Glasgow Climate Pact: Achievements and Disappointments

Why in news?

The Glasgow Climate Pact (of COP 26) was adopted recently and it is a mixed bag of modest achievements and disappointed expectations.

What are the modest achievements of the Summit?

- **Average global temperature** - The achievements include a clear consensus on a target of keeping global temperature rise down to 1.5 degrees Celsius.
- The notional target of 2 degrees of the Paris Agreement remains but the international discourse is now set in the more ambitious target.
- **Transition from fossil fuels -** It is the first clear recognition of the need to transition away from fossil fuels by phasing down the use of coal.
- **Importance of Adaptation –** Adaptation attained greater significance and there is a commitment to double the current finance available for this to developing countries.
- A start is being made in formulating an adaptation plan and this puts the issue firmly on the Climate agenda.
- **Global Methane Pledge -** Methane is a significant greenhouse gas with 28 to 34 times higher temperature forcing quality than carbon but stays in the atmosphere for a shorter duration.
- An agreement is signed among 100 countries to cut methane emissions by 30 % by 2030.
- **Ending deforestation - A** group of 100 countries has agreed to begin to reverse deforestation by 2030.
- Since the group includes Brazil and Indonesia where large areas of forests are being ravaged by legal and illegal logging, there will be progress in expanding these carbon sinks on the planet.
- **US-China Joint Declaration on Climate Change** - It implies that both the countries are moving towards a less confrontational and more cooperative relationship overall.
- **India's commitments** – The commitment to achieve net-zero carbon by 2070 and of enhanced targets for renewable energy were welcomed.
- **Clarity on Article 6 of Paris agreement**- There is greater clarity on how

bilateral carbon trades can proceed and the creation of a centralised hub that replaces Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism.
- Criteria have been set out for countries to use CERs from projects registered after January 1, 2013 to meet their first NDC or first adjusted NDC.
- It also designates a 12-member Supervisory Body to oversee the emerging hub and to review the baselines of recognised credits.

Article 6 of the Paris Agreement introduces provisions for using international carbon markets to facilitate fulfilment of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by countries.

What are the major disappointments of the Summit?

- **Phasing out the coal** - India introduced an amendment to the original draft to replace the phrase "phase out" with "phase down" playing negatively with both the advanced as well as a large constituency of developing countries.
- India had earlier said that principles of equity meant all fossil sources: coal, oil and gas be reduced but the US and other countries refused as they were critical to their own economies.
- **Inadequate funding for adaptation** - Doubling the current finance available for adaptation to developing countries will be around $ 30 billion which is grossly inadequate.
- According to UNEP, adaptation costs for developing countries are currently estimated at $70 billion annually and will rise to an estimated $130-300 billion annually by 2030.
- **Shortfall in Paris Agreement target** - The Paris Agreement target of $100 billion per annum between 2005-2020 has a shortfall of more than half.
- The renewed commitment to deliver on this pledge in the 2020-2025 period is unlikely especially in this post-pandemic global economic slowdown.
- **Issue of compensation for loss and damage –** The compensation for loss and damage for developing countries who have suffered as a result of climate change for which they have not been responsible has not met.
- **Global Methane Pledge -** India did not join the Global Methane Pledge despite methane being the second-most abundant greenhouse gas in the atmosphere after carbon dioxide.
- **Ending deforestation -** India refused to join the group due to concerns

over a clause on possible trade measures related to forest products.

How can the Glasgow outcome be assessed?

- There is more ambition in the intent to tackle climate change but little to show in terms of concrete actions as there are no compliance procedures.
- The UK Presidency noted that as on 2019, only 30% of the world was covered by net zero targets and this had now moved close to 90%.
- Enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are expected to be announced next year and further deliberations are planned on the other pledges related to Adaptation and Finance.
- However the text of the agreement indicates that all countries should deliver climate plans to the UN on 5-year cycles starting from 2025 (submitting 2035 NDCs in 2025, 2040 NDCs in 2030).

References

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