Reworking Climate Agreements

What is the issue?

Setting common targets in climate agreements will undermine the concept of climate justice for developing countries like India.

What is climate justice?

- It reframes global warming as an ethical and political issue rather than being purely environmental or physical in nature.
- When countries such as India were becoming major industrial and middle class nations, they should not pay the price for the pollution caused by the West.

How is climate justice undermined in treaties?

- Firstly, inequity is built in the climate treaties which make India the 4th largest emitter even though India contributes 3% when compared to 26% in U.S. and 13% in China.
- According to UN, richest 1% of the global population emits more than two times the emissions of the bottom 50%.
- Secondly, in the climate negotiations longer term goals are set without any strategy to achieve them.
- The focus is more on physical quantities, emissions of carbon dioxide and increase in global temperature rather than the analysis of drivers, trends and patterns of resource use.
- Moreover the current framework considers symptoms which forces developing countries to keep the discussion away from the causes of the problem.
- Thirdly, global policy recommendations for developing countries are based achieving reasonable not comparable levels of wellbeing.
- This ensures that there is an early capping of energy use thereby not affecting the growth while ignoring the costs on the poor.

How does infrastructure contributes to climate change?

- Firstly, infrastructure has a defining role in human well-being both in its provision of services to the outside market and in shaping the demand-manufacturing, lifestyle.

- Secondly, in the urbanised world, two thirds of emissions arise from the demand of the middle class for infrastructure, mobility, buildings and diet.
- There is no substitute to cement, steel and construction material, which require half the available carbon space.
- Thirdly, because of its young population and late development, much of the future emissions in India will come from infrastructure, buildings and industry.

What are the challenges for India?

- India should highlight its unique national circumstances with respect to food, energy and transportation systems that have to change.
- Consumption of meat contributes to a third of global emissions and Indians eat just 4 kg a year.
- In European Union, a person eats 68 kg and twice that in the U.S. where a third of the food is wasted by households.
- India has abundant coal reserves and per-capita electricity use is tenth when compared to U.S.
- Now it is under pressure to stop using coal though U.S. currently uses more coal.
- India wants to eliminate the use of oil and replace it with renewable energy and hydrogen as a fuel for electrification.
- This acceleration requires international cooperation around technology development and transfer.

What can be done now?

- Global goal-shaping national strategy requires a new understanding.
- Firstly reframe the global concern in terms of sustainable development for countries with per capita emissions below the global average and it should be in line with Paris Agreement.
- Secondly, the verifiable measures should be well-being within ecological limits.
- Thirdly, international cooperation should centre on sharing technology of electric vehicles and hydrogen as a fuel, as they are the most effective response to climate change.

Source: The Hindu



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