

BOLSTERING PARIS: ON THE KATOWICE CONSENSUS

Relevant for: Environment & Disaster Management | Topic: Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Development & EIA

The [UN Climate Conference held in Katowice, Poland, has moved ahead with the implementation of the Paris Agreement through a rule book](#), reflecting strong support among citizens of all countries for urgent action to avert dangerous climate change. Public pressure has prevailed over scepticism, although the outcome does not adequately reflect the short window available to make deep greenhouse gas emissions cuts. Yet, the Paris Agreement, endorsed by 195 countries under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), has a long road ahead before carbon emissions can be pegged at levels flagged by scientists. Recently, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in a special report, issued a stark warning on man-made emissions. It said that to cap the rise in global average temperature over pre-industrial levels at 1.5°C, a 45% reduction in emissions over 2010 levels must be made by 2030. This is a challenge for all big economies, including India, which is among the top five emitters of carbon dioxide. In the Indian context, it highlights the need for action on several fronts: scaling up solar and wind power in line with the goal of reaching 175 GW of renewable energy by 2022, steadily reducing reliance on coal, shifting substantially to electric mobility and adopting green industrial processes. Taxing luxury emissions and using the dividend to give the poor energy access has to be the policy target, building on international green climate funding linkages.

At Katowice, Indian negotiators put forth legitimate concerns on the likely social impact of the new rules that will operationalise the Paris Agreement in 2020. After all, at an estimated 1.2 tonnes of CO₂ per capita, India emits far below the global average of 4.2 tonnes. Yet, cumulative emissions determine the impact on climate, and India's emissions grew at an estimated 6.3% in 2018. The prospect of increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events and sea level rise in a warming world affecting small island states allows little room for complacency. The task now is to achieve a paradigm shift that will slow down the addition of new sources of carbon emissions. As a party to the global climate compact, India has to systematically assess its emissions and measure mitigation actions for reporting to the UNFCCC at stock-taking meetings. This is an opportunity to bring major sectors such as energy production, building, agriculture and transport on board, and make changes to regulations that favour environment-friendly alternatives. China has taken the lead in advancing electric mobility, while individual States and cities are ahead of national governments, as in the U.S., in reducing their carbon footprint. A clean-up in India will help meet emissions commitments and remove the blanket of air pollution that is suffocating entire cities.

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