

HCFI Dr KK Aggarwal Research Fund

HCFI Round Table Environment Expert Zoom Meeting on “UN Climate Change Conference 2022 (UNFCCC - COP27)” – Part 1

October 30, 2022 (Sunday, 12 noon - 1 pm)

- Environment has become an issue across the world and everybody living on the earth today is suffering. For e.g., Europe has had a drought because of war, some parts of India are getting excess rains, while some parts are facing a drought. The air quality index (AQI) level in Delhi is around 450 today. Because of the Russia Ukraine war, gas is not available. Now they will go back to coal again because of which there will be more of sulfur, more AQI level of pollution in the air.
- The top 10 most polluted cities in India are not Delhi or any other metropolitan city but they are some of the very smaller towns where air pollution is much high. Water and sound pollution has also to be considered alongside.
- The UN climate change Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC (COP27) is being held in Egypt from the 6th to 18th November.
- The UNFCCC came into existence subsequent to the Rio Summit in 1992. UNFCCC came into force in 1994. Since then, these meetings are held annually towards the end of the year except for 2020, when it could not happen because of pandemic.
- The last summit (COP26) was in Glasgow under the presidency of the UK. This year, the presidency will now be held by Egypt. Presidency does have a role because they set up agenda and assign priority to the subjects to be discussed.
- COP27 will help build on the outcomes of COP26 to deliver action on issues critical to tackling climate emergency like urgently reducing greenhouse emissions, building resilience, delivering on commitment to financing climate actions in developing countries to face the growing energy crisis, record greenhouse emissions and increasing extreme weather conditions like heat wave, floods, forest fires, etc.
- The COP27 seeks renewed solidarity between countries to deliver on the landmark Paris agreement for people and the planet.
- We must unite to limit the greenhouse warming below 2° and work hard to meet the 1.5° target. This requires bold and immediate actions from all parties particularly those who are in a position to do so and those who can make efforts. Unless developing countries are supported, we cannot achieve the target of 2° or 1.5° because survival is of priority for these countries.
- Such ambitious transformative actions provide a paradigm shift for more sustainable climate resilient, low emission and carbon neutral future based on the science.
- Implementation requires serious input and contribution from all stakeholders, government and non-governmental.
- There will be different thematic days in the conference including Finance Day, Science Day, Youth and Future Generation Day, Decarbonization Day, Adaptation and Agriculture Day, Gender Day, Water Day, Africa Day, Energy Day, Biodiversity Day.
- We need to focus on sustainable features and principles that use of renewable energy particular focus on solar power, energy efficiency issues, e-mobility, sustainable and smart transport system, water use and conservation, adopting proper waste management process like including recyclable and environment-friendly alternatives.
- The environmental conditions today are not as much the question of performance as of attitude. Stubble burning (parali) is an example of attitude. Clouded minds, vested interests and failure to commit are the problems that COP faces. The Glasgow Pact is very often quite vague and also often not translated into actionable details.
- Monitoring is another area, which is very difficult to manage. Unless monitoring is done of some scale with comparable instruments, monitoring data may be of no or little value. All countries are not well-equipped equally. Moreover, there are interest which require the data to be either suppressed or even manipulated. Very often suppression of data is not so much of dishonesty, but conclusions drawn from the remaining data are different from facts. However, a change of heart is difficult to take place.

- The UNFCCC process has been quite disappointing. Lot of action has to happen outside of the UNFCCC forum.
- The sentiment is that the developed countries, who are mainly responsible for climate change, have not come up with their commitments. Neither commitments in reducing their own emissions nor giving technology and finance to developing countries.
- We had commitments under the Kyoto Protocol but they were not met in the 1st commitment period in 2012 and also in the 2nd commitment period ending in 2020. We had a pre-2020 commitment. 2020 has gone without any commitments being met by the developed countries. Now, we have a new agenda that is pre-2030 commitment.
- The main agenda is that the developing countries have a lot of development deficit. We have 1 billion people who are below poverty line in the world. A quarter of them may be in India. The hunger problem is huge. These vulnerable populations are also vulnerable to climate change.
- Development is the best defense to adaptation. Developing countries cannot be denied their rights to develop. India is home to 17% global population but our historical Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions have been only 4% (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC]).
- It has been recognized for the first time that the whole problem is because of global carbon budget.
- The extreme events which we are witnessing now are a result of 1.1°, which we have reached right now. 1.1 is because of concentration of ≥415 ppm of carbon dioxide in the global atmosphere. This is a global problem.
- India has done a lot in climate action. We are amongst the fastest growing renewable energy sectors in the world. There is a lot of investment coming in other sectors as well like green hydrogen emission. We are also doing a lot of research in carbon capture utilization storage. A lot of transition is happening in the transport sector whether in terms of freight corridors or public transportation and e-vehicles. In developed countries, almost 33% emissions come from transport sector whereas in India, it is 9.7% right now.
- The climate change problem is a problem of consumption. Unless people can be convinced to reduce consumption, this problem is not going to be solved.
- There are many conventional sources of energy, which have long drawn investments. They have to be phased out in a timely manner.
- The main agenda for COP27 will be loss and damage finance facility. There have been losses because of extreme weather events and there are damages, which are permanent. Loss and damage was also identified in the Paris agreement in paragraph 52 of 1/CP2, according to which there will not be any financial liability or compensation due to loss and damage arising out of climate change. In the last 5 to 6 years, there is a lot of momentum in creating a loss and damage finance facility.
- Other agenda include Global Stocktake every 5 years, which was agreed upon in the Paris Agreement. The next Global Stocktake is coming up in 2023. This is important in examining the commitments of the developed countries in terms of how much they have reduced their own emissions and given their funds. In 2009, 100 billion dollars would move from developed to developing countries. But this commitment is far from being fulfilled.
- There is lot of ongoing discussion on the definition of climate finance. Many times funds given for road development, hydroelectric power plants, etc. have been dubbed as climate finance. This is a contentious issue.
- The special circumstances of Africa are also going to be on the Agenda. Many African countries want special status given to Africa as this is the most vulnerable and poor part of the world.
- The way forward and the only solution is that India has to invest in research and innovation, develop its own technologies and rapidly invest in frontier technologies which will help in future. The technology developed for climate change has to be freely available or not much of profit.
- We have to change our lifestyle and see that we don't profiteer from this disaster, otherwise we will continue to have rising emissions. Right now it stands at 52 billion tons every year. We need to reduce it to 25 to 30 billion tons by 2030 to have any chance of achieving the target of 1.5° or 2°.
- COP27 will be an agenda for a thorough review of whatever commitments have already been made and implementing whatever had been committed to. Not much headway is expected to be achieved in this also. Earlier, we had BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) countries asking for their share now of African countries and Latin American countries are also asking for their share.

- Lifestyle changes have to be emphasized upon. Last one decade in every COP, Indian Govt. has been advocating for lifestyle changes. If the west adopts our lifestyle changes, the emission will automatically come down by 40% or so.
- India had said in COP that luxury emissions cannot be and shall not be equated to survival emissions. We have survival emissions, while developed countries are emitting luxury emissions.
- Any change in temperature will affect the livelihood of the human population dependent on the coast especially fishermen. It will also result in salt water intrusion and alteration in major rainfall pattern, which will affect the yield of crops including fisheries.
- We need to identify corporates and ask them to adopt all coastal villages. This can be a simple and workable solution in India because external finances are not going to come because of the pandemic and the war.
- Using cycles for transport will reduce the carbon footprint. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) had published a book on low-carbon lifestyles in 2016, which describes various activities and calculates how much GHG is reduced with each activity. In 2015, the Prime Minister had released a book 'Parampara' at COP21 in Paris. The ministry has published a brochure, which describes activities in terms of per capita emissions – such as meat consumption, food wastage. Samanvay, which is a combination of traditional and modern approach to low-carbon pathway was also published by the Ministry.

Participants: Dr Anil Kumar, Mr Vivek Kumar, Mr Paritosh Tyagi, Mr Ajay Raghav, Mr Pradeep Khandelwal, Mr Ankit Sethi, Dr Ravindar Kumar, Mr PK Jain, Mr Neeraj Tyagi, Mr Rajeev Sharma, Dr M Dwarakanath

HCFI Round Table Environment Expert Zoom Meeting on “UN Climate Change Conference 2022 (UNFCCC - COP27)” – Part 2

November 6, 2022 (Sunday, 12 noon - 1 pm)

- COP27, beginning today will continue till 18th November under the Presidency of Egypt. Many commitments have been made in earlier summits, but their implementation is in question.
- Important issues in COP27 are climate finance, extreme weather-related events like floods, heat

waves, forest fires, which incur huge damage. This is an important issue from the Indian point of view. Another important issue where India will focus is lifestyle for environment.

- Many developing countries including India have adopted the industrialization model to increase the economic growth. Industrialization has changed our whole lifestyle. It has led migrations and nuclear families. Increase in economic activity is leading to increase in emissions. Pre-industrialization, our economic activity was dependent on agriculture or non-industrialized activities. Instead of asking developed countries for financial help to reduce industrial emissions, all countries should have an alternate development model.
- India is an agricultural country, so if we need to make lives of our people better we need to revert back to agriculture society, then we will be able to achieve lifestyle for environment.
- The solution to the problem is to go to the root of the problem. We have to start working on alternative models of development to successfully achieve the targets.
- Climate change is a global problem. All countries should rethink on the model that is appropriate for their country for the betterment of their citizens. At this date, our top most priority must be to change our lifestyle. It has to become a citizen's movement.
- But on the flip side, if industrialization is stopped, this will lead to unemployment.
- Water and sanitation problem, air pollution and water pollution still persist in our country. We should see holistically if we are willing to stop air pollution caused by any industry. Every industry should give an undertaking how much pollution it is causing. Until we reuse water the problem will remain the same. Along with conservation of water we should be able to reuse the wastewater. The depleting groundwater levels may lead to water wars in the future.
- We have to look for a sustainable development approach keeping industrialization and agriculture parallel to each other.
- GHG emissions must be reduced. Small scale industries where alternative energy can be used so that pollution is reduced can be adopted.
- Innovative researches can be done in environment. Industrialization should be environment-friendly. Consent to operate should be made stricter to control air pollution.

- The key aim of COP27 is to increase GHG reduction efforts to keep the temperature limit agreed in Paris Agreement. Others include increased global efforts on adaptation and climate financing and making progress on supporting developing countries in loss and damage.
- The Paris Agreement adopted in December 2015 aims to avoid dangerous climate change by limiting global warming to below 2° above preindustrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature rise to 1.5° and to make financial clause consistent with climate objectives. It entered into force on 4th November 2016 and 198 UNFCCC chief parties adopted the agreement & 193 states & EU have now ratified it.
- In COP15 held in Copenhagen in 2009, the developed countries had committed that 100 billion USD per year would be given to developing countries by 2020 and every year thereafter through 2025 to help developing countries tackle the effects of climate change. But they have failed in doing so.
- The Indian delegation will be led by Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav. India has a pavilion with the theme of *LiFE - Lifestyle for Environment* at COP27.
- At COP27, India would seek clarity on the definition of “climate finance” to be able to accurately assess the extent of finance flows for climate action and nudging developed countries to enhance supply of technology and finance needed to address climate change and resulting disasters.
- If the burden on poor countries is very high, they will keep environment secondary and focus on industrialization.
- The absence of a definition allows developed countries to greenwash their finances and passes off loans as climate-related aid. India will seek clarity as to what constitutes climate finance, whether it is loans, grants or subsidies. It should be in the form of a grant and not loan and should be clearly defined.
- Developing countries, including India, will also push rich countries to agree to a new global climate finance target, also known as the new collective quantified goal on climate finance (NCQG). This help should be in trillions and not in billions as the costs of addressing and adapting to climate change have grown. The discussion on NCQG in the ad-hoc working group must focus on the quantity of the resource flow and its quality and scope.
- Any consensus on an enhanced scale of financial mobilization could be a welcome takeaway from COP27.
- Poor and developing countries also want to see a new finance facility to fund the “loss and damage” resulting from climate change – for example money needed for relocating people displaced by floods. Developed nations have opposed this new fund which will hold them legally liable for massive damages caused by climate change.
- The existing financial mechanisms, like Global Environment Facility, Green Climate Fund and Adaptation Fund, under the UNFCCC have not been able to mobilize or deliver funds for loss and damage due to climate change, as these are under-funded, most of the money is for mitigation (preventing and reducing emissions) and accessing it is cumbersome and time-consuming.
- At COP26 in Glasgow, parties agreed to develop a Mitigation Work Program (MWP) to urgently scale up mitigation ambition and implementation. Mitigation means avoiding and reducing emissions, ambition means setting stronger targets and implementation means meeting new and existing goals.
- Proper waste management is needed to reduce greenhouse emissions, particularly for developing countries. Methane is 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide emission.
- Lack of proper disposal of waste leads to several problems which we are facing now. Today the landfill sites, which were once outside city are now in the cities and are now affecting people living around them.
- Decentralization solutions should be encouraged in waste management. Composting is an environment-friendly solution. Earlier every household has garbage and it was made into compost at that level itself. Plastic was not popular then. Nonrecyclable things like plastics, etc. should be burned and waste to energy should be produced from the waste keeping in mind the waste emission control norms. These have to be monitored regularly. Till we control emissions from transport sector, industry sector and waste sector, we cannot achieve the GHG reduction targets. It is now time to focus on the level of source.
- Lifestyle in India is still environmental-friendly as we still rely a lot on nonmechanical vehicles like cycles.

- If we make a 7-point program and concentrate on 7 critical goals, we can achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 3, 5, 11, 12 and 13).
- Protect communities and natural ecosystems from damage caused by GHG emissions and generate opportunities for people by catalyzing global transition to a low-carbon economy.
- Drive up scale of clean, affordable power for systems throughout the world to deliver sustainable socioeconomic development.
- Ensure world's food ecosystem their impact on the environment, ensure opportunity and sustainability, feed 9.6 billion people by 2030. Alleviate poverty, enhance food security.
- Conserve biodiversity, and mitigate climate change by reducing forest loss and restoring productivity through graded deforested lands.
- Achieve a water-secure future by mapping, measuring and mitigating global water waste.
- Improve quality of life in cities by developing and scaling environmentally, socially and economically sustainable urban and transport solutions.
- Ensure implementation of Kigali Amendment of the UN and the Montreal Protocol for ozone and full compliance and recovery of petroleum gases.

Participants: Dr Anil Kumar, Dr SK Gupta, Dr Sanjeev Agrawal, Dr Ravindra Kumar, Mr Neeraj Tyagi, Mr Pradeep Khandelwal, Mr Arun Kumar, Dr S Sharma

Coronavirus Updates

Masks now “optional” but “preferable”, says India's Aviation Ministry

The Union Civil Aviation Ministry has relaxed the mandatory requirement of in-flight masks during domestic and international flights considering the decreasing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases. Not wearing face masks during the flight will not incur any penalty. However, the government recommends that masking is preferable, i.e., travelers should use them. The requirement of filling the Air Suvidha for inbound travelers is still applicable... (Source: PTI, Nov. 16, 2022)

Slight uptick in new weekly COVID-19 cases, says WHO

Last week saw a rise of 2% in the number of new weekly cases worldwide. The number of weekly deaths on the other hand saw a decline of 30%. More than 2.3 million new cases were reported, as per the latest 118th Edition of WHO's Weekly Epidemiological Update on COVID-19. The Western Pacific Region recorded an increase of 18%; cases increased by 15% in the South-East Asia Region and 12% in the Region of the Americas. However, cases declined in the European Region (-21%), Eastern Mediterranean Region (-12%) and the African Region (-8%)... (Source: WHO, Nov. 16, 2022)

BN.1: The new Omicron subvariant in the US

The BN.1 Omicron subvariant is gradually gaining foothold in the United States and accounts for around 4.3% of new COVID-19 cases, as per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The prevalence is higher (6.2%) in the western parts of the country. The numbers of hospitalizations are also slowly rising... (Source: CBS News, Nov. 14, 2022)

Australia recommends against a third booster dose

In view of the rising cases in the country, health authorities in Australia have advised all eligible citizens to be updated on their booster doses. However, they have recommended against taking the third booster shot of the COVID-19 vaccine in the new vaccination recommendations. The average daily cases have increased by 47% in the last week compared to the preceding week... (Source: Medscape, Nov. 16, 2022)

Impact of indoor relative humidity on COVID-19 outcomes

A study from MIT has found that indoor relative humidity between 40% and 60% is associated with fewer COVID-19 cases as well as mortality. Relative humidity less than 40% or more than 60% are associated with adverse outcomes. This analysis of COVID-19 data along with meteorological measurements from 121 countries is published in the November 2022 issue of the *Journal of the Royal Society Interface*... (Source: J R Soc Interface, Nov. 16, 2022)

With inputs from Dr Monica Vasudev

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