

NET ZERO GOALS AREN'T THE SOLUTION, SAYS INDIA BEFORE COP26

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

NEW DELHI : Setting net zero targets wasn't a solution and instead rich countries needed to acknowledge their "historic responsibility" while assuring the interests of developing nations and those vulnerable to climate change, said India's federal environment minister Bhupender Yadav.

He said that India was committed to "being part of the solution" at the forthcoming U.N. climate summit at Glasgow, known as [COP26](#) for short, but he added that fresh plans for cutting down greenhouse gas emissions would be announced at an "appropriate time and place."

India is among the few countries that are on course to reach its targets for curbing the release of planet-warming gases. A UN-backed report published Tuesday said that the country had "significant room" for more ambitious goals. But it has yet to provide an update to the U.N. climate agency.

Asked about newer targets, Rameshwar Prasad Gupta, India's top environmental official, said that "all options were still on the table."

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be attending a Group of 20 summit scheduled for this weekend in Rome, and then the COP26 at Glasgow.

Yadav stressed that India had reached its targets without the promised financing from rich nations.

The cost of meeting all of India's climate targets is estimated to be \$2.5 trillion, and adapting key sectors like agriculture or fisheries would require \$206 billion, a 2019 finance ministry document said.

Although India is the third-highest emitter of greenhouse gases after China and the United States, it has historically contributed to only 4% of total emissions since the 1850s.

Gupta added that "net zero in itself isn't a solution," since cumulative emissions were the cause of the problem and not how much each country emits right now. Instead, he argued that countries needed to focus on how much carbon is put in the atmosphere while getting to that goal.

He added that developing nations needed space to grow and assistance, and failing that they are faced with a choice of either compromising on development or relying on dirty fuels. "Without that it becomes extremely difficult," he said.

But India's dependence on coal — its the world's second-largest user of the fossil fuel and it has vast reserves of it — is likely to continue.

Electricity demand is likely to soar in India and while the overall share of energy from coal will keep coming down, weaning itself off the fossil fuel just yet would impact its energy security, said Gupta.

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