

The Paris Summit

Current International Environment Concerns

Objectives of the module

After going through this module, you will be able to:

1. Understand the cardinal issues associated with the Paris Agreement

We present this chapter as a bonus to the section on International Treaties and Conventions. The aim to this module is to appraise you to two major international developments with an impact on the environment, namely, the Paris Agreement. Let us have a look at each of them.

1. **Paris Climate Change Summit**

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The Paris Climate change summit was expected to break the path for securing a stable environment. Yet the summit was noted more for USA's disassociation with the climate change accord than anything else. Firstly, let us look at the salient features of the Paris Accord.

1. One of the notable points in the agreement is the commitment to limit global temperature increase to 2%, while putting in maximum efforts to limit the increase to 1.5%(UNCC, 2019).
2. The agreement acknowledges that the process of peaking of Green House Gas emissions for developing countries will take time on account of their delay in the development process, calls for all nations to peak at the earliest possible(UNCC, 2019).
3. The agreement calls for heightening emission mitigation by both the Developed and Developing Countries, wherein the lead would be taken by the former(UNCC, 2019). Every county shall notify Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) towards mitigation and the steps taken to achieve them (UNCC, 2019).
4. All countries are encouraged to maintain sinks and reservoirs of GHCs, including forests(UNCC, 2019).
5. The agreement underscores the importance of voluntary cooperation and non-market approaches for Sustainable Development. The agreement also lays down principles for voluntary cooperation, including that of environmental integrity, transparency and robust accounting(UNCC, 2019).
6. The agreement emphases on implementing adaptation plans to lessen the impact of climate change, especially with regard to temperature rise. It states that every member should formulate National Adaptation Plans, and submit and periodically update the same while describing their priorities, needs, plans and actions(UNCC, 2019).
7. The agreement calls for concerted efforts to minimize the loss and damage encountered as a result of climate change. Measures should be taken as per Warsaw International Mechanism, on a cooperative and facilitative basis with respect to minimizing loss and damage occurring on account of climate change(UNCC, 2019).
8. The agreement calls for the establishment of a Green Climate Fund (GCF) to finance the prevention of climate change. International development of "climate-safe" technology, technology transfer and capacity building are other areas those are highlighted in the agreement(UNCC, 2019).
9. The agreement gives particular attention to Climate change education, training, public awareness, public participation and public access to information(UNCC, 2019).
10. Transparency in the implementation process is particularly emphasized for in the agreement. Apart from national reporting on implementation, mitigation and provisioning of support, each national report shall undergo a technical expert review (UNCC, 2019).
11. The first stock-taking on progress towards achieving the goals set by the convention will be held in 2023 and thereafter it will take place every 5 years(UNCC, 2019).

However, the point of contention on the implementation of the agreement is the "sharing of burden" issue. Who will share what part of the burden? It is on this discordant issue area that the US presidency seems to be at

loggerheads with other world leaders. The moot point is that nearly 200 countries have agreed for GHG cuts to make the world a more livable planet. However, the US seems to think otherwise. In the words of Mike Pompeo, adherence to the agreement will impose unacceptable burden on the American economy (Friedman, 2019). Recently, as expected, President Trump announced the withdrawal of the USA from the Paris process. Trump feels that the commitments under the Paris accord shall cost the US both in terms of finance and jobs. The issue of concern for the US seems to be its ability to substitute fossil fuels with alternatives without affecting production costs. Re-entering the Paris process for the US in later years would be difficult as other countries may be vary of their adherence to climate change related commitments, having earlier moved out of the “Kyoto mechanism” (Friedman, 2019).

The issue here again is that of Public Good provisioning as seen through the lens of “tragedy of commons”. Though a cleaner environment benefits everyone, the moot question is as to who will foot the bill. The largest polluter of our times is China, which has shown least incentive for reducing emissions, inspite of financial support from the European Union (Friedman, 2019). Without the support of China, achievement of the Paris goals will be very difficult in the context of the pull out by USA.

Let us sum up

The Paris Agreement was a sincere effort on the part of the world community to arrest climate change and to entice nations into taking effective steps to develop the environment. The major roadblock towards attaining success in implementing the agreement has been the withdrawal of the USA from the agreement. The relative gains problem associated with Public Goods provisioning is an issue that plagues the acceptance of the agreement in toto. Now the onus is on eliciting the cooperation of countries like India and China to attain the goals set under the agreement.

References

- Friedman, L. (2019, November 4th). *Trump Serves Notice to Quit Paris Climate Agreement*. Retrieved December 11th, 2019, from NewYork Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/04/climate/trump-paris-agreement-climate.html>
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