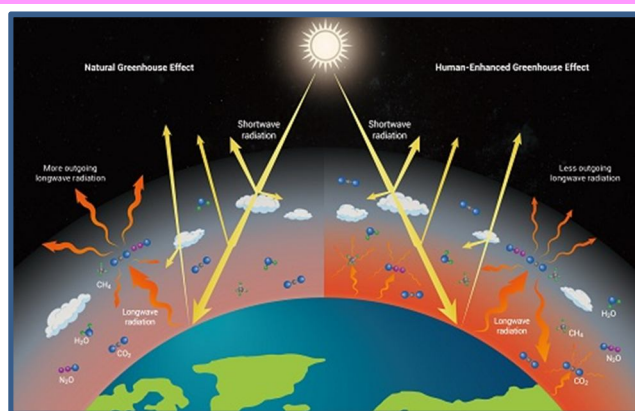


Climate Change Debate in the Perspective of Global Climate Negotiations



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ABSTRACT

Climate change has emerged as one of the most pressing global challenges of the twenty-first century, transcending environmental concerns to encompass economic development, international law, social justice, and geopolitical stability. By 2014, global climate negotiations had reached a pivotal stage, with intensified diplomatic efforts under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to formulate a comprehensive and universally binding climate agreement. This period was marked by deep divisions between developed and developing countries

over issues such as historical responsibility, carbon equity, climate finance, technology transfer, and sustainable development. The principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) remained central to these debates, particularly for countries like India, which emphasised climate justice and developmental priorities. The Lima Climate Conference (COP20), the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and bilateral agreements such as the United States-China climate accord significantly influenced the trajectory of negotiations. This article critically examines the climate change discourse in the context of global climate negotiations up to 2014, analysing legal frameworks, political conflicts, policy developments, and the evolving international climate governance regime. It further explores India's strategic role and the broader implications of climate diplomacy in shaping the eventual Paris Agreement framework.

KEYWORDS: Climate Change, Global Climate Negotiations, UNFCCC, Kyoto Protocol, CBDR, Climate Justice, India, COP20, Sustainable Development, International Environmental Law.

I. INTRODUCTION

Climate change has evolved from a scientific and environmental issue into a complex global governance challenge that involves international diplomacy, legal obligations, development policy, and human survival. The increasing concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere due to industrialisation, deforestation, and fossil fuel dependence has led to unprecedented alterations in global climate systems, manifesting as rising temperatures, melting glaciers, sea-level rise, biodiversity loss, and intensified natural disasters.¹ These consequences have compelled the international community to recognise climate change not merely as an ecological crisis but as a multidimensional threat to economic security, public health, food systems, and international peace.

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¹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report (IPCC, Geneva, 2014) 2.

The institutional framework for global climate governance was established through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992, which sought to stabilise greenhouse gas emissions while respecting the developmental needs of sovereign nations.² Subsequent negotiations, particularly through the Kyoto Protocol of 1997, sought to operationalise emissions-reduction commitments but faced criticism for limited participation and inadequate enforcement mechanisms.³ By 2014, it had become increasingly evident that fragmented approaches and voluntary commitments were insufficient to address the accelerating climate crisis.⁴

The year 2014 represented a significant transitional moment in climate diplomacy. Preparatory negotiations under COP20 in Lima sought to lay the groundwork for a universal climate agreement. At the same time, the IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report issued stark warnings about the catastrophic implications of delayed action.⁴ Simultaneously, geopolitical developments such as the United States-China bilateral climate agreement indicated renewed political will among major emitters.⁵ However, persistent divisions between developed and developing nations over equity, historical emissions, climate finance, and technological obligations continued to impede consensus.

For developing countries such as India, climate negotiations were inseparable from issues of poverty eradication, energy access, and sovereign developmental rights. India consistently advocated for equitable carbon space and the preservation of the CBDR principle, emphasising that developed nations bear primary historical responsibility for climate degradation.⁶ Thus, global negotiations became a contested arena balancing environmental urgency against developmental justice.

This article critically analyses climate change debates in the broader context of global climate negotiations up to 2014, with particular emphasis on legal principles, institutional frameworks, policy controversies, and India's strategic position.

II. EVOLUTION OF GLOBAL CLIMATE GOVERNANCE: HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The origins of climate diplomacy may be traced to the broader environmental movement beginning with the Stockholm Conference of 1972.⁷ Scientific developments during the 1980s, especially the establishment of the IPCC in 1988, transformed climate change into an urgent global legal issue.⁸

The UNFCCC (1992) established the foundational framework for climate governance by incorporating the principles of CBDR, sustainable development, and the precautionary principle.⁹ The Kyoto Protocol (1997) further introduced legally binding commitments for developed countries, though its effectiveness was limited by political resistance and lack of universal participation.¹⁰

Subsequent developments, including the Bali Action Plan, Copenhagen Accord, Cancun Agreements, and Durban Platform, progressively restructured climate negotiations toward broader participation.¹¹ By 2014, the institutional evolution reflected both significant progress and persistent structural limitations.

² United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 1771 UNTS 107 (1992).

³ Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2303 UNTS 162 (1997).

⁴ IPCC (n 1) 8.

⁵ U.S.-China Joint Announcement on Climate Change (White House, 2014).

⁶ Lavanya Rajamani, *Differential Treatment in International Environmental Law* (Oxford University Press 2006).

⁷ Stockholm Declaration, 1972.

⁸ UNEP, *History of the IPCC* (1988).

⁹ UNFCCC (n 2).

¹⁰ Kyoto Protocol (n 3).

¹¹ UNFCCC COP Decisions, 2007–2014.

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III. MAJOR CLIMATE CHANGE DEBATES IN GLOBAL NEGOTIATIONS

Several contentious issues dominated climate negotiations by 2014:

1. CBDR and Historical Responsibility

Developing nations emphasised historical accountability of industrialised states, while developed countries increasingly demanded broader obligations from emerging economies.¹²

2. Climate Finance

The Green Climate Fund and its \$100 billion annual commitment became central to negotiations, though implementation gaps remained substantial.¹³

3. Technology Transfer

Developing countries sought affordable access to clean technologies, while intellectual property barriers complicated negotiations.¹⁴

4. Adaptation vs Mitigation

Vulnerable states prioritised adaptation funding, while developed countries often focused on mitigation commitments.¹⁵

5. Loss and Damage

This emerging issue has introduced demands for compensation for irreversible climate harms.¹⁶ These debates transformed climate governance into a broader legal struggle over equity, justice, and global responsibility.

IV. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF GLOBAL CLIMATE NEGOTIATIONS

The UNFCCC and annual COP conferences formed the primary institutional structure of climate diplomacy.¹⁷ Major conferences such as Kyoto, Bali, Copenhagen, Cancun, Durban, and Lima shaped the legal trajectory of negotiations.

COP20 in Lima (2014) was especially significant for establishing the Lima Call for Climate Action, which introduced Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) and laid the diplomatic groundwork for the Paris Agreement.¹⁸

Despite institutional sophistication, enforcement weaknesses, consensus-based procedures, and political divisions, effectiveness was limited.

V. ROLE OF MAJOR POWERS IN CLIMATE NEGOTIATIONS

United States

Historically inconsistent due to domestic political constraints, though 2014 saw increased engagement through bilateral cooperation with China.¹⁹

¹² Rajamani (n 6).

¹³ Copenhagen Accord (2009).

¹⁴ Narain and Sharma, Climate Justice and Equity (2012).

¹⁵ IPCC (n 1).

¹⁶ Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (2013).

¹⁷ UNFCCC (n 2) art 7.

¹⁸ Lima Call for Climate Action (2014).

¹⁹ Bodansky, Brunnée and Rajamani, International Climate Change Law (2017).

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China

Maintained developing-country status while gradually assuming greater climate responsibility.²⁰

European Union

Served as a normative leader advocating binding legal frameworks and ambitious emissions targets.²¹

India

Defended equity, developmental sovereignty, and climate justice while balancing domestic developmental priorities.²²

The interplay among these actors significantly shaped negotiation outcomes.

VI. India's Position in Global Climate Negotiations

India consistently framed climate negotiations through:

- CBDR
- Equity
- Per capita emissions fairness
- Development rights
- Adaptation finance

India's climate diplomacy emphasised that environmental obligations must not undermine poverty eradication or economic growth.²³ Through alliances such as BASIC and G77+China, India played a pivotal role in defending Global South interests while gradually expanding its domestic climate initiatives, such as the National Action Plan on Climate Change.²⁴

VII. CONCLUSION

By 2014, climate change had become one of the defining legal and political challenges of modern international governance. Global climate negotiations reflected profound tensions between environmental urgency, developmental justice, and geopolitical power. While institutional frameworks such as the UNFCCC, Kyoto Protocol, and COP mechanisms created a robust diplomatic structure, persistent disputes over equity, finance, and legal obligations hindered transformative action.

The period up to 2014 marked a critical transition from fragmented legal regimes toward a more inclusive, nationally determined framework. India's role highlighted the broader challenges faced by developing nations in balancing sustainability with development.

Ultimately, climate diplomacy by 2014 laid the essential normative, legal, and institutional foundations for future agreements, particularly the Paris Agreement, while simultaneously revealing the enduring structural limitations of international environmental law. The global climate debate remains a test of humanity's ability to construct equitable governance systems that ensure both planetary survival and social justice.

²⁰ Stern, *The Global Deal* (2009).

²¹ Oberthür and Dupont (2011).

²² Rajamani (n 6).

²³ Government of India, *National Action Plan on Climate Change* (2008).

²⁴ Narain and Sharma (n 14).

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