

FOR INDIA, BIDEN'S CLIMATE PLAN IS AN OPPORTUNITY

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Degradation - GHGs, Ozone Depletion and Climate Change

(Written by Madhu Verma, Asi Guha, Elphin Tom Joe)

The outcome of the US Presidential Election 2020 is expected to have great impact on the world's environmental conservation and climate action. The detailed plan on climate and energy put forth by President-elect Joseph R Biden Jr. in his manifesto, is an ambitious one.

Indeed, the Biden Plan – to tackle climate emergency and advance a clean energy future – links economic growth with climate actions driven by research, innovation and prudent policy-making. The president-elect's commitment to this agenda is evident in the formation of transition teams embedded with climate experts, and his plans to set up a White House office to oversee mitigation efforts.

The target is to make the US a 100 per cent clean energy economy and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. The strategy aims at revitalising US climate leadership by investing in clean energy and sustainable infrastructure to the tune of \$2 trillion in the first-term. It also talks about investing \$400 billion for clean energy research and innovation, over the next 10 years. That is twice as much as the iconic Apollo programme that put man on the moon!

Aside from clean energy, Biden's vision also covers forest, biodiversity and sustainable agriculture. It talks about raising a Civilian Climate Corps consisting of conservation and resilience workers to sustainably manage forest, restore wetlands, plant trees in urban landscapes, protect coastal ecosystems, support biodiversity and so on. The aim is to create well-paid jobs along with conservation of nature.

The Biden Plan pays due attention to foreign policy. Aside from his declaration to re-join the Paris climate accord, Biden has also acknowledged that mitigation and adaptation to climate change cannot be done in silos. Therefore, he aims to convene a climate world summit to bring global leaders together to go beyond the existing national targets.

Further, Biden has laid out a policy roadmap to label laggard countries "climate outlaws" in order to promote climate action. However, such an approach to foreign policy must be backed up by sound domestic ambitions and a serious commitment to climate finance. Towards this end, the US must submit a new NDC (Nationally determined contributions) as it re-enters the Paris Agreement, committing to cut its total emissions by 45 to 50 per cent by 2030 (from 2005 level). It must also re-establish financing for the Green Climate Fund – as Biden has promised to do – starting with the USD 2 billion, outstanding from its 2014 pledge.

An important aspect of this climate policy is its potential to impact macroeconomic levers of bilateral and multilateral trade systems. The plan proposes to link US trade policy with its climate objectives. This vision could have a significant impact for developing nations like India. India can use the opportunity to facilitate a shift towards greening of the economy by focussing on clean energy solutions, land restoration etc. However, in order to successfully ride with the tide, there is a need to build domestic capacity.

To step up and embrace this opportunity, India needs investment in research and development (R&D). The nation has a massive pool of talent and ever-growing demand for jobs due to an

increasing number of people entering its workforce. The domestic economy has been shaken due to [COVID-19](#), and India has a gruelling path ahead in its race to build back better.

Today, capacity building in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, forestry and water management requires significant research and innovation to design suitable solutions. India invests around 0.6 to 0.7 per cent of its GDP in R&D whereas countries like the US, China, Israel and Korea invest around 2.8, 2.1, 4.3 and 4.2 per cent respectively. A progressive investment strategy in R&D is imperative for India to become climate leaders, as it is becoming increasingly clear that the future economic leadership is deeply entwined with it.

It is in the area of environmental research, education, and awareness that there is increasing convergence in interests for the Indo-US relationship. The US and India share a strong cultural bond through the ever-increasing Indian diaspora, especially in academia. There is a need for increasing the synergy between US and Indian universities for tackling climate change. The recently launched Fulbright Kalam Climate fellowship aims at engaging scientific and technical research scholars from India and the US. More such collaborations would be necessary to fully benefit from the comparative advantages the two countries have – India, in terms of human resources, and the US in technological specialisation.

Verma is chief economist, Guha and Joe are interns at Economics Centre, World Resources Institute (WRI) India. Views are personal.

The Indian Express is now on Telegram. Click [here to join our channel \(@indianexpress\)](#) and stay updated with the latest headlines

END

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

Crack