

# India, Environmental Protection and International Politics

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines India's role in various COP summits, analysing how emerging economies like India can balance economic growth and sustainable development while supporting international environmental governance and national policies through multiple strategies. India participates globally and is involved in Conference of the Parties (COPs) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). India's role and commitments, along with its domestic policies, reflect the government's initiatives on the international stage. India emphasises different principles in COPs, but “common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities” remains its main focus for renewable energy and climate justice. Known for its development, population growth, and increasing environmental awareness within government initiatives and among citizens, India's active participation in international forums represents a significant step.

**KEYWORDS:** Environmental Protection, Indian Government Initiatives, India's Role in International Environmental Protection, Sustainability, Solar Alliance, Conferences of the Parties.

## INTRODUCTION

Climate-related problems are increasing worldwide alongside development, and climate change is a global issue. Countries should unite to address these problems to protect the environment from undesirable changes. India is the third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases, making it challenging to sustain economic growth while maintaining sustainability. During the drafting stages of the UNFCCC, as well as later on at the negotiation table, the fundamental approach of the developing countries was clear. It was based on equity, a policy that reflects the fact that anthropogenic climate change was the result of cumulative emissions of GHGs that originated in developed countries in the past as well as in the present. On the other hand, the developed countries had a different approach. They contended that since climate change is a global problem, there has to be a ‘Common Responsibility’ in mitigating the harmful effects of climate change. In other words, they sought to minimise the link between the commitments under the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol, as well as India's active participation in COP summits, where discussions focused on striking a balance between sustainability and development, and addressing the concerns of underdeveloped and developing nations. In COP summits, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC) recognises that industrialised countries have historically contributed more to global emissions and possess the financial and technological capacity to combat climate change. India has consistently promoted the CBDR-RC concept at early COPs, from the Rio summit in 1992 to the Kyoto Protocol for addressing climate change. It emphasised the emissions of

wealthy nations, arguing that developing countries, including itself, have become increasingly marginalised in climate negotiations. India's primary aim during this period was to prevent significant erosion of its position by maintaining the divide between developed and developing countries and demonstrating its willingness to support international climate efforts. The Indian government continues to strike a balance between economic growth and sustainable development through its domestic and global initiatives.

## OBJECTIVES

- To explore the impact of the Indian government's initiative at the international level.
- To examine the Indian government's efforts to control environmental pollution.
- To analyse the international efforts of India to protect the environment.

## Methodology

This research is based on secondary data, collected from newspapers, reliable international sources, government reports, and e-journal articles.

## INDIA'S CONTRIBUTIONS AND COMMITMENTS

In 1990, the IPCC First Assessment Report called for 'Common Responsibility' among all nations since Climate Change is a 'Global Concern' and India successfully built a coalition of developing countries and successfully substituted 'Common Responsibility' with 'Common but Differentiated Responsibility (CBDR)'. India also successfully lobbied for shifting climate negotiations from IPCC, dominated by 'developed countries', to UNGA, where there is a level playing field. In 1995, COP-I, held in Berlin, India, successfully defended the demand for mandatory commitments from advanced developing countries with emission reduction commitments. Thereafter, in every COP, a conflict arose between the North and South, and the South successfully defended itself. During the 1991-92 UNFCCC Negotiations, India successfully campaigned for equity and CBDR. However, at the same time, India and other developing countries were unable to secure any concrete emission reduction commitments from the North.

During COP21, a historic document was adopted, known as the Paris Agreement, which was a significant step in global climate governance. The Indian government plays a vital role in the Paris Agreement, which aims to limit global warming to below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5 °C.

During the Paris Agreement, India's targets under the Paris Agreement for 2030

Reducing greenhouse gas emission intensity of its GDP by 33-35% below 2005 levels by 2030

Forty per cent of its power capacity is to be based on non-fossil fuels

Create an additional 'carbon sink' of 2.5-3 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent

India achieved its early success in meeting past targets in 2022 when it filed an updated NDC, highlighting its expanded vision. During COP26 in Glasgow, India made a bold commitment, known as 'Panchamrit', including a target to achieve net-zero emissions by 2070.

**Table 1.1 explained the 'Panchamrit' commitments in briefs**

Year	Commitments
2030	500 GW of non-fossil energy capacity

2030	50% of energy from renewable sources
2030	Reduce carbon emissions by 1 billion tonnes
2030	Cut the carbon intensity of the economy by less than 45%
2070	Net zero emissions

At the COP26 in Glasgow in 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the Indian government’s Panchamrit goals, a term representing the Sanskrit word that means five important commitments forming the crux of India’s climate action plans. Table 1.1 explains five commitments in brief according to years, and India presents as a strong supporter of sustainable development at the international platform to achieve a green future and control climate change.

## INDIA’S INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

### International Solar Alliance

The establishment of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) in November 2015 is an example of India’s progressive and cooperative climate engagement. The alliance, established jointly by India and France during the Paris Agreement it is a treaty-based, member-driven forum aimed at promoting trans-regional solar energy cooperation to reduce fossil fuel dependence and foster a more equitable and just energy order. Most of ISA’s members are countries in Africa, with the continent contributing 36 of the 101 ratified members. The ISA, which was co-founded with France at COP21, aims to promote the use of solar energy worldwide, particularly in countries with abundant sunshine. It has become a significant intergovernmental body that promotes the use of solar energy.

### Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)

In recent years, governments have achieved some success in saving human lives from disaster threats; however, direct economic losses, in the form of property and infrastructure damage, continue to rise. Recent catastrophic events have underscored the loss and damage incurred in critical infrastructure sectors. CDRI was started by India in 2019 and is centred on creating capacity, exchanging information, and encouraging infrastructure systems to be resilient to climate change and disaster risks.

### Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE)

This environmentally friendly program, initiated by India, encourages people to adopt a more environmentally friendly lifestyle and modify their habits to combat climate change. Introduced by the Indian Prime Minister at COP26, this initiative aims to combat climate change. The mission is centred around the principle of promoting a sustainable lifestyle through traditional values of conservation and modernisation. LiFE is an environmentally friendly approach based on the ‘Pro-Planet-People’ principle, promoting sustainable development through cultural norms and traditional methods.

### Green credit program

India has launched the Green Credit Programme (GCP)—a market-based, voluntary programme—to enhance energy and resource use efficiency, foster resource conservation, mitigate climate change, and strengthen adaptive capacity. The programme aims to incentivise the adoption of environmentally sustainable technologies and processes through fiscal and financial incentives to effect behavioural changes. The efficacy of a policy programme depends on its design and implementation, though, in theory, such programmes are designed to be cost-effective, environmentally favourable, and economically inclusive. The success of a tradable programme should be judged based on four key parameters: the programme's design, minimisation of transaction costs, market volatility, leakage and environmental

degradation. The GCP administrators have yet to issue an effective design and implementation framework for the programme. The Green Credit Program, introduced in 2023, provides incentives for environmentally friendly activities, such as planting trees.

### **Impact of India's policies on COP outcomes**

India's domestic climate policy and diplomatic efforts have significantly influenced the results and discussions at COPs. Implementation of this programme has laid the groundwork for the long-term implementation of the Convention itself. The agenda of the meetings of the Conference of the Parties is very wide-ranging, reflecting the programme of work the Conference of the Parties has established for itself.

### **Championing climate justice and equity**

India persistently champions climate justice, underscoring the necessity for sufficient climate financing and technology transfer from developed to developing nations. India's championing of climate justice and equity is a key tenet of its national policy and international diplomacy. The country seeks to balance its developmental needs with its climate responsibilities, advocating for a global framework that is fair and equitable while simultaneously implementing domestic policies that protect its most vulnerable populations from the impacts of a changing climate.

### **Push for 'phase-down' of fossil fuels**

During COP27 (2022), India prominently championed a phase-down of all fossil fuels, rather than just coal, a proposal that attracted considerable attention and signifies its shifting stance on the energy transition. India's push for a "phase-down" is a strategic position in global climate negotiations. It is a demand for a fair and equitable global framework that acknowledges the diverse developmental needs of nations. At the same time, its domestic policies reflect a commitment to a gradual but resolute transition towards a cleaner energy future.

### **Balancing development and climate action**

India's policy framework aims at combining its socio-economic objectives with its climate obligations. Other developing countries can learn from its effective decoupling of economic growth from greenhouse emissions, as demonstrated by the decrease in emission intensity.

### **South-south cooperation**

India makes a substantial contribution to the global stocktake process under the Paris Agreement, which evaluates collective progress towards climate targets, through its updated NDCs and long-term low-carbon development policy.

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Recently, the 29<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was held in Baku, Azerbaijan. COPs aimed to foster international cooperation and develop techniques to mitigate the escalating impacts of climate change, emphasising the current need for integrated global action to achieve a sustainable future.

### **India's Role in COP29**

The COP29 to the UNFCCC was recently held in Baku, with the main purpose of addressing the climate crisis and geopolitical tensions. This summit has been marked as a milestone in global climate diplomatic summits. At this summit, Article 6.4 of the Paris Agreement was a key focus of discussion, centred on

carbon markets and establishing an international climate finance target under the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG). India is leveraging these outcomes for sustainable development and economic growth.

“India’s deep-tech solutions, including digital MRV systems, blockchain, satellite monitoring and AI, ensure high-quality carbon credits by enhancing accuracy, transparency and accountability. Supported by robust government policies, these technologies contribute significantly to global climate goals,” says Sujatha UG, Vice President, Global Partnerships at Invest India.

India takes a strong stand for fairness in climate policies, challenges such as inadequate financing mechanisms and risks of ‘greenwashing’ in carbon credits markets. India’s double focus on holding developed nations accountable for past and future commitments while ensuring equitable and sustainable pathways for developing economies. The conference serves as a critical reminder of the financial and collaborative efforts needed to address the climate crisis effectively, and India played a prominent role in COP29 to tackle the climate crisis at the international platform and focused on different aspects to manage the economic development among sustainable development.

### Goals at COP30

The COP30 outcomes will have real impacts across Asia and give a clear picture of where global action stands. COP30 discussed about the 2024 year, which was considered the warmest year on record, about 1.55°C above pre-industrial levels, which was the latest in a 10-year run of record heat and extreme events. According to the UN weather agency, 2015 to 2024 are now the 10 hottest years ever recorded.

- Implementation and adoption, not just negotiation
- Strengthen accountability and implementation to limit global warming
- Advance climate finance commitments, with a spotlight on adaptation funding and fair finance flow
- Adopt the transition, equity, and inclusive cooperation

### CONCLUSION

India has played a dominant role in COP summits and has been represented as a strong member in the Conference of the Parties, managing its developmental needs alongside sustainable development and fulfilling its global climate commitments. Recently, India has become the world's largest population in the world, and their highest dependency on coal. India has always demanded equity, international climate justice and common but differentiated responsibility among the members of the COPs. India has been a major international force since the earliest days of the negotiations. It has played a constructive role in building the norms and regulations at international negotiations and summits., India will doubtlessly continue to remain a major force in the international climate negotiations. Like in the past, where India has played a major role in developing the architecture, norms and rules of the climate regime, to suit its own interests and that of its coalition partners, India will continue its efforts at the global level. It has been rightly noted that, “if India’s national legislation on climate change is to be best served, then it must combine aggressive domestic action to combat climate change with tough and clear-eyed bargaining in its international negotiations.

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