

Report

Topic: TALK- Climate Change-COP 26 and Beyond

The Executive Development Institute (EDI), National School of Public Policy (NSPP), in keeping with its tradition of choosing topics of current importance and relevance for policy formulation, selected the topic of the recently held climate summit at Glasgow. The topic was '**COP 26 and Beyond: Pakistan's Position and Obligations**'. The Talk was held at NMC hall on 27 December, 2021. The guest speaker was the honourable Special Assistant to Prime Minister Malik Amin Aslam. The Dean EDI, Ahmed Nazir Warraich was co-Speaker on the topic '**Climate Change: Road Leading to Glasgow Summit COP 26**'. Participants of NMC attended the session in person while MCMC Lahore and some faculty members of NIM, Islamabad attended it via Zoom.

Dean, Executive Development Institute NSPP initiated his lecture with an overview of the effects of climate change in the world. He traced the unprecedented rise of temperature in the planet over a period from 17th to 20th century. He noted that a rise of 0.5C has occurred from mid-1970s alone, which is indeed alarming. He said that according to scientists, the cause of climate change is due to greenhouse gas emissions. The top ten contributing countries emit 68% of total emissions. Whereas Pakistan is emitting only 1%.

Dean, EDI cited the example of the 1880s era in which a Swedish scientist had warned the world about devastating changes in the climate and thereafter in the 1930s, a British scientist had done the same to point out alarming assumptions about climate change. Taking cognizance of these assumptions and realities, the Dean traced many conferences and milestones towards reaching a working plan to combat such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) which was adopted in 1992. Under it, there have been 26 Conference of Parties (COPs) with the last one being the Glasgow Summit. The Treaty has 197 signatories so far.

The honourable SAPM Mr. Amin Aslam, in his talk explained that climate change is not an issue for one nation: it is a global threat with no escape for anyone. Therefore, it requires a serious response from all nations if we are to save the planet. He further stated that environmental issues have manifold facets but an important is economic, social, and environmental justice.

Environmental justice deals explicitly with the distribution of environmental benefits and the burdens which people experience, at home, at work, or in all sorts of social settings. Environmental benefits include attractive and extensive green space, clean air, and water. Whereas, environmental burdens include risks and hazards from industrial, transport generated, and municipal pollution. The learned speaker highlighted that the top 3 countries emit 55% of GHGs. At present Pakistan is among the top 10 most affected countries of climate change and included in the top 3 who are a continuous victim of climate change owing to its geography which has 12 ecological zones. It has 7000 glaciers in Himalayas and Karakorum ranges contributing to 80% of its water resources which flow from these northern glaciers. The remaining 20% comes from monsoons.

The learned speaker apprised the participants of the fact that virtually every ecological zone of the world touches Pakistan. For these reasons, Pakistan will continue to face climatic change hazards such as floods, super floods, back to back heat waves. Even the highest ever temperature to be recorded in the world in 2021 was in Pakistan at Jacobabad. It is most certain that in such a temperature, the human body cannot remain viable. Then, Pakistan also faces the hardships of droughts and cyclones. The honourable Advisor emphasized the need for raising awareness about these issues and to work together with the global community to combat the challenge of Climate Change.

Against this context, the learned speaker delved on the basis of COP 26. Historically, warnings given by scientists in 1988 on perceived dangers of climate change led to the formulation of a body of 1400 scientists who sought to investigate and create awareness across the world about the potential threats of climate change. The ‘Common but Different Responsibilities Principle’ (CDRP) of international environmental law was evolved for establishing a minimum level of responsibility of all States for environmental protection with due acknowledgment that everyone’s share in destruction was not equal. This led to the KYOTO protocol and then the Paris Agreement. Global leaders and scientists have tried to agree on measures to protect the climate. The Paris agreement is a significant realization of all such concerns with tangible key performance indicators to measure and mitigate the impact of extreme weather by 2030.

The learned speaker also explained that ‘Nationally Determined Commitments’ (NDCs) are fully operationalized in COP-26 with respect to the updation of commitments from different

nations. In the eventuality of such commitments not being fully fulfilled, then the temperature rise could be capped to at least 1.8 degrees rather than the projected 2.7 degrees.

The respected SAPM further highlighted the outcomes of COP26 and the position of Pakistan. In the two weeks of negotiations, there were 196 nations somewhat agreed to endorse a 10 pager Glasgow Pact. This is indeed a milestone to have 196 countries agree upon a single document, which finds few parallels in the world. The United Kingdom played a significant role for building this consensus. The Conference culminated with noteworthy steps forward. Nations agreed on de-carbonization by decreasing and ultimately stopping the use of fossil fuels. It was agreed that new scientific ways would be adopted for energy generation such as hydel, windmill and solar, etc. It was decided that climate incurred loss and damage would be compensated by nations whose activities trigger them. The nations polluting and responsible for environmental degradation would pay affected nations. However, it was dismally noted that some governments that had pledged net-zero emissions until 2060 did not show any comprehensive plan to accompany that pledge.

The speaker apprised the forum that India had played the role of a spoiler in COP 26 as its net-zero pledge till 2070 did not show any progress. Infact, India managed to change the coal phase-out pledge to phase down, which was widely criticized. The Speaker also informed that the Pakistani delegation did very good work.

Concerning Pakistan, the country has devised a plan to go for clean energy till 2030 and has planned for a recharge project using stormwater after storage. It has also pledged to cut emissions and submitted new Nationally Determined Considerations which were appreciated in the COP.

Pakistan has signed the forestry pledge and is implementing it though the Pakistan's Billion Tree Tsunami Project. Its rapid implementation remained in focus and was widely appreciated. On the sidelines of COP, Pakistan Pavilion arranged 25 events in Glasgow depicting stories of nature, Green Pakistan, success against Covid19, and National Parks Services. The delegation also interacted with Ministers of the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme. MOUs worth €150 million were signed with Germany and £50 million with UK. An MoU was signed with UAE as well. Pakistan interacted with the World Bank and Asian Development Bank for agreements to help Pakistan with clean energy projects including ETM.

In his concluding remarks, the honourable Minister highlighted the details of acknowledgments for Pakistan in the COP where the country was recognized as a global forestry champion and elected as vice-chair for G77+ China group. The Minister expressed appreciation for efforts underway in Pakistan whereby it achieved appreciation and landmark mutual agreements with donors and countries at COP26 despite being one of the smallest delegations.

In the end, Dean EDI presented a shield to the SAPM on behalf of NSPP as a token of appreciation for his visit and talk.