

# Special Report: Why climate change is a real threat for Pakistan

Sunday 19 November 2017, by [SHEIKH Ali Taugeer](#) (Date first published: 15 November 2017).

## What are global climate challenges and how will Pakistan respond to them?

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## GLOBAL CLIMATE TALKS LINK ACTION TO FINANCE

**BONN: A week into the UN climate change conference - also known as the COP23 — in Bonn, Germany, gruelling discussions on raising climate finance started on Tuesday.**

Developing countries, Pakistan included, have shown interest in discussions on adaptation measures, capacity-building, and climate finance.

While the global objective is to curb emissions and protect people against climate change, the cost of funding climate action initiatives, such as greener infrastructure and turning to more renewable energy usage, are increasing. In a series of discussions on climate finance, key takeaways included the need to get finance to flow so that the potential to invest in areas such as clean energy and climate-friendly agriculture is realised. Eric Usher, the head of the finance initiative of the United Nations Environment Programme, said: "At the heart of the climate challenge are two gaps we urgently need to bridge — the ambition and the investment gap."

On Monday, the Green Climate Fund announced that it had committed \$2.2 billion in expenditures whereas it has \$40 billion worth of projects marked for execution.

Countries susceptible to rising sea levels, droughts and flooding are particularly anxious about climate finance drying up as the US withdraws its financial contributions.

The majority of submitted national climate plans with an adaptation component prioritise water requiring finance to the tune of \$295 billion annually to meet targets.

A lack of funding for the water sector would mean compromising on other development goals (energy, food security, education) for countries such as Pakistan.

Meanwhile, US billionaire media mogul, Michael Bloomberg, has pledged \$50 million towards the global effort to scrap coal power even though the Trump administration has officially spurned climate action and favours promoting fossil fuels.

On Sunday (Nov 12), global leaders signed the Bonn-Fiji Commitment for further and faster climate action at the local government level.

This is a significant commitment to sustainable development when more than half the world's population lives in cities — expected to reach to two-thirds by 2050.

### **Bridging the emissions gap**

The target of reducing global warming to below 2°C set by the Paris Agreement has defined the direction of climate action for the coming decades.

It has been agreed that countries will undertake voluntary actions and reduce emissions through their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). According to UNEPs Emissions Gap Report 2017, released concurrent with COP23, current pledges do not cover more than a third of the emissions reduction needed.

In other words, even if all countries' NDCs were implemented, the numbers still fall short of global targets.

If the emission gap is not bridged by 2030, it is extremely unlikely that the goal of holding global warming at 2°C will be achieved.

There is a growing consensus that national emission levels, particularly for larger economies, need to peak and begin to decline now rather than waiting for 2030.

This necessitates immediate action by major emitters and corrective measures by those who are anticipating a faster growth rate, like Pakistan.

As nations begin to report on the implementation status from 2020 onwards and periodically revise their NDCs for deeper and more ambitious reductions, equity and transparency will emerge as the central issue.

No wonder, then, that the agreement on the Paris 'rulebook' has become one of the moot points at Bonn.

Meaningful engagement during these global negotiations requires detailed prior preparation at national and provincial levels, engaging experts, specialised institutions and concerned government departments.

Because most of these issues are negotiated concurrently, delegations are stretched and understandably prioritise certain areas at the cost of others.

### **What's at stake for Pakistan**

Between Bonn and COP24 in Warsaw in 2018, federal and provincial governments will need to bring their NDCs to the front burner assuring implementation to reach targets.

Pakistan has yet to initiate and agree on the process of clarifying provincial responsibilities to meet specific targets, procuring financing and formulating reporting mechanisms.

Like mitigation, adaptation is another important issue on the agenda of COP23.

The fact that COP23 is hosted by Fiji has reflected the priority of developing countries to talk more about adaptation with a twin purpose of building greater resilience to counter the impact of climate change and boost access to climate finance adaptation.

Pakistan has been consistently ranked high in several vulnerability indices, reflecting the need for augmented investments to reduce climate vulnerabilities and enhance resilience through water, food and energy security and enhancing livelihood options.

However, currently, given the Fijian presidency of COP23 as well as the recent wave of hurricanes in the Caribbean, attention has been drawn towards these highly vulnerable island nations — and away from Pakistan.

## **Investing in SDGs to meet climate change targets**

There is seldom reference to the Sustainable Development Goals in the NDCs, because they were finalised and ratified about a year after the NDCs were submitted.

Because climate change has emerged as a development issue, there is an emerging window of opportunity to invest in the SDGs to meet climate targets as set in our NDCs.

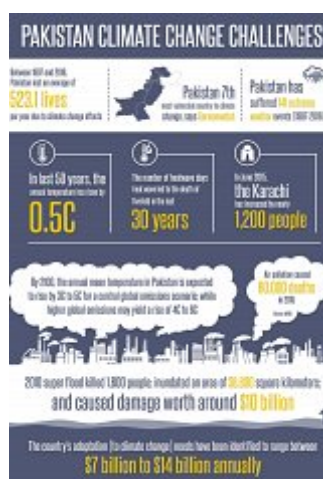
Both commitments have been voluntarily agreed upon by our government; regarding both, there is growing global expectation for meaningful and verifiable progress.

The SDGs and NDCs have been designed for implementation in an integrated manner and adopt bottom-up practices requiring financial resources from domestic and international sources.

In Pakistan's context, the arena of action for both lies in the provinces, after the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment, and are anchored firmly in planning and development departments.

The NDC submitted by Pakistan, for example, focuses primarily on energy, agriculture, industrial processes, land use and forestry, and waste.

These priorities relate to specific SDG targets. Meeting these commitments will hinge on sustained political will through changes in government, cohesive public and private partnerships, and parliamentary oversight to ensure transparency.



*Infographics designed by Nabeel Ahmed.*

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**P.S.**

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