Assessing the Progress of Paris Agreement - Climate Change

What is the issue?

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- The 24th Conference of the Parties (COP-24) meeting to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is held in Katowice, Poland.
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- With this, it is essential to assess the progress of countries in terms of Paris Agreement (PA) commitments made in 2015.
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How is the global warming scenario?

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- Average global temperatures have crossed a degree Celsius above preindustrial levels.
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- Such concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere (410 ppm) has never been seen by humans before.
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- Resultantly, today's children are inheriting an earth that is out of control and heading to be 3-4º C warmer by the end of the century.
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- Perpetual growth is not viable for any species.
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- Business-as-usual policies with high consumption by the rich are driving the destruction of ecosystems and mass extinction of species.
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- The "sixth extinction", massive destruction of species on earth is ongoing.
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- In this context, the 1.5 Degree Report, a special publication, was recently released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).
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- It calls for far-reaching, speedy transformative changes by countries in order to stay below 1.5° C.

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- It emphasises on immediate and drastic drop in GHG emissions through technology and lifestyles, and on mitigation and adaptation.
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What was the outcome of the Paris conference?

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- The Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) were planned ahead of the Paris COP-21.
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- Under this, each country described the actions it would take and the levels to which GHG emissions would be reduced (mitigation).
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- Countries also described what they would do to improve their capacity to live in a warmer world (adaptation).
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- The extent to which these goals required support in the form of finance or technology transfer was also mentioned.
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- The Paris Agreement (PA) was ratified rapidly and went into force within a year (in November 2016).
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- The Katowice meeting's objective is to set guidelines, or agree on a rulebook, to implement pledges made by countries at the Paris Climate Conference in 2015.
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What are the concerns with PA progress?

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- **Finance** - There has been little, if any, progress on finance, technology transfer and capacity development.
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- Article 9 of the PA calls for financial support from developed countries that is significantly derived from public funds.
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- This was expected to result in at least $100 billion per year to address mitigation and adaptation needs of developing countries.
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- Article 9.5 requires developed countries to communicate their levels of support, including pledges of additional finance.
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- Even a rough estimate of financial needs for implementing all the NDCs puts it at $4.4 trillion.
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- But the Climate Funds Update of 2018 notes that multilateral funds pledged until 2017 are less than $30 billion.
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- There have also been charges of double counting and counting of development aid levelled against developed countries.
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- **Response** - While the U.S. and its current policies are much to blame for the situation, other developed countries are not doing that much better.
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- Australia and France have had political turmoil due to their climate policies even while experiencing severe weather events.
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- Europe is still heavily reliant on coal and European Union emissions were stable in 2014-2016.
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- The U.K. has been relying on fuel from fracking.
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How does the future look?

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- The implementation of the activities for the PA formally begins in 2020 and concludes in 2030.
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- The world is currently in the Doha Amendment period, or the second phase of the Kyoto Protocol, which has not been ratified.
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- In a couple of years after the start of the PA implementation, there will be review on progress and decisions on more stringent targets for the future.
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- This renewed commitment towards the future means that countries have to trust each other.
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- So fulfilling obligations is a foundation of future ambition and action.
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What is required?

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- What is required for India is credible, accurate and verifiable numbers on the climate flows expected from developed countries.
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- Such reliable flow will encourage and persuade all countries that commitments made will be fulfilled.
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- There also has to be a general agreement on how to estimate adaptation.
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- Countries with high emissions should alter their lifestyles considerably, for the transformational change that 1.5 Degree Report calls for.
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- As extreme events are on the rise, the separate stream referred to as “loss and damage” needs attention.
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- This is a provision for support to poor countries experiencing economic and non-economic losses and destruction from climate change events.
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- There has not been much progress on this issue by the task force set up to advance it, which also needs to be addressed at Katowice.
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Source: The Hindu

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