**COP26: What would Pakistan Look For?**

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The UK will host the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow from October 31 to November 12, 2021. This very important conference is taking place at the moment when the COVID-19 pandemic has brought devastation to millions around the world; disrupting many parts of the global economy. Governments have stepped up to protect lives and livelihoods. But climate change has continued, which ultimately threatens life on earth.

“As countries begin to recover from the Coronavirus pandemic, we must take the historic opportunity to tackle climate change at the same time – to build back better, and greener. We can deliver green recoveries across the globe that bring in good jobs, trillions in investment and ground-breaking new technology. And we must. To keep the temperature of the planet under control – limiting its increase to 1.5 degrees – the science dictates that by the second half of the century, we should be producing less carbon than we take out of the atmosphere. This is what reaching ‘net zero’ means,” said Alok Sharma, the COP President-Designate.

Around the world, storms, floods and wildfires have intensified while air pollution has enormously increased; affecting the health of tens of millions of people. This unpredictable weather causes untold damage to innumerable houses; disrupting livelihoods all over. The impact of climate change is devastating, but the advances in tackling it are, unfortunately, very meagre in proportion. The poor, least developed and developing countries are suffering from the environment unfriendly development and industrial growth of the rich countries. It is high time they pay back for the vulnerabilities of the resource-starved countries by taking measures to safeguard its people and their livelihoods from the changing climate impacts.

According to the World Bank, Pakistan is one of the top five vulnerable countries, despite having no significant contribution to climate change. Another report mentions: “In 2019, CO2 emissions for Pakistan was 223.6 million tons. Between 1970 and 2019, CO2 emissions of Pakistan grew substantially from 17.7 to 223.6 million tons rising at an increasing annual rate that reached a maximum of 15.38 percent in 1987 and then decreased to 1.33 percent in 2019.”

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The drastic decrease in carbon emissions is, surely, the result of steps taken by Pakistan under its Climate Action – the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13. The flagship project, Ten Billion Tree Tsunami (TBTT), is not just a tree plantation movement, but a comprehensive initiative for ecosystem conservation and management. More than a billion new plantations, revised plans for forest management and development across the countries with the engagement of provinces and administrative entities, and capacity of institutions have already been noticed and appreciated by the national and international environment and climate watchdogs.

The Sustainable Development Report 2020, written by a group of authors led by Prof. Jeffrey Sachs, President of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), and published by Cambridge University Press, has declared Pakistan accomplished all targets of the SD-13 ten years ahead of the actual date – 2030. The UNDP SDGs report has also shown Pakistan’s remarkable progress on SDG-13 Climate Action.

COP26 is an opportunity for Pakistan to vigorously showcase its achievements so far as well as its vulnerabilities. Pakistan has been facing the worst impact in the forms of short-span heavy rains, flash floods, unprecedented land-sliding incidents, glacial melting, air pollution and fast diminishing water resources, climate prone crop diseases and low productivity and many others. Overburdened by debt, incapacity and capital shortfall have further increased Pakistan’s vulnerability. Keeping in view the performance on climate action, Pakistan should be slated among the global top priorities for funding, human resource development and institutional strengthening to protect masses living at the edge and their livelihood resources.

The government has approved Pakistan’s Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) for the UN Climate Conference COP26 where it has aimed for an ambitious 50 per cent reduction on top of the present 1.3 per cent carbon emissions by 2030 subject to the provision of $100 bn climate finance. Special Assistant to Prime Minister Malik Amin Aslam has mentioned that national funding, professional capacity and institutional strengthening will simultaneously take place while mobilising global resources to attain the goal.

The prime minister’s approved roadmap for shifting the country’s carbon emissions levels onto a lower trajectory will include a 15 per cent reduction in carbon emissions from the country’s resources through different ongoing initiatives. Pakistan will be looking for a 35 per cent reduction in heat-trapping carbon emissions that is subject to the availability of international financial support from various available funding channels such as the Global Climate Fund.

Pakistan shall adopt an all-inclusive approach towards achieving the goal. The government offices are besieged by all the stereotyped national and chapters of the international environmental conservation organisations. The government shall trust new extroverted approaches, critical thinking and innovative frameworks to showcase its achievements for harnessing global finance for achieving its targets.

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