UNFCCC COP-28 (Part-3)

Why in news?

The Conference of Parties (COP-28) has been recently concluded in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) with the adoption of UAE Consensus.

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What is the role of India in COP 28?

- **Bihar's program** - The actions undertaken by the *Bihar government* in the field of afforestation, particularly through the ***Jal-Jeevan-Hariyali Abhiyan*** (Rural Development Department), was praised by the international community at COP-28.
- **Hosting the COP** - Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his address at COP-28, offered to host the ***33rd edition*** of the annual summit due in ***2028 in India.***
- If India hosts the 33rd summit, it would be for the *2nd time after* ***2002,*** when it hosted the 8th edition.
- A proposal to host the COP must be approved by other signatories to the UNFCCC. Venues for future COP are only decided *2 years in advance.*
- **Green Credit Initiative** – India has announced the launch of the Green Credit Initiative to incentivize voluntary environmental actions across diverse sectors.

Green Credit Initiative
• **Genesis** - Unveiled in 2023, by the *Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change*, the Green Credit Program is an initiative within the government's broader *Lifestyle for Environment or Life Movement.* • **Working -** Green credits will be assigned to specific environmental activities, and will be treated as tradable commodities. • These credits will be able to be sold on domestic market platforms. • **Administration** – By ***Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE)*** • **Focus areas** - Tree plantation - Water - Sustainable agriculture - Waste management - Air pollution reduction - Mangrove conservation and restoration - Ecomark - Sustainable building and infrastructure • **Priorities** – The 2 main priorities include *water conservation and afforestation.* *Green growth was one of the top 7 priorities in the Finance Minister's Budget 2023-24.*

- **Global River Cities Alliance (GRCA) –** Inspired by India's ***River Cities Alliance (2021),*** GRCA was launched at the COP28.
- The River Cities Alliance currently has 142 river cities in India and serves as a dedicated platform to discuss aspects related to enhancing the state of urban rivers within their administrative boundaries.

Global River Cities Alliance (GRCA)
• **Aim** - To scale up the concept of collaborative knowledge sharing to facilitate the transfer of good experiences from one part of the world to another. • **Launched by** - National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) • **Members** – ***9 countries*** (Indian, Denmark, Cambodia, Japan, Bhutan, Australia, Netherlands, Egypt, and Ghana) • **Secretariat –** Provided by - National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), Ministry of Jal Shakti - National Institute for Urban Affairs (NIUA), Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs • **Supported by** – World Bank, Asian Development Bank and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

In what initiatives did India refuse to join?

Declaration on Climate and Health

- **About** - The ***non-binding*** declaration calls for nations to reduce their greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions in the health sector swiftly, sustainably, and substantially.
- **Signatories** - 144 countries till now. ***US and India,*** which are among the top greenhouse gas emitters, absent from the list of signatories.
- India ***neither signed*** the declaration nor participated in official activities on ***World Health Day*** citing the lack of practicality in curbing GHG use for cooling in the health sector.

December 3 was celebrated as World Health Day.

The Global Renewables and Energy Efficiency Pledge

- **About** – The pledge provides for
  - Tripling installed renewable energy generation capacity to at least 11,000 GW by 2030
  - Doubling global average annual rate of energy efficiency improvements to more than 4% by 2030
- It is ***not legally binding.***
- **Spearheaded by** - *EU, the US and the UAE*
- **Supported by** - Brazil, Nigeria, Australia, Japan, Canada, Chile and Barbados.
- **Signatories** - As many as 130 countries signed on to a pledge, with the ***China and India,*** absent from the list of signatories.
- They have stayed away as the initiative calls for *phasing down of coal* and ending the continued investment in unabated new coal-fired power plants.

China has the world's largest installed renewable energy capacity followed by the United States, Brazil and India.

India's Status on Renewable Energy
• India is the world's ***3rd largest producer*** of renewable energy, with 40% of its installed energy capacity coming from non-fossil fuel sources. • India has announced its aim to meet *50% of its electricity demands* from renewable energy sources by 2030 and reach *net zero emissions by 2070.* • India already has ambitious targets on renewable — ***450 GW by 2030.*** • India had already supported, as part of the G20, to work towards *tripling global renewable energy capacity by 2030.*

Emirates Declaration on Resilient Food Systems, Sustainable Agriculture, and Climate Action

- **Aim** - To promote food security while combatting climate change.
- **Promoted by** - The UAE
- **Partner** - Melinda Gates Foundation
- **Signatories** - ***134 nations*** which make up 76% of food-based GHGs and produce 70% of food globally
- India refrained from signing as it conflicted with its longstanding *policy of not committing to climate action related to agriculture and livestock* and the millions of livelihoods that depend on them.

Global Cooling Pledge

- **Aim** - It commits the countries to reduce their cooling emissions *by at least 68% by 2050* from 2022 levels and outlines several strategies to tackle them.

Conventional cooling, such as air-conditioning is a major driver of climate change, responsible for over 7% of global GHG emissions.

- **Signatories** - 66 countries, including the US and Canada have signed the pledge.
- ***India has not signed*** the pledge as strict adherence to it could restrict access to affordable cooling and transitioning to sustainable cooling technologies requires substantial investments.

*India has its own **Cooling Action Plan,** announced in 2019 to reduce power consumption for cooling across sectors by 20-25% by 2038.*

What are the disappointments in the COP 28?

- **Fossil fuel phase-out** - The final agreement called upon countries to contribute towards transitioning away from fossil fuels, to achieve net zero by 2050 but there

were *no time schedules or targets.*
- Some countries were extremely disappointed that the term "*fossil fuel phase-out"* had not been used.
- Fossil fuel companies had been steadily increasing their presence at the COPs with COP 28 being held in a petrostate and headed by an oil company chief.

Fossil fuels are responsible for around 75% of all GHG emissions and about 90% of global CO2 emissions.

- **Loss & Damage Fund** - A meagre $790 million has been pledged so far, despite the corpus requiring $100 billion to more than $400 billion a year.
- Notably, the U.S., the largest historical emitter, committed only $17.5 million.
- Concerns related to limited access to the fund, questions about the legal autonomy, flexibility, and decision-making authority, and general scepticism about the fund's agility in responding promptly to emergencies, have emerged.
- **Tripling of Renewable Energy** - Tripling is a global target, and it is not incumbent on every country to individually triple its current installed capacity.
- It is thus not clear how this tripling would be ensured.
- **Phase-down of coal**- There was a move to stipulate that no new coal fired power plants could be opened without an in-built carbon capture and storage facility, but it was strongly ***resisted by India, China,*** and others and so it was dropped.
- In 2022, India had proposed to *phase down all fossil fuels* and not just coal.
- There is nothing about how this phase-down is to be measured, or from what baseline.
- **Methane emission cuts** - Several countries, ***including India***, are opposed to any mandate to cut methane emissions, because one of the major sources happens to be agriculture and livestock.
- The agreement also does not mention any targets for methane emission cuts for the year 2030.

Methane is the most widespread greenhouse gas apart from CO2, accounting for nearly 25% of all emissions. It is also about 80 times more potent than CO2 in causing global warming.

- **Global Goal on Adaptation** - Much more needs to be done on this front, particularly in identifying the indicators to measure progress on each of the global goals.
- The adaptation agreement currently *lacks financial provisions*, and countries would need to continue working on it to strengthen it in the coming years.
- **Loose definitions** - While calling for a phase-down of "*unbated*" coal power, the door was left open for *"low-carbon fuels", "low-emission"* technologies, "*low-carbon hydrogen*" and "*transitional fuels*".
- **Transitional Fuels** - The declaration also refers to 'transitional fuels', such as natural gas, for ensuring energy security. But this falls short of true climate justice as it allows industry to continue operating in business-as-usual mode.
- **Climate finance** - The draft did not take the issue of financial support by developed

countries further, causing much anguish to climate vulnerable countries.

- **Carbon capture** – The call for accelerated deployment of carbon capture is skeptical as it is expensive and has yet to be proven at the scale needed to impact climate change.
- **Energy systems** - The call upon parties to transition away from fossils in energy systems – *as opposed to across the entire economy*, sends a signal that other energy-intensive sectors like plastics and petrochemicals production can continue to rely on fossils.

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