Human Rights Based Implementation of Climate Policies

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Climate change architecture and policies have been inconsistent with human rights and failed to respect human rights obligation, respect, protect and promote since the days of Kyoto Protocol, which put very mild burden on the countries who have contributed to most of the emissions since pre industrial days. It also gave preferential pollution rights to the rich and industrial countries in the form of market based mechanisms. From Copenhagen COP through Cancun, climate negotiations and rich countries worked overtime to divorce historical responsibilities from the climate architecture.

Paris Agreement completed this transition of taking away equity, justice and human rights from the climate change control mechanism by (i) complete obliteration of historical responsibility and any liability for loss and damage, (ii) continuing with failed market based mechanism, (iii) failure to strengthen provisions on finance and technology for poor countries, (iii) brining in focus on carbon dioxide removal, rather than strengthening mitigation in high emission countries, (iv) continuing with 2 DC target, which we now know isn’t a safe threshold.

Recent 1.5 C Report and UNEP Emission Gap Report continues to underestimate impacts and provide false solutions.

***1.5 C report; Main messages***

1. 2 DC is not a safe threshold, will lead to exposure of more than half of the population to severe impacts, 420 million more people to extreme heat wave, once a decade ice free arctic summer, double the rate of extinction of species, and biomes

2. Current pledges are not sufficient to stop at 2DC, leave alone 1.5 DC

3. We have only 12 years left to reverse the warming beyond 1.5DC

4. Differential impacts in regions and in seasons, even 1.5 degrees will translate into far higher temperature for many regions and countries.

5. Poorest in developing countries and economies based on climate change sensitive sectors most vulnerable.

What has changed between PA and now is that climate change is no longer a future threat but a lived reality; 40% population living in areas which have already experienced more than average global warming.

Despite the crisis, the 1.5 C report continues with the dependence on CDR, shifts the baseline to 2015, and does away furthermore with historical responsibility by not providing how much carbon budget has been already exhausted.

Recent UNEP Emissions Gap Report on the same line; main messages

1. Emissions gap rising with emissions increasing after stalling for 3 years, currently at 53.5 GTCO2e, will need to be brought to 24 GTCO2e by 2030 for 1.5C, 40 GTCO2e for 2DC
2. Despite the fact that global emissions need to peak by 2020 to remain within the possibility of preventing warming beyond 1.5 C to 2 C, global emissions are rising through 2030, only 57 countries covering 60% of global emissions
3. Countries will have to work 5 times harder to prevent warming beyond 1.5 C and 3 times harder to achieve 2 DC

While the reports have brought out the urgency very well, they fail to provide appropriate solutions, UNEP report suggests that there is huge potential in enhancing actions by sub national and non state actors (19 GT) and therefore, action should shift to them. Currently 7000 cities and regions and 6000 companies (among 500,000 odd companies are taking action), PA can be achieved if all of them reduce their emissions. The mechanism that they promote is Carbon tax (sic). Currently only 15% carbon is covered (20 including MBM in China), and only 10% carbon taxes are 2 DC compliant. Suggest that carbon tax equivalent to $ 70 per ton will help achieve PA. So the burden of mitigation will now be on Shell, Exxon, Walmart, Black Rock and not on countries. Not many among us believe in the self correction, equity and justice in the functioning of the companies including oil companies.

***Result of flawed climate policies***

Narrative being built by developed countries that emissions are shifting, big lie. Huge inequality in emissions, rich 50% accounts of 86%, poorest 50% for 14%, poorest 10% less than 0.5% of global emisisons.

Huge impacts on the poorest. Climate change is a lived reality for people in countries like India, Pakistan, Philippines, Maldives, and many countries in sub Saharan Africa, also for North America and many European countries (floods in France), and we don’t need IPCC and UNEP report to tell us about the impacts they are facing. Impacts range from economic, social, safety and security to a matter of life of death. Millions of people dying from pollution related deaths, lack of clean cooking fuels, development of countries being impeded due to lack of access to clean energy for close to 1 billion people. Inter Academy Partnership Report, brought out by National Academies of science and medicine in more than 100 countries tells us that the number of people under chronic undernourishment increased from 777 Million in 2015 to 815 million in 2016 (FAO 2018 801 M to 820 M). Many more people suffer from micro nutrient deficiency and obesity. The situation has worsened in Africa, South East Asia, and West Asia mainly due to conflict and climate change. Disasters are increasing in frequency, severity and costs and have the potential reverse whatever little gains have been made and further erode human rights.

Are climate policies/responses addressing human rights, (3 case studies in brief):

1. Assessment of loss and damage in Uttarakhand Flash Floods (2013, June); more than 5000 people perished, huge economic losses running into hundreds of billions, discrimination in response measures, poorest left to fend for themselves
2. Study on solar farms and windmills in Rajasthan (2014), huge land grabbing, destruction of livelihoods based on agriculture and tourism, wells surviving for more than 100 years dried up, hugely fertile lands yieliding two crops in summer without irrigation (khadin) destroyed, energy farms set up against contravention of all policies of state, more than 100 panchayats petitioned.
3. REDD Plus Project investigation (2015) in Mauphlang (Meghalaya), indigenous population bluffed to leave their habitat a sacred forest, subsistence agriculture, all economic benefits going to project developers, consultants, people even not aware that the project is going on. Another project in Aizwal, people have no idea what is happening.

***Where we are***

Deep cuts required but not likely

Pre 2020 commitments, only 122 countries have ratified despite 5 years old commitment of Doha, 144 required, only 7/G20 countries on track, must reduce by 2.5 t/yr, rather than reducing 15/G20 countries increased emissions in 2017

Post 2020 commitments/NDCs, only 6/G20 countries Brazil, China, India, Japan, Russia, Turkey on track. India, Russia and turkey likely to overachieve due to their low ambitions, with a projected rise in emissions by 66%, 80% and 107% respectively. Russia and Turkey (Saudi also) are on 4DC trajectory.

US, less we talk about is better

EU-40% reduction, lower than what it has achieved during 1990-2015, Germany opposing increasing emission reduction target from 40% to 45%.

*Finance* which has real potential to unlock potentials of developing countries in poor state. Climate finance moving from developed countries to developing countries in 2015-16, only $ 45 B ($ 18B Oxfam says), GCF only $8.2 B, no predictability of finance holding up developing countries from taking action when we are running against time. There are several estimates of what financial flows will be required to achieve PA, however, latest 1.5 C report says that $900 B will be required in RE only over 2015-2030. Investment in EE will have to be enhanced by 5 times

***What is the resolution?***

3 things that will take care of climate and human rights

1. Equality between nations, Historical responsibility and capacity
2. Factor in inequality within the countries and protect poor
3. Address overall global inequality and ensure synergy with the SDGs. 62 persons hold half the wealth. During entire MDG period the income and wealth of the poorest grew only by 5%. Countries having net negative public wealth, countries getting richer but governments getting poorer, implications for poverty reduction, reducing inequality, providing basic services, mitigation and adaptation. Climate crisis cannot be solved without reducing poverty and inequality. Complimentarity with the SDGs, none of the countries on track to achieve all SDGs by 2030. Even top most in the index and dashboard (Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland) not addressing climate related SDGs (SDG 7 energy access, SDG 12 SCP, SDG 13 etc.).