

## Reaching Agreement in Paris

### A Negotiator's Perspective

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#### The Context for Negotiations

Paris marked a high point in the climate change dialogue in its chequered history of over two decades. Few issues concerning the future of humankind have seen so much global concern and conflict. While the world continued to witness the ill effects of climate change, international negotiations continued to be dogged by the politics of a divided world. There were protocols that were signed but not adopted, and there were promises that were made but not kept. Climate change had divided the world between those who had polluted and those who were being asked to foot the bill. While the developed countries were keen to arrest the current levels of emissions of the developing countries, the latter were struggling to reconcile the new expectations and their financial burden with the burden of development. The backdrop of Paris was dark, the prospects hazy, but the expectations high. However, what characterized the Paris Agreement on 12 December

2015 was a collective sigh of relief and a near-unanimous sense of achievement.

How did this happen? Was it a silent determination on the part of divergent groups to agree to a common agenda for the future? Was it an overwhelming commitment on the part of the host country, France, to be the coryphaeus of a new order that would deal with the challenge of climate change? Was it a victory the European Union (EU) wanted to claim? Was it desperation on the part of the United States (US) that was trying to present Obama and the Democrats as the saviours of humankind, an image that would see them through the hustings of 2016? Was it a collective desire to demonstrate a consensus even if it meant a weak Agreement? Was it sheer ennui?

The fact that the spotlight was on India was evident during the build-up to Paris. Speaking to the *Financial Times* four weeks before the negotiations began, the then US secretary of state, John Kerry, warned that India could be a ‘challenge’ at the upcoming climate talks in Paris, with its government reluctant to accept more of a role in addressing global warming. ‘We’ve got a lot of focus on India right now to try to bring them along’, Kerry said (Sevastopulo and Clark 2015). Kerry was clearly trying to build on India’s past reputation of being an obdurate negotiator and creating unwarranted apprehension about India with the intention of putting it on the back foot. The battle had begun.

The immediate trigger was a rather piquant face-off between the Indian Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Prakash Javadekar and the US Chief Negotiator Todd Stern, at the pre-Conference of the Parties (COP) meeting at Paris on 9 November. In his concluding remarks, the US chief negotiator called for an ambitious Paris Agreement rather than being ‘minimalistic’. In turn, the Indian minister concluded by saying that Paris should aim at the ‘doable’, as Paris might not be able to solve all problems and some issues could be resolved later. He then looked at the US flag and added with the glee of a goalkeeper who had just saved a penalty stroke, ‘and that is not minimalistic’.

That set the tone for the subsequent bilateral meeting between India and the US. The US side was up to its familiar argument about the changing world and economic circumstances that the Agreement must recognize. This, as per the US viewpoint, would mean sharing

the responsibility of reducing emissions and providing finance by developing and developed countries in equal measure, rather than the burden being recognized as the sole responsibility of the developed countries, which was the case hitherto. The Indian side brushed aside the US suggestions by saying that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) could not be rewritten in Paris.

Ten days later, at the G20 Summit at Antalya, there was a prolonged discussion on para 24 of the Summit statement dealing with climate change. The Indian sherpa held out till the wee hours of the morning and compelled the developed countries to settle for a goal-less draw. The para reflected conventional positions except that, at the insistence of the US, it was added that the leaders would instruct their negotiators to show greater 'flexibility' while negotiating the Paris Agreement. The situation was complicated by the fact that India's traditional ally at climate change talks, China, had announced in a joint statement with the US in 2014 that its carbon dioxide emissions would peak by 2030 (Office of the Press Secretary 2014) and had won plaudits for its noble intent. Here were the biggest historical contributor, the US, and the biggest contemporary contributor, China, joining hands and taking credit for being leaders of a better future. In fact, China had secured anticipatory bail for its emissions that would continue to rise for 15 years and then peak at undefined levels. This triggered expectations that India would similarly declare its holy commitment, leading to a debate within the country on whether it should fall in this trap or steer clear.

Throughout 2014 and the following year, India resisted attempts at a similar joint statement with the US as its contention was that, owing to its huge development imperatives, it was not in a position to declare a 'peaking' year like China. Any such declaration would be unrealistic and would not carry conviction. In addition, there was real apprehension of such a statement being used to criticize the government at home for bartering its right to growth. The contrast with China was coming into focus and India was being projected as a bad boy not willing to change its old attitude of standing on effete principles. Moreover, China had also offered US\$ 3 billion in finance to help poorer countries as part of 'South-South cooperation', which the US was using to impose the responsibility of mobilizing finance

on the non-Annex countries, another major departure from past positions. China had played along with the US as it had nothing to lose by this new expectation. It was, in any case, funding many developing countries and would not have been really upset if this was termed as its contribution to ‘green their economies’, as Kerry had stated in his broadside against India. China was content if its suggestion of replacing the phrase ‘countries in a position to do so’ with ‘countries willing to do so’ was accepted to describe the obligation of countries to mobilize finance as part of their effort to raise climate change finance.

India, on the other hand, opposed both the formulations. At the Paris pre-COP, I had argued that the phrase ‘in a position to do so’ implied that there would be a third party that would assess the ‘position’ of different countries and determine whether they were in a position or not, which was not acceptable. On the other hand, countries ‘willing to do so’ did not cast any obligation and would be an inert phrase in an Agreement. When the co-chair of the finance group at the pre-COP nonchalantly referred to it in his summary as a question of semantics, I raised the flag, looked at the delegate from the United Kingdom (UK) with whom I had already had a verbal duel, and said: ‘although English is not my mother tongue, according to my understanding the difference between the two is more than semantics. For example, there is a difference between the co-Chair, who is “in a position to” record the discussion accurately and whether it is “willing to do so”.’<sup>1</sup>

Instances such as these, perhaps, could have prompted Kerry to indicate that while China appeared to accept that previous United Nations (UN) regimes—where only developed countries take action on climate—are no longer viable, he was getting ‘different vibes from Narendra Modi’s government’. ‘India has been more cautious, a little more restrained in its embrace of this new paradigm, and it’s a challenge,’ he said (Sevastopulo and Clark 2015). Kerry further stated that India’s move to expand domestic coal use was ‘not in the direction we ought to be moving in’, adding, ‘we have to be careful not to be holier-than-thou or accusatory’ (Sevastopulo and Clark 2015). The *Financial Times* suggested that these comments ‘underline how

<sup>1</sup> Meeting held during Paris Pre-COP, 8–10 November 2015.

tough the upcoming Paris talks could be if India—the world's fourth largest greenhouse gas emitter after China, the US and EU—plays hardball on a new agreement' (King 2015). It was part of our strategy as well to play hardball without getting into trenches that we could not vacate. The Indian environment minister called Kerry's remarks 'unwarranted' and 'unfair' (Press Trust of India 2015). He also said that India would not be 'bullied' by any country during the negotiations.

Meanwhile, the French worked dexterously on making the Paris Agreement a matter of national prestige. A diplomatic offensive was launched to garner support for the success of Paris. The Kyoto Protocol, despite all its fanfare and pious intent, had been severely weakened with the US having failed to ratify it and Canada withdrawing. The French did not want Copenhagen to be repeated, which had come to be associated with everything undesirable in international negotiations.

As part of their diplomatic outreach, the dashing French foreign minister, Laurent Fabius, toured all major countries, including India (on 20 November 2015), in an effort to persuade them to cooperate with the French presidency. In his meeting with us, the Indian side dwelt a lot on the promise of US\$ 100 billion climate finance promised by industrialized countries. The prime minister also made a point of the 'fiction' of a controversial Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report on climate finance, published in the same year in October, that claimed that developed countries had 'mobilised ... for developing countries ... USD 61.8bn in 2014, up from USD 52.2bn in 2013, with an average for the two years of USD 57.0bn per year in 2013–14' (OECD 2015). The prime minister conveyed India's position in no uncertain terms and pointed to the hollowness of the claim, which lacked transparency and accuracy. The OECD report was also rebutted in a discussion paper brought out in November 2015 by the Climate Change Finance Unit of the Department of Economic Affairs, Government of India. It questioned the 'OECD report's accuracy, methodology and verifiability of the numbers reported' (Department of Economic Affairs 2015).

During the meeting, we also queried the French side on the purpose of calling the heads of states on the opening day. The

French had reversed the order by calling them in the opening plenary, whereas the custom was to call them on the final day of the high-level segment in the second week. Rumour was rife that the French had a statement up their sleeve which would be foisted as an outcome of the meeting of minds of the heads and which, in a way, would determine the restricted course of the negotiations to follow. I even asked Fabius if they were working on a joint statement, which he denied quite categorically. We were somewhat reassured by one experienced diplomat who said that it was almost impossible to get a statement out of more than 100 heads in half a day. He very emphatically stated that the French would not risk a failure at the starting point of the COP.

The build-up to Paris was also shaped by broader events, notably a terrorist attack on Paris on 13 November that killed 153 persons (Bliss 2015). There was a groundswell of support for France that had now turned into an unfortunate quarry of senseless terror. France was no longer simply a nation seeking support, but a nation that elicited the sympathy of other nations.

As the identified terrorists were migrants, climate warriors were at work trying to contrive a link between climate change and migration. They argued that climate change caused desertification, which in turn led to migration from Syria to France, which was at the heart of the attack (Bliss 2015). For instance, a November 2015 article in the *Time* magazine stated:

U.S. military officials refer to climate change as a ‘threat multiplier’ that takes issues like terrorism that would pose a threat to national security and exacerbates the damage they can cause. A 2014 Department of Defense report identifies climate change as the root of government instability that leads to widespread migration, damages infrastructure and leads to the spread of disease. ‘These gaps in governance can create an avenue for extremist ideologies and conditions that foster terrorism,’ the report says. (Worland 2015)

The developed world was adept at inventing a logic that suited their purpose. In this case, an old debate linking terrorism to climate change was being revived in order to present France as a victim of terrorism. The world could provide an effective rebuff to the recent terrorist attack by allowing France the credit of presiding over a climate

change agreement. This spin put further pressure on countries like India that were raising inconvenient arguments against developed countries.

### **The Road to Paris: Signalling India's Intent**

Before COP 20 in Lima, India had the image of a road blocker or naysayer in the climate change discourse. In 2014, the government began to change it into a positive, proactive image, garnering trust and confidence of key countries and major negotiating groups at UNFCCC. India began to project itself not as a part of the problem, but as a country keen to be a part of the solution. India's approach during the negotiations was guided by a cabinet mandate, based on a national consensus around the long-term interests of India for development space and growth, with a view to providing basic services and energy access to all our citizens and eradication of poverty balanced with the need for combating climate change. India advocated a strong and durable climate agreement based on the extant principles and provisions of the Convention.

In the year prior to Paris, we focused on representing the interests of developing countries in COP 20 decisions at Lima and in the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP). For example, the note by the co-chairs dated 5 October 2015 (ADP 2015) was rejected by a number of developing countries who saw it as mitigation-centric and highly skewed in favour of developed countries. Many coalition blocks, including G77 and China, considered it a 'failed text', placing the Paris meeting in jeopardy. India took the lead and spoke to different negotiating blocks to bring back the process on track. Our work ensured that the envisaged Paris Agreement was balanced and comprehensive in its scope, by including not just mitigation but all six pillars: mitigation, adaptation, finance, capacity building, technology development and transfer, and transparency of action and support.

As part of this process, India hosted, for the first time, a meeting of senior negotiators of 25 Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDC) on 14–15 September 2015 in New Delhi. With the collective efforts of developing countries led by India, the co-chair's draft note was considered and the parties agreed to move forward on what

we perceived as a more balanced negotiating text during the conclusion of the ADP session at Bonn on 23 October 2015. This leadership cemented further the cohesion in the LMDC negotiating block.

India's domestic policies, as articulated in our Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC), were also relevant to signalling India's intent. The image of the country had received a big boost by the scaling up of the goals set for renewable energy capacity—175 gigawatt (GW) by 2022. However, after the initial euphoria, people had started questioning the scale and terming it a hollow statement of boastful intent not backed by an action plan. Questions were raised about the resources required, their availability, and whether there was a practical programme of implementation.

I was conscious of this criticism while framing the INDC and knew that this would be the high mast of our plan and had to be reflected appropriately. However, there were two challenges: first, on how to project the effort beyond 2022, the end date of the present target of 175 GW; and second, whether to delink from the resources required. An approximate calculation showed that 100 GW of solar alone may require at least US\$ 150 billion. First of all, we started using arguments of the coal saved and emissions reduced to divert discussion from the resources required. Second, we said that with so much investment, the government could have set up almost *two times* the current thermal capacity but had decided to adopt a more difficult but desirable path. After we declared the INDC on 2 October 2015, in response to a question by *The New York Times* on the availability of funds, I said that the government had never said that it would fund the entire programme itself: 'It is the role of the government to create an enabling policy framework, set up the regulatory mechanism and to prepare the system to absorb this power in its system' (Barry 2015). The government had declared its bold intention of supporting this huge effort by investing in the green corridor to facilitate evacuation and creating the regulatory framework for a market for renewable power. Having created a congenial investment climate, it was now for the market, domestic as well as international, to respond.

In our INDC document, we had taken care to present the renewable effort as creation of installed electricity capacity based on 'non-fossil' sources, thereby taking advantage of hydroelectric as well



as nuclear power. Together we were confident that we could reach a target of 40 per cent. This was the only Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) that we linked to the availability of international finance and technology. Whatever be the holes that people found in the goal that India had set, this became the biggest talking point of the climate change debate and catapulted India into the super league—no longer a laggard, no longer a Lazarus looking for alms, but determined to demand attention by its daring declaration.

The INDC declared by India, after a prolonged period of suspense, was well received by both the Indian as well as the international communities. We had eight contributions ranging from lifestyle to mitigation, adaptation and capacity building, finance and technology transfer, and creation of additional carbon sink, besides a major shift to non-fossil fuel-based installed capacity. With the declaration of the INDC, India was perceived as a nation that was no longer in self-denial but was willing to play its part in dealing with a global problem. ‘India is not a part of the problem but would like to be a part of the solution,’ was the refrain popularized by the then environment minister, Prakash Javadekar.

### **Heads First: Leaders’ Day at Paris**

The first day of COP 21 was a high-level leader’s segment in which more than 150 heads of state/heads of government participated. The Indian prime minister addressed the high-level leaders’ segment on 30 November 2015, outlining India’s position on key issues related to climate change negotiations. The prime minister shared his vision and views with the French and the US presidents. He also had bilateral meetings with Japanese Prime Minister Abe on the sidelines of the high-level segment. The prime minister’s visit to Paris set the stage for India playing an important role in the climate change negotiation. The attendance at the highest level from India gave a positive signal from the second-most populous nation and largest democracy in the world about our seriousness and preparedness to tackle climate change threat.

Of course, the prime minister, with his avowed commitment to renewable energy and his powerful image as a strong world leader, had carved out a place for himself as a man who mattered. He had

announced an ambitious renewable energy programme much before the Paris negotiations, and that had been hailed as a bold statement of his conviction. In fact, the world business community had started seeing this as a major economic opportunity that could transform the solar energy sector. Underscoring this point, on the first day of the meeting, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Francois Hollande launched the International Solar Alliance (ISA), to bring together 121 solar-rich countries falling within the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn for promotion of solar technology and its applications. The ISA aimed to facilitate joint efforts through innovative policies, projects, programmes, capacity-building measures, and financial instruments to mobilize more than US\$ 1,000 billion of investments that are needed by 2030 for the massive deployment of affordable solar energy. In addition, India joined the US in the launch of 'Mission Innovation' during the inauguration of COP. This Mission aimed to reinvigorate and accelerate global clean energy innovation with the objective to make clean energy widely affordable by providing easy access to critical clean-energy technologies. These initiatives, at the beginning of the Paris negotiations, signalled India's positive intent. India also had a fruitful meeting with the US, where both leaders had a frank discussion on national priorities and explored possible meeting grounds, recounted by President Obama's advisor, Ben Rhodes (2018), in his book, *The World as It Is: A Memoir of the Obama White House*.

### Massive Outreach

India, hitherto, had been known as a country that kept its cards close to its chest. This time, however, we decided to go for a major media outreach to communicate India's stand and concerns. On the very first day of COP 21, that is, on 30 November 2015, the *Financial Times* carried an opinion article titled, 'Do Not Let Lifestyles of the Rich World Deny the Dreams of the Rest', by the Prime Minister of India, which we felt set the tone and tenor of the Conference (Modi 2015). The concerns of developing countries regarding climate-friendly lifestyles and climate justice stood powerfully articulated by the prime minister in his article.

This approach was further buttressed by appointing an affable, knowledgeable, and credible media spokesperson, who also opened an informal dialogue with people who mattered. The spokesperson held daily press briefings, besides networking with non-government organizations (NGOs) who are important opinion makers in every COP.

India set up an India Pavilion, inaugurated by the prime minister, which remained the cynosure of all delegates and visitors through the COP. Its water curtain was the most sought-after photo backdrop and the hi-tech display was found to be a convincing presentation of India's climate action. More than 25 events giving a vivid glimpse of India's diverse strategies and positive action towards mitigation and adaptation to climate change, clearly demonstrating India's active efforts in combating climate change, with more than 150 speakers/panellists, were organized in the India Pavilion. The pavilion drew thousands of visitors from 65 different countries and was, arguably, the best pavilion at the COP venue.

In both formal and informal settings, we explained the Indian perspective. For example, during a private reception hosted by the British ambassador, I said that, for India, climate change was basically about development with a difference and that we would like to believe that no one present here would want those that had been, hitherto, left behind in economic progress to be in that state forever. I said that:

We quite understand that the problem of climate change is on account of the path followed in the past by the countries that have prospered. We are willing to take a different path and be guided, but don't simply tell us what not to do; instead tell us what to do and how. Understand the barriers in the path you suggest and see how they can be removed.<sup>2</sup>

I concluded that this is the spirit that has to drive the climate change dialogue rather than mutual recrimination. Similarly, halfway through the Paris COP, I gave an interview to the *Independent* in

<sup>2</sup> Meeting held during UNFCCC COP 21, 30 November–12 December 2015, Paris.

which I said, ‘India’s objective is to establish an effective agreement based on climate justice, which distinguishes between obligations of the rich countries, based on their historical responsibility in causing climate change, and the less onerous obligations of the developing world’ (Bawden 2015). Perhaps as a result of our communications efforts, public and private, by the second week we found the media less strident against India. In fact, we felt that we were no longer being considered the ‘challenge’ that we were perceived to be earlier, but a positive force to be taken along in order to achieve an effective outcome.

An effective outreach strategy was implemented through coordinated efforts, including social media initiatives, by creating a dedicated website tilted India@COP21 (<http://www.justclimateaction.org>), along with Twitter and Facebook accounts, handled jointly by the Ministries of External Affairs, Information and Broadcasting, and Environment, Forest and Climate Change. India decided to bring out a publication on its own climate-friendly traditional practices, which have been part of the psyche of its common man for years together, called *Parampara*. These efforts eventually succeeded in convincing the world that the pulse of the problem lies in excessive consumption patterns and lifestyles. Indeed, the issue of sustainable lifestyles found an appropriate expression in the preamble to the Paris Agreement. These various communication efforts disseminated the Indian viewpoint and stand on climate change-related negotiating issues, which helped in arriving at the ‘win-win’ Paris Agreement.

### Focus on Key Concerns during Negotiations

India consistently took the lead in asking developed countries to commit to their obligations to cut GHG emissions. India further suggested that action in the pre-2020 period would generate momentum and confidence for all the parties—including developing countries, least developed countries, and Small Island Developing States (SIDS)—to undertake ambitious climate action post-2020. India also argued that developed countries should adhere to mobilization and joint provision of US\$ 100 billion annually in the Paris decision text, taking into account the needs and priorities of the developing countries. Mandating developing countries to

adhere to the path of carbon neutrality or net zero emissions would have serious development implications, especially when many of the developing countries, including India, are struggling to have universal access to energy and fulfil the mandate of lifting huge number of their people above the poverty line. Accordingly, India led the developing countries in ensuring that differentiation is built into the aspirational goal in Paris Agreement of reaching the global peaking of emissions by the second half of the century without mentioning any fixed timelines.

The concern on technology transfer and development was spearheaded by India in the G77 and China group, which in turn influenced its inclusion in the Paris Agreement in Article 10.

## Reflections on the Final Text

The final text took into account India's core concerns on all elements of the Durban Platform relating to mitigation (emissions reduction), adaptation, finance, technology, capacity building, and transparency of action and support. Some of the salient features of the Agreement are as follows:

1. The Paris Agreement is firmly anchored in the UNFCCC—its purpose is to enhance the implementation of the UNFCCC, including its objective. This is a major accomplishment for developing countries since it safeguards policy space underpinned by key principles such as equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR&RC). Developed countries, on the other hand, had wanted the purpose of the Paris Agreement to be restricted to achieving the objective of the Convention rather than enhancing its implementation. This failed effort to delink the two was significant.
2. The preamble to the Agreement explicitly recognizes the imperatives of climate justice, sustainable lifestyles, and the right to development, ideas that were specifically brought on the table by India. The notion of climate justice has been acknowledged in a UN document on climate change for the first time.
3. The Agreement will be implemented to reflect 'equity and CBDR&RC' in light of different national circumstances. In

our view, this captures the notion of historical responsibility of developed countries as being largely responsible for contributing to climate change, and therefore highlights the necessity for these countries to take the lead in GHG emissions reduction and to enable the developing countries to take ambitious climate action through provision of finance, technology development, and technology transfer.

4. One of the key issues articulated by developing countries, including India, was to see operationalization of the principle of CBDR&RC in the form of differentiated obligations for developed and developing countries. While differentiation based on the annexes enshrined in the 1992 Convention could not be reflected in the Paris Agreement explicitly because of an extremely hard, adversarial position taken against this by developed countries, we were able to reflect some element of differentiation across all elements of the Agreement. This is something which is extremely useful from the perspective of implementation of commitments under the Convention.
5. The differentiation in mitigation is on both the 'scale' and the 'nature' of efforts. The Agreement differentiates in the form of efforts parties will undertake: while developed countries will undertake absolute reduction targets, developing countries are to enhance mitigation efforts (such as those undertaken currently, including relative targets), with an encouragement to progressively move towards 'reduction or limitation targets' taking into account their national circumstances.
6. The NDCs are not restricted to mitigation alone, and could include other elements. The developed countries wanted the NDCs to be restricted to mitigation alone. This was a major item of contention between the developed and some developing countries (led primarily by the LMDC group), and we were able to secure the broader framework.
7. The NDCs are to be furnished every 5 years and, importantly, remain nationally determined. While any party is free to raise their ambition at any time, the Agreement contains no provision on ex ante or ex post review to compel revision of the NDCs through a mandatory process, which was a priority concern for India and other developing countries.

8. The Agreement clearly recognizes the need to provide support to developing country parties for effective implementation of their mitigation and adaptation actions, and it contains an obligation for developed countries to provide financial resources to developing countries. The mandatory provision of finance is for both mitigation and adaptation, and the Agreement also notes the linkage between enhanced support and higher ambition by developing countries. The encouragement to other parties (other than developed countries) to offer such support is on a voluntary basis, despite an intense effort by developed countries to dilute their responsibility and draw some developing countries into this equation. There is a reporting requirement on developed countries with respect to their financial commitments and the global stocktake is also supposed to take into account progress on climate finance.
9. The developed countries have agreed to continue with the mobilization of US\$ 100 billion per year post 2020 and to set a collective short-term goal for climate finance every five years. Much will depend on how they mobilize such finance and how climate finance is calculated as there is no internationally accepted definition of climate finance at present.
10. The transparency arrangements for the new Agreement were a major issue of contention between the developed and developing countries. Developed countries, led by the US and EU, wanted to have a common transparency framework applicable to all countries, with some flexibility for developing countries with limited capacities. The developing countries wanted the existing differentiated arrangements to continue as, among other reasons, these have not yet been fully implemented. What has been agreed under the Paris Agreement is an enhanced transparency framework which will build on the arrangements under the Convention, which implies retention of the principle of differentiation. The work on modalities and guidelines for the enhanced transparency framework is ongoing. A capacity-building initiative linked with transparency was an Indian proposal and has been agreed upon.
11. One of the provisions of the Agreement, that is, Article 2.1(c), refers to 'Making financial flows consistent with a pathway

towards low GHG emissions and climate resilient development.’ This was included despite vehement opposition from India and a large number of developing countries and could be interpreted as ‘green conditionalities’ on the movement of international finance. This is an aspect which will need to be addressed in this context and elsewhere in the future too, so as to ensure that it does not limit our policy space.

## Outcome

Overall, our negotiators managed to preserve India’s core interests in the Paris Agreement. Many of our articulations and positions were put forth as group positions, mainly through the configuration of the LMDC group. The BASIC group (Brazil, India, China, and South Africa) also met several times at the ministerial level to articulate a common strategy on a few key issues. Issues on which the developing countries were united (adaptation, finance, capacity building) were negotiated through the G77 and China.

The Paris Agreement ensures that our developmental space will not be constricted by a top-down approach, and also that our contributions to counter climate change will remain nationally determined in years to come. From our perspective, this is the most important issue and one on which we were able to preserve our position. Going forward, so long as our climate action is nationally determined based on our national priorities and resources and there is no international process that can oblige us to revise our contributions upwards, we will be able to preserve our developmental space; the Paris Agreement does not place onerous obligations on that freedom of action.

In sum, the Paris Agreement, while not being perfect from the point of view of either the developing or the developed countries, can be said to meet the expectations of both sides and embodies a delicate balance of positions of either side. While India and other developing countries were able to preserve the fundamental tenets of the UNFCCC and thereby our developmental policy space, the developed world secured substantial gains in terms of a strong mitigation and transparency framework. Much will now depend on how the various details, modalities, and guidelines are framed for



giving effect to the provisions of the Agreement in the period before entry-into-force of the Paris Agreement and how we will continue to remain fully engaged in that process.

In the final analysis, I think what worked for India was a firm handling of the key players while keeping some channels open, that is, an accommodating approach on some issues in order to seek flexibility from others on issues that mattered to us, such as: keeping the Montreal Protocol amendments open till the conclusion of Paris Agreement, good rapport with the COP president, *support* of our traditional allies, tactical moves at the appropriate time, stern messaging and posturing on the penultimate day, liberal interaction with media and NGOs, building a convincing case for development by our logically argued outreach efforts, and a proactive and positive stance by India throughout that capitalized on the positive and dynamic image of the prime minister.

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