

# India's stand against inadequate climate finance at COP29

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November 26, 2024

The Conference of Parties (COP)29 climate summit in Baku, Azerbaijan, ended on a dramatic note as negotiators announced a pledge to triple annual climate finance to \$300 billion by 2035, with an aspirational target of \$1.3 trillion. For many nations in the Global South, including India, this was a bitter pill to swallow. The agreed figure fell far short of the \$1.3 trillion annual goal by 2030 that developing countries had demanded. India, in particular, rejected the deal outright, calling it insufficient and inequitable.



PREMIUM

A view shows a venue of the COP29 United Nations climate change conference, in Baku, Azerbaijan. (REUTERS)

“The amount that is proposed to be mobilized is abysmally poor. It's a paltry sum,” says Chandni Raina, an adviser to India's department of economic affairs. Representing India at the summit, Raina expressed strong disapproval of both the finance package and the process by which it was adopted. “This document is little more than an optical illusion. This, in our opinion, will not address the enormity of the challenge we all face. Therefore, we oppose the adoption of this document.”

India's rejection of the climate finance package came in the face of celebration by developed nations who hailed the deal as a significant milestone. The European Union (EU)'s climate envoy, Wopke Hoekstra, said, “COP29 will be remembered as the start of a new era on climate finance. The EU will continue to lead. This COP delivered an ambitious and realistic goal and an increased contributor base. With these funds and this structure, we are confident we'll reach the \$1.3 trillion.”

For India, however, the package is emblematic of deeper inequities in global climate action. “\$300 billion does not address the needs and priorities of developing countries,” Raina argued. “It is incompatible with the principle of CBDR (Common but Differentiated Responsibilities) and equity.”

The final hours of COP29 were marked by heated negotiations, backroom deals, and accusations of procedural unfairness. The presidency of the summit, led by Azerbaijan, was accused of rushing the adoption of the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) without adequately consulting all parties. “We had informed the presidency and the secretariat that we wanted to make a statement before any decision on the adoption,” Raina said. “However, and this is for everyone to see, this has been stage-managed, and we are extremely disappointed with this incident.”

This sentiment was echoed by other members of the Global South. Delegations from small island states and the least developed countries (LDCs) bloc walked out of one meeting, stating that their concerns were being ignored. Civil society organizations also criticized the outcome. Harjeet Singh, Global Engagement Director of the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative, called the deal “woefully inadequate.” He said, “The deal fails to provide the critical support required for developing countries to transition swiftly from fossil fuels to clean, renewable energy systems or to prepare for the devastating impacts of the climate crisis, leaving them severely under-resourced.”

India’s resistance to the package is not merely a refusal to compromise but a clarion call for transformative change. The \$300 billion figure, though a step up from previous pledges, is seen as disproportionately small compared to the scale of the crisis. Furthermore, it shifts responsibility onto all actors, including private entities and even developing nations themselves, through voluntary contributions. This, India argues, undermines the historical responsibility of developed nations, who bear the brunt of accountability for the climate crisis.

India’s opposition to the COP29 outcome is further accentuated by its impressive track record in climate action. As the only G20 nation on track to achieve its Paris Agreement goals, India has proven that sustainable development and rapid economic growth can coexist. Its ambitious renewable energy targets, including 500 GW of non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030, are testament to its commitment.

India’s leadership in global initiatives like the International Solar Alliance (ISA) has catalysed the adoption of solar energy worldwide, particularly in countries lacking resources for clean energy transitions. Domestically, India has championed green technologies, from scaling up electric mobility under the National Electric Mobility Mission to investing in green hydrogen as a future energy source. Programmes like Perform, Achieve, Trade (PAT) have improved energy efficiency in industries, while policies promoting urban climate resilience offer scalable solutions for other nations.

By showcasing these achievements, India positions itself as a leader in the Global South, demonstrating that ambitious climate action is achievable even in resource-constrained settings. This credibility strengthens India's call for equitable climate finance and the fulfilment of commitments made by developed countries.

India's rejection of the COP29 deal signals a need for a fundamental rethinking of the global climate finance framework. The \$300 billion pledge falls short not only in scale but also in timing, with the funds slated to flow only by 2035 which is long after many developing nations will have faced irreversible climate impacts. The Global South has argued for a binding commitment of \$1.3 trillion annually by 2030, a figure necessary to ensure a just transition to low-carbon pathways and build resilience against climate shocks.

A reimagined framework must include simplified mechanisms to access climate finance, particularly for the most vulnerable nations. The current process is marred by bureaucratic hurdles, delaying the delivery of resources to those in urgent need. Moreover, developed nations must shift away from offering loans disguised as climate finance, which exacerbates the debt burdens of developing countries.

India's stance at COP29 also highlights the importance of technology transfer and capacity-building. Beyond financial resources, developing nations require access to affordable technologies that enable them to achieve their climate goals. India has already taken steps in this direction, leading initiatives like the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) and advancing South-South cooperation.

India's rejection of the COP29 package is not merely a protest against an inadequate financial pledge, it is a call to action for a more equitable and ambitious global climate regime. During the plenary session Raina asserted that only trust and collaboration can drive meaningful action against climate change, which is one of humanity's greatest existential challenges.

As a leader among developing nations, India has the capacity to shape the climate agenda in several ways. Strengthening alliances within the Global South can amplify demands for fair and just financing mechanisms. Collaborating with nations like Nigeria, Bolivia, and Malawi, which supported India at COP29, can create a unified front to hold developed nations accountable.

Domestically, India must continue to lead by example, exceeding its climate goals and implementing innovative solutions. Its achievements in renewable energy deployment, sustainable urban development, and industrial efficiency can serve as models for other nations. India can champion new financial instruments, such as green bonds and blended finance models, to mobilise resources without compromising equity.

India's firm stance at COP29 is a pivotal moment in global climate diplomacy. By rejecting an inadequate climate finance package, India has reaffirmed its commitment to a fair and just transition for the Global South. Its leadership, rooted in both domestic achievements and a vision for global equity, can help redefine the narrative around climate action.

The path forward must prioritise trust, collaboration, and ambition. India's role as a leader is not merely aspirational; it is grounded in its successes and its unwavering commitment to justice. As Raina eloquently stated, "We absolutely object to this unfair means of adoption. We are faced with one of the biggest challenges of all times which will determine our existence. The only thing that enables us to move beyond and take action in line with addressing this challenge is collaboration and trust among us. It is a fact that both have not worked today. We are extremely hurt by this action of the presidency and the UNFCCC Secretariat"

India's voice at COP29 echoes the demands of billions across the Global South: a call for equity, accountability, and meaningful action. By continuing to lead with both advocacy and example, India can help shape a future where climate action is not just a promise but a shared reality.

*This article is authored by Harsh Mahaseth, assistant professor, Jindal Global Law School, OP Jindal Global University, Sonapat.*