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## A BEGINNER'S LOOK AT CLIMATE CHANGE NEGOTIATIONS

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The human race, in its years of evolution, has sped up the aging of the earth itself. In their endless greed for development, the impact will inescapably be on the human race. Global warming and pollution have caused a significant shift in the climate all around the world. Climate change is an important issue now more than ever. The fact that the ozone layer has been recovering due to active cooperation between humans is proof enough that when bold actions are taken by aligning principles, outstanding results are achieved. For such actions to be taken, a platform for discussing and deciding upon the actions is to be established. A platform for the negotiators representing their countries and their positions on the various agreements that are to be enacted was necessitated.

### Why is the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) Important?

For the achievement of such multifaceted agreements among the diverse developed and developing countries, whose interests might be contradictory, the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)—the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)—are the two major forums that overlook such discussions. The UNFCCC is a forum for science-based global action, basing its decisions and conclusions on scientific research. While the IPCC conducts and publishes assessment reports on global climatic and environmental conditions. The latest assessment reports published in 2022 reported that climate change poses a serious threat to the agriculture sector, which will inevitably affect the economic and social aspects of life. Two important MEAs have been accepted since the first assessment report, viz., the Kyoto Protocol (KP), 1997, and the Paris Agreement (PA), 2015. In the Kyoto Protocol, emissions levels were quantified, and developed countries were to reduce their levels of emissions. While in the Paris Agreement, all the parties agreed to increase their efforts in

adopting the decisions, and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) efforts were also made by the parties included.

The UNFCCC has three types of governing bodies: i) Governing Bodies; ii) Constituted Bodies; iii) Entities of Financial Mechanism.

i) The Governing Bodies are the main decision-makers of the UNFCCC. The governing bodies established are:

1. Supreme bodies are headed by the President. Only decisions adopted by these bodies, i.e., a) the Conference of Parties (COP), b) the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP), and c) the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA), are legally binding to the parties.

2. Subsidiary bodies are led by the chair. They complement and provide assistance to the Supreme Bodies.

3. The secretariat is headed by the executive secretary. Their main objective is to provide organizational and technical expertise to the negotiation and decision-making bodies.

ii) Constituted bodies are established to provide input to the negotiations. They have no official negotiation roles.

iii) Entities of Financial Mechanism have provision for funding grants or concessions, even for the transfer of technology.

In negotiating and reaching agreements, parties organize themselves into groups. According to the UNFCCC, a party is ‘any country that has ratified, approved, acceded to, or adopted the Kyoto Protocol or the Paris Agreement’. Even though they are not parties, non-party nations are nonetheless able to watch the proceedings. Observers can make statements and may participate in some negotiation meetings, but they cannot negotiate. They can indirectly impact the negotiations by influencing the negotiators. An observer can be any national, international, governmental, or non-governmental agency or body. The only people who have the authority to negotiate, decide, and be elected to various bodies are the parties. Parties can be formed by nations with comparable interests. Participants can fortify their stance by becoming members of a ‘Group of Party’. Smaller nations have more chances to defend themselves and make their opinions known. While some groups adhere to customary

processes that are not legally obligatory, others have their own set of standards for cooperation. Throughout time, the members of the Group of Parties are free to associate with any group that best represents their shared interests. In 2022, there are 15 active groups of parties. India is a member of BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India, and China) and Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDC). A country can be a member of multiple groups as well.

### **Negotiation and Negotiator**

Negotiations are conversations between two or more people, where each is trying to convince the others of the merits of the arguments they are presenting. There are three aspects to negotiations: i) communications; ii) purpose; and iii) common interest. A good negotiator is both a good talker and a good listener. He or she knows when to hold his words. A negotiation happens for a purpose; without engaging the other party in a discussion, an agreement cannot be reached. The parties should share some common interests.

Unlike a normal conversation, a multilateral negotiation carries the political weight of a country. A skilled negotiator knows when and how to show interest. Instead of expressing their interest, a negotiator must take a position in order to defend it. Positions are the outward declarations of a person or group; they represent "what" the negotiator claims to be seeking. Interests serve as the "why" behind the negotiators' stated desires, whilst values and motivations serve as the underlying causes. A skilled negotiator will choose the correct time to reveal more of their underlying interests to increase their chances of successful negotiations. They recognize that when more parties are involved, a web of different interests may be created. They also have to rely on their own soft and hard skills to understand the interests of their counterparts.

A good negotiator will have two types of skills: i) Soft skills, also called People skills. It relates to how each person interacts with other people. They can be developed through coaching and practice. It includes verbal and non-verbal communication skills. ii) Hard skills are competencies that can be proven by producing certificates, degrees, or work experience. It relates to technical knowledge on the subject matter of negotiations. While negotiating, both skills come in handy and are a requirement for a successful negotiation.

## Conclusion

Negotiating and coming to an agreement about the environmental and climatic interests between developed and developing nations is a challenging process. But in the long run, it is for the sustenance of the earth and its life forms as a whole. It is imperative that countries and organizations stay open to discussions on the matter. And only cooperation and coordination among the countries can lead to a better and more fruitful future. The participating countries have to provide skilled negotiators to stand up for their interests and also be integrated with the collective agreements taken by the forums. Therefore, multilateral negotiation at the UN level allows for the successful conduct of proceedings, and the negotiators are to be abundant in the proper skills to achieve both their interests and the overall goals of the forums.

## Reference

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