

Is it possible to slow global warming?

This is an important year for making progress on the Paris Agreement (PA), which was discussed at the climate meeting called the Conference of Parties (COP-21) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in December 2015. The [Paris Agreement](#) entered into force in November 2016. A two-week-long meeting was recently concluded in Bonn (April 30-May 10) where the operational guidelines for implementing the PA were to be discussed and agreed upon by all parties. What one was looking for was a common, consistent framework of how each country would define and measure its commitments. It would also include proposals for how action taken could be monitored, accounted for and kept transparent while providing some level of flexibility.

'Glow-in-the-dark algae may be sign of global warming'

This meeting was the 48th session of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), referred to as SB48. With insufficient progress towards goals, another interim meeting has been proposed in Bangkok ahead of COP-24 in Katowice, Poland, in December 2018. A good draft on the rulebook ought to be ready before the COP. Ideally, these guidelines should help countries develop ambitious targets for the next level of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). There should also be a regularised and dependable flow of funds from rich countries so that climate action can be implemented in developing nations. Countries can then develop along a path of sustainable development that is low carbon and inclusive of poor and other marginalised communities.

The barriers

The roadblocks at the Bonn meeting seemed predictable. On the issue of the NDCs, the question was the scope of the rulebook. Developing countries want them to cover mitigation targets, adaptation and the means of implementation for the NDCs. Developed or rich countries would like the rulebook to be limited to mitigation, the reduction of greenhouse gases. But since most countries require adaptation programmes in a warming world and need support to implement their national targets, it is essential that these be included too. In fact, most NDCs require support for operationalising them. The "means of implementation" are about financial support and technology transfer to build capacity in poorer countries and have always been contentious. At various sessions and discussions on climate change, this issue has turned out to be a deal breaker.

At the Copenhagen summit, it was agreed that from 2020, rich countries would provide a minimum of \$100 billion each year to poor and developing countries. There is little sign that these funds will be available. Instead, the discussion on finance has veered towards: how to increase the number of donors who will provide funds; which countries should perhaps be excluded from these funds; and whether these funds are a part of or distinct from the official development assistance, and so on. According to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities of the UNFCCC, while actions need to be ambitious to limit warming, providing support is essential for equitable action.

Incomplete task

The issues related to loss and damage (L&D) are another thorn in the negotiations. L&D is a means to provide assistance to poor countries that experience severe impacts from climate change but have contributed very little to the greenhouse gases responsible for the warming and its effects. This is a very important issue for the least developed countries and for small islands, which are already experiencing the brunt of sea level rise. But there was little progress on the funds that could be used to support L&D.

Is the Paris Agreement necessary?

Participants could not come to an agreement on any significant issue and thus have not produced a draft document to guide full implementation of the PA. Some commentators have said that the pace of the discussions was slow and that there was an absence of urgency.

The NDCs put forth prior to the Paris COP would lead up to 2030. Discussions on raising the bar beyond that would be discussed at COP-24 in Poland. Even if the current NDCs were implemented, the world would be on track to be warmer by about 3°Celsius.

The discussions at Bangkok in early September are therefore crucial and continue the incomplete task from this Bonn meeting. The UN is also expected to release the report on the impacts from a 1.5°C warming around the same time.

Given the growing frustration of experienced negotiators on all sides after more than two decades of intense climate talks, it appears that pressure from youth, especially in rich countries, is vital. Unless they remind governments and the public of the responsibilities of their countries towards mitigation, adaptation and support for means of implementation, keeping global warming under reasonably safe levels for humankind could be impossible.

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When a child faces brutality, in or outside the family, society's contract with its own spirit is violated

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