



Mitigating is the key challenge in COP26 Glasgow

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(Mains GS 3 : Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.)

Context:

The heads of state from at least 120 countries are expected to convene in Glasgow for the 26th meeting of the United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP).

Important year for COP:

- The year 2020 was an important year in the **COP** calendar as most of the major economies were expected to review the actions undertaken so far in meeting voluntary targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Paris Agreement of 2015.
- Following the exit by former **U.S. President Donald Trump** from the Paris Agreement, the Biden administration is making a concerted effort to commemorate the country's return.
- To this end, it has sent emissaries and multiple delegations to several countries to coax them into committing to some sort of a deadline or a 'net zero' timeline by when their emissions would peak and eventually abate.

Climate finance:

- Climate finance has remained skewed towards mitigation, despite the repeated calls for maintaining a balance between adaptation and mitigation.

- The 2016 Adaptation Gap Report of the UN Environment Programme had noted that the annual costs of adaptation in developing countries could range from \$140 to \$300 billion annually by 2030 and rise to \$500 billion by 2050.
- Currently available adaptation finance is significantly lower than the needs expressed in the Nationally Determined Contributions submitted by developing countries.

Cutting emission:

- To limit global warming to 1.5°C, net zero emissions would have to be achieved by 2050 and emissions would need to be drastically cut by at least 45% from 2010 levels by 2030.
- India and China are the major emitters of the world that haven't committed to any 2050 deadline.
- Their argument, which has been consistent for many years, is that the climate crisis exists because of excess emissions by the developed West for more than a century.

Onus on western countries:

- Attempts to solve the crisis of mitigation would involve the western countries doing much more than what they have committed to and, at the very least, making good on promises already enshrined in previous editions of the COP.
- As years of COP negotiations have shown, progress is glacial and the effort is more on delivering a headline announcement rather than genuine operationalisation of the steps that need to be taken.

Complying with demand:

- In real terms, for developed countries, complying with the demand by developing countries to pay reparations means shelling out sums of money unlikely to pass domestic political muster.
- And for developing countries, yielding to calls for 'net zero' means that governments such as India will appear as having caved into international bullying.
- However, the COP, despite all the media interest it generates, can at best incentivise adaptation that aids a transition to clean energy.

Conclusion:

- Even without immediately retiring fossil fuel assets, the world needs to frame a meaningful response to a warming globe.
- For this, developing countries must develop the mechanism for climate finance which is trustworthy and provide mitigation and adaptation strategies beneficially for developing or least developed countries.

