

KEY COP28 DRAFT DOCUMENT SAYS COUNTRIES MUST SHOW PROGRESS ON ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE BY 2030

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Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav walks through the COP28 U.N. Climate Summit after a meeting in Dubai on December 10, 2023. | Photo Credit: AP

By 2025, all countries must have in place a detailed plan to adapt to the current and future impacts of climate change in their countries, and must demonstrate progress in implementing such a plan by 2030, Sunday's draft of a key climate document said.

A final version of this Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) document is expected to be part of the agreement when the UN's COP-28 climate summit concludes in Dubai on December 12.

Much of the focus at the annual talks is on 'mitigation', getting countries to commit to time-bound plans to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions which cause climate change, reflected in the emphasis on the Global Stocktake process. However, there is an equally important process underway on 'adaptation', to push countries to take the steps necessary to cope with the current and future impacts of a changing climate. Global temperatures have already risen 1.1 degrees C since pre-industrial times and brought in their wake an acceleration in climate-related disasters, exhaustive scientific investigations show.

'Adaptation' refers to the adjustments in ecological, social or economic systems that countries must make in response to these, and other anticipated climate effects. These actions are country-specific and can range from building flood defences, setting up early warning systems for cyclones, switching to drought-resistant crops, and redesigning communication systems, business operations, and government policies, according to the UN climate division.

At COP 21 in Paris, negotiators decided that the GGA was necessary to get all countries on board a common framework for adaptation. Eight workshops were held after the last COP in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt where country representatives proposed concrete targets that could be used to quantitatively define whether the world was indeed becoming more adaptable vis-a-vis climate change.

For instance, they framed targets such as: "Enhance the adaptive capacity and resilience of the global population to adverse impacts of climate change by at least 50% by 2030 and by at least

90% by 2050”, or “...achieving 100% coverage of multi-hazard early warning systems, climate information services and response systems by 2027”.

Just as billions and trillions of dollars are needed for mitigation, adaptation too is expected to require developed countries to invest trillions of dollars in developing countries and island states, which are most at risk from climate hazards. Again, only a fraction of what is required has made its way to where it is required.

On Saturday, India had formally conveyed to the United Nations that it was meeting most of its adaptation expenses with its own money. “The total adaptation relevant expenditure was 5.6% of the GDP in 2021-2022, growing from a share of 3.7% in 2015-16... There is significant gap in adaptation resources which cannot be met only through governmental resources. Considering the increase in the adverse impacts of climate change as well as costs of resilience measures, significant contributions need to be channelized through bilateral and multilateral public finance and private investments,” India’s statement said.

Several experts have expressed disappointment with the latest draft of the adaptation document, given the scale of the issue it aims to address. “There are no clearly defined targets, no clear definition of a framework, lots of very general exhortations, no outcome targets... This doesn’t do anything for the adaptation agenda for developing countries and is disappointing,” Dr. Anand Patwardhan, who teaches and researches climate policy at the University of Maryland in the United States, told *The Hindu*.

“Strengthening adaptive capacity is a multi-faceted endeavour that requires sustained and significant support. The Global Goal on Adaptation needs to have an ambitious and specific climate finance and technology commitment from developed nations that the current text lacks,” said Sameer Kwatra, policy director for India at a U.S.-based non-profit, the National Resources Defence Council.

Another expert said that it was encouraging that the GGA at least recognised the need for more adaptation finance. “We have seen that out of \$1.27 trillion in climate finance flows in 2021-22, only \$63 billion is allocated for adaptation. The allocation for adaptation has to increase given the acceleration of the effects of climate change globally,” said Arun Krishnan, an analyst with the think-tank, the Climate Policy Initiative. “The GGA’s implication is that India would need to increase domestic capital allocation for adaptation. India needs to set up a new fund with a broader mandate than the [existing] National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change to provide coverage for all aspects of adaptation and resilience.”

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