Climate Denialism and Nationalism: making climate efforts little and late

Rumana Sharmin gives an overview on the rise of nationalism and explains how the nationalism, along with climate denialism, delaying implementation of the Paris Agreement.

The 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change introduced a new phase of globalism wherein nearly all the member states agreed a common objective, which is to stabilize greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic (human induced) interference with the climate system. Referring to the historical responsibility of causing climate change, the Convention puts obligation on the developed countries to lead the way towards stabilizing GHG concentrations and support developing countries by providing financial and technology supports for climate actions.

Since the ratification of the Convention in 1994, currently ratified by 197 countries, the member states met a total of 25 annual conferences (termed as the Conference of the Parties-COPs) and succeed to yield only two agreements. The first one, the Kyoto Protocol adopted in 1997, made the developed countries legally obligated to reduce GHG emission within its commitment period from 2008 to 2012. The second one, the Paris Agreement adopted in 2015, requires all the Parties for emission reduction with nationally determined progressive targets towards achieving a long-term goal of limiting global average temperature rise well below 2 degree Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

Both the agreements are contextualized from the internationalized political commitment, however their implementation are sidetracked and challenged by the national interests. For instance, the post-Kyoto political leadership in the USA denied any mitigation commitment and the country didn’t ratify the Protocol. Such a retreat of the USA and its allied countries left around one-third of global emission unaddressed and unaccounted. Even though most of the developed countries implemented their obligations under the Protocol, the global emissions increased by 32 percent from 1990 to 2010 (UNEP, 2012). The second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol from 2013 to 2020 hasn’t enter in to force even now on toady. Similarly, the political antagonism of several governments on the global imperative of addressing climate change already challenged implementation of the 2015 Paris Agreement. The USA that has been the topmost GHG emitting countries since many years and currently the second top with 16 percent share to the global emission denied to comply with any obligations under the Agreement.

Withdrawal of the USA from the Paris Agreement resulted to a paradigm shift in the post Paris climate conferences, especially at COP 24 and COP 25. Following ratification of the Paris Agreement, the USA made commitment...
However, this is just not from the ground of climate denaism or nationalism, but also the growth focused development narrative of the national governments and international development agencies (especially the IFIs). They define the development in terms of quantity, for instance, per capita income and GDP growth. It doesn't matter whether the development activities are either green or brown.

Yet, in the context of climate emergencies it doesn't matter whether the countries are ‘big emitter’ or growing emitters. All should progressively enhance their mitigation commitments according to their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capacities (CBDR&RCs). Otherwise the late and little efforts will lead the earth to 3°C or more temperature rise (UNEP, 2015).

References


About the Author

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