The Emission Gap: Assessment of NDCs Pledges with Reference to G-20 and India

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In the history of climate change regime, in year 2010 and 2015, countries submitted their self determined GHG emission reduction targets through NAMAs (Cancun, 2010) and NDCs (Paris 2015). It is pertinent to mention that the world unanimously accepted the threshold to temperature rise below 2°C or in best scenario 1.5°C by the year 2100. The important question arises here, whether these pledges would sufficient to save the temperature goal or we need to increase grave efforts with greater intensity? In the present paper, an attempt has been done to assess adequacy of mitigation pledges made by, specially the G-20 countries with additional emphasis on India.

Keywords: Climate Change, Regime, GHG Mitigation Pledges, Temperature rise, NDCs

INTRODUCTION

Since the adoption of the United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992, the world has been gathering annually to decide the fate of the living earth. So far, two remarkable achievements can be recognized towards curbing the Green House Gases- responsible for the rise in average global temperature- one is Kyoto Protocol (1997) and Paris Agreement (2015). By the year 1990, the science of climate change and its repercussions had been well understood by the world under the auspices of the Inter Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). From 1992 to the Copenhagen Summit 2009, the political leaders of nations were largely engrossed in the grave business of deciding the responsibilities of mitigation actions, financing and the technological assistance. The Copenhagen summits was historical in context of changing the basic arguments, the Common but Differentiated Responsibility (CBDR) that had been embraced as the bedrock of future negotiations under the UNFCCC. Unlike the Kyoto Protocol, Copenhagen summit adopted self determination approach to offer mitigation action plans. Now, the differentiation between developed and developing countries in context of mitigation actions was thinner or almost ended. Subsequently, countries offered their emission reduction pledges on volunteer basis in form of Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) that had to be implemented by 2020.

In 2015, at Paris, the Conference of Party to the UNFCCC agreed to keep the average rise in global temperature above pre industrial level within 2°C and in best scenario 1.5°C by 2100. As the Paris Agreement decided that each party would offer its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC), contained with their plan of actions and quantified GHG reduction targets. The Paris Agreement (Article 4, para2) requires each party to prepare, communicate and maintain successive nationally determined contributions (NDCs). The submitted NDCs will be implemented from 2020 to stabilize the rise in temperature within 2°C. The NDCs will have to be submitted on incremental basis in every 5 year.

1. The Concept of Emission Gap

The Copenhagen Accord associated around 140 countries and 85 countries had made pledges to reduce GHG emissions till the year 2020. But, still, the critical question was on the board, whether the pledges would be sufficient to hold the rise in global temperature below 2°C above pre industrial level? Or there would be any gap between required and offered pledges. To assess these pledges and their consistency with 2°C goal, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) in conjunction with the European Climate Foundation and the National Institute of Ecology, Mexico had carried out a six month study by compiling various studies. This was the first “Emissions Gap Report” released in 2010. The UNEP has been releasing the Emission Gap Report on annual basis. The 10th edition of the report was released on 26 November 2019. The report is containing with alarming conclusions and warranting urgent mitigation action to narrow down the emission gap to curb repercussions of climate change.

For the purpose of definition, we can rely on the simple definition offered by the World Resources Institute (WRI) “the difference between the emissions level countries have pledged to achieve under international agreements and the level consistent with limiting warming to well below 2 degrees C (3.6 degrees F). In other words it can be described as “the difference between where we are likely to be by 2030 and where we need to be has become known as the ‘emissions gap’.” The difference can be measured from the pledges that had been made in 2010-2011 as NAMAs or more precisely from the pledges (NDCs) have been made in Paris Agreement. For this paper, pledges made in Paris Agreement by top emitters, have been taken to assess the emission gap in 2030.

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