**National emergency**

Malik Muhammad Ashraf

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The destruction caused by the 2022 rains and floods in Pakistan is far beyond the scale of devastation that happened in the 2010 floods caused due to climate change. Pakistan is one of the world’s ten most-affected countries by climate change, a phenomenon which is beyond the capacity of developing countries.

Developed countries cannot stop it in its tracks unless sincere and coordinated efforts are made by the international community to nullify the impact of greenhouse gases by reducing their carbon footprint. Even though the world acknowledges climate change as the biggest challenge for humanity in the 21st century and a credible threat to human existence on earth, no tangible action has been taken so far. The protocols agreed and signed by the world community in this regard have not been implemented.

It will be quite difficult for Pakistan to rebuild the infrastructure destroyed by the floods without international help, resettle the communities displaced by the mayhem, compensate farmers whose crops have washed away and also reconstruct shelters for those who have been forced to live under the open skies. This destruction is of unprecedented proportions, and it seems as if nature has gone berserk and is trying to take revenge from humans for changing the natural echo system.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has been persistently warning the global community about the impacts of climate change. Addressing the COP26 conference on climate change in Glasgow, he said: “The addiction to fossil fuels which threatens to push humanity and the planet to the brink through unsustainable global warming is tantamount to digging our own graves. We urgently need to make peace with nature.”

The concern shown by the secretary general on the issue of global warming which is instrumental to climate change can be better understood in the backdrop of the reality that despite two international protocols known as the Koyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement, the required cooperation and fulfilment of the commitments made by industrial nations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions have not been fulfilled.

Some bigger nations did not ratify those protocols and pulled out of them, followed by some others who only partially stood true to their undertakings. According to several authentic reports compiled in this regard, 10 countries are responsible for 80 percent of the total greenhouse gas emissions while only 15 per cent is contributed by all other nations combined.

No wonder then that the COP 26 conference on climate change was held to bring countries together to agree on a comprehensive, ambitious and balanced outcome that takes forward coordinated climate action and resolves key issues related to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement. The Paris agreement set the destination – limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees C.

The UN chief also called for greater ambition on mitigation and immediate concrete action to reduce global emissions by 45 per cent by 2030; this should be led by developed countries. He said that G20 countries had greater responsibility as they contribute around 80 per cent emissions while emerging economies must also go an extra mile to tackle climate change.

While reminding rich countries of their commitment to provide financial and technical support to less-developed countries for fighting climate change, he concluded by saying: “On behalf of this and future generations, I urge you: choose ambition, choose solidarity, choose to safeguard our future and save humanity”.

The COP26 started on a promising note with global leaders recognizing the gravity of the situation and expressing resolve and optimism to collectively fulfil their responsibility to save the world from the impending disaster.

Former UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson reiterated: “We need to make this COP26 the moment we get real about climate change. We can get real. COP26 will not, and cannot be, the end of the story of climate change. The work will not end, even if the conference finishes with the needed commitments.”

US President Joe Biden said: “The world leaders can keep the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees if they come together. Glasgow must be the kick-off of a decade of ambition and innovation to preserve our shared future. Climate change is already costing nations millions of lives and dollars. The US will be announcing new commitments over the next few days to mobilize action.…We’re still falling short…there is no more time to hang back or sit on the fence or argue amongst ourselves. This is a challenge of our collective lifetime”.

The atmosphere at the COP conference was quite encouraging. Many countries have joined the US and the EU in making the pledge to cut methane emissions – a potent greenhouse gas – by at least 30 per cent this decade.

Environmental experts believe that this could have a deep short-term impact on global warming. The conference also echoed the fulfilment of the pledge made earlier by wealthy countries to provide $100 billion every year to low-income countries which are not responsible for most of the emission but experience the worst effects of global warming.

The former prime minister of the UK conceded: “We owe a special duty to those developing countries and that is why the $100 billion commitment to support them is so important. But other countries are going to have to do more. The key pledge of $100 billion in climate funding to poorer and more vulnerable nations would still miss its original deadline, but it will be there for 2023. Further action from countries around the world is needed.”

This sounds quite promising. However, pledges will remain pledges until they are fulfilled.

The writer is a freelancecontributor. He can be reached at:

ashpak10@gmail.com