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Environmental Governance and Climate Change: Challenges and Prospects

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ABSTRACT

Environmental governance is emerging as one of the trending and crucial fields of study, as climate change is one of the major challenges of 21st century and it adds considerable stress to our societies and to our environment. Climate change also referred by the buzz word 'Global Warming' is the observed century –scale rise in the average temperatures of earth's climate system and its related effects. The impacts of climate change are global in scope and unprecedent in scale, ranging from shifting weather that threaten food and crop production, to rising sea levels that increase the risk of catastrophic flooding,.

Posing serious threat to the existence of life on earth, people from across world are putting efforts to contain it, resulting in a series of conferences led by world forums like United Nations(UN) ,right from earth summit (1992) to Kyoto protocol (1997) down to Paris and Kigali agreements held in 2015 and 2016 respectively. Are these agreements and treaties going to yield any desired results is a matter of serious debate because quite often climate change becomes victim of petty politics, reflected by recent decision of Donald Trump to withdraw from Paris Climate Agreement. The multiplicity of causes of climate change, the uncertainty of timing and effects and substantial economic costs make global agreements difficult to attain and maintain. Along with a challenge to material wellbeing, however, the climate change problem poses an ethical dilemma stemming from large physical, social and even temporal distances between emitters and victims as developing and developed countries always pointing fingers at one another. The proposed research paper seeks to analyse the Governance challenges in tackling climate change at global level as well as prospects thereof, while exploring the key questions about responsibility, consequences, action and way forward vis-à-vis climate change is concerned. Challenges in establishing a sovereign and functioning climate change regime will also be highlighted in the proposed study.

Keywords: Environmental Governance; ethical imperative; Paris Agreement ;Strategic adaptive Governance; National interest; Global climate regime; social behavior; Issue linkage.

I.INTRODUCTION

Environmental Governance is concept in political ecology and environment policy that advocates sustainability, i.e. sustainable development as the Supreme consideration for managing all human activities -political, social, and economic. Environmental governance holds for appropriate legal frameworks on the global, regional, national and local level for good environmental governance.

Environmental Governance is emerging as an interesting but challenging area of study because of unprecedented challenges posed by climate change to existence of life on earth. More than half a century has passed since the modern ecology movement started to take hold and make environmental protection a political cause at the domestic and international level. This movement owes its first impulse to the work of many scientists and concerned individuals especially of the United States and Europe. The ground breaking work of Rachel Carson (1962) on "the devastating impact of industrial toxic waste on the environment", the pioneering research of the biologist Barry Commoner documenting "the harmful effects on children of radiological fall-out" and the Aurelio Peccei's Club of Rome, a precursor of the concept of "sustainable development", are the pioneers to the nascent and powerful movement of modern ecology.

Climate change presents the ultimate challenge to global environmental governance. The inherently global nature of the problem mandates a truly global response. The atmosphere is indivisible and greenhouse gas concentrations have a global effect. However, the multiplicity of causes, uncertainty of timing and effects, and significant economic costs are strong deterrents of collective action. Moreover, vulnerability to climate change varies across regions, with the greatest negative impacts likely to be concentrated in the tropics and sub-tropics. While historical responsibility for causing climate change is undoubtedly lodged with the Developed North, developing countries are shifting this burden to the South. Climate change, thus, brings forth deep-seated North-South divisions that demand resolution.

II.CHALLENGES

The establishment of Global governance on climate change has faced a lot of difficulties and inoperativeness which are mostly due to different understanding on cooperation and equity legislation among countries. National interests, distrust among actors, disparities in political, economic and social powers of the parties, and the lack of a global Leviathan make it difficult to reach any fruitful agreement. From 1992 to the Paris agreement, the designing of Global environmental governance institutions has been characterized by deadlocks. The deadlock about the Kyoto Protocol (1997) was indeed the best example of its kind. According to the principle of differentiated responsibilities, the Protocol set emission reduction targets only to industrialized countries. This lead to a deep division in opinions of developed and developing countries as to matters of cooperation and equity. The refusal by the US to ratify the Protocol, stating that it was not fair to exempt the big polluters among developing countries (China, India, Brazil, for instance), nor to share the costs of mitigation based on historical emissions, is a good example. This has created doubts about the success of Paris agreement goals after US president Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from this agreement. Also, question on sharing the efforts for the reduction of emissions addressed in a non-binding way and with no reference to the global carbon budget limits, as well as the weak mechanisms for financing, adaptation, capacity-building and transference of technology for developing countries, may difficult the operation of environmental governance in terms of equity and justice, bringing about new disagreements vis-à-vis Paris agreement in the near future.

The approach to historical responsibility addresses each country's different emission level and responsibility for the unsustainably high concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere on the basis of past emissions is

matter of serious contention between developed North and developing south. Developing countries hold that historically, greatest greenhouse gases emitters, developed-North are responsible for the current climatic conditions of our planet, and therefore, should pay for that. While as developed North accuses developing countries of emitting a major chunk of green house gases owning to increasing deforestation there because of population explosion and the over dependence on fossil-based non renewable energy sources. The divergence between the countries most responsible for, and the countries most affected by the climate change creates a profound ethical dilemma. Developed countries have the capacity to act, yet some of them (notably the United States) are unwilling to do so without the assurance of substantial emission reductions on the part of developing nations. Facing pressing domestic concerns, however, countries in the South resent the imposition of economic costs for the amelioration of what they perceive to be a Northern-caused environmental problem. This brings deadlock on the question who should act.

Thus, differences in the perceptions of developed and developing countries as to what is fair and equitable have presented enormous difficulties in constructing governance mechanisms (Global climate regime) for addressing climate change.

III.PROSPECTS

Following decades of deadlocks in climate change negotiations characterized by divergences and distrusts among the parties, the Paris agreement somehow managed to achieve more concrete diplomatic results. But, Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from (COP21), the international climate regime represented by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is being widely criticized now. However China and European Union are expected to come forward to lead world in fight against Global warming.

Due to challenging problems posed by climate change over the years,the international discussion about global climate change has moved beyond an understanding that substantial reductions in worldwide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are necessary to significantly reduce climate risks. Inoreder, to tackle climate change, various policy-cum-technological initiatives, therefore, need to be strengthened and promoted. Strategic adaptive governance is one such innovative initiative in this regard. Strategic Adaptive governance seeks to address complicated and difficult policy problems. Due to the extreme political upheaval wrought by the Trump administration's dismantling of federal climate change programs, many state and local governments in United States are considering new policy approaches. Strategic adaptive governance permits policymakers to achieve the highest rate of compliance possible under existing conditions and constraints involving state and local policy.

Similarly, another initiative could be the issue linkage strategy. An issue linkage strategy might provide for a more egalitarian approach than current governance structures.Many developing countries, for example, still manufacture and use chemicals known as persistent organic pollutants. These substances include pesticides such as Dicloro diphenyl tricoloro ethane(DDT), Deldrin, and endrin, industrial chemicals such as polychlorinated biphenyles(PCBs), and unintentional byproducts of industrial and combustion processes such as dioxins and furans. Persistent organic pollutants pose a serious threat to human and ecosystem health and their effects may span the globe, since they travel great distances, persist in the environment,

and bio-accumulate through the food chain. A global forum for negotiation and bargaining across issues might provide a breakthrough in global governance. The United States, for example, could agree to reduce CO2 emissions in exchange for a phase-out of persistent organic pollutants, emitted by developing countries. Developing countries would hold powerful bargaining chips in the form of natural resources of global significance. Biodiversity, tropical forests, coral reefs, and pristine ecosystems could be preserved in exchange for market access, debt relief, or immediate financial transfers. An issue linkage strategy, therefore, might provide for a more egalitarian approach than current governance.

Social behavior in reducing Green house gas emissions could be a powerful force in mitigating climate change. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and development (OECD) presents one vision (represented by Jancovici [2002]) in which individuals' efforts to reduce their own carbon footprint will achieve a major reduction on greenhouse gas emissions.

Technological change can plays an important role in climate change policy. In recent years, researchers have begun to investigate the role of international technology diffusion for addressing environmental problems. International diffusion of technological know-how is particularly important for addressing problems such as climate change, as carbon emissions are growing faster in developing nations than in the developed world. Recent research suggests that developing countries can take advantage of clean technologies developed in high income countries. Thus,a well-targeted set of climate policies, including those targeted directly at science and innovation, could help to lower the overall costs of mitigation.

We must cut down on the amount of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere from human activities, by eliminating Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and Hydroclourofloro carbons (HFCs) (discussed in Kigali agreement, 2016). Energy conservation programs must be adopted along with other measures to minimize Carbon dioxide release. A swift shift from non-renewable and fossil-based energy sources to renewable energy sources such as hydel, solar, wind, etcetera is the need of hour. Similarly, initiatives like International Solar Alliance (ISA, 2017) as well as other environment related programs and initiatives proposed by Global and regional organizations including those of Non-governmental organization needs to be strengthened and implemented in letter and Spirit, besides being committed to National determined contributions(NDCs) .

III.CONCLUSION

- Climate change ,therefore, requires a global response, encompassing the North and the South, local and global communities, and the public and private sectors. Ranging from global negotiations between nation states to individual choices, a diversity of actors with different resource endowments, and diverging values and aspirations, need to be involved. Despite , the confrontations and the differences, we have begun to move in the right direction. The issue now is the pace at which we are moving. The longer we wait before taking serious action, the more difficult and costly it will be to mitigate global warming. Global governance, whether for climate change or for any of the myriad issues affecting the world as a whole, can only be built on the recognition of planetary interdependence. Anything short of that will keep us paralyzed while the planet's challenges grow far beyond our reach.

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