

# Multilateralism & Climate Diplomacy



## What has not worked so far?

Without stronger accountability measures, the large emitters economies and countries have little incentives to accelerate their efforts, particularly when faced with domestic economic and political pressures.

### Bilal Anwar - CEO NDRMF

After over three decades of multilateral negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the global response remains woefully inadequate. While the world is at the brink of climatic meltdown with the increasing frequency and intensity of climate induced disasters with exceeding human and economic losses, the international politics of climate policy commitments consistently exhibits disappointing outcomes combined with serious lack of implementation and accountability.

Consequently, countries like Pakistan continue to face economic and social costs due to climate

induced disasters and extreme weather conditions. Devastations caused by flood 2022 costing over \$30 billion in loss and damages to the economy and affecting population of 33 million across Pakistan is one such example.

Outcomes at COP29 in Baku are viewed as an indicator of broader collapse of the multilateral process deemed not-fit-for-purpose to deal and address the pressing challenges of multifacetedly complex world. Multilateralism, as an instrument, evolved in the post second world war era aimed to define and resolve some of the most critical and thorny international issues and challenges.



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Although it might have been able to serve its purpose in a limited sense but the fault-lines and shortcomings have become more than evident. Though a late entrant, international climate policy development and action has become a leading and powerful addition to the multilateral process and global politics. And undeniably becoming a dominant pointer of growing skepticism on the potential of global governance to address this still evolving and enduring international challenge.

While the COP-29 concluded with a large set of decisions including much hyped commitment for three-fold increase in climate finance to USD 300 Billion and agreement on Article-6 of the Paris Agreement paving the way for global carbon markets. But the much hailed commitment for \$ 300 Billion falling short of determined needs of \$ 1.3 Trillion and clouded by the unfulfilled promise to mobilize \$100 billion annually to help developing countries address their climate challenges.

Similarly, no credible action oriented and finance guaranteed adaptation action plan for large number of developing countries like Pakistan agreed at the COP. More seriously, the 30 years in making victory achieved at COP-28 on phasing out of fossil fuels had been effectively lost in Baku.

Such combination of low ambition and miss-outs sparked many questions on the aptness of international climate negotiations process. Starting from sluggish decision making process, no built-in implementation mechanism and ensuring inclusiveness of key stakeholders due to disparities in resources, access and relevant capacities of different players are few to mention.

Further compounded by the underlying perception that it is not a matter of abysmal outcome at Baku but a long series of under-delivering



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COPs and other high level forums dedicated to international climate policy making culminated into strong and skeptical sentiments against the UNFCCC process.

The fundamental question being asked is whether UNFCCC, in its current format, is suitable to deliver at scale and pace needed to confront the climate crisis. Although fault-lines of the process had been in discussion for quite some time but having no viable alternative in sight held back these sentiments to some extent. Seems not any more. At the height of the drama in

Baku, the Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, Mr. Simon Steil received an open letter from highly influential group of people, including Mr. Ban Ki Moon, Ms Christiana Figuerres, Ms Marry Robinson and many others.

The letter called for improving the decision making process at speed and to ensure the accountability and implementation while ensuring equitable representation as effective means to mobilize finance at scale and amplify the voice of science in the climate policy decision making.

One of the most common critique of COP meetings is not being able to make great breakthroughs. Such as, ban on fossil fuels and large scale transition to renewables or availability of abundant funding for adaptation measures or more recently developed countries taking up the liability of compensating the losses and damages of developing countries arisen out of climate impacts.

These are fair set of expectations in times of crises but hard to materialize. It needs to be understood that COPs, as a standard format and pattern of multilateral process, are not designed to support leaping advances or transformational changes due to inextricable economic interests and inherent political power imbalances ingrained in the system.

Transparency of deliberations, information sharing mechanisms to facilitate participation and inclusiveness and consensus based decision making are designed to achieve balance of interests but the fact remains the sum of contributions has been remaining short of required global targets due to competing national interests.

For instance, the level of commitments for capping emissions, demonstrated through Nationally Determined Contribution of countries, are known to be insufficient to meet the Paris climate goals – the so called emissions gap. In

for a comprehensive climate action.

Likewise, absence of mechanism of binding commitments and enforcement measures have been a long standing stumbling block in the success of UNFCCC process. The Paris Climate Agreement, despite achieving a global ratification status, remains a voluntary agreement having no consequences in case of no compliance.



Global civil society is not only vocal about the limitation of the process but pro-actively offering support and innovative solutions. To overcome inherent limitations, stronger enforcement mechanisms, more effective financial assistance for developing countries, and increased political will are necessary.

Furthermore, it is essential to create a more flexible and adaptive negotiations process that can respond quickly to the evolving climate crisis and ensure that commitments translate into real, transformative actions. Pakistan has been traditionally playing a key and instrumental role in highlighting its climatic challenges and mobilizing support for its domestically driven actions. Moving ahead, Pakistan must build alliances with some of the most vulnerable group of countries in the region and across and lead in forging a common and comprehensive strategy for transforming the process in the benefit of developing countries.

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Therefore, states are not felt compelled to comply with their contributions, promises and responsibilities particularly in case of scenarios

2023, the UN Environment Programme's Emissions Gap Report showed that the world is on track for a temperature rise of 2.8°C, far exceeding the 1.5°C target.

Without stronger accountability measures, the large emitters economies and countries have little incentives to accelerate their efforts, particularly when faced with domestic economic and political pressures. The ongoing global macro-economic conditions and rising phase of resource nationalism in the global north further erodes the prospects for global solidarity demanded

where their efforts are not equitably distributed or justified across other group of countries and stakeholders rendering competitive disadvantages. In consequence, we are seeing leveling-down of global ambitions for climate action and provision of technical support and adequate finance for countries like Pakistan.

While conventional tools of the multilateralism have played a critical role in raising awareness of the climate crisis and fostering international cooperation but its limitations are now apparent demanding for broader set of reforms.



**The writer is CEO National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF).**