[**The climate crisis**](https://www.dawn.com/news/1628170/the-climate-crisis)

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A TRIPLE planetary emergency is compounding poverty, leading to economic instability, exacerbating food insecurity and threatening our health. Most of all, it is affecting the poor. Climate change, nature loss and pollution are a trio that poses an existential threat to the planet.

Global warming results in extreme weather events, such as cyclones, droughts, extreme heat and wildfires. They strike with greater intensity and less predictability. A recent UNEP report, Making Peace with Nature, shows how humanity has — in the words of Secretary General António Guterres — “left the planet broken” and gives a blueprint for government action, as well as the needed engagement from businesses, civil society and individuals to address these emergencies. Fresh scientific evidence tells us of the impact of the triple emergency of climate change, nature loss and pollution, in line with warnings from other scientific bodies on climate and the environment. These planetary crises are showing no signs of subsiding.

Internationally agreed goals and targets on climate change, biodiversity and pollution are very ambitious and aspirational. Countries have approved national legislations, established new structures and initiated collaborative actions in line with their treaty obligations. However, recent years have witnessed several major environmental goals being missed by large margins, notwithstanding the high level of commitment regularly exhibited for treaties on climate and environment. A case in point of such failure are the Aichi Biodiversity Targets which missed the 2020 deadline, leaving the earth’s marine ecosystems in an extremely fragile state. The Paris climate agreement will falter too if countries do not ramp up their national contributions.

So why are these efforts falling short? Why is the planetary emergency continuing to grow when so much political will is on display? Why are environmental treaties and agreements bedevilled by a serious implementation deficit?

Why are efforts to tackle the climate emergency failing?

Multiple reasons are cited. Low-income countries ascribe their weak compliance with agreed goals to insufficient technical and financial resources. They also point out the unmet promises of development partners of financial support and transferring appropriate technologies. In the 2009 Copenhagen Climate Summit, high-income countries pledged to jointly mobilise $100 billion a year by 2020 to assist low-income countries in addressing climate change. That pledge was then extended through 2025. Despite measures taken by several high-income countries, they have not even reached the $80bn mark yet.

Other misplaced priorities of some rich countries are further deepening the gap in climate finance. Unfair subsidies for fossil fuels and agriculture worth hundreds of billion of dollars, as well as restrictive policies on the transfer of appropriate technologies to poor nations, are among the factors that exacerbate the triple planetary emergency. These are worrying signs as we move to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and a carbon neutral-world by 2050.

Yet we need to go beyond ringing the alarm bells. By shifting to renewable energies, both large and small economies can decarbonise. The economic slowdown caused by the Covid-19 pandemic offers an opportunity for moving away from a carbon-intense industry to investments in green technologies, even if the signals so far are not encouraging — an analysis of 50 leading economies by UNEP and the Oxford University Economic Recovery Project found that since the onset of the pandemic, nations were badly lagging in their commitment to invest sustainably in recovery.

Strenuous endeavours will be required to reverse negative trends in the short time that we have. Major economies have the chief responsibility to create enabling conditions and lead by example. Restructu­ring economies on a path to sustainability would require the involvement of all stakeholders. A breakthrough in climate finance and adaptation will only be possible through collective action by governments, the private sector, business and communities. A crucial step for governments would be to put a price on carbon and redirect huge subsidies from fossil fuels to renewables and nature-based solutions. The UN chief has urged the world to make this a decade of transformation and translate commitments into concrete and immediate action. By opting for green recovery plans of economies, this transformation can be expedited.

The good news is that much can be done to tackle the triple environmental threat we are facing. Science has clearly identified options and mustering the political will to do that is in every citizen’s hands. We have another opportunity to revitalise our commitments to a sustainable future.

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