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# COP28: Moment of Action

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## ABSTRACT

*As the global community grapples with the escalating challenges posed by climate change, the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP 28) emerges as a pivotal moment in the ongoing discourse on climate action. This article provides a comprehensive overview of key themes, discussions, expected outcomes from COP 28 and the position of India regarding the meeting in particular, and climate change in general. Drawing on the latest discourses on climate change and policy developments, the article explores strategies for mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, adapting to changing climate patterns, and fostering international cooperation. Additionally, it examines the role of technology, finance, and inclusive governance in shaping the trajectory of climate efforts post-COP 28. By synthesizing diverse perspectives and outcomes, this article aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the global response to the climate crisis and the pathways toward a sustainable and resilient future.*

**Keywords:** *climate change, CBDR, Loss and Damage Fund, India.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

All eyes are set on the COP 28 to be held in Dubai. Many regard this year's edition as the most important COP since COP21 when the Paris Agreement was adopted. This is in light of the recent UN Global Stocktake on climate action which indicated that the progress made is inadequate. The world is already 1.2 degrees warmer than the pre-industrial times.

This year is set to overtake 2016 as the warmest ever. The World Meteorological Organization says one of the next four years will almost certainly breach the 1.5-degree Celsius threshold. For context, according to the Paris climate agreement, the temperature rise was to be limited between 1.5-2 degrees. This calls for an urgent focus on action and solutions. COP 28 could just be the platform for collaborative solutions.

Ahead of COP, the UN chief warned- "As the reality of climate chaos pounds communities around the world – with ever fiercer floods, fires and droughts – the chasm between need and action is more menacing than ever." There is a big mitigation gap with the current trajectory of global emissions being insufficient. The intensity and frequency of natural disasters is increasing unprecedented, due to climate change. NOAA has declared 2023 as the worst year

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on record for billion-dollar disasters. While the U.S. witnessed the deadliest wildfire in more than a century, torrential rains destroyed a quarter of the city of Derna in Libya. COP 28 can potentially alter this disastrous and destructive trajectory.

After a long and arduous marathon, the Loss and Development Fund was created in the previous COP at Sharm-el-Sheikh. However, no money has been put into the fund yet. COP 28 will have to finish this incomplete task by hammering out the details of the fund. Pertinent questions such as the source of funding, eligibility criteria for support and the process for accessing funds, need to be addressed. This will ensure climate justice since the countries most impacted by climate disasters have contributed the least to it. For instance, while making the least contribution to climate change, the African continent is the most susceptible to its effects. Despite contribute so little, the African continent will have to spend up to five times more on adapting to the climate crisis than on healthcare. Loss and Development, if successfully utilized will be able to right this historic injustice and ensure global solidarity on an issue with global repercussions.

This also highlights the pertinent question of “common but differentiated responsibility”. The context of this principle and loss and development fund is to strike a balance between the common objectives of environmentalism and the particular interests of the global north and global south. It also endorses the asymmetrical commitments of different states to ensure universal participation and effective implementation – as a ‘lowest common denominator’ solution. This reconciles the environmentalist agenda to intra-generational equity, particularly relevant in the South-North context of decolonization. The Delhi Declaration signed at the G-20 summit recently also endorsed this principle of international environmental law. This will be reflected in the negotiations in Dubai.

It is now evident that the fossil fuel tap needs to be turned off before the entire world is deluged. Since the emissions from the burning of coal, oil and gas constitute the main driver of climate change, their phase-down is likely to receive much attention at negotiations in Dubai.

This calls for the proliferation of non-renewable sources of energy. The idea is the triple it by 2030. It will require serious investment, especially in developing countries where millions still don’t have access to regular electricity. Scaling up renewable energy and phasing out fossil fuels are two sides of the same coin—COP 28 must deliver on both. However, reaching a consensus on fossil fuels is a gruelling task. The final Glasgow climate pact in 2021 called for “accelerating efforts towards the phasedown of unabated coal power.” It is the first time coal has been explicitly addressed in a COP agreement. This was a major breakthrough but far from the requirement at the ground level.

The governments still continue to pump billions in financial support to fossil fuel industries each year. For example, in 2022, governments spent over \$7 trillion in taxpayers' money on fossil fuel subsidies. This incentivizes pollution and delays climate action. Ending government support for fossil fuels is critical to reducing emissions. This will ensure the government's complete focus on climate action and ensure the rights of millions who bear the brunt of climate change. Another innovative suggestion by the UN secretary-general was to impose windfall taxation on the profits of fossil fuel companies and redirect the money to people struggling with rising food and energy prices and countries suffering from the disastrous impact of climate change.

This can also be seen in the light of the much-touted poor vs nature debate; herein the global poor (developing countries) are pitted against climate action. This narrative is often used to mask short-term, profit-driven self-interest. The only stable, economically sustainable future is one of energy security, resilience to disasters and active climate action. A recent UN report states that despite the mounting climate risks, the amount of money being made available to developing countries for adaptation measures was actually declining. According to the Adaptation Gap Report, the developing countries require at least \$215 billion each year but barely \$21 billion is actually flowing in, with Africa getting merely 3% of the global aid. This will not only deepen the rift between the developed and developing countries but also increasingly victimize the marginalized communities. This is when climate change can be viewed through the lens of human rights. Individuals with intersecting marginalized identities and vulnerabilities are at greater risk of climate change-related impacts. Thus, this COP must ensure that the developing countries get the billions of dollars they require to undertake climate action and protect their vulnerable communities.

Mobilization of climate finance is a key priority for many countries in the negotiation. In 2009, developed countries pledged to mobilize \$100 billion annually from 2020 and onwards from a range of public and private sources. This target has never been met. Climate finance will be, as in all COPs, an agenda of great priority. For island nations like Maldives, all finance is considered to be climate finance since their entire economy and survival is dependent on climate resilience.

## **II. INDIA AND COP28**

Owing to its gigantic size and extremely high population, India is the third largest emitter of greenhouse gases. And thus, it has to be at the forefront of the global fight against climate change. According to data from the independent Emissions Database for Global Atmospheric

Research, India's emissions have increased by nearly four times since 1970. Nearly 40% of India's emissions come from the electricity production sector, while land transport contributes about 10%.

However, in per capita terms, India's emissions are low, less than half of the global average. Low levels of per capita emissions indicate lower access to energy and thus, lower standard of living. This has been India's principal argument to counter any international demand to cap its overall emissions, arguing that it needs to lift its people to similar standards of living as in the developed countries.

At the 2021 Glasgow meeting, India blocked the final draft outcome at the last minute and got the "phase-out" of coal changed to "phase-down". This led India to be given the title of 'spoiler' by environmental activists. On the other hand, India has also been actively promoting the need for lifestyle changes and the creation of a mass movement to bring down energy consumption and emissions through the scheme of Lifestyle for Environment- 'LiFE'.

India has recently emerged as a loud voice advocating for global climate movements through various national and international platforms. The International Solar Alliance (ISA) was launched jointly by India and France in the 2015 Paris meeting. It seeks to promote the installation of solar energy throughout the world. India has also launched the Coalition of Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), which seeks to become the global knowledge centre for the creation of more resilient infrastructure. The CDRI has been receiving a lot of interest from developing countries, especially the small island states at maximum risk from climate disasters.

India's priorities as stated by the finance minister, Seetharaman recently are- climate financing and technology transfer to the less developed nations of the world. Experts also expect discussions about the Global Biofuel Alliance (GBA), which was signed at the recently concluded COP28.

COP28 can be a monumental moment in the history of climate action if the global community unanimously brings in substantial course correction in global climate change policy. It is imperative that it brings climate action out of the mere discourses and discussions and onto the tangible results on the ground. Countries must undertake a multi-stakeholder approach towards just energy transition, phasing out of non-renewable sources of energy, and ensuring climate equity all while keeping ecosystem and human-rights-centric policies. By acknowledging the gravity of the situation, mobilizing resources, and embracing shared responsibility, we can pave the way for a resilient, harmonious coexistence between humanity and the environment. The

time to act is now, and the power to make a difference lies in the collective will and determination of individuals, communities, and nations worldwide.

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