

Climate Change Mitigation: Nepal's Priority Concern

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Abstract

The world today is beset with multi-faceted conflicts and numerous challenges threatening international peace, security, social harmony and peaceful co-existence. The crisis, however, unleashed by unprecedented climate change has overshadowed ongoing conflicts with global implications. Several climate conferences, including the latest COP-29 held at Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan in November last year have confirmed the public perception and belief that climate change is no longer the concern of a particular country. It has already become an issue of global concern. There is a growing realization on all sides at home and abroad that Nepal placed in a risk zone is highly vulnerable to the adverse impact of climate change. Nepal, being a mountainous country, is deeply concerned about fast-melting Himalayan glaciers, the source of clean water and energy. United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who observed the climate crisis being experienced by Nepal during his visit to this country in October 2023, has added his voice to Nepal's concern, urging all member states to work together for climate crisis mitigation. Nepal, which is not responsible for carbon emissions leading to global warming, has raised its voice for climate finance and justice.

Keywords: conflicts, COP-29, global concern, mountainous country, climate justice, finance

Introduction

The impact of climate change across the globe, in recent years, has assumed alarming proportions (WMO, 2023). Ongoing intra-regional and inter-regional conflicts have been overshadowed by climate change which has become the subject of discussion in conferences, now numbering twenty-nine, attended by member states or parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In a Preface to *Climate Change Diplomacy: The Way Forward for Asia and Europe*, editors Wilhelm Hofmeister and Patrick Rueppel observe: “Climate change and its consequences are one of the biggest challenges for international politics and

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cooperation. There is no doubt about the devastating effects of climate change on many countries. International climate summits have repeatedly pointed out the need for joint actions by the international community. However, these summits often could not agree on common targets and policies, that include all key stakeholders. In the meantime, international analyses and predictions on the consequences of climate change show that Europe, the United States and the People's Republic of China are among the biggest emitters of CO₂, while many Asian countries suffer from the negative impacts of climate change. At the same time, economic development in most Asian countries is accompanied by increasing emissions of greenhouse gases, a typical dilemma for many emerging markets and developing countries that require a clear de-coupling strategy” (Hofmeister & Rueppel, 2014).

As stated above, the US is one of the biggest carbon emitters. The Paris Conference in 2015 asked all countries to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius and achieve net-zero emissions, preferably by 2050 (UNFCCC, 2015). US President Donald Trump, during his first term in office, refused to sign the Paris Accord and withdrew from it. Former President Joe Biden reaffirmed American commitment to the accord. Trump, who won the 2024 election for a second term, has again signed the American withdrawal from the Paris Accord (Perez & Waldholz, 2025) and (UNEP, 2017). The global community was disappointed and shocked by this decision. Erik Solheim, former Norwegian Minister of International Development, during his recent visit to Nepal, commenting on American withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accord, said, “It is an absolute insult to the world that one nation, which has more than any other nation caused the climate problem, now tells the world to sort out the problem” (Giri & Khanal, 2025).

Krishna Poudel, a climate expert, in a lengthy article published in *Kantipur Daily*, observes, “At a time when the impact of climate change has become a priority concern of the world, Trump’s decision has impeded cooperation for climate finance. It has given a death blow to efforts towards achieving the target aimed at minimizing the effects of climate change” (Poudel, 2025). According to Poudel, Trump’s decision will boost the morale of industrializing countries who look upon fossil fuel as nature’s gift and will further escalate deepening environmental degradation. As expected, a particular section in the US associated with coal, oil and natural gas-related industries has welcomed and supported Trump’s decision. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, while addressing the World Economic Forum at Davos in Switzerland, compared Trump’s fondness for fossil fuel to Frankenstein’s monster (UN, 2025). Poudel anticipates the formation of a new grouping to provide leadership for climate change negotiations in forthcoming

COP-30 and other forums.

The US withdrawal from the Paris Accord has certainly given a new turn to the challenging issue of climate change. The emerging scenario is polarization between the global north and the global south. In this context, the growing influence of China cannot be undermined. China may be willing to bring climate change under the umbrella of the Global Development Initiative (GDI), one of the three initiatives already set forth by President Xi Jinping (MoFA, China, 2024). Countries of the global south will be pleased by Chinese overture with capital and technology to combat the climate change–induced crisis, if the US continues to turn its back on global decisions supporting a transition to green energy for sustainable development.

The effective implementation of the 2015 Paris Accord is the bottom line for climate change mitigation. The world remains divided on the need for minimizing carbon emissions to pave the way for de-carbonization under which the use of fossil fuels including coal, diesel and gas will be drastically curtailed, facilitating green energy generation and production. Experts point out that at the time of the Paris Accord in 2015, carbon emissions per year were equivalent to 23 billion tons. By now it has gone up to 40 billion tons. If carbon emission accelerates at this pace, it will be difficult to achieve the target of limiting temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Global warming will further increase, damaging the already fragile eco-system and ecological balance of the earth (IPCC, n.d.).

Climate Finance Negotiations

Climate finance was a major agenda item at COP-29. The conference dragged on for two more days to reach a deal on climate finance goals. Tough negotiations finally enabled rich countries to pledge at least USD 360 billion by 2035 (UNFCCC, 2024). It was far short of the target amounting to USD 1.3 trillion as desired by developing countries. The text issued by the conference called on all parties to work together using all public and private sources to achieve the goal of USD 1.3 trillion per year by 2035. As reported in *The Kathmandu Post* of 25 November 2024, World Resources Institute President and CEO Anil Dasgupta termed it “an important down payment toward a safer, more equitable future.” Developing countries disappointed by the deal blamed rich countries for their failure to earmark more money when billions of people’s lives are at stake.

Nepal at COP-29

While former Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal ‘Prachanda’ led the Nepali delegation to COP-28 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, the Nepali delegation

to COP-29 was led by President Ramchandra Paudel. Representing Nepal as a mountainous country, President Paudel forcefully affirmed, “Let us all take care that the protection of the mountains is the protection of the earth, the world should not forget that the process of turning the white mountains into black mountains will not only lead to the crisis in those countries but also the low-lying coastal countries.” He further informed the conference that Nepal has decided to conduct the Sagarmatha (Everest) Dialogue focused, among others, on the protection of the mountain (Kantipur, 2023).

Sagarmatha Dialogue and its Significance

Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli announced May 16-18 this year as the date for Sagarmatha Dialogue with the motto “Climate change, Himal and the future of mankind” (January 21, 2025). The dialogue will attract all sections, policymakers, administrators, diplomats, civil society organizations, the private sector, the business community, academics, experts, the media and all stakeholders, including distinguished dignitaries from friendly countries of Nepal and representatives of international organizations like the UN, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and other agencies. It is reported that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will most likely be the Chief Guest to deliver his keynote address at the Dialogue (Republica, 2025).

The dialogue is an important initiative of Nepal to highlight the country’s predicament hit hard by climate change-induced disasters like floods caused by excessive rains, landslides, drought and other calamities adversely affecting the lives of millions, particularly the poor and deprived communities living miserable existence and unable to cope with the crisis. Since Nepal’s avowed foreign policy is based on friendship with all and enmity towards none, we expect a positive and encouraging response to the dialogue from the international community, including our friends whose goodwill, support and cooperation are vital to the success k of the dialogue. It is heartening to note that Nepal has already started making preparations for the forthcoming dialogue. What is important is coordination among all sectors, including line ministries as well as partnership with the global community. Prime Minister Oli, while briefing the invitees about the initiative, expressed the hope that the dialogue will provide a suitable platform for Nepal’s friends at home and abroad, all relevant organizations, both national and international and the international community to apprise themselves of Nepal’s plight as a victim of climate change for no fault of its own and suggest effective and practical measures for Nepal to deliver itself from the unforeseen crisis.

It is by now quite obvious that while Nepal has effectively pleaded for the resolution of intra-regional and inter-regional conflicts and acts of violence in the UN and other international forums by peaceful means and through dialogue and negotiations, it is a paradox that Nepal has suffered the most, despite its negligible (less than 0.1 percent) contribution to global greenhouse emissions. Nepal has consistently pointed out the failure of industrialized developed countries to provide climate finance to LDCs like Nepal in highly vulnerable situations to enable them to mitigate the climate-induced crisis affecting their overall national development.

If the growing demand of LDCs and other developing countries for climate justice, including climate finance is met, it will create congenial conditions for them to overcome challenges of development and focus on nation-building activities with a sense of security and confidence. It is high time the global north realized its moral responsibility to avoid further escalation of conflict by positively addressing the grievances and problems of the global south including LDCs and other developing countries in vulnerable situations due to climate change and its adverse impacts.

Conclusion

Nepal's presence as an active participant at both COP-28 and COP-29 was widely appreciated by observers at home and abroad. The mountain issue forcefully raised by Nepal as a LDC nation received the attention of the international community it deserves. President Paudel and former Prime Minister Dahal were able to present Nepal's case as effectively and forcefully as possible at COP-29 and COP-28 respectively. The forthcoming Sagarmatha Dialogue will further enable Nepal to draw the attention of the world, nationally and internationally, to its deteriorating plight due to the devastating effects of climate change. Nepal has been able to convince the world community that climate change is its overriding priority concern. Experts have advised Nepal to continue raising its voice for climate justice and finance and intensify its efforts toward securing substantial contributions to the Loss and Damage Fund. If the cake is small with scarce resources, Nepal's share will be inadequate. Considering the size of the global south consisting of so many developing countries, USD 360 billion pledged for climate finance is too meager to mitigate the climate-induced crisis faced by countries, including Nepal (UNCTAD, 2024).

As mentioned in the article "COP-28 and Climate Diplomacy", published in the 2024 issue of NCWA Journal, Nepal needs to do serious homework internally to benefit from the fund and other resources, such as climate finance likely to be made available to highly vulnerable countries hardest hit by climate change and climate-induced disasters (Lohani, 2024).

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