

COP21 to COP22: From Solutions to Implementation

by Aisha Khan



In November 2016, the Ochre city hosted the COP22 to mobilize action on decisions taken in Paris for the battle against climate change. The emphasis was on maintaining momentum gathered at the landmark Paris Agreement in 2015, where the world endorsed the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to address climate change. The task in Marrakech was to overcome obstacles that stand in the way of achieving these goals, making it possible for countries to implement the commitments reflected in the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs).

The key elements of the Paris Agreement were discussed in Marrakech to find implementation modalities acceptable to all. 97 countries had ratified the Paris Agreement just before the talks started. By the time negotiations wrapped up at the Bab Ighli conference site, 111 parties had ratified the Paris Agreement, covering 77 percent of Global Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions. The response and participation post Paris can be called the “Dawn of a New Climate Age”.

However while reviewing outcome of COP22, it is important to bear in mind that it took the world 20 years,

from 1995 to 2015, to reach agreement in Paris, and as such, it will take a few more COPs after Marrakech to make the agreement fully operational.

Mitigation

Climate change mitigation lies at the heart of the Paris Agreement. Signatories to the Paris Agreement have already submitted their INDC. Once submitted, the INDC becomes a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC). NDCs are the foundation of the Paris Agreement. They are pledges that countries laid out ahead of last year’s negotiations, setting out how they would tackle climate change over the coming years. These include a diverse and comprehensive range of actions and targets, serving as a testament to the seriousness with which the world is approaching climate change.

NDCs are mitigation actions committing countries to limit emissions to a certain level through a variety of actions within a given timeframe. All parties must report biennially on their national emissions and progress in implementing their national mitigation measures to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate



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Change (UNFCCC). This requires dedicated institutional capacity mandated to design and implement national strategies to reduce emission intensity over time as well as to deal with the collection and reporting of data.

In Marrakech, the developing countries asked for a “higher level of ambition”, a euphemism for more drastic reduction of emissions by the developed countries given their role and responsibility for historic emissions and climate change. The most potent argument advanced by the developing countries was anchored in the UNEP “Emissions Gap Report 2015-2016”, which points out that the reduction commitments made by all the countries would not lead to limiting increase in temperature to 2 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels. For the period before 2020, developing countries called on the developed countries to decrease their emissions in pursuance of the letter and spirit of the Kyoto Protocol that was extended through the Doha Amendment.

NDCs provide the roadmap for GHG emission reduction. However the diversity and conditionality in the NDCs makes it difficult to measure the cumulative impact. Each country faces different challenges and has its own set of constraints that make transition to low carbon pathways difficult to achieve while keeping pace with its development needs. In Marrakech, deliberations took place on how to make NDCs as clear and transparent as possible, with a more uniform set of features, with consistent terminology and methods to ensure that actions taken are traceable.

Adaptation

Adaptation measures seek to reduce vulnerability and facilitate adjustment to expected change in climate and its effects. The Paris Agreement says that every country should submit an adaptation communication as appropriate. These include vulnerability assessment, long-term objectives, plans and actions and support needs. In Marrakech, the framework of these communications was fleshed out. Developing countries reiterated their stance that given their relatively small emissions, they were more concerned about the consequences of the inevitable changes in climate that are already affecting them. They sought more funds for adaptation before 2020, and half of the 100 billion to be mobilized by the developed countries. The developed countries did not accede to these demands.

Global Stocktaking

The second most important element of the Paris Agreement was Global Stocktaking, which will periodically assess collective progress towards meeting the long-term goals of the deal. Stocktaking is part of the ratchet mechanism that is designed to raise nations' ambitions on climate change over time, recognizing that current pledges will not meet the temperature goals submitted in the NDCs. The first one will take place in 2023, with a facilitative dialogue in 2018. In Marrakech, the form and content of this new feature in the UN climate talks was discussed. According to a summary of the informal consulta-



tions, parties have agreed that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Paris Agreement institutions should be the primary source.

Loss and Damage

Loss and damage, an important building block of the UN's climate change apparatus, was laid in 2013 during COP19 in Warsaw. Till then, loss and damage was a side issue flagged by countries with the most to lose from climate change. In the year following its establishment, the mechanism's executive committee designed a two-year work plan, which was approved in Lima in 2014. It also had the task of drawing up a five-year work plan that would take over after the expiry of the initial two-year period. The meeting in Marrakech analyzed the draft plan of loss and damage mechanism, including its structure and effectiveness. On the basis of the Warsaw Implementation Mechanism (WIM), developing countries demanded a separate funding window, to which the developed countries did not agree.

Capacity Building

Capacity building in developing countries is an integral part of making climate change mitigation and adaptation work around the UNFCCC's member states. The Paris Agreement established the Paris Committee on Capacity Building with the central objective of addressing the gaps and needs of developing countries. Parties to the Paris Agreement differ in terms of their development status as well as their capabilities, which is why capacity building is delivered as part of the UNFCCC Framework bilaterally and multilaterally. Informal consultations were held in September in Marrakech to discuss membership criteria and sources of expertise to draw upon for completing this task. Special prominence and visibility was given to the committee as it built on the informal consultations.

Transparency

One of the key elements of operationalizing the Paris Agreement is the creation of an enhanced transparency

framework, which will set the parameters for the reporting and review of all countries' climate plans and actions. Developing countries lack well established monitoring, reporting and verification processes, as well as institutional capacity for collection and evaluation of historical, current and future data. As global stock taking is part of the Paris Agreement implementation mechanism, to start from 2023 and repeated every five years, reliable and transparently collected data will play a pivotal role in providing all parties with a clear understanding of climate action taken and national objectives being met. Climate finance is one of the key areas where increased transparency is an immediate priority.

Double counting, mislabeling and misreporting climate finance by rich countries was criticized and controversies around accounting of and definition of climate finance itself were debated. The meeting in Marrakech delved deeper into underlying issues inside climate finance to bring all signatories to the Paris Agreement on a common platform. Some of the tasks for the next few years will include defining how the transparency framework will be differentiated between countries so that poor countries are not overburdened. This includes a call for further submissions from Parties requesting their technical papers on as yet undecided matters and convening technical workshops.

Finance

At COP21, discussion hinged on whether rich countries would fulfill their promise of providing US\$100 billion per annum by 2020. At COP22, the debate continued. Climate finance is the most critical aspect of facilitating climate change mitigation and adaptation. This is truer for developing countries where climate action is dependent on financial assistance from abroad, but it also applies to developed countries where transition from fossil fuel to low carbon pathways requires investment in new economies of scale. The Paris Agreement includes provisions of support from developed countries to developing countries, based on existing pledges from Copenhagen, to mobilize US\$100 billion per year in the period from 2020, up to 2025, to be followed by a new collective target sum thereafter.

Developing countries expressed apprehension that the developed countries may add all the funds provided to developing countries to the tune of US\$100 billion for the Green Climate Fund, and demanded a clear roadmap showing how the US\$100 billion would be mobilized. They also demanded that the bulk of the money should come from public sources, whereas reports prepared by the World Bank and Australia mention an amount of US\$62 billion from public sources. Developed countries want to include the private sector investments to the Green Climate Fund calculations, which the developing countries resisted. Finance and financial mechanisms dominated

talks at Marrakech and will continue to play a critical role in pushing the climate change agenda in future.

Preparing for COP23

Pakistan played an important role in the Earth Summit in Rio (1992) and subsequently as leader of G77 with impressive performance in setting the agenda and guiding negotiations. However, in recent years this role has witnessed a silent decline and moved from center stage to the periphery. This is largely because the Ministry of Climate Change has not been able to make timely adjustments to keep pace with the fast changing world of climate change and its evolving dynamics. Climate change negotiations have become more complex and technical over time. Historical knowledge of issues and emerging scenarios need to be carefully blended to guide future policies and agreements in ways that are acceptable to all parties. This is not an easy task and requires a different set of skills that go beyond subject knowledge of climate change and how it affects us. The finer nuances of text and language have legal implications that require careful scrutiny.

The days of negotiations conducted by one entity are over. Today, we live in a world of specialization where experts provide supporting material and information to

strengthen a country's stance at international negotiations. Planning for COP therefore requires the development of a structured approach to meet the demands of negotiations in a meaningful way.

Pakistan's participation at COP22 was a big improvement from Paris, but a lot of work still needs to be done. Revival of the Advisory Committee on Climate Change, which had representation from all stakeholders, could be one of the institutional mechanisms to streamline planning, making it more participatory.

Given the urgency of the issues and the unresolved agendas, it would be useful for Pakistan to propose more than one extraordinary session of informal meetings leading up to COP23 in 2017 so that consensus can be reached on maximum number of agenda items before COP24 in 2018 to make the facilitative dialogue more meaningful.

There is also urgent need for stock taking at the local level and preparing an action plan. It would be unwise to link all mitigation and adaptation measures with external financial assistance. An alternative plan based on local available financial resources should also be developed to absorb shocks and address priority issues such as water management, land use, forestation and population.

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