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India updates its NDC to tackle climate crisis

[Environment](#)

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The update was marked via a two-page document uploaded on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change



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By Jayashree Nandi

New Delhi: India has formally updated its nationally determined contribution (NDC) to fight climate change, confirming to the United Nations apex body that it will reduce the emissions intensity of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 45% from 2005 levels by the year 2030, and to have installed capacity for non-fossil fuel-based power sources equivalent to the country's 50% requirement by 2030.

The update was marked via a two-page document uploaded on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) website, and represents India's formal commitments to the Paris Agreement, a legally binding international treaty on climate change.

The second quantifiable goal will be implemented with the help of transfer of technology and low-cost international finance, including from Green Climate Fund (GCF), the document states. In other words, it is partially conditional on climate finance from rich nations, senior environment ministry officials said.

The Paris deal seeks to limit global warming to well below 2, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels but study after study has shown the actions planned and the pledges made by governments the world over are at present inadequate to meet the goals.

According to India's submission, the new update will "help achieve a long-term goal of reaching net-zero emissions by 2070", although this itself wasn't one of the targets.

The NDC also states that India will put forward and further propagate a healthy and sustainable way of living based on traditions and values of conservation and moderation, including through a mass movement it called "LIFE- Lifestyle for Environment".

India also reiterated its goal from the NDC submitted in 2015, which is to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030 and to better adapt to climate change by enhancing investments in development programmes in sectors vulnerable to climate change, particularly agriculture, water resources, health and disaster management, as well as in the Himalayan and coastal regions.

The declaration adds that will mobilise domestic and new and additional funds from developed countries to implement the above mitigation and adaptation actions in view of the resource required and the resource gap, and will build capacities, create domestic framework and international architecture for quick diffusion of cutting edge climate technology in India and for joint collaborative R&D for such future technologies.

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way of additional submissions on its NDC, as and when required.”

The NDC has been submitted with a cover letter by Bhupender Yadav, the Union environment minister, which is addressed to Ibrahim Thiaw, acting executive secretary, UNFCCC. It states: “India’s NDC do not bind it to any sector specific mitigation obligation or action. India’s goal is to reduce overall emissions intensity and improve energy efficiency of its economy over time and at the same time protecting the vulnerable sectors of economy and segments of our society.”

“It is good that two of the Panchamrit targets announced in Glasgow are now formally included in the NDC update. Our modeling shows that India can be confident about achieving these updated NDC targets and more. At a time of global energy volatility, India’s commitment to expanding renewable energy is reassuring,” said Ulka Kelkar, director of the Climate Program at World Resources Institute.

In its last NDC sent to UNFCCC in 2015, the commitments comprised eight targets for 2021-2030, including reducing the emissions intensity of its GDP by 33- 35% by 2030 from the 2005 level; achieving about 40% cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030 with the help of transfer of technology and low-cost international finance; and creating an additional carbon sink of 2.5- 3 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030”.

Other targets pertained to sustainable lifestyles, climate adaptation, and climate friendly growth.

“Out of these, India achieved an emission intensity reduction of 24% back in 2016. The next update on emissions intensity is expected early in 2023 when the next Biennial Update Report will be submitted to UNFCCC. India’s non-fossil installed capacity is 41%. Our target was 40% by 2030,” added a second environment ministry official, detailing India’s performance on the earlier NDC.

This person admitted that India is lagging behind on achieving the carbon sink target.

Speaking at the Glasgow climate summit on November 1 last year, PM Modi announced that India’s non-fossil energy capacity would reach 500 GW by 2030, meeting 50% of the country’s energy requirements by then.

Modi also added in Glasgow that such ambitious action would be impossible without adequate climate finance from developed nations, calling on rich countries to make \$1 trillion available as climate finance “as soon as possible.”

HT had reported on Thursday that the process of NDC submission to UNFCCC will be completed well before a September 23 deadline of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

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higher than in 2000, 28.1% higher than in 2005, 16.3% higher than in 2010, 8.2% higher than in 2015 and 5.0% higher than 2019. The total GHG emission level resulting from implementation of the unconditional elements of the NDCs is projected to be 7.8% higher in 2030 than in 2019. But as per the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's findings, CO2 emissions need to decline by about 45% from the 2010 levels by 2030 and reach net zero by around 2050 in order to keep global warming under 1.5 degree C warming level.

In other words, the last synthesis report showed countries were not doing enough to meet the Paris Agreement goal.

"The pledge retains the headline long-term goal of reaching net zero by 2070, which is now re-cast as a long-term goal. The updated NDC has the virtue of simplicity. It resolves what were unclear and confusing statements in the Glasgow Panchamrit announcement," said Navroz Dubash, professor at the Centre for Policy Research, a think tank.

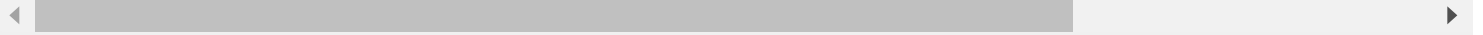
"For example, a confusing pledge on reduction of 1 billion tonne by 2030, without mention of a baseline or whether this is cumulative, has disappeared. It also streamlines the pledge on renewable and non-fossil fuel energy, by boiling down what were two somewhat confusing pledges, one in percentage terms and one in GW capacity terms, into one clear pledge. No one should shed any tears for these confusing and unclear pledges that have been discarded," he added.

"But what does this add up to in terms of India's contribution to the climate challenge? First, the carbon intensity pledge of 45% reduction below 2005 levels by 2030 will likely require deep structural changes in the Indian economy to de-link carbon and GDP. Current policies may achieve this target but to exceed it will require additional policies...

"According to our analysis in Ideas for India, India's emissions intensity has been dropping steadily compared to other countries even though India is at a lower level of GDP. On electricity, the updated NDC commitments are clearer but marginally less stringent than before, but the real benchmark of progress is domestic policy, which goes further than the international pledge...

"The updated pledge states 'about' 50% cumulative installed electricity capacity from non-fossil sources by 2030. This replaces a dual pledge of 50% renewable energy by 2030 and 500GW non-fossil capacity in the Panchamrit," the professor added.

"There are two implications of this change. First, the new pledge is marginally less stringent because the 50% now refers to all non-fossil fuel sources (including nuclear) while the Panchamrit referred to only renewable electricity. Moreover, the specific 500GW number has been dropped, which could be seen as

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India already has a domestic target of 450GW renewable energy capacity, which serves as a domestic analogue to the now-removed Panchamrit 500GW non-fossil pledge. Most significant, India already has in place provisions to require that 43% of renewable electricity be purchased from renewable sources (including hydro) by 2030 in the form of a renewable portfolio obligation. This generation-based policy goes beyond anything in the updated NDC or the Panchamrit -- it requires going beyond building new capacity, to actively manage the use of thermal versus renewable power," he added.

"India's formal NDC submission after cabinet's approval cements its leadership position in the international climate discourse. As India moves towards COP27, it has started to carve a position of offence to corner the developed world for its unambitious climate actions and lack of financial support to the developing world," said Vaibhav Chaturvedi, fellow, Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW).

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