

Climate Change

As per United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), climate change is what alters the composition of the global atmosphere, attributed directly or indirectly to human activity and that is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods. Climate change is a complex problem, which, although environmental in nature, has consequences for all spheres of existence on our planet. Geographical studies indicate that a mere 2 degree rise in temperature can trigger catastrophic and unpredictable events across the world. Climate change, by its nature, cannot be dealt in isolation by any single nation. It requires collective effort from all the nations.

In an effort to foster global consensus and cooperation, a multilateral political framework called United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was brokered at the Rio summit in 1992. On the basis of this framework, annual summits called Conference of Parties (COPs) are held to reformulate measures and assess the impact of previous COPs.

The latest edition of COP at Paris (COP21) has been hailed as a watershed in climate negotiations. The Paris edition saw one of the most complex negotiations till date as nations try to accommodate national interests while stretching to meet global climate goals.

The agreement's main aim is to keep the global temperature rise below 2 degree Celsius and further hammer down the temperature increase down to 1.5 degree Celsius above pre-industrial levels. One of the defining features of the Paris outcome has been ending the strict differentiation between developed

and developing nations. With this clarification, the sticking issue of 'Common but differentiated Responsibility' (CBDR) has been partially ironed out. CBDR imposes binding emission targets on developed countries while developing countries are excluded.

The straitjacket 'top-down' approach in allocating binding targets has given way to a more pragmatic 'bottom-up' approach in the form of Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC). The INDCs give parties more latitude in curtailing domestic carbon emissions based on their capacities and circumstances. For the first time, the nations have committed to report regularly on emissions and progress made in implementing and achieving their NDCs and to undergo international review. The first global stock-take will take place in 2023 to assess the collective progress made in achieving the long term goals.

The Paris agreement with respect to mitigation strategy of global emissions is two-folded. First it expects countries to reach its peak emission levels contingent on its growth imperatives and then to achieve the goal of 'net greenhouse gas neutrality'. The 'net greenhouse gas neutrality' refers to striking a balance between carbon emission of human origin and carbon capture through forest cover. The core mitigation commitments are common to all but the expectations are differentiated. The developed nations are legally bound to undertake economy-wide targets whereas developing nations are encouraged to do so over time, whose progress shall be reviewed every 5 years.

The finance for mitigation and adaptation has been a major stumbling block in Paris treaty. While developing nation sought stronger assurances that

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finances will be scaled up from developed nations, the latter tried to push wealthier developing nations to contribute as well. The final treaty provides for voluntary contributions from developing nations too. The Green Climate Fund is one such fund within the framework of UNFCCC, founded as a mechanism to assist developing countries in adaptation and mitigation practices to counter climate change.

India has been crusading for climate justice on the central plank of CBDR and ratified the Paris global climate agreement on October 2, 2016. It has committed to improve its emissions intensity per unit GDP from 33 to 35 percent by 2030 and to creating an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tons of carbon dioxide through additional tree cover. India formulated a holistic climate policy with precedence on clean energy, especially renewable energy committing to ensure that at least 40% of its electricity will be generated from non-fossil sources by 2030, enhancement of energy efficiency, development of less carbon intensive and resilient urban centres,

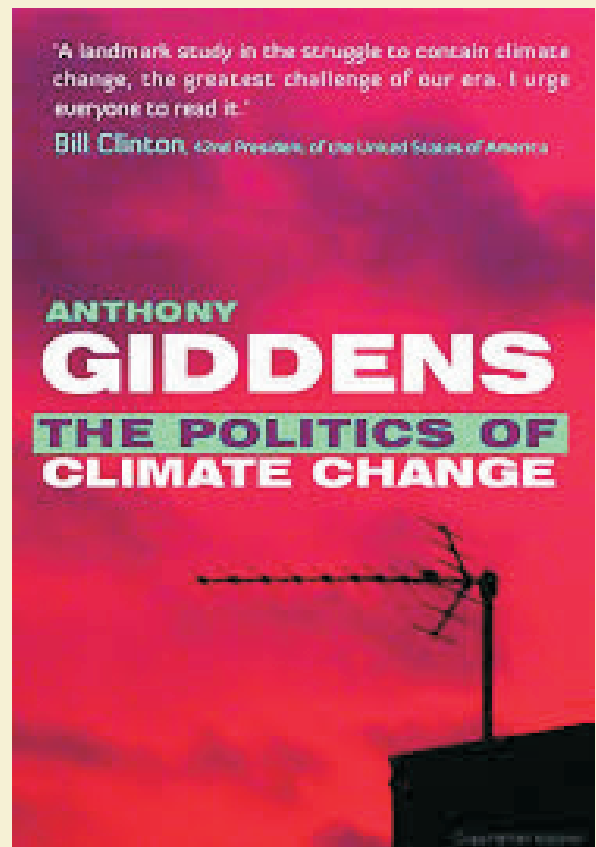
promotion of waste to wealth, safe, smart and sustainable green transportation network and abatement of pollution. India has put forward a well-balanced climate plan that outlines transformational changes. India's INDC are ambitious and forward looking. However it is to be seen how the implementation challenges are going to be tackled.

Although the major strength of the Paris Agreement is its near universal participation and acceptance of responsibility, it will enter into force only when 55 countries that produce at least 55% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions ratify the same. This brings to us the question of accountability since countries can withdraw from it without consequences like Canada did from the Kyoto Protocol. Fossil fuels being the cheapest fuel available, shall continue to be in use. Hence, there is a need for an accountable and wilful move from local, national and international participants to convert the comprehensive agreement into a commitment.

Book Scan

The Politics of Climate Change by Anthony Giddens presents a 'realist' perspective on the political issues posed by climate change – that is, it treats global warming as a political, rather than a scientific or economic problem, examining various aspects of climate change politics and importance of the green movement and the geopolitics of climate change to international negotiations and domestic policies, technologies and taxes.

Political action and intervention, on local, national and international levels, is going to have a decisive effect on whether or not we can limit global warming, as well as how we adapt to that already occurring. At the moment, however, Anthony Giddens argues that we do not have a systematic politics of climate change. Politics—as-usual won't allow us to deal with the problems we face, while the main challenge to orthodox politics, the green movement, are flawed at source. Giddens introduces a range of new concepts and proposals to fill in the gap, and examines in depth the connections between climate change and energy security.



Climate Negotiations Timeline

- 1979— The first World Climate Conference takes place.
- 1988— The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is set up.
- 1990— The IPCC and the second World Climate Conference call for a global treaty on climate change. The United Nations General Assembly negotiations on a framework convention begin.
- 1991— First meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee takes place.
- 1992— At the Earth Summit in Rio, the UNFCCC is opened for signature along with its sister Rio Conventions, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification.
- 1994— The UNFCCC entered into force.
- 1995— The first Conference of the Parties (COP1) takes place in Berlin.
- 1996— The UNFCCC Secretariat is set up to support action under the Convention.
- 1997— The Kyoto Protocol is formally adopted in December at COP3.
- 2001— The Marrakesh Accords are adopted at COP7, detailing the rules for implementation of the Kyoto Protocol, setting up new funding and planning instruments for adaptation, and establishing a technology transfer framework.
- 2005— Entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol. The first Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (MOP 1) takes place in Montreal.
- 2007 — The IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report is released. Climate science entered into popular consciousness. At COP13, Parties agreed on the Bali Road Map, which charted the way towards a post-2012 outcome.
- 2009— Copenhagen Accord drafted at COP15 in Copenhagen.
- 2010— Cancun Agreements drafted and largely accepted by the COP16 where countries made their emission reduction pledges official, in what was the largest collective effort the world has ever seen to reduce emissions in a mutually accountable way.
- 2011— The Durban Platform for Enhanced Action drafted and accepted by the COP17 where governments clearly recognized the need to draw up the blueprint for a fresh universal, legal agreement to deal with climate change beyond 2020.
- 2012— The Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol is adopted by the CMP at CMP8.
- 2013— Key decisions adopted at COP19/CMP9 on further advancing the Durban Platform, the Green Climate Fund and Long-Term Finance, the Warsaw Framework for REDD Plus and the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage.
- 2014— COP20 was held in Lima, Peru as precursor to Paris climate agreement.
- 2015— Paris agreement was signed in COP21 or CMP11.

“Climate change is no longer some far-off problem; it is happening here, it is happening now.”

*Barack Obama
President of the United States of America*

“Our planet is crowded to an unprecedented degree. It is bursting at the seams. It's bursting at the seams in human terms, in economic terms, and in ecological terms.”

*Jeffrey Sachs
Director, The Earth Institute*

ISDG Updates

Consultation and Release of Urban Governance Report | June 22, 2016



ISDG released a comprehensive report on Urban Governance of Thiruvananthapuram at the Press Club. The book release was inaugurated by Hon Minister Shri. K.T. Jaleel (Minister for Local Self Government). A short Malayalam version of the Report highlighting the challenges faced by the city was also released by Hon. Mayor, V.K. Prasanth. The book release ceremony was followed by a consultation with prominent members such as Dr. V. Madhusudan, Dr. B.G. Sreedevi (NATPAC), Architect Shankar, Shri. A. Kasthuri Rangan and Shri. M.V. Sugathan (FRAT patron).

National Capacity Development program on Public Policy, Governance & Advocacy | June 26 – June 30 2016

ISDG in association with Trancivic Consulting organized the training program at its training centre at Bodhigram, Adoor. It saw the participation from 21 participants from across 10 states. The program was designed as blend of theoretical concept with practical applications. Resource persons included Dr. N.R. Madhav Menon, Shri. P.H. Kurien IAS, Shri. Gouridasan Nair and Shri. C.P. John. The training was facilitated and coordinated by Mr John Samuel (President, ISDG).



Round Table Conference on Future of India's Development Cooperation | September 28, 2016



ISDG in association with Oxfam India conducted a research study on the Future of Development Cooperation and published a comprehensive report containing the policy priorities for an emerging India. The Report was released by Dr. Shashi Tharoor at Mascot Hotel and the conference was presided by Shri. Amitabh Behar, Executive Director of the National Foundation for India (NFI). The study was an attempt to analyse the role of India as an emerging donor in the context of growing South-South development cooperation in the international aid regime. The research study was coordinated by Mr. John Samuel (President, ISDG) and Dr. Abraham George (Director, ISDG).

Forthcoming Events

- 1) Capacity building workshop for young professionals on sustainable development, policy and budget analysis, organizational management
- 2) Workshop on economic governance and budget analysis for elected representatives of local self government institutions
- 3) Media workshop on sustainable development and economic governance for young media professionals.

Recent Publications



"Future of Development Cooperation"



"Goods and Services Tax"



"Citizens' Report" Malayalam



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