

UPSC & STATE PCS CURRENT AFFAIRS · UJIYARI.COM**EDITORIAL ANALYSIS**

Fine-Tuning the Paris Pact — Why Climate Equity Must Be Non-Negotiable



28 March 2026

CURATED & WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

GS2 GS3

ALSO FROM THE CREATOR**BharatNotes**Free UPSC notes, MCQs, PYQ analysis. **100% Free.**bharatnotes.com →**ADVERTISE****Advertise with Ujiyari**

Reach thousands of UPSC aspirants daily.

epicbharat@gmail.com

Fine-Tuning the Paris Pact — Why Climate Equity Must Be Non-Negotiable

 The Indian Express

28 March 2026

GS2

GS3

 The Indian Express

4 tags ▼



INTERVIEW ANGLE

"Is the Paris Agreement fair to developing countries? Should historical emitters bear a greater financial burden for climate action?"

WHY IN NEWS

The Union Cabinet on March 25, 2026 approved India updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) for 2031-2035, pledging to reduce emissions intensity of GDP by 47% from 2005 levels by 2035 and achieve 60% non-fossil fuel electricity capacity. This comes as developing nations intensify demands for equitable climate finance ahead of COP30 in Belem, Brazil, arguing that the \$300 billion NCQG agreed at COP29 Baku falls far short of actual needs estimated at \$1-1.3 trillion annually.

THE EDITORIAL ARGUMENT

- 1 The Paris Agreement structural flaw:** While the Agreement enshrines the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC), its implementation through Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) is entirely voluntary and self-determined — allowing developed countries to set unambitious targets without accountability.
- 2 Climate finance remains the broken promise:** The original **\$100 billion/year** pledge (made in 2009 at Copenhagen) was met only in **2022** — three years late — and even that figure was contested as inflated through creative accounting of loans repackaged as “climate finance.”
- 3 The carbon budget is being consumed disproportionately:** Developed countries are responsible for approximately **79% of historical cumulative emissions** (1850-2011), while India — with 17% of the world population — has contributed just **~4%** of cumulative CO₂ emissions. Yet developing countries are expected to decarbonise at the same pace.

- 4 **India NDC 3.0 is ambitious but conditional:** The 47% emissions intensity reduction target and 60% non-fossil capacity goal exceed what most developing countries have pledged — but India rightly insists that delivery is contingent on adequate climate finance and technology transfer from the developed world.

THE PARIS ARCHITECTURE AND ITS LIMITATIONS

The Bottom-Up Approach

The Paris Agreement (adopted December 12, 2015; entered into force November 4, 2016) replaced the top-down Kyoto Protocol model with a bottom-up system where each country sets its own climate targets through NDCs. While this achieved near-universal participation (**195 signatories, 194 ratifications** as of 2026), it created an accountability vacuum — there is no penalty for setting weak targets or missing them.

FEATURE	KYOTO PROTOCOL (1997)	PARIS AGREEMENT (2015)
Approach	Top-down; legally binding targets for Annex I	Bottom-up; voluntary NDCs for all
Differentiation	Sharp (Annex I vs. Non-Annex I)	Blurred (CBDR-RC “in light of national circumstances”)
Targets	Quantified emission limits for developed	Self-determined; no minimum ambition
Compliance	Enforcement branch; penalties	Transparency framework; no penalties
Participation	192 parties (US never ratified)	194 ratifications (near-universal)
Temperature goal	No explicit limit	“Well below 2C; pursue 1.5C”

CBDR-RC: The Equity Anchor

Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC) is the foundational equity principle of the UNFCCC (established at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit). It acknowledges that all countries share the responsibility to address climate change, but the burden must be differentiated based on historical emissions, current capabilities, and development needs.

The Paris Agreement qualifies CBDR-RC with the phrase “**in light of different national circumstances**” — a compromise text that developed countries interpret as diluting the historical responsibility principle, and developing countries interpret as merely contextualising it.

THE CLIMATE FINANCE GAP

From \$100 Billion to \$300 Billion: Still Insufficient

The journey of climate finance promises tells a story of persistent under-delivery.

YEAR	PROMISE/OUTCOME	STATUS
2009 (Copenhagen)	\$100 billion/year by 2020	Missed; met only in 2022 (3 years late)
2020 target year	\$100 billion/year	Delivered ~\$83.3 billion (OECD estimate)
2022	First year \$100 billion reportedly met	Contested — much was loans, not grants
2024 (COP29 Baku)	NCQG: \$300 billion/year by 2035	Agreed; developing nations demanded \$1-1.3 trillion
2035 target	\$300 billion/year (core) + \$1.3 trillion (total including private)	No binding mechanism for private finance

Developing countries — led by the African Group, Arab states, AOSIS (Alliance of Small Island States), and the Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDC, which includes India and China) — had demanded **\$1 to \$1.3 trillion annually**. The \$300 billion agreed at Baku represents roughly one-quarter of the stated need.

The Loans-vs-Grants Problem

A significant portion of the \$100 billion “delivered” was in the form of **loans at near-market rates**, not grants. The OECD reported the \$100 billion target was met in 2022, but an **Oxfam analysis** estimated that the **grant-equivalent value** was only **\$21-24.5 billion** — roughly a quarter of the headline figure. This means developing countries are borrowing to finance climate adaptation, adding to their already unsustainable debt burdens.

INDIA POSITION: NDC 3.0

Cabinet Approval (March 25, 2026)

India updated NDC for the **2031-2035** period was approved by the Union Cabinet and will be communicated to the UNFCCC ahead of COP30. The key targets represent a significant step-up from previous commitments.

NDC TARGET	NDC 2.0 (2021-2030)	NDC 3.0 (2031-2035)
Emissions intensity reduction (vs. 2005)	45% by 2030	47% by 2035
Non-fossil fuel electricity capacity	50% by 2030	60% by 2035
Carbon sink (forest/tree cover)	2.5-3 billion tonnes CO ₂ eq.	3.5-4 billion tonnes CO ₂ eq.
Net zero target	2070	2070 (unchanged)

India Track Record

India has already exceeded its earlier NDC targets ahead of schedule. Government data show that India **reduced emissions intensity by 36% between 2005 and 2020**, and non-fossil fuel capacity crossed **52% of installed capacity** by early 2026.

India Per Capita Argument

India per capita CO₂ emissions stand at approximately **1.9 tonnes (2023)** — one-third of the global average and roughly **one-eighth of the US per capita emissions** (~15 tonnes). Despite having **17% of the global population**, India historical share of cumulative CO₂ emissions is just **~4% (1850-2019)**.

COUNTRY/GR OUP	PER CAPITA CO ₂ (2023, TONNES)	HISTORICAL CUMULATIVE SHARE (1850-2019)	POPULATION SHARE
United States	~15.0	~25%	~4.3%
EU-27	~6.0	~22%	~5.7%
China	~8.0	~13%	~17.7%
India	~1.9	~4%	~17.8%
Sub-Saharan Africa	~0.8	~2%	~15.0%

This data forms the backbone of India equity argument: asking India to peak emissions at the same timeline as nations that industrialised two centuries ago, consumed the vast majority of the global carbon budget, and achieved high living standards in the process is fundamentally unjust.

THE LOSS AND DAMAGE FUND

From Warsaw to Baku

The concept of **Loss and Damage** — compensating vulnerable countries for climate impacts they can neither adapt to nor mitigate — was first formally acknowledged at **COP19 in Warsaw (2013)** with the establishment of the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM).

The breakthrough came at **COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh (2022)**, where parties agreed to establish a dedicated **Fund for responding to Loss and Damage**. At **COP28 in Dubai (2023)**, the fund was operationalised with the **World Bank** as interim trustee. Initial pledges totalled approximately **\$700 million** — widely criticised as insufficient given that climate-related losses in developing countries are estimated at **\$400 billion annually**.

As of COP29 Baku, no developed country NDC explicitly references contributing to the Loss and Damage Fund — a glaring omission that undermines the fund credibility.

THE CARBON BUDGET FAIRNESS QUESTION

What Is Left and Who Gets It

The **remaining global carbon budget** to stay within **1.5 degrees Celsius** of warming is approximately **250 billion tonnes of CO₂** (as of 2024, per IPCC AR6). At current global emission rates (~40 GtCO₂/year), this budget will be exhausted in roughly **6-7 years**.

If this remaining budget were allocated on a **per capita basis**, India (with 17.8% of the world population) would be entitled to ~44.5 GtCO₂ — roughly 25 years of emissions at current rates. The US (4.3% of population) would be entitled to just ~10.75 GtCO₂ — about 2 years at current rates, despite having already consumed more than its per-capita share historically.

This mathematical reality is why India and other developing nations argue that the **polluter-pays principle** must be central to any **equitable** climate framework. Historical emitters have consumed the carbon space that developing countries now need for their industrialisation and poverty eradication.

WAY FORWARD

The Paris Agreement remains the only viable **multilateral** framework for climate action — but its equity architecture needs urgent strengthening before COP30 in Belem (November 2025).

First, the \$300 billion NCQG must be treated as a **floor, not a ceiling**, with a built-in escalation mechanism linked to updated climate science and developing country needs assessments. At least **50% must be in the form of grants**, not loans.

Second, the Loss and Damage Fund must be scaled to at least **\$100 billion annually by 2030**, with mandatory contributions from Annex II countries pegged to their historical emissions share. Voluntary pledges have demonstrably failed.

Third, technology transfer provisions (Article 10 of the Paris Agreement) must move from aspiration to enforceable commitments — particularly for green hydrogen, grid-scale battery storage, carbon capture, and climate-resilient agriculture. India cannot achieve its NDC 3.0 targets at affordable cost without access to frontier clean technologies.

Fourth, India must leverage its **G20 presidency legacy** and LMDC leadership to build a coalition that links NDC ambition to verifiable finance delivery — no new commitments without demonstrated fulfilment of old ones.

Climate equity is not charity; it is the mathematical consequence of a finite carbon budget consumed disproportionately by a few nations. The Paris Pact will succeed only if it honours this arithmetic.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Paris Agreement (2015); UNFCCC (1992); CBDR-RC; NDC; COP29 Baku NCQG (\$300 billion); Loss and Damage Fund (COP27 Sharm el-Sheikh); India NDC 3.0 targets; Kyoto Protocol (1997); IPCC AR6 carbon budget

MAINS GS-2:

Important international institutions, agencies; Bilateral, regional and global groupings involving India; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India interests

MAINS GS-3:

Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation; Climate change and its impact

INTERVIEW:

Equity vs. ambition in climate negotiations; India moral authority on per capita emissions; developmental rights vs. planetary boundaries

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

PARIS AGREEMENT — CORE DATA:

Adopted: December 12, 2015 (COP21, Paris)

Entered into force: November 4, 2016

Signatories: 195; Ratifications: 194

Temperature goal: well below 2 degrees Celsius; pursue efforts for 1.5 degrees Celsius

Equity principle: CBDR-RC “in light of different national circumstances”

India ratified: October 2, 2016 (Gandhi Jayanti)

INDIA NDC 3.0 (2031-2035) — APPROVED MARCH 25, 2026:

Emissions intensity reduction: 47% by 2035 (vs. 2005 levels)

Non-fossil fuel electricity capacity: 60% by 2035

Carbon sink: 3.5-4 billion tonnes CO₂ equivalent

Net zero target: 2070

Track record: 36% intensity reduction achieved (2005-2020); 52% non-fossil capacity (early 2026)

CLIMATE FINANCE TIMELINE:

\$100 billion/year pledge: 2009 (Copenhagen); met only in 2022

COP29 NCQG (Baku, 2024): \$300 billion/year by 2035

Developing country demand: \$1-1.3 trillion/year

Grant-equivalent of \$100 billion (Oxfam estimate): only \$21-24.5 billion

LOSS AND DAMAGE FUND:

Concept: COP19 Warsaw (2013) — Warsaw International Mechanism

Fund established: COP27 Sharm el-Sheikh (2022)

Operationalised: COP28 Dubai (2023); World Bank as interim trustee

Initial pledges: ~\$700 million; annual losses estimated at \$400 billion

INDIA EMISSIONS PROFILE:

Per capita CO₂ (2023): ~1.9 tonnes (one-eighth of US; one-third of global average)

Historical cumulative share (1850-2019): ~4% (vs. US ~25%, EU ~22%)

Population share: ~17.8% of world

3rd largest current emitter (after China and US) but low per capita

CARBON BUDGET (IPCC AR6):

Remaining budget for 1.5 degrees Celsius: ~250 billion tonnes CO₂ (as of 2024)

Current global emissions: ~40 GtCO₂/year

Budget exhaustion at current rate: ~6-7 years

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

UNFCCC established: 1992 (Rio Earth Summit)

Kyoto Protocol: 1997 (entered force 2005); Annex I vs Non-Annex I differentiation

COP30 venue: Belem, Brazil (November 2025)

India G20 Presidency: 2023 (New Delhi Declaration)

LMDC: Like-Minded Developing Countries (includes India, China, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia)

AOSIS: Alliance of Small Island States (39 members)

Sources: [Indian Express](#), [PIB](#), [UNFCCC](#), [Carbon Brief](#)



CURATED & WRITTEN BY

Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)[Read Full Article on Ujyari →](#)<https://ujyari.com/editorials/2026/03/paris-agreement-equity-climate-justice/>

ALSO FROM THE CREATOR

BharatNotes

Free UPSC study platform — subject-wise notes across all 4 GS papers, Prelims MCQs, Mains answer frameworks, PYQ analysis & progress tracking. **100% Free • No Login Required.**

[Start Preparing → bharatnotes.com](http://bharatnotes.com)

📌 OPPORTUNITY

Advertise with Ujyari

Reach **thousands of serious UPSC & State PCS aspirants** daily through our PDFs, website, and social channels.

Ideal for: Coaching institutes • EdTech platforms • Book publishers • Exam prep apps

[✉ epicbharat@gmail.com](mailto:epicbharat@gmail.com)

Write to us for rates & media kit

Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs · ujyari.com · bharatnotes.com