

Indian government forms national panel to drive Paris Agreement goals

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The government of India has created a national-level panel which would interact with officials across the government departments, technical experts, civil society leaders and other stakeholders to drive a coordinated approach to the nation's climate change goals under the 2015 Paris Agreement.

The "Apex Committee for Implementation of Paris Agreement (AIPA)" with the secretary of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) as its head, was notified by the government on 27 November.

India has ratified the 2015 Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) which aims to limit the global temperature rise well below two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The Paris accord envisages a process of 'global stocktake' to periodically take note of its implementation and assess the collective progress of the climate goals and its long-term goals every five years with the first one scheduled in 2023.

The government noted that AIPA is needed to ensure a "coordinated response on climate change matters that protects the country's interests and ensures that India is on track towards meeting its climate change obligations under the Paris Agreement" including the promises made as part of the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) in 2015.

India's NDC's primarily targets by 2030 a reduction in the emissions intensity of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 33 to 35 percent; achieving about 40 percent installed power capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources; energy efficiency; and creating an additional carbon sink of 2.5-3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent through additional forest and tree cover.

The panel to have a multidisciplinary approach

Besides the environment ministry, the committee envisages senior officials from the federal think tank, Niti Aayog, and 12 other ministries such as agriculture, external affairs, health, new and renewable energy, water, finance and others as its members, in a bid to ensure the working of the panel faces no resistance from within different arms of the government.

The notification explained that the apex panel can invite officials and experts from the government, financial institutions, universities, academic institutions, consultancy organisations, non-governmental organisations, civil society, legal profession, industry and commerce, for "technical and professional inputs and may co-opt other members depending upon need." The notification has also said that the panel can interact with concerned authorities, institutions, individual stakeholders for matters relating to climate change and take up any environmental or sustainable development issues pertaining to climate change referred by the central government and give recommendations.

It is also expected to "define responsibilities of concerned ministries for" achieving India's NDC goals and receive periodic information updates to monitor, review and revisit climate goals to fulfill the requirements of the Paris Agreement.

R.R. Rashmi, a former senior climate change negotiator welcomed the move and said, "It is a long-awaited move that will help expedite finalisation of an agreed roadmap for implementation of the goals stipulated under the NDC, pending since 2015." Notably, in 2016, six committees were formed

by the environment ministry to address specific components of the NDCs but have not made much progress.

Rashmi was part of the government's climate change policy-making team in the run-up to the Paris Agreement.

"I believe this panel will encourage inter-sectoral exchanges through a formal platform and help the government in deciding its approach to updating or enhancing the NDCs, on which a decision has to be taken before the next CoP (Conference of the Parties)," said Rashmi, a distinguished fellow and programme director, earth science and climate change at The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), a think-tank working on environmental issues.

Since 2015, India, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the helm, has been trying to position itself as a global leader on climate change with ambitious steps on renewable power, energy efficiency, afforestation and electric vehicles.

Under the NDCs, India had already promised 175,000 megawatts of renewable power by 2022 and over the past few months, India has announced its ambition of installing 450,000 MW of renewable power capacity.

Source: <https://india.mongabay.com/2020/12/indian-government-forms-national-panel-to-drive-paris-agreement-goals/>