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**Global Policy Regime
versus
Indian & Odishan Approach
on
Climate Change
*A Brief Analysis***

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Analysis of India's climate policy

Overview

India ratified the [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) (UNFCCC) in 1993, and the [Kyoto Protocol](#) in 2002.

Under the Convention, India (and other developing countries), has not had to undertake legally-binding commitments to reduce its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, since the major proportion of the problem (and historical responsibility) was due to emissions from developed countries. As a result, the Kyoto Protocol the burden of emissions reductions is not placed on India (and other developing countries) - they are exempt from mandatory emissions reductions.

But due to rapid industrialization of India (and other emerging economies such as China, Brazil, etc.) the 'fairness' of Kyoto is being challenged, as they are contributing a much greater proportion of global emissions now. and pressure for such developing countries to cut emissions is now being felt.

In absolute terms, India is now the fourth largest emitter of greenhouse gases, with just under five percent of the global share of emissions. Since taking office in May 2009, the Minister for Environment and Forests, Jairam Ramesh, has sought to pursue a more proactive role in international climate negotiations.

Both the LDCs (Least Developed Countries) and AOSIS (Alliance of Small Island States) countries are calling for global temperature rise to be limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius to ensure the survival of island nations and vulnerable countries. This position is not shared by the Government of India which cleaves to the conventional 2 degrees limit mentioned in the [Copenhagen Accord](#) and the G8/ G20 declaration of 2009.

Since November 2009, India has aligned with the three other major developing countries – Brazil, China and South Africa (the BASIC group) - who are increasingly predominant at international climate change fora.

India's approach to the international climate change negotiations has been to keep firmly behind the 'historical responsibility' and 'common but differentiated responsibility' positions.

India's National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) was launched in June 2008. It includes eight 'National Missions' which focus on mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change. Progress on the implementation of this appears to have had mixed results (see [article](#) May 2011, Times of India).

India is 'listed' as a party to the Copenhagen Accord, which emerged from UN negotiations in December 2009. This falls short of 'full association' and demonstrates the potential weakness of its commitment to the outcome of these negotiations. Also, the Accord was not adopted by the Conference of Parties but just taken note of, and is not a new track of negotiations or a template for outcomes.

India made a voluntary commitment to reduce its emissions per unit of GDP 20 to 25 percent below 2005 levels by 2020. To meet and exceed this goal, the government said it would increase fuel efficiency standards by 2011; adopt building energy codes by 2012; increase forest cover to sequester 10 percent of its annual emissions; and increase the fraction of electricity derived from wind, solar, and small hydro from the current 8 percent to 20 percent by 2020. ([more detail on India's action commitment](#))

As a result it is introducing some market-based mechanisms to reduce emissions, as opposed to emission trading schemes that have been introduced in other countries - emissions trading would need an absolute emissions cap which India does not yet want to introduce. A three year roll-out phase of the market-based scheme is due to begin in September 2011. The government has already rolled out a renewable energy certificate (REC) trading scheme for wind, solar and biomass power plants. But concerns remain about how both initiatives will evolve because of a lack of data and trained manpower as well as weak penalties for firms that refuse to comply. (See [article](#) from May 2011 on this topic)

In the UN Cancun summit in December 2010, Jairam Ramesh stated that *India is willing to accept international legally binding emission commitments*. This internationally praised move was made at the expense of causing a domestic outcry. He heavily criticised the NAPCC in the run up to Cancun.

India is still lacking is a national climate change strategy, which is reported to be in the making, and likely to be ready by 2012. Indeed, there is continued controversy and frustration over India's commitment to tackling climate change - the government continues to focus on economic development, professing to keep this in harmony with environmental objectives, but critics argue that the truth of this remains to be seen. On May 22 2011, the PM said in the UPA govt's annual report: ""While we stay sensitive to environmental concerns, we will also strive to ensure that the pace of our development does not suffer in the process" (see [IBN](#)).

India will be party to the next UN climate change talks in Bonn, Germany in June 2011.

If India does agree to legally binding targets at the summit in Bonn or South Africa (December 2011), the NAPCC and Orissa's CCAP will be out of date, or will need significant modification.

NAPCC

Launched in June 2008, it has been hailed by some as a great step towards tackling climate change in India (and globally) as India's first comprehensive document detailing a plan of action. In many ways, the NAPCC does mark progress and there have been some positive outcomes as a result - there has been some visible action (such as a [UNEP-backed programme](#) to develop a low-carbon transport system) and it has raised the level of climate change discourse in India.

However, there has been a wealth of criticism of the NAPCC by Indian civil society. One critique says that the 'action plan' is a misnomer, as there are no specifies emission goals. (China in 2007 set voluntary quantitative targets for 2010). Some key criticisms of the NAPCC include:

- There was little, if any, consultation with civil society or independent experts during the framing of the NAPCC.
- It relies too much on out of date IPCC projections and not the best currently available climate science, thereby leading to a lack of urgency
- Lack of clarity with regards to roles and responsibilities. How is the NAPCC to reach citizens all over India? There is no definitive strategy on how to roll out the eight Missions on the ground.
- There is an overall vagueness to the NAPCC - for example it hints at 'qualitative change in a direction that enhances ecological sustainability' but essentially does not identify how this would be achieved.
- It does say: "India is determined that its *per capita* greenhouse gas emissions will at no point exceed that of developed countries even as we pursue our development goals" - if it ever does reach that limit, it would be an awful state of affairs anyway, so this is not a desirable target. The per capita equity approach is potentially very dangerous.

Also, there so far appears to be a distinct inconsistency between green rhetoric and practice. For example, it refers to the protection of biodiversity, yet there are proposed government projects (such as big dams) that directly threaten biodiverse regions, not to mention allowing developments like the Orissa POSCO mine to go ahead.

Also there is the obvious problem of the need to limit consumption against sustaining rapid economic growth. It is argued that rapid economic growth will reduce people's vulnerability to climate change, yet it is such growth that is contributing to, if not hastening, climate change. There is no talk of limiting consumption, and this could make efforts of the NAPCC pointless.

A very thorough general critique of the NAPCC was put together by a large team of civil society actors. Click for a link to [India's NAPCC: There Is Little Hope Here](#). Another summary of the NAPCC is available [here](#) and includes a list of criticisms of the plan.

NAPCC and the Kyoto Protocol

The NAPCC is generally in line with the Kyoto Protocol. But, this is not necessarily a positive outcome, as the Kyoto Protocol actually does not hold India (and other developing nations) to any particularly high standards for environmental responsibility. The exemption of India from having to cap or reduce emissions allows the NAPCC to have a gaping loophole - climate change is hardly going to be prevented when emissions are not actively reduced and India continues its rapid (unsustainable) economic growth.

As the majority of India's large population do not directly contribute to climate change, the government is able to use 'differentiated responsibility' (under UNFCCC and Kyoto) as an excuse to avoid reducing GHG emissions. Critics say that this is 'hiding behind the poor'. The NAPCC seems to embody this approach - although it promotes a general greening of industry and government activities, none of its eight missions directly give direct emission reduction targets.

NAPCC and the Copenhagen Accord

NAPCC pre-dates the Copenhagen Accord - this means the NAPCC was not designed with India's Accord 'action commitment' in mind. There are some elements of the NAPCC which are in line with the Accord commitment, for example:

Commitment: clean energy deployment, including 20GW of solar energy by 2020 through \$19 billion in investments.

--> Under the National Solar Mission, the government will establish a fund with an initial investment of \$1.1 billion. Also, The government will add to the fund through a new fossil fuel tax of 0.1 cents for every kWh produced. India is providing funding incentives to solar power operators, financial institutions, state and local governments, utilities, NGOs, and entrepreneurs. These incentives include capital subsidies of up to 30%, low-interest loans, and feed-in-tariffs for rooftop solar projects.

Commitment: Double the rate of restored forest cover, removing 43 million tons CO₂e each year, or 6.35% of India's annual greenhouse gas emissions, by 2020.

--> Under its Green Mission, India is investing \$2.5 billion (Rs 11,700 crore) for forest conservation and reforestation projects. India plans to increase investment every year to revitalize 6 million hectares of degraded forestlands.

But the Accord also reveals that the NAPCC is weak in some dimensions. The vagueness of the NAPCC's emissions targets and the methods to achieve these, makes it difficult to see how its Accord commitment is going to be fully met. For example:

Commitment: to curb emissions by nearly 100 million tons a year and cut annual energy consumption 5 percent by 2015 – adding 20 GW of capacity and fuel savings of 23 million tons per year -- through enhanced energy efficiency.

--> Under the National Mission on Enhanced Energy Efficiency, India is establishing measures and policies to curb emissions and cut annual energy consumption. But action on this appears to be vague and it is not evident how this NAPCC Mission would meet the direct targets of this commitment.

However, the Copenhagen Accord is not legally binding and India is not 'fully associated' with it, further weakening the promise of its action commitment. Thus, the NAPCC does not have to (by law) meet the requirements of India's Accord action commitment.

Orissa CCAP

Orissa's CCAP, released in June 2010, broadly fits with the Missions of NAPCC. In some areas it goes into further depth and it also brings in other issues, such as coasts and disaster response [see Appendix for more detail on this]. As one of the first states to produce a CCAP, it has received praise domestically and internationally. Indeed, in general it represents a positive framework for tackling climate change in the state and is thorough in exactly how it will do this in some areas. However, as with the NAPCC, it is vague on emission reductions and also states it will not compromise development objectives when addressing environmental goals.

CCAP and Kyoto Protocol

In terms of emissions, it is in line with Kyoto Protocol in that it doesn't set any direct targets to cap or reduce carbon emissions. Most of the CCAP's references to industry and transport emissions are vague and discuss 'tracking' rather than capping or reducing. The CCAP does set some caps for the thermal industry, but it says these will be in line with national targets, which are vague themselves as India has no legally binding commitment until 2012 to reduce carbon output.

CCAP and the Copenhagen Accord

The CCAP was written after India joined the Copenhagen Accord. There are items in the CCAP which go near to complying with India's action commitment in the Accord. Yet, its vagueness on tangible targets and unwillingness to thoroughly address Orissa's reliance on fossil fuels, means that in many ways the CCAP does not fully meet the demands of India's action commitment in the Accord.

The points below identify how the CCAP does and does not meet the requirements of the action commitment:

- One of the CCAP's key activities is reforestation/afforestation, which contributes to the commitment under the Accord to double the rate of India's restored forest cover.
- The CCAP states it aims to maximise wind power and solar power generation, which is in line with the Clean Energy Deployment commitment in the Accord - although exactly how this will be achieved is vague and there are no direct targets in the CCAP. Also, it says it will use 'clean coal', thus refusing to break away from reliance on fossil fuels.
- The CCAP addresses the need to improve efficiency and suggests some ways it will do this, in line with the Clean Energy Deployment commitment but, again, it is lacking real targets.
- In terms of the Emissions Reduction commitment, the CCAP broadly discusses how its various activities of reforestation (for carbon sinks), energy efficiency and 'cleaner' fuel will reduce emissions. However, it only proposes setting emissions standards for thermal power plants - it doesn't actually set any! For the rest of it, the CCAP weakly proposes 'research' into emissions and training relevant actors on climate change. In this way, it would hardly be contributing to meeting India's action commitment under the Accord.
- For the Adaptation element of India's commitment under the Accord, the CCAP is most thorough. In fact it is probably more thorough than the NAPCC. For instance, it has a whole chapter on coasts and disasters which proposes research and modeling to achieve effective disaster preparation. It also discusses adaptation methods in most of its other chapters, such as Agriculture where it addresses thoroughly the need to adapt the agricultural sector in anticipation of climate variability.

Conclusion

It is clear that the Kyoto Protocol does not hold India's climate change commitments to account, which means that both the NAPCC and Orissa's CCAP are not subject to the emissions standards set to more developed countries. Consequently, the NAPCC and the CCAP are vague on emissions targets.

Both the NAPCC and the CCAP refuse to compromise India's current path of rapid and non-climate friendly economic development, which fundamentally undermines their strength as effective strategies to tackle climate change in India.

Though they both mark progress on climate change policy in India, and they have encouraged discourse on the matter, they both leave much to be desired in terms of clear targets and methods of implementation.

Also, as identified earlier, there are activities (such as deforestation to make way for polluting factories) which completely contradict the commitments of the Copenhagen Accord action commitment, the NAPCC and Orissa's CAP. It is not clear whether, in the areas where the NAPCC or the CAP is in line with India's action commitment, the targets are going to be met at all - it seems that the reality on the ground does not always reflect the rhetoric of these environmental commitments.

[However, some national action is being taken in line the NAPCC - [this article](#) details how]

Appendix

1. How the CCAP fits with the NAPCC, in brief, according to the chapters of the CCAP:

- Agriculture

The CCAP claims that key priorities identified in the Orissa plan fall in line with the NAPCC policy directions.

- Coasts and Disasters

NAPCC doesn't have a separate national mission on coastal protection and disasters. This is a key area of focus for Orissa.

- Energy

Only very tentatively suggests it will tackle carbon-heavy energy production. It is integral to economic development. Aims are perhaps weak, e.g. switching to 'clean coal' and training relevant staff in the sector. Also not enough concrete targets or detail on wind and solar power.

Plus: issue with promotion of biofuels so heavily - not necessarily 'green' or good for biodiversity or the food economy

- Fisheries and Animal Resources

As livestock and fishing are a central part of Orissa's economy, the CAP details methods by which to reduce their contribution to CC and adaptation to mitigate the impact of CC on them. This fits somewhat into the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture.

- Forestry

CAP claims Orissa's key forestry priorities are in line with the National Mission for a Green India. This section is thorough and has specific strategies for reforestation, for example.

- Health

This is not a Mission as part of the NAPCC but is highlighted as a cross cutting issue under the Orissa CAP.

- Industry

There are no direct targets to reduce carbon emissions, except in thermal (coal powered) industry - for which it claims targets will be in line with national policy. The CAP will explore ways to encourage emission reduction - but with few aims to legislate in order to set limits or standards in

industry. Plans are cautious, and involve mostly research, scoping and assessment of the current situation.

No mention of the following, which are included one of the NAPCC missions:

- Mandating specific energy consumption decreases in large energy-consuming industries, with a system for companies to trade energy-savings certificates;
- Energy incentives, including reduced taxes on energy-efficient appliances; and
- Financing for public-private partnerships to reduce energy consumption through demand-side management programs in the municipal, buildings and agricultural sectors.
- Power Generation: The government is mandating the retirement of inefficient coal-fired power plants and supporting the research and development of IGCC and supercritical technologies.
- Renewable Energy: Under the Electricity Act 2003 and the National Tariff Policy 2006, the central and the state electricity regulatory commissions must purchase a certain percentage of grid-based power from renewable sources.
- Energy Efficiency: Under the Energy Conservation Act 2001, large energy-consuming industries are required to undertake energy audits and an energy labeling program for appliances has been introduced.

- Mining

The CCAP discusses 'tracking' not capping or reducing emissions from the mining sector. It addresses the need to encourage energy savings and proposes research into how to promote this. Similar issues to the 'industry' section.

- Transport

The CCAP appears to have taken into consideration various national policies relating to 'greening' transport in India. It does refer to:

- Incentives for the use of public transportation. (although it is more 'encouragement' than any direct 'incentives')

It does not include:

- Strengthening the enforcement of automotive fuel economy standards and using pricing measures to encourage the purchase of efficient vehicles
- Also, there seems to be a reluctance to discourage the building of new highways to cope with growing traffic in Orissa - even if these new highways are built in a 'green' way, they will allow more cars to exist on the road which makes it questionable as to its ability to abate rises in GHGs.

- Urban planning

The CAP does include this:

- A greater emphasis on urban waste management and recycling, including power production from waste;

But it does not specifically mention green building initiatives:

- Extending the existing Energy Conservation Building Code.

It again focuses on the need to make plans and policies - without actually including many specific targets or detail of activities relating to these plans.

- Water resources

The NAPCC sets a goal of a 20% improvement in water use efficiency through pricing and other measures. The CCAP does not directly state it will improve water efficiency by 20% but does have a comprehensive set of ideas on how to improve efficiency.

2. Also of note under the Kyoto Protocol:

CDM (Clean Development Mechanisms)

Defined in Article 12 of the Protocol, CDMs allow a country with an emission-reduction or emission-limitation commitment under the Kyoto Protocol (developed countries) to implement an emission-reduction project in developing countries (such as India). Such projects can earn saleable certified emission reduction (CER) credits, each equivalent to one tonne of CO₂, which can be counted towards meeting Kyoto targets.

India is reportedly number two in the world (after China) for developing CDM schemes and generating carbon credits. The actual benefits of CDM are wildly ambiguous and it is claimed that CDM projects are often made with dishonest and unsubstantiated statements, making a sham of the carbon-reducing results they are designed to provide.

Also there is a need to be cautious with mechanisms/technology designed to reduce GHGs, such as biofuels, nuclear power, big hydro power projects, etc., as the adverse effects of these ventures can be harmful on the environment in other ways, not to mention the effect often felt by the poor.]