Rulebook at Katowice - Concerns for Developing Countries

What is the issue?

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- The recent climate conference in Katowice, Poland finalised the "rulebook" for the implementation of the Paris Agreement.
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- But it brings little cheer on the climate front for developing countries, given its drawbacks.
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What are the shortfalls in the rulebook?

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- **Developing countries** - At Paris, the developed nations were allowed to make voluntary commitments to climate mitigation, on par with the developing nations.
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- At Katowice this process went further, with uniform standards of reporting, monitoring and evaluation for all countries.
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- The real targets of this uniformity are not the poorest nations, who have been provided exemptions, but the larger developing nations.
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- These reporting requirements, in their uniformity, are intended as much for Maldives as the U.S.
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- All developing nations are apparently allowed flexibility in these reporting requirements.
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- But the concession comes with a number of conditions, with the intention of forcing them to full compliance in short order.
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- **Rationale** - The reporting requirements are also marked by a pseudo-scientific concern for stringency.
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- The recent Special Report of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) highlights uncertainties in fixing global emission targets in relation with global carbon budget.
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- Given such uncertainty, the requirement of reporting as little as 500 kilo tonnes or 0.05% of national emissions per country has little scientific rationality.
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- Moreover, the uniformity of the stringency in reporting is being expressed in percentage terms.
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- But a smaller percentage of the emissions of a large emitter will be a larger quantity in absolute terms compared to the larger percentage of emissions of a small emitter.
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What are the larger concerns?

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- **Mitigation** - There is lack of initiative by the developed countries in taking the lead in climate mitigation.
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- All developed countries continue to invest in fossil fuels either through direct production or imports.
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- Some do so because of the downgrading of nuclear energy due to domestic political pressures.
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- Others are still trying to wean themselves off coal by shifting to gas.
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- Overall, the use of fossil fuel-based electricity generation continues to rise for OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries.
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- **Finance** - Developing countries have for long demanded that the bulk of climate finance must be from public sources.
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- In contrast, the developed countries have succeeded in putting other sources of finance, including FDI and equity flows.
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- But private sector flows or loans will increase the indebtedness of developing countries.

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- Much of the pressure exerted by developed countries at COP24 (Conference of Parties), Katowice had the active backing and instigation of the U.S.
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- The marked synergy between the U.S. and its political and strategic allies pushed through several critical elements of the “rulebook”.
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What is the case with India?

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- India has been articulating the need for equity in climate action and climate justice.
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- But it failed to obtain the operationalisation of these notions in several aspects of the “rulebook”.
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- In contrast, Brazil held its ground on matters relating to carbon trading that it was concerned about.
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- It postponed finalisation of the matter to next year’s summit.
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- India underestimated what was at stake at Katowice and the outcome mean a serious narrowing of India’s developmental options in the future.
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- In all, the “rulebook” adoption at COP24 signals a global climate regime that benefits and protects the interests of the global rich.
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- It has left the climatic fate of the world, and the developmental future of a substantial section of its population, still hanging in the balance.
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Source: The Hindu

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