A Balanced Approach to Climate Change

What is the issue?

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As evident from developed countries' over-emphasis on mitigation, the approach in climate talks is not balanced with other aspects of dealing with climate change.

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What are the broad components in the approach?

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- All the things to do under ‘dealing with climate change’ fall into three broad categories: mitigation, adaptation and loss & damage.
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- **Mitigation** is all about limiting further rise in global temperature.
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- This involves phasing out fossil fuels and shifting to renewables, electric vehicles, green buildings, etc.
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- **Adaptation,** on the other hand, is about finding ways to cope with the effects of climate change that have already set in.
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- It includes reducing the impact of climate change related environmental hazards like floods, droughts and diseases.
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- **Loss and damage** has to do with the repair work that would need to be done after a certain climate event has occurred.
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- Mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage could roughly be seen as approaches relating to future, present and past, respectively.
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What is the flaw with the present approach?

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- Logically, there ought to be equal attention on all the three - mitigation, adaptation and Loss and Damage.
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- However, the entire narrative around climate change has always been terribly skewed towards mitigation.
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- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in its recent Adaptations Gap report highlights that adaptation had not gained much traction.
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- Despite the awareness, it has not translated sufficiently into tangible action.
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- E.g. There is a significant gap in allocation and utilisation of funds for adaptation as against that for mitigation.
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- The powerful developed world has made the whole climate narrative mitigation-centric because it is easier to handle and falls within their interests.
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How can countries share the roles?

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- **Mitigation,** for its outcomes, is important to the developed countries.
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- They are better equipped to handle disasters and they only need to ensure that the disasters don’t grow bigger than they can handle.
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- **Adaptation,** on the other hand, is crucial for developing countries such as India which are particularly vulnerable to climate risks.
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- E.g. India has roughly about 120 highly climate-vulnerable agro-climatic zones.
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- **L&D** measures are like life jackets for the least developed countries, particularly the small island nations.
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What lies before India?

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- Given the fact that 2 degrees target is unrealistic to be met, it is highly critical that developing countries take measures on the adaptation front.
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- Thus in terms of its own interest as well as in respect of its development status, India should logically be more inclined towards the adaptation front.
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- India has its own National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change from the Budget.
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- However, given the demand, it also needs to seek more multilateral funding from the developed world going by the ‘polluter pays’ principle.
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- Beyond building physical defences, funds are essential for increasing the knowledge base of “adaptation science” for predicting weather, developing heat-resistant crop varieties, etc.
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Source: BusinessLine

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