

## Climate Change Negotiations Stalled

Bumpy Road to COP 21 Paris 2015

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Vol. 49, Issue No. 51, 20 Dec, 2014

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It is unlikely that the climate change negotiations at Lima in 2014 and at Paris in 2015 will lead to any agreeable conclusion. Putting national interest over worldwide climate change mitigation will lead to a weak and ineffective international treaty.

The climate change negotiations have been going on for the last two decades and even today international politics reiterates the old positions of rich and poor countries. The divide continues to exist and so does mutual distrust and fear. The industrialised countries do not want to take the burden of drastic emissions reduction and deep de-carbonisation. The developing countries are still harping on the principle of equity and common but differentiated responsibility (CBDR) - the two principles enshrined in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The developed countries say that when they were developing their economy with high fossil fuel based energy systems; they did not understand the future implications of their actions. They are aware of their mistakes now that science has established how anthropogenic activities are resulting in climate change.

The developing countries are of the opinion that developed countries should be paying the price of industrialisation. It is also argued by some countries that climate change a common problem and requires action by all countries. However neither pollution nor climate change can be addressed by the conventions agreed upon at Rio Declaration on Environment and Development in 1992 because the context of environmental degradation has changed. Countries that were scarcely industrialised in 1992 are emerging economies now; therefore CBDR has become outdated. The developed countries do not want to see an international agreement that excludes the developing countries from the ambit of emission reduction commitment.

### **Kyoto, Durban, Lima - Dead-end in climate change talks?**

What is happening in Lima Conference of the Parties (COP 20) is a continuation of the effort started in COP 17 held in 2011 at Durban where CBDR was diluted to a significant extent. Developed countries are unlikely to agree to any international agreement that excludes

developing countries from assuming climate change mitigation responsibilities. US, Canada and Australia had also not ratified the Kyoto Protocol in 1997 due to which emissions did not reduce but increased at a higher rate.

The financial support to climate change mitigation efforts was also badly hit by recession in the West that started in 2008 in USA and spread to other developed countries. The economic recovery has not yet taken place and this situation forced the developed countries to avoid required financial commitment for fighting impacts of global climate change. Their economy is not likely to boom in the near future as it happened in 1990s and the cyclic bust will continue for some more years. Therefore, expectations and demands of the poor countries with respect to investment in mitigating climate change will not be fulfilled. This factor is also playing a major role in the ongoing negotiations.

## **No money for developing countries**

The cost of mitigation in developing countries is lower than developed countries. One ton of carbon dioxide can be sequestered in less than one fourth of the cost that will be borne in a developing country. The developing countries can also go for low carbon development pathways as well as greater renewable and non-fossil fuel energy. But the cost of producing non-conventional energy is much more than traditional coal and oil based electricity production. Developing countries would need financial resources from developed countries and their corporations to shift to renewable fuel and efficient energy systems. However most developed countries do not want to pledge economic support for climate change at this juncture arguing that developing countries should mobilise their own resources for this purpose.

The developed countries are insisting that all countries pledge their intended nationally determined contributions (INDC) for mitigation and that its progress must be reviewed ex-ante. There is resistance for this proposal. INDC is a difficult proposition especially when it becomes part of a legally binding international agreement. The aim remains that a draft agreement should be agreed at Lima that could be adopted by all countries at COP 21 in Paris next year in December. The dilemma is that if there is no INDC target that may also indirectly fix carbon budget for a country and in a way divide atmosphere among nations, a legal instrument will be irrelevant and there will be business as usual. The most serious challenge before the international community today is how to adopt a sustainable development pathway that ensures the well-being and even survival of the human race.

The clock is already ticking and the world is running against time. Climate change is a reality and is not a fantasy that people should take it lightly. However, international politics remain highly centred on national interest, where one country wants to emerge better at the expense of the other. It is not likely that an agreement will easily emerge at Lima on a draft legislation that could be tough and effective. A political compromise will result in a weak draft leading to an ineffective international treaty. The only fear is that the failure of Kyoto

# Economic & Political WEEKLY

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ISSN (Online) - 2349-8846

Protocol failure may be repeated once again. T future will have serious implication if there is a failure in Paris. The economic warfare will be exacerbated. The rich will win and the poor will lose.