



## Climate Diplomacy for India

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This article is based on **'Time to Practice Climate Change Diplomacy in India's Neighborhood'** which was published in The Diplomat on 07/12/2019. It highlights the significance of climate diplomacy for India.

Global carbon system is an interlocked system. The global transition to low carbon systems has spillover effects -from changes in one economy to changes in another economy, changes in politics in one place to changes in politics in another place. Hence, the manner of transition is important for a low carbon economy.

If one country is honourable in the extreme and cuts its carbon emissions to the bone, that is going to be of little use if the others do not follow suit. They will suffer the consequences of climate change despite the extent of their sacrifice or effort. Equally, at the same time waiting for others to do something and not doing something oneself, is also not an option, especially in terms of adaptation. It is in this context that global leadership gets shaped by the policies and governance approach of a nation that is conscious of the significant impact of climate change.

### India's Role and Responsibility on Climate Change Diplomacy

India is a large economy, market, has the second largest population and it can play an important role in being part of these positive spillover effects.

- India needs to move climate change, global warming to the top of its foreign policy agenda. It is in this way that India can draw benefits from its own climate actions.
- India's stance on climate diplomacy has evolved from highlighting the issue of environmental colonialism in the 1990s through the principle of **"common but differentiated responsibilities" (CBDR)** to pushing for the establishment of an institution like **International Solar Alliance** in 2015.

### Environmental Colonialism

Developed countries blaming developing countries like India and China for the rise in global temperatures. Resisting the pressure from developed countries, the developing countries then put forth the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities” so that their developmental needs would not be made to pay for the excesses of the developed world.

- India’s climate diplomacy needs to **construct a development model that takes into account all its needs, including climate change**, that is focussed on adaptation, and encourages the responsible engagement from the West on issues like finance and technology.
- A country’s economic gain from technological cooperation for the environment can ensure its sustainable engagement with another country, which can, in turn, have a spillover effect on global engagement.
  - The fall in renewable energy prices, driven by Germany’s domestic programme that basically supported global prices for renewables, is an example.
  - Therefore, if **India can frame its national priorities** more accurately and correctly, it can have a more reasonable engagement with the international process in climate change.

## Steps towards better Climate Diplomacy

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- **Maritime Security:** SAGAR (translated as “sea” or “ocean”) – Security and Growth for All in the Region – is at the centre of India’s maritime strategy.

While India attempts to tap into its **blue economy** potential along with its regional partners in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), it also needs to undertake elaborate steps – technical, logistical, technological and regulatory – **to develop climate-resilient ports in the region**, an effort that could be steered by climate diplomacy.
- **Strategic relations:** Rising sea levels and sinking cities, number of tsunamis, cyclones, and floods have strategic concerns as well. India needs to align all its foreign policies with the issues of climate change.

For eg- India has taken a step toward cooperating with Sri Lanka on climate change. This initiative needs to be pushed further for India to gain an advantage over China, especially in the Indo-pacific region.
- **Food security:** Climate-resilient agriculture can be pushed by India in its bilateral and multilateral dialogues. Encouraging trade in sustainable agricultural products can create demand for the same and can also help address the issue of global food security.
- **Trade:** Economic engagements in climate supporting technology for instance in the renewable energy sector with Germany can promote climate change conscious global trade.

## Conclusion

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It is important for India to prioritize climate change as one of the instruments of its foreign policy. Climate change should not be just considered from the environmental and economic point of view; it also stands to affect strategic considerations. India can start focusing on its neighbourhood to play a constructive role in the area of climate change through its **Neighbourhood First policy**. Making climate change an integral part of its foreign policy ethics and moving towards climate diplomacy can project India as a sensitive and responsible global leader.

***Drishti Mains Question***

Explain the significance of climate diplomacy for India. (250 words)