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Challenges In Climate Change Negotiations

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This article is based on **“Vaunting Rhetoric versus Grim Realities”** which was published in Economic and Political Weekly on 04/01/2020. It talks about the challenges in climate change negotiations.

The **25th Conference of Parties (COP25)** of the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**, which was concluded at Madrid in December 2019. Instead of being hailed as a milestone, almost universally, it has been held to be a failure.

The reason for the failure of these negotiations can be attributed to a **lack of consensus between developed and developing countries** on various issues.

Moreover, the irony lies in the fact that it was developed countries who coined the term like climate emergency and it is the only who opposes any legally binding climate actions.

Tussle Between Developed and Developing Countries.

Inequality:

The UNFCCC in its explicit articulation of **the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR)** as the basis for climate action, calls on the developed countries to take the lead in mitigating climate change.

- However, developed countries are of the view that with economic growth witnessed by developing nations, the principle of CBDR has somehow become outdated.
- The developing countries argue that, though economic growth has taken place, global inequality remains quite high. Thus, acknowledging the continuing validity of the differentiation of developed and developing countries is, therefore, essential to making sense of the global politics of climate change.

Note:

- According to the **Global Wealth Report 2019** (released by the Credit Suisse Research Institute) shows that 57% of global wealth is concentrated in Europe and North America alone.
- The per adult distribution of wealth is even more skewed, with North America having 5.9 times the global average.
- Europe has 2.2 times the world average, while all other nations in the world are below this global average.
- India's wealth per adult is only one-fifth of the global average figure.

Unfulfilled Commitments:

- Developed countries agreed in the Paris Agreement to fulfil their pre-2020 commitments (part of the second phase of the Kyoto Protocol from 2013 to 2020) before the start of the implementation of the Paris Agreement in 2020.
However, the issue of what has been done so far, especially by developed countries, is one of the foremost challenges faced in climate change negotiations.
- The **compilation and synthesis (C&S) report on the Biennial Reports of the developed countries and their National Greenhouse Gas Inventories** showed that, by 2017, they had reduced their annual emissions only by some 13% below the 1990 levels against 25% to 40% reduction by 2020 (that is required of these countries, according to the Fourth Assessment Report (AR4) of the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change**).
- In the matter of finance for climate action, the **Copenhagen pledge** by the developed countries of mobilising \$100 billion annually by 2020 is nowhere near being kept.
 - The total financial support that has been mobilised by 2016, amounted to \$37.5 million only.
 - Further, almost 80% of this "assistance" to developing countries is mitigation-linked with only 15% for adaptation, while the major part of what has been disbursed is in the form of loans rather than grants.

Sidelining the UNFCCC

- There has been a continuing attempt by the developed countries to set aside the Convention in practice and push all considerations into the framework of the Paris Agreement.
- Most developing countries, however, have increasingly become aware of this and have insisted on keeping the overarching role and significance of the Convention very much in place.

- This is particularly important since the only way to maintain pressure on the US is through the Convention and the processes under it, as it is set to withdraw from the Paris Agreement by 2020.
- Also, developing countries want clarity on the extent to which developed countries will be able to absorb their pre-2020 commitments into their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement,

Article 6 of the Paris Deal

- Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, which refers to carbon trading, has been not finalised yet.
- Developed countries insist on the adoption of this article, as it places no bar on countries upscaling their efforts at a drastic reduction in emissions through independent domestic action.
- China and India, have taken a wide range of initiatives in mitigation, without the assistance of carbon trading. However, other developing countries fear that the article may allow the developed countries to restrict advanced technology to developing countries.

Conclusion

- Till now there is no planet other than earth, where human civilization can thrive. Therefore, the challenge of climate change should only be met through global collective action based on equity, driven by a clear commitment to multilateralism by all nations.
- In this context, the developing countries need to persist with the strategy of prioritising sustainable development while using multilateral fora for maintaining pressure on the developed countries to take the lead in climate action.

Drishti Mains Question

Discuss the challenges faced in the climate change negotiations and also suggest some measures to promote collective global action.