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Down with the Paris agreement: America playing the 2020 game on climate change negotiations

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Abstract:

The American Administration under President Donald Trump's leadership has perfectly personified itself being at its reluctant best regarding bargaining with the Cop24 at Katowice, Poland in December 2018. The Trump Administration had already announced on June 1, 2017 of America's exit citing the case of Nicaragua and Syria. The current developments at Katowice have further slowed the progress of the negotiations due to contentious issues inherent in the climate change negotiations for developing countries including India. The recently concluded 50th UN Bonn Climate Change Conference has also failed to deliver the desired result.

Key words: *America, Cop24, climate change, negotiations, UNFCCC, IPCC*

Introduction: American reluctant bargaining

The American Administration under President Donald Trump's leadership has perfectly personified itself being at its haughty best regarding reluctant bargaining with the Cop24 at Katowice, Poland in December 2018. The Trump Administration had already announced on June 1, 2017 of America's exit citing the case of Nicaragua and Syria. The current developments at Katowice has further slowed the progress of the negotiations which was already moving with a snail's pace due to contentious issues inherent in the climate change negotiations.

In the previously held conferences since 2015 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) the Parties had agreed to work on the implementation of the Paris Agreement. The next step was to finalize the rule book to make the Agreement operational by 2020. Keeping in mind the current IPCC Special Report on 1.5⁰C, this seems a

mammoth task, since finalizing the rule book needs the consent of the parties to the negotiation

America's position on climate change negotiations:

Ahead of the conference America had given a positive indication of engaging itself in the re-negotiations of Paris Climate deal. Wells Griffith, the man President Donald Trump appointed as Senior Director for energy at the National Security Council advocated at the “Innovative Technologies Spur Economic Dynamism” event to rebrand coal as a potentially “clean” energy source which was laughed off by the protestors.



The earlier administration of President Bush and President Clinton clearly embraced the critical challenges posed by climate change. It was under the presidency of Barak Obama that concerned efforts generated the positive steps towards the culmination of Paris Climate Agreement in 2015. At the present juncture the Trump Administration has receded from the critical global issue of climate change thereby hampering the future prospects of a sustainable climate deal.

Under the provisions of the Paris Agreement the US withdrawal will only take effect from late 2020. This has provided America with the bargaining power to address the issue of GHGs and climate change finance in terms of “national interest” justified by each administration according to the requirements of the present political regime.

Starting from the days of oil crisis in the 1970s and later the Byrd-Hagel resolution (1997) American policy towards climate change has been one of greatest concern, voluntary participation, yet “non-commitment”. The unresponsive attitude of America on Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement is to be considered on two counts, first, it would impose

binding limits on emission within the same compliance period and second, it would result in “serious economic harm” to the country’s economic interest.

The United States remains firmly committed to see its hegemonic interest intact in climate change negotiations and calls for “transparency framework” based on “no position for differentiation”. The Paris Agreement on the other maintains differentiation in terms of financial responsibility mandating the developed countries to take the lead and at the same time it requires the emerging economies to contribute to the same.

Constrains on climate change negotiations:

The engagement between the (super) developed and developing countries with emerging economies tag is more embedded in the classical concept on development perception and concern for national interest than for “global common concerns”. It is to be noted that the largest part of green house gases emissions (GHGs) historically originated in the developed countries. Hence the developing world demands these countries have the largest responsibility for combating environmental pollution.

The developing countries and emerging economies particularly the BASIC Group (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) do insist for a bigger responsibility for the developed world to be part of the emission reduction regime. For this it requires countries to accept their share of responsibility guided by the “equity principle” to meet the global challenge.

Future drawbacks of climate change negotiations

The outcome of the Katowice conference is highly in the favour of developed countries. The issue of equity, financial responsibility and sharing of the burden of carbon emission differentially has been highly compromised with little accountability. The Parties to the negotiation have been left with self determining goals based on their convenience to reduce emission. This has resulted in risks and uncertainties that hamper the ability to informed decision making at the national, regional and international levels.

The recently concluded 50th UN Bonn Climate Change Conference has failed to incorporate the key findings on global warning to reduce the emissions at 1.5 degree Celsius as highlighted by the Special Report prepared by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2018. Hence to deliver the Paris Agreement remains on the big shoulders of the developed countries with the developing countries toeing the line in future with their own

reservations. Further America's reluctance to come to the negotiating table has also hampered the entire climate change negotiation regime.

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