Discussion on Climate Change Plans - UN Secretary General

Why in news?

Ahead of the UN General Assembly meet (in September, 2019), the UN Secretary General has convened a summit to discuss plans to address climate change.

What is the key agenda?

- The UN Secretary General is concerned that the collective climate ambition is low.
- There exists a gap between the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) made under the Paris Pact and the goal of climate stabilisation.
- Launching new initiatives to close this gap is thus a key priority.
- Also, the recent IPCC report which called for limiting the global warming to 1.5 degree Celsius has added momentum to the push.
- For this goal, the world will need to move towards zero carbon emission around 2050.
- For this, heavy electrification of energy, industry and transport systems in the medium term is essential.
- Also, in the longer term, market adoption of low or near zero carbon technologies is needed.
- In this line, discussions are planned at the summit to encourage countries to move to an aggressive path of decarbonisation.
- The “industry track,” focussing on industrial decarbonisation, led by India and Sweden, is one of the plans.

What is India’s position in this regard?

- As per government data, India may be on track to achieve its NDC target of emissions intensity well ahead of time.
- The period between 2005 to 2014 has seen consistently higher economic growth (around 6-7%) than the rate of growth in emissions (around 3.8%).
- Falling energy costs of renewables have made it possible for incomes and jobs to be protected while lowering the emissions.
- However, over a third of the emissions is generated by the harder-to-abate sectors.
- Notably, this will witness high growth rate in the next decade, leading to three to four times increase in energy demand.

- While the energy intensity of these sectors may fall because of improved energy efficiency, their emissions intensity may remain high.

What are the challenges ahead for India?

- The fall in India's emissions intensity of GDP may not be sustainable.
- So attempts are essential to address the carbon intensity of these sectors in the long term.
- But heavy industries such as iron and steel, cement, aluminum, plastics, and long distance transport heavily depend on fossil fuels.
- The challenge is that technologies to replace such fuels are either not ready for commercial-scale application or simply not available.
- Typically, industry is hesitant to adopt better but costly technology because of concerns about market share.
- A common aspirational goal has to be established on a scientific basis.
- This will enable industry to make investment decisions on a level-playing field.
- In the process, cost of newer technologies may also come down over the medium term.

What can the UN summit provide for?

- The summit could help build three levels of coalitions in a push for the above discussed transformation.
- A voluntary coalition of industries having the desire to accelerate to low or zero carbon technologies could be formed.
- These coalitions could adopt sector-wide goals by 2023 based on the best-available technology using life-cycle methods.
- The second coalition could consist of countries interested in promoting decreased carbon intensity through specific schemes.
- E.g. the perform, achieve and trade scheme for energy efficiency in India
- A coalition of industries and countries could also be formed to push for international agreements.
- This can aim at promoting technology solutions in harder-to-abate sectors through working groups and partnerships.
- India could choose to join the coalition that would facilitate its sectoral actions as part of a long-term low carbon national growth strategy.

Source: Indian Express



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