

## PAKISTAN'S PUSH FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

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*(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)*



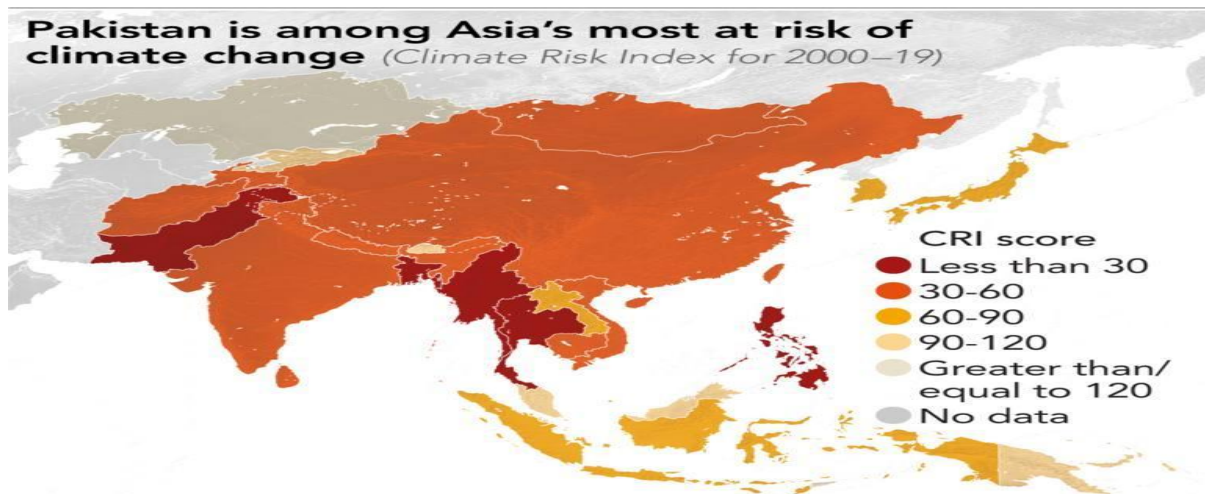
### **Background**

Pakistan has long been considered one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change in the world. While Pakistan is one of the lowest contributors to climate change, it is one of the most impacted countries in the world. Extensive rains, which pummelled Pakistan in the late summer of 2022, inundated the country, putting a third of it under water. More than 33 million people have been affected by the flooding, brought on by record monsoon rains amplified by climate change with an estimated \$30 billion in damages incurred. This was after the country had gone through an extreme heat wave in the earlier part of the summer making Pakistan one of the most susceptible countries to climate induced calamities.<sup>1</sup>

According to data released by the Ministry of Climate Change (MOCC), during the last two decades the country has experienced 152 extreme events, triggered by climate change, of which the recent catastrophic floods are one. There has been a 300% increase in glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) in one year alone. Furthermore, the high intensity heatwave persistence has increased to 41 days per year and Pakistan has had the hottest cities in the world for 3 straight years now. The statistics

<sup>1</sup> Tamanna Salikuddin, Jumaina Siddiqui, "Pakistan's Deadly Floods Come Amid Deluge of Crises," USIP, September 1, 2022, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/09/pakistans-deadly-floods-come-amiddeluge-crises>

released by the ministry also show that the country is likely to hit absolute water scarcity by 2025. Apart from a lack of water, food insecurity is also expected to rise from 40% to 60% by 2050.<sup>2</sup>



Rank	Country/region	Score	Rank	Country/region	Score
2	Myanmar	10.00	48	Mongolia	59.17
4	Philippines	18.17	52	Laos	60.50
7	Bangladesh	28.33	57	Japan	64.83
8	<b>Pakistan</b>	<b>29.00</b>	72	Indonesia	74.00
9	Thailand	29.83	91	South Korea	85.17
10	Nepal	31.33	99	Papua New Guinea	90.83
13	Vietnam	35.67	105	Bhutan	95.17
14	Cambodia	36.17	116	Malaysia	105.67
17	Afghanistan	37.83	120	Kyrgyzstan	109.67
20	India	38.50	154	Kazakhstan	141.83
23	Sri Lanka	39.50	174	East Timor	166.83
36	Taiwan	53.50	174	Maldives	166.83
41	China	56.33	176	Brunei	167.50
47	Tajikistan	59.00	179	Singapore	172.00

Index ranks to what extent countries/regions have been affected by impacts of climate related extreme weather events; includes 180 countries/regions; lower the score, greater the risk  
Source: Germanwatch and Munich Re NatCatSERVICE

Given the multitude of climate change related crises that await Pakistan, the federal government plans to highlight the country's perilous position at the 27th Conference of the Parties (COP27) to be held in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt from November 6-18. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will co-chair, along with the Egyptian President and Norwegian Prime Minister, the deliberations of heads of state and government on key climate-related issues at the high-level segment of the conference. The need for climate diplomacy will be the most important piece in solving the climate puzzle. According to Minister of Climate Change Sherry Rehman, "Now is the time to move towards implementation, and

<sup>2</sup> Our Correspondent, "Climate change's adverse impact on Pakistan to be highlighted at COP 27," Tribune, November 3, 2022, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2384399/climate-changes-adverse-impact-on-pakistan-to-be-highlighted-at-cop-27>

enough with broken promises. COP27 must shake the leaders of the Global North that talks must be focused on protecting vulnerable lives.”<sup>3</sup>

### ***Call for Climate Justice***

“What we seek is not charity, not alms, not aid but justice,” Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Pakistan’s foreign minister, said in September. Developing countries are the least responsible for climate change but the ones who suffer the most because of it. Hence, they are demanding climate justice. Without dedicated loss and damage funding, climate impacts will force helpless nations into unsustainable debt, arresting development and holding them hostage to random acts of charity. With so much money at stake, discussions of loss and damage in Egypt are certain to prove contentious.<sup>4</sup>

Climate change has amplified a climate emergency to a climate catastrophe, putting millions of people at risk globally. The COP26 Summit failed to gain agreement between industrialised and developing countries on who pays for the disasters caused by climate change, especially when it is happening in countries that have contributed the least in emissions. Climate change and the injustice from it is still being argued and tabled at conferences; there is ambition but little action. The world urgently needs climate action, including remedy for loss and damage.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, there is no mechanism yet either in the international dispute settlement arena or in the multilateral negotiations processes of climate change where an aggrieved victim of global warming like Pakistan can present its case against the world’s largest polluters and sue for damages. However, the lack of such a mechanism does not and should not absolve rich countries of their historical responsibilities, who have made certain commitments of mobilising funds for financing climate change mitigation and adaptation called green climate funds. COP27 is an opportunity to remedy that problem, but also to ensure that the issue of climate justice is tackled effectively without climate justice, more funding and loftier promises by world leaders will be meaningless.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Staff Reporter, “PM says will urge world to deliver on climate finance, loss fund commitment,” Pakistan Today, November 7, 2022, <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2022/11/07/pm-says-will-urge-world-to-deliver-on-climate-finance-loss-fund-commitment/>

<sup>4</sup> “Pakistan’s Foreign Policy Priorities: A Conversation with Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari,” Wilson Centre, September 27, 2022, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/pakistans-foreign-policy-priorities-conversation-foreign-minister-bilawal-bhutto-zardari>

<sup>5</sup> Aima Waheed, “Pakistan’s devastating floods spur renewed fight for Climate Justice,” Amnesty International, October 12, 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org.au/pakistans-devastating-floods-are-a-climate-injustice/>

<sup>6</sup> Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, “The way to climate justice,” The News, October 24, 2022, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1002895-the-way-to-climate-justice>

### ***Issue of Climate Finance***

In 2021, wealthy nations vowed to provide \$40 billion per year by 2025 to help poorer countries with climate adaptation measures such as building flood defences. But a United Nations (UN) report (Adaptation Gap Report 2022) estimates this is less than one-fifth of what developing nations need. That has fuelled calls for separate loss and damage funding to deal with the aftermath of climate disasters that nations cannot protect themselves against.<sup>7</sup>

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) passed a resolution on October 7th, calling for developing nations to receive more funding to fight climate change. The resolution also showed support for Pakistan. The resolution, passed by the 193-member body with consensus, said that better access to international climate financing is important in helping developing countries mitigate and adapt to climate change, particularly those that are most vulnerable. Rich countries' unkept promise to provide \$100 billion a year in climate change financing starting in 2020 is a recurring sticking point in international talks on global warming.<sup>8</sup>

Current climate challenges are the cumulative outcome of aggressively pursued industrialisation-led, energy intensive economic growth of economically advanced countries causing damagingly soaring concentration of carbon emissions with climatic impacts for the rest of the world. Pakistan lies at the lower rungs of bottom 50% of emitters where per person emissions have marginally risen from 1.2 tons to 1.6 tons on average from 1990 onwards. This intensifies the ongoing debate that Pakistan, like many other developing countries of the world, has absolutely no role in making this mess but its people and economy are suffering well beyond its coping capacities. While it is apparent that Pakistan represents a special case for climate resilient development and disaster risk reduction needs. But experience shows that international funding does not readily translate into effective prioritisation or allocation of funds to most deserving countries and places.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> UNEP, "Adaptation Gap Report 2022," UN Report, November 1, 2022, <https://www.unep.org/resources/adaptation-gap-report-2022>

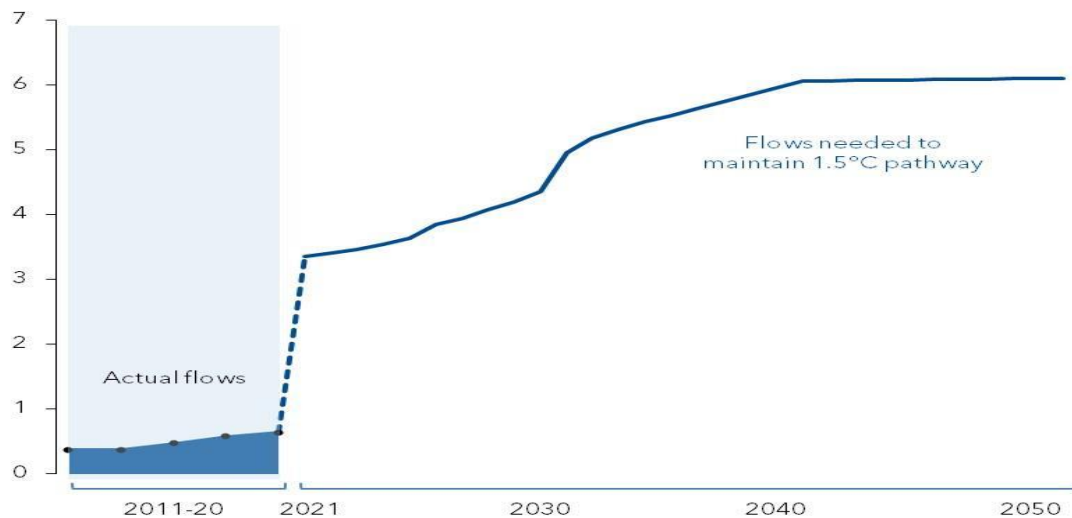
<sup>8</sup> AFP, "UN reiterates support for Pakistan, seeks more funds to fight climate change," Daily Times, October 8, 2022, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/1009274/un-reiterates-support-for-pakistan-seeks-more-funds-to-fight-climate-change/>

<sup>9</sup> Bilal Anwar, "Unlocking financing for climate action in Pakistan," Tribune, October 15, 2022, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2381574/unlocking-financing-for-climate-action-in-pakistan>

## Falling short

At \$630 billion a year, climate finance is a fraction of what's needed for developing countries.

(global climate financing, US\$ trillion)



Source: Global Landscape of Climate Finance 2021, Climate Policy Initiative.

IMF

There are scores of developing countries that face irreversible damage from climate change but have done little to cause the crisis. And they are demanding compensation from the parties they see as responsible: wealthier nations that have burned fossil fuels for decades and created pollution that is dangerously heating the planet. Rich nations and blocs like the United States and the European Union have opposed the idea of explicitly compensating poorer countries for climate disasters already underway, fearing it could open them to unlimited liability. Developing countries and activists view loss and damage as a matter of justice while wealthy nations blanch at the idea of accepting blame.<sup>10</sup>

COP27 presents the world with a chance to show climate leadership by injecting political momentum and building on the tenuous but key consensus reached at COP26 on accelerating action to keep the goal of 1.5 alive. This year, vulnerable countries will expect decisive responses to the latest science and concrete and actionable steps towards implementation of the Paris Agreement. A key part of an effective response will require demonstrable political will from wealthy nations to scale up finance and acknowledge loss and damage as a separate category of finance to address recovery and rehabilitation from climate-induced disasters.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Brad Plumer, Lisa Friedman and Somini Sengupta, "Developing Nations Have a Message at Global Climate Talks: Polluters, Pay Up," New York Times, November 6, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/06/climate/loss-and-damage-climate-cop27.html>

<sup>11</sup> Aisha Khan, "Race to COP27," Dawn, November 4, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1718786>

## **Conclusion**

A consensus has emerged among scientists and policymakers that climate change represents a major threat to the environment. The real challenge of connecting climate change and development is not modelling the long-term effects and potential threats. Rather, formulating a holistic and sustainable policy which is crucial for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Pakistan needs a strategic framework for achieving national growth and poverty alleviation objectives while ensuring ecological sustainability with extensive and accelerated deployment of appropriate technologies for adaptation and mitigation.<sup>12</sup>

Pakistan is already under pressure from climate-related stresses, and this increases the country's vulnerability to further climate change and reduces its adaptive capacity. The COP27 is a great opportunity for Pakistan to present its case in terms of the most affected country due to climate change and the losses attributed to it. The major thematic areas where Pakistan needs to argue its case are climate adaptation, industry decarbonisation, water, food, and nature. It needs to emphasise the need for adaptation and remind the rich nations of their commitment under Article 8 of the Paris Agreement i.e., provision of funds for adaptation.<sup>13</sup>

Pakistan so far has a limited access to international climate finance whereas Pakistan's financial needs remain high given the country's vulnerability to climate change and capital-intensive transition to decarbonise economy to achieve the 2030 emissions target, and make its cities liveable, Pakistan will need to attract investment in climate change initiatives. This will require Pakistan to decommission coal plants, expand renewable sources of energy, invest in green technology more broadly and deepen the green finance market for bonds by improving perceptions about country risk. More importantly, it will be critical to build capacity and technical expertise within the Ministry of Finance, which is leading the country's climate finance efforts, so it can identify and mobilise financing from the range of climate finance instruments and means available internationally.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Aneel Salman, "Broken Bridges: The climate change dilemma in Pakistan," Global Village Space, October 20, 2022, <https://www.globalvillagespace.com/broken-bridges-the-climate-change-dilemma-in-pakistan/>

<sup>13</sup> Maryam Shabbir Abbasi, "Climate justice, now," The News, November 6, 2022, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/tns/detail/1006642-climate-justice-now>

<sup>14</sup> William P. Mako, Amna Mahmood and Ijaz Nabi, "How Pakistan can leverage international climate financing," Dawn, September 14, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1708561>