

CLIMATE DIPLOMACY AND PAKISTAN

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The climate crisis is one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century with huge geopolitical consequences for the global world. Greenhouse gas emissions have already increased temperatures and are drying up water sources, rising sea levels, and threatening lives and livelihoods around the world. Extreme weather events; intense rain, dangerous storms, prolonged droughts, deadly heat waves, and uncontrollable wildfires, are becoming more frequent and more severe. The challenges posed by the climate crisis are enormous. The repercussions not only threaten people’s livelihoods and impair development but raise important geopolitical questions that touch upon the heart of international politics: sovereignty, territorial integrity, and access to resources such as water, food, and energy. The climate crisis has the potential to cause significant and highly uncertain impacts on societies, undermining human security and increasing the risks of conflict and instability. Addressing them requires a global-level strategic and coordinated response. This is where climate diplomacy comes in.¹

Climate diplomacy encompasses the use of diplomatic tools to support the ambition and functioning of the international climate change regime and to attenuate the negative impacts climate change risks pose for peace, stability, and prosperity. Furthermore, it entails using the issue of climate

¹ “What is Climate Diplomacy?” Climate Diplomacy, <https://climate-diplomacy.org/what-climate-diplomacy>

change for furthering other foreign policy objectives such as confidence and peacebuilding or strengthening multilateralism. Climate diplomacy also calls for preparing appropriate risk assessment and risk management strategies at a global strategic level. This can be achieved through prioritizing climate action with partners worldwide, in diplomatic dialogues, public diplomacy, and external policy instruments.²

Developed nations and their negotiation blocs have long practiced climate diplomacy to shape international negotiations to deliver outcomes that are consistent with their priorities. In contrast, developing country groups, such as the LDCs like Pakistan, have often lacked sufficient capacity to engage actively in climate diplomacy. Consequently, they have had limited influence in shaping negotiations. Countries will always meet challenges and barriers to climate diplomacy and must make all efforts to lift them. Diplomats from developing countries, particularly from LDCs, often struggle to engage effectively in national debates and international negotiations. They may lack the capacity to marshal technical and strategic information or the negotiation skills to influence national and international diplomatic agendas, often because of limited resources and their position in the existing geopolitical landscape. Although building these capabilities seems straightforward on the surface, delivering them requires significant institutional changes to governmental and non-governmental systems. In many countries including Pakistan climate change is housed in more than one ministry, resulting in conflicting mandates and sporadic policy implementation. Most countries have yet to embed climate change sufficiently into their decision-making machinery to deliver an effective climate diplomacy strategy. This is beyond the capacity of any single organisation, ministry or department, no matter how influential they are.³

Pakistan's climate diplomacy needs to construct a development model that considers all its needs, including climate change, that is focussed on adaptation, and encourages 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. Therefore, if Pakistan can frame its national priorities more accurately and correctly, it can have a more reasonable engagement with the international process in climate change.⁴

2 Alexander Carius, "Foreign Policy Responses to Climate Change," *Climate Diplomacy*, 2017, <https://www.adelphi.de/en/publication/climate-diplomacy-foreign-policy-responses-climate-change>

3 Brianna Craft, "Engaging effectively in climate Diplomacy," IIED, August, 2014, <https://pubs.iied.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/migrate/17246IIED.pdf?>

4 Ali Tauqeer Sheikh, "Five takeaways from COP26," *Dawn*, November 21, 2021, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1659322>

It is important for Pakistan 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. Pakistan can start focusing on its neighborhood to play a constructive role in climate change. Making climate change an integral part of its foreign policy ethics and moving towards climate diplomacy can project Pakistan as a sensitive and responsible global leader. Pakistan's fundamental problem is not that the developed countries have not augmented their commitments, which certainly need to increase during this decisive decade to support developing countries. Pakistan's most urgent challenge is two-fold: the inability to have direct access to concessional climate finance on the one hand, and, on the other hand, our inability to spend and absorb the finances that are secured in our name by others.⁵

Although Pakistan contributes little to the global greenhouse gas emissions, it is vulnerable to the effects of climate change and any action it takes to combat it would send a positive signal to the world. While Cop26 delivered some good outcomes, it also dropped some balls: a failure to properly tackle loss and damage and a last-minute deal to weaken coal commitments undermined trust. The G20's efforts won't come to fruition without the G7's money and influence. The world's biggest economies are central to public finance, and major shareholders of development banks. Those most powerful countries need to build an open framework to mobilize money, not exclusive climate clubs that only protect them.⁶

5 Aimen Ayaz, "Climate Diplomacy: The Pakistan Chapter," Paradigm Shift, December 3, 2020, <https://www.paradigmshift.com.pk/pakistan-climate-diplomacy/>

6 Luca Bergamaschi, "Finance must be the golden thread for climate diplomacy in 2022," Climate Home News, December 16, 2021, <https://www.climatechangenews.com/2021/12/16/finance-must-golden-thread-climate-diplomacy-2022/>