# Home Truths on Climate Change

## What is the issue?

There is a gap between what the government says on the international stage and what it does at home about climate change commitments.

## What is the hypocrisy of the developed countries?

- The reasons for the climate crisis are the reckless **drive for profit maximisation** due to global capitalism led by the U.S. and its developed country allies.
- This has resulted in ecological destruction in the name of development.
- But COP26 to the UNFCCC, the developed countries resorted to their usual tactics of bullying the less developed world to accept higher targets for controlling greenhouse emissions when they haven't done so themselves.
- In fact, they have failed to implement their earlier commitments towards funds and technology transfer.
- In COP26, there was a push for 'net zero' emissions by 2050 as a standard across countries, without taking into account the cumulative emissions for which the Global North is mainly responsible.
- The effort by some to equate India and other developing countries with the U.S. and Europe as the worst "emitters" is also misplaced precisely for this reason of cumulative emissions.
- **Reality** - The U.S., Russia, the U.K., Japan and Canada account for 10% of the world's population, but they constitute 39% of cumulative emissions.
- Whereas, China, India, Brazil and Indonesia account for 42% of the world's population but just 23% of cumulative emissions.

## Why developing countries are blamed for?

- **Absence of end-use policy in coal mining -** Developing countries are committed to the capitalist appropriation of natural and national resources.
- In COP26, India fought hard to protect its sovereign decisions on the use of fossil-based energy requirements from the hypocritical demands of the Global North.
- On the one hand, India boasts of switching to solar energy to meet its emission control targets. On the other hand, it is auctioning coal mines to privatize the coal industry for profit (rather than being merely for

development purposes).

- Encouraging open cast mines without the guarantee of end-use is for commercialisation and export.
- **Halt and reverse forest loss declaration -** Over 140 countries signed the declaration on "halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030."
- But India didn't sign the agreement on the ground that the declaration linked trade to land use and trade falls under the purview of the WTO.
- However home policies towards corporatisation of agriculture and the encouragement to contract farming on conditions set by big agri-businesses undermine food security.
- The pursuit of such policies domestically damages the credibility of India's stand on international platforms.
- **Protecting the rights of indigenous people -** The same declaration has commitments to recognize and (extend) support to smallholders, indigenous peoples, and local communities.
- India did not sign these commitments as it is following policies that are opposed to them.
- In amending the following Acts, the government has moved to monetize, privatize, commercialize and even militarise forests
    - Forest Act of 1927,
    - Forest (Conservation) Act of 1980,
    - Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act of 1957,
    - Coal Bearing Areas (Acquisition and Development) Act of 1957,
    - Adoption of the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Rules.
- This affects the recognized rights of forest communities and specifically tribal communities.
- These measures are reflected in the proposed Forest Policy of 2018.
- All these changes strip the Gram Sabha of any voice in decision-making processes.
- From 2013-2019, it is estimated that 96% of tree cover loss occurred in natural forests.
- Making tribal communities who have the emitted least carbon pay with their lands is concerning.
- Forest Rights Act of 2006, which recognizes the rights and duties of Adivasis and traditional forest-dwelling communities, is being diluted with a high rejection of claims.

## What does the Estimates Committee of Parliament say?

- In COP21 at Paris (2015), India had promised to develop carbon sinks equivalent of 2 billion to 3 billion tonnes of $CO_2$ by 2030.
- The government has set up a Green Mission for the regeneration of forests,

afforestation, additional forest and tree cover, and so on.

- However, in its 2018-2019 report, the Estimates Committee criticized the government on progress towards these goals.
- It reported that to fulfill the promise 30 million hectares of land are required to plant indigenous trees instead of monocultures or plantations as is being done now.
- Planting trees along national highways or railway tracks will be a very small component of the required target.
- The clear gap between what is portrayed as a nationalist fight on the international stage and what is followed at home is even starker with the present regime.

## What needs to be done?

- The government must reverse its pro-corporate policies reflected in privatization.
- It needs to call off its undeclared war on the Forest Rights Act and constitutional provisions that protect Adivasi communities.
- It is only with the cooperation of those who have protected forests that India can make a real contribution to the efforts to control climate change and be an example to the rest of the world.

**Reference**

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/home-truths-on-climate-change/article37948763.ece

