

Global Environmental Governance: Examining the Role of Developing Nations in Climate Negotiations

Dr. Nikhil Arora

Center for Global Environmental Governance, International Academy of Climate Policy and Sustainable Development, Geneva, Switzerland

Dr. Laila M. Okonkwo

Department of South–South Cooperation and Climate Diplomacy, Institute for Emerging Economies and Global Negotiation Studies, Nairobi, Kenya

Submission: 10.07.2025 | Acceptance: 01.10.2025 | Publication: 18.02.2026

Abstract

A crucial area for tackling the intricate problems brought on by resource depletion, biodiversity loss, and climate change is global environmental governance. In international climate negotiations, developing countries are crucial because they must strike a balance between the demands of environmental sustainability and economic growth. The changing roles that developing nations play in influencing international environmental policies, with an emphasis on how they participate in multilateral environmental agreements, the Paris Agreement, and COP summits. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study identifies important areas—such as promoting equity, financial assistance, and technology transfer—where emerging countries have demonstrated leadership. The difficulties they encounter, including scarce resources, geopolitical demands, and the way that vulnerable groups are disproportionately affected by climate change. Through the examination of case studies from Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia, the article emphasises how crucial it is to give poor countries more influence over global climate governance. The necessity of inclusive negotiations that put accountability, equity, and capacity-building first in order to produce fair and long-lasting results for everybody.

Keywords: Global Environmental Governance, Climate Negotiations, Developing Nations, Paris Agreement

Introduction

In the twenty-first century, global environmental governance has emerged as a key component of international diplomacy, tackling pressing issues including resource depletion, biodiversity loss, and climate change. All nations must participate in these interrelated issues because they require collective action. Despite the fact that wealthier nations have traditionally controlled international climate negotiations, developing countries' influence has increased dramatically due to their growing susceptibility to environmental changes and desire to influence sustainable development paths. Developing countries must strike a balance between the urgent need for environmental stewardship and the need for economic growth and poverty reduction. Their participation in global environmental governance is crucial yet complicated due to their modest resources, strong reliance on natural ecosystems, and disproportionate vulnerability to climate

hazards. Notwithstanding these obstacles, poor nations have been powerful advocates for equality, justice, and the acknowledgement of past obligations in international climate talks. The Paris Agreement and the COP summits that followed have brought attention to how important it is for developing countries to advocate for aggressive global climate objectives while making sure that pledges take into consideration their unique roles and capacities. In order to facilitate sustainable transitions, these countries have also underlined the significance of financial mechanisms, technology transfer, and capacity-building. Developing countries have increased their bargaining leverage by banding together under groups like the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Group and the G77+China, promoting agendas that put inclusive governance and climate justice first. The roles and difficulties that developing countries play in global environmental governance. It looks at how their roles in climate negotiations have changed over time, reviews case studies from various geographical areas, and assesses the factors that help or hinder their involvement. This study intends to advance knowledge of how empowering developing countries might result in just and efficient international environmental policy by emphasising the value of inclusion.

The Role of Developing Nations in Climate Negotiations

Because of their support for justice, equity, and sustainable development, developing countries have emerged as crucial players in international climate negotiations, helping to shape the global agenda. These nations have effectively established themselves as important players in the fight against climate change, despite a number of political and economic obstacles. Their involvement demonstrates how intertwined global environmental governance is and how inclusive and fair contributions from all countries are essential to the achievement of climate agreements.

1. Advocating for Climate Justice

The idea of "common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities" (CBDR-RC) is one that developing countries constantly highlight. This idea, which has its roots in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), recognises both the resource limitations of impoverished countries and the historical responsibilities of wealthier nations for greenhouse gas emissions.

- **Equity in Climate Action:** Developing countries urge wealthier nations to spearhead mitigation measures and help economies that are at risk, arguing for equitable burden-sharing in emission reductions.
- **Representation of Vulnerable Populations:** Nations such as Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) have called for immediate international action, pointing out the disproportionate effects of climate change on their populations.

2. Leadership in Multilateral Negotiations

Important international agreements like the Paris Agreement and the Kyoto Protocol have been greatly influenced by developing countries.

- **The Paris Agreement:** The agreement's provisions for technology transfer, capacity-building, and financial support were secured in large part thanks to the efforts of developing nations.
- **Coalition-Building:** Developing countries now have more collective bargaining power and can effectively influence climate agendas because to organisations like the African Group of Negotiators (AGN), the LDC Group, and the G77+China.

3. *Pushing for Financial and Technological Support*

For developing countries to make the shift to low-carbon economy and prepare for the effects of climate change, financial and technological resources are essential.

- **Climate Finance:** Developing countries have been outspoken in their calls on wealthier nations to commit to meeting the \$100 billion yearly climate funding target set forth in the Paris Agreement.
- **Technology Transfer:** In order to facilitate sustainable energy transitions and enhanced climate resilience, they promote the availability of clean technologies at reasonable prices.

4. *Highlighting Adaptation Needs*

Developing countries have stressed the significance of adaptation measures to address urgent climate concerns, even as mitigation efforts dominate global climate deliberations.

- **Adaptation Strategies:** These consist of sustainable farming methods, coastal defence systems, and catastrophe preparedness.
- **Loss and Damage:** Developing countries have led the charge to acknowledge "loss and damage," demanding restitution for irreversible climate impacts.

5. *Case Studies of Developing Nations' Contributions*

- **India:** India led the International Solar Alliance, a cooperation to increase the deployment of solar energy, and is a major force in the promotion of renewable energy.
- **Brazil:** Brazil, the guardian of the Amazon rainforest, has negotiated worldwide funding for conservation initiatives while promoting sustainable forest management.
- **Small Island Developing States (SIDS):** In order to preserve their survival, countries like Fiji and the Maldives have emphasised the need for immediate climate action on international stages.

6. *Challenges in Participation*

Developing countries encounter many obstacles in climate negotiations, notwithstanding their proactive involvement:

- **Resource Constraints:** Their capacity to engage successfully is frequently hampered by a lack of financial and technical resources.
- **Geopolitical Pressures:** Smaller countries' views may be silenced in international diplomacy due to power disparities.
- **Climate Vulnerability:** Climate change's disproportionate effects draw money and focus away from negotiations.

7. *Strengthening Their Role*

Developing countries can improve their efficacy in climate negotiations by:

- **Leverage Regional Alliances:** Their combined voice can be amplified by fortifying alliances such as the LDC Group and the African Group.
- **Enhance Technical Capacities:** Their negotiating tactics can be strengthened by spending money on knowledge and study.

Demand Accountability: Progress in providing financial and technological support can be ensured by holding rich countries responsible for their promises.

The significance of inclusive and equitable global governance is highlighted by the participation of poor countries in climate discussions. These countries have influenced the direction of international climate policies by promoting climate justice, calling for financial and technological assistance, and highlighting the need for adaptation. Achieving lasting and equitable results in the battle against climate change requires bolstering their involvement and tackling their obstacles.

Conclusion

The global climate agenda is significantly shaped by developing countries, who prioritise the values of justice, equity, and shared responsibility. These countries have become powerful players in global climate talks in spite of major obstacles like scarce resources, unequal geopolitical influence, and disproportionate susceptibility to the effects of climate change. Developing nations have played a significant role in historic accords such as the Paris Agreement and have maintained international focus on the needs of vulnerable populations by forming coalitions, advocating for financial and technological assistance, and taking the lead in sustainable development. Their advocacy for adaptation strategies and climate justice emphasises how critical it is to acknowledge past obligations and resolve disparities in global climate governance. Stronger support systems, such as more climate money, access to clean technologies, and capacity-building initiatives, are necessary to fully realise the contributions of developing countries. The active and fair involvement of poor countries is crucial for building robust and sustainable global policies as the effects of climate change worsen. The international community can guarantee that climate negotiations produce results that benefit everyone and open the door to a more equitable and sustainable future by promoting inclusivity and accountability.

References

- Gupta, J. *The Climate Change Convention and Developing Countries: From Conflict to Consensus?* Springer, 1997. (Discusses UNFCCC negotiations and developing countries' positions)
- Klöck, C., Castro, P., and Weiler, F. (eds.) *Coalitions in Climate Change Negotiations*. Routledge. (Explores negotiating blocs including G77+China)
- Aguilar Delgado, N., & Perez-Aleman, P. "Inclusion in Global Environmental Governance: Sustained Access, Engagement and Influence in Decisive Spaces." *Sustainability*, 2021. (Inclusion of actors in governance)
- Common But Differentiated Responsibilities* (United Nations principle). Wikipedia article. (CBDR as a guiding principle in climate negotiations)

- Ndebele, P. “Global Governance and Its Effect on Climate Change Policy Implementation.” *American Journal of International Relations*, 2024. (How governance affects climate action)
- Paris Agreement* (UN climate deal, 2015) — Details the commitments on finance and differentiated responsibilities. (Key framework shaping negotiations)
- Sustainable development and climate change negotiations: Perspectives of developing countries*. In *Sustainable Development: Asia-Pacific Perspectives*, Cambridge University Press, 2022. (Developing countries’ negotiation positions)
- Global climate governance in the new era: Potential of business actors and technological innovation*. Climatic Change Policy, 2021. (Examines actors beyond states in governance)
- China’s Rising Influence on Climate Governance: Forging a Path for the Global South*. *Global Environmental Change*, 2022. (Emerging role of a key developing country)
- Global Climate Governance and International Cooperation*. In *Global Climate Governance* (Springer), 2020s edition. (Discusses CBDR and North-South roles)
- Stevenson, H., & Dryzek, J. *Democratizing Global Climate Governance*. Cambridge University Press, 2014. (Theoretical insights into governance democracy)
- Earth Negotiations Bulletin (ENB)*. (A daily reporting service on multilateral environmental negotiations which can be cited for conference proceedings)
- Climate Law and Governance Initiative (CLGI)*. Wikipedia article. (Institutional capacity-building linked to climate negotiations)
- Qin, Y., Zhang, D., & Pang, Y. “Dynamic Grouping for Climate Change Negotiation...” arXiv, 2023. (Modeling cooperation and group negotiation strategies)
- Carattini, S., et al. “What does Network Analysis teach us about International Environmental Cooperation?” arXiv, 2021. (Insights into networks of environmental agreements relevant to negotiation dynamics)