and even today, India faces the dilemma of balancing its economic development and the trajectory of balancing climate change challenges. Despite challenges, India has taken a leadership role in addressing such climate challenges. In the early years of the Indian climate policy, starting with the UNFCCC in 1992, India identified itself with the Group of 77 (G77), i.e., developing nations who urged developed countries to act on climate.

Kyoto Protocol argues that developing nations must only take on voluntary commitments conditional on receiving finance and technology transfers from industrialised nations. The Principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibility (CBDR) was reflected in the UNFCCC in Rio 1992, and the Indian negotiators claimed significant influence over adding the principle.

Following Rio, India continued to play an active role in global climate negotiations. The negotiations at COP 1 in Berlin in 1995 eventually led to the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, which emphasised the continued relevance of the firewall differentiation between developed and developing nations with respect to the burden of responsibility for climate action. However, during the commitment period for the Kyoto Protocol, the BASIC countries (Brazil, China, India, and South Africa) distinguished themselves from the G77 countries. They began to be termed as 'emerging economies' based on

their economic power and carbon footprint. Ahead of the Copenhagen Summit in late 2009, India announced voluntary targets to reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by 20–25% against 2005 levels by 2020.

## India's role at major COP Summits

Over the years, there has been a seismic shift in India's climate policy and negotiations at COP. The Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) deliberations began in 2013 at Warsaw – COP 19. In its NDC submitted in October 2015, India committed to installing clean energy capacity equivalent to 40% of the total installed electrical capacity in the country by 2030, pledged to reduce the carbon intensity of its economy by 33–35% by 2030 and announced a goal to install carbon sinks. India also ratified the Paris Agreement, and several commentators praised the Indian leadership in global climate policy during the COP 21 negotiations and its early ratification. In this context, India positioned itself as a strong voice for the developing world by pushing for 'climate justice.' At COP 21, India's role could be seen as shifting from that of a global opposition to that of a global agenda setter.

## COP 26 & 27 – watershed moments for India



COP 26 was the first since the Paris Agreement of COP 21 that expected parties to make enhanced commitments towards mitigating climate change. While India was recovering from the massive second wave of COVID-19 that had hit the country, COP 26 emerged as an important event for India as it articulated and put across the concerns of the developing countries at the Summit. At the Summit, India announced an ambitious

LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) at COP 26. These net-zero goals included India's aim to raise its non-fossil fuel capacity to 500 GW by 2030 while meeting 50% of its energy demand through renewables. By announcing the net-zero year, India has also accorded a red carpet to foreign and domestic investors to invest in research and development, manufacturing, and deployment of green technologies in India. India's efforts, however, still need to be supported by the availability of climate finance from developed countries. Without foreign capital, in concessional terms, the transition will prove to be difficult.

Taking a step further, India held its ground firmly during COP 27. The release of a long-term low carbon emission development strategy (LT-LEDS) at the COP27 outlining India's proposition towards low carbon development pathways was a decisive moment. The document takes stock of existing policies and focuses on the government roadmap on the following heads: electricity, transportation, adaptation in urban design energy and material efficiency in buildings and sustainable urbanization, decoupling of growth and emissions in industry, carbon dioxide removal and related engineering solutions, increasing forest cover and vegetation, and economic and financial aspects of low carbon transition.

COP27 made some progress and deferred many decisions to the next year. Diplomatically, introducing a financial mechanism for Loss and Damage was a big victory for developing countries. The breakthrough decision established a loss and damage fund, which will be operationalized at COP 28 in the UAE. While Indian leadership expressed their happiness with the creation of the fund and inclusion of issues regarding sustainable lifestyle, the Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Bhupender Yadav, stated that there was no question of India providing any fund to the proposed loss and damage facility as it was the responsibility of a developed country. To this, he further stated that India will seek money from the fund since it is one of the most climatically affected countries in the world.

## Global scenario

Over time, international pledges to address climate change have been established based on the 2015 Paris Agreement, a pivotal moment in the global effort to combat climate change and address its impacts. This groundbreaking accord marked the first instance where a legally binding agreement united nations in their commitment to address climate change and its consequences. In acknowledgment of the pressing need to curtail global temperature rise to 1.5°C, countries have been presenting their national climate action plans, termed NDCs, since 2020, and each subsequent NDC is expected to demonstrate a progressively greater level of ambition compared to its predecessor. Since 2015, there has been an uptake in the number of countries, businesses, and other institutions pledging to get to net-zero emissions. More than 70 countries, including some of the world's biggest polluters, have set net-zero targets, covering about 76% of global emissions.

Climate finance pledges have supplemented net zero commitments and NDCs by countries through public funding, international climate finance mechanisms, and private sector investments. It's commonly understood that the \$100 billion goal, which formed part of the Paris Agreement, is a fraction of what is needed to support developing countries to achieve climate goals in accordance with the Paris Agreement. As per UNFCCC's 2023 analysis of financing needs, developing countries require at least \$6 trillion by 2030 to meet less than half of their existing Nationally Determined Contributions.

The increasing impacts of climate change were reflected in this year's UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report ('IPCC Report'), an eight-year-long undertaking from the world's most authoritative scientific body on climate change. The IPCC Report outlines that the world is already at a 1.1°C rise in global temperature, and there is a more than 50% chance that global temperature rise will reach or surpass 1.5°C between 2021 and 2040. The IPCC Report further specifies that to hold the planet's temperature below the 1.5°C threshold (as compared to the pre-industrial level); the world will have to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

Ongoing conversations regarding collective global climate action are often overshadowed by one key aspect - climate financing. It is a critical requirement for effective climate action in some of the most vulnerable nations. There is an ongoing debate about which countries have contributed most to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and how climate change mitigation

and adaptation costs should be shared. This debate has effectively stalled the ongoing negotiations regarding the Loss and Damage fund set up at COP27. While developing countries are pushing for the CBDR-RC principle, effectively putting the onus for climate financing on the developed countries, the developed countries – the EU and the United States of America – are insisting on bringing India and China into the fold by emissions. At this point, it is necessary to note that, statistically, India ranks far down in the list of countries ranked for their per capita emissions.

While COP27 concluded with a historic decision to establish and operationalize a loss and damage fund, it also raised important policy direction questions which are key to the implementation of the complex global climate action commitments.

## Road to COP 28 – UAE

The leading theme for COP 28 will be the first global stocktake on the progress towards the Paris Agreement. The COP 28 plan of action, as laid out by the UAE COP President – Sultan Al Jaber, focuses on trebling renewable energy, doubling energy efficiency and raising hydrogen production to 180 million tonnes per year by 2030. The President's plan aligns with discussions on energy and sustainability during India's G20 Presidency. The talks at the G20 Energy Transitions Working Group Meeting drew attention to fuels for the future, including hydrogen, and the outcome document of the Meeting affirmed the high-level principles on hydrogen. Similarly, the Environment and Climate Sustainability Working Group referred to the need to keep global temperatures below 2°C of warming, referred to as the North Star by the COP President. Even though the G20 is not a climate negotiation, there have been discussions on the phasing out versus phasing down of fossil fuels, as introduced by India at COP 26. The discussions and challenges of climate change are all pervasive and have also been included in the Delhi Declaration 2023 with the Green Development Pact for Sustainable Future and reaffirming the goals set at the Paris Agreement, 2015 and has called for strong, sustainable, balanced, and inclusive growth, and the pursuit of development models that leave no one behind. This reflects India's G20 and COP 28 India Pavilion theme of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'.

The Delhi Declaration also reinstates focus on the 'Common But Differentiated Responsibilities' principle mentioned in Rio 1992.

Further, with additional focus on the IPCC AR6 Synthesis Report, which states that the impacts of climate change will be much lower at a temperature increase of 1.5°C compared with 2°C, the G20 member countries have resolved to make further efforts to limit the rise to 1.5°C.

India's LT LEDS strategy, as announced at COP 27, included plans for rapid expansion of green hydrogen production, a three-fold increase in nuclear capacity by 2032, 20 per cent ethanol blending in petrol by 2025, and more. The Amrit Kaal 1.0: Budget 2023 shows the trajectory towards achieving these commitments. A capital outlay of INR 35,000 crores was announced for energy transitions, and an outlay of INR 19,700 crores for the Green Hydrogen Mission. At COP 28, India is expected to carry forward its commitments towards energy transition and climate change and draw focus towards the LiFE movement, as introduced at COP 26 in Glasgow.

India's commitments for COP 28 can be seen as Prime Minister Modi, on his UAE visit, assured India's full support for UAE's COP presidency on ways to further sustainable development and bilateral energy cooperation. Further, the Indian Environment Ministry has decided to use the same theme of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam': One Earth, One Family, One Future for COP 28 India Pavilion to showcase the country's efforts to instill a sense of unanimity for addressing the global challenge of climate change. The objective of the continued theme will be to highlight the various ongoing initiatives/ activities of the government and its strategies for mitigation and adaptation measures to tackle climate change.

In order to build momentum ahead of COP28, four regional climate weeks were held, promoting collaboration among diverse stakeholders. At the MENA Climate Week held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, India's Power Minister stressed the importance of global cooperation in the energy transition. Notably, India and Saudi Arabia signed an MoU, establishing a comprehensive framework for cooperation in various energy sectors, including electrical interconnection, electricity exchange, joint projects, green hydrogen, and secure supply chains for renewable materials. This underscores India's commitment towards energy transition and sets the stage for India's position at the upcoming COP28.

Against that background, at COP 28, the parties to COP must focus on climate action and sustainable development bolstered by a package of financial solutions and institutional reforms to achieve global net zero targets. Such financial solutions include a

loss and damage fund agreed upon during COP 27. Against that background, during the G20 Summit, significant headway was made on climate finance in the Delhi Declaration. The G20 countries acknowledged a need for an annual investment of over USD 4 trillion for the energy transition, with a high share of RE in the energy mix. The summit also acknowledged the disproportionate impact of climate change, biodiversity loss, desertification, and pollution on the developing world. With India positioning itself as the 'Voice of the

Global South' and a successful G20 Summit, it will have a higher role in taking forward the conversations on the need for financial solutions, the need for adaptation, etc. Thus, India must propose a positive, forward-looking narrative to demonstrate India's investments and drive towards achieving net zero.

## Expert speak:



With its focus on pragmatic and results-oriented approaches to climate policy and governance, India has come a long way in building its own institutional capacities to deal with climate change as well as forging climate partnerships with various countries and international/regional organizations. The International Solar Alliance and the Coalition for Disaster Resilience Infrastructure are just some of the key Indian interventions that have paved the way for just and effective climate action. India continues to champion the voice of the Global South on equity and climate justice – reinforced by its G-20 presidency. COP28 will be crucial for India to work with its partners in both the Global South and Global North to overcome the current geopolitical quagmire and explore solutions to unresolved issues such as climate finance.



**Dhanasree Jayaram,**

Assistant Professor, Department of Geopolitics and International Relations, and Co-coordinator, Centre for Climate Studies, Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE), Karnataka, India

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**Suryaprabha Sadasivan**  
Vice President - Public  
Policy



**Alak Desai**  
Manager



**Drishti Ahuja**  
Junior Associate



**Saurabh Joshi**  
Manager - Design



**Sudhanshu Gulati**  
Executive - Design

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