

Topic of the week for discussion: 24<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2016

## Topic: Getting Real on Climate

The UN conference on climate change held in **Marrakech**, with an emphasis on raising the commitment of all countries to **reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions**, is particularly significant as it provided an opportunity to communicate concerns about **the future climate policy of the U.S.** It would be untenable for the U.S., with a quarter of all cumulative fossil fuel emissions, to renege on its promise to assist vulnerable and developing nations with climate funding, technology transfer and capacity-building under Donald Trump's presidency. As the Marrakech Action Proclamation issued at the close of the conference emphasizes, the world needs all countries to work together to close the gap between their intended reduction of carbon emissions and what needs to be done to keep the rise of the **global average temperature well below 2°C in this century**. The Paris Agreement on climate change was forged on the consensus that man-made climate change does have a scientific basis that the developed countries are responsible for accumulated emissions, and that future action should focus on shifting all nations to a clean energy path. Not much progress was made at Marrakech on raising the **\$100 billion a year that is intended to help the poorer nations**. Political commitment and resource mobilisation will be crucial to meet targets for mitigation of emissions and adaptation.

### Topic Introduction

#### **Impact on India:**

India is in a particularly difficult situation as it has the **twin challenges of growing its economy to meet the development aspirations of a large population, and cutting emissions**. National GHG levels are small per capita, but when added up they put India in the third place, going by data from the Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Center in the U.S. As a signatory to the Paris Agreement, which has provisions to monitor emissions and raise targets based on a review, pressure, on India to result big cuts, is bound to increase. The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change will hear from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2018 on what impact an additional warming of **1.5°C could have on the planet** and what can be done to ensure it is pegged at this level. The pledges made so far are well short of this target, and even if they are all implemented, a minimum rise of **2.9°C is forecast by the UN Environment Programme**. India has no historical responsibility for accumulated GHGs, but smaller, more vulnerable countries such as island states and Bangladesh are demanding action to cut emissions. A strategy that involves all State governments will strengthen the case for international funding, and spur domestic action.

### **Trump's Reaction towards Climate Change:**

For a look at how sharply policy in Washington will change under the administration of Donald J. Trump, look no further than the environment. Mr. Trump has called **human-caused climate change a “hoax.”** He has vowed to **dismantle the Environmental Protection Agency** “in almost every form.” And in an early salvo against one of President Obama’s signature issues, Mr. Trump has named **Myron Ebell** of the business-backed Competitive Enterprise Institute to head his E.P.A. transition team. Mr. Ebell has asserted that whatever warming caused by greenhouse gas pollution is modest and could be beneficial. A 2007 Vanity Fair profile of Mr. Ebell called him an “**oil industry mouthpiece.**” Global warming may indeed be the sharpest example of how policy in Washington will change under a Trump administration. President Obama has said his efforts to establish the United States as the global leader in climate policy are his proudest legacy. But if Mr. Trump makes good on his campaign promises, experts in climate change policy warn, that legacy would unravel quickly. The world, then, may have no way to avoid the most devastating consequences of global warming, including **rising sea levels, extreme droughts and food shortages, and more powerful floods and storms.** Mr. Trump has already vowed to “cancel” last year’s **Paris climate agreement**, which commits more than 190 countries to reduce their emissions of planet-warming carbon dioxide pollution, and to **dismantle the Clean Power Plan**, Mr. Obama’s domestic climate change regulations. Mr. Trump cannot legally block other countries from fulfilling their Paris agreement commitments, nor can he quickly or unilaterally erase Mr. Obama’s climate rules. But he can, as president, choose not to carry out the Paris plan in the United States. And he could so substantially slow or weaken the enforcement of Mr. Obama’s rules that they would have little impact on reducing emissions in the United States, at least during Mr. Trump’s term. That could doom the Paris agreement’s goal of reducing carbon dioxide emissions enough **to stave off an atmospheric warming of at least 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit**, the point at which, many scientists say, **the planet will be locked into an irreversible future of extreme and dangerous warming.** Without the full participation of the United States, the world’s second-largest greenhouse gas polluter, after China, that goal is probably unattainable, even if every other country follows through on its pledges.

#### **Read further:**

[http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/20/world/americas/united-nations-trump-climate-change-iran-cuba.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/20/world/americas/united-nations-trump-climate-change-iran-cuba.html?_r=0)

<http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/trump-and-the-truth-climate-change-denial>

<https://ourworld.unu.edu/en/loss-and-damage-from-climate-change-is-already-happening-says-unu-report>

[http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/11/us/politics/donald-trump-climate-change.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/11/us/politics/donald-trump-climate-change.html?_r=0)