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India submits its updated climate action targets to UN body, says it's a step towards reaching net-zero by 2070

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NEW DELHI: India has submitted its updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) - climate action targets - to the UN climate change body, promising that the country would achieve about 50% cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030. The updates are aimed at keeping India on track of its long-term goal of carbon neutrality by 2070.

India's other updated quantitative target under the new submission is to reduce emissions intensity (emission per unit of GDP) by 45% by 2030 from 2005 level.

"This update to India's existing NDC is a step forward towards our long-term goal of reaching net-zero by 2070," said environment minister Bhupender Yadav in the country's submission note to the United Nations

Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on August 23.

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Yadav also flagged that the country's NDC does not bind it to any sector-specific mitigation obligation or action, saying "India's goal is to reduce overall emission intensity and improve energy efficiency of its economy over time and at the same time protecting the vulnerable sectors of economy and segments of our society".

India has also kept the option of further updates of its NDC open. "India reserves the right to provide further updates by way of additional submissions on its NDC, as and when required," said Yadav in his note. The UNFCCC made the submission public on Friday.

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India's submission shows that the country's target of achieving 50% cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy will be a sort of conditional as it will be contingent on international support. India underlined that the country would achieve that target "with the help of transfer of technology and low-cost international finance including from Green Climate Fund (GCF)".

The condition is a kind of reminder to the rich nations about their promises on delivering \$100 billion per year by 2020 to help developing countries move towards a low carbon growth path. Rich nations have, so far, not contributed the promised amount to the GCF, meant for supporting developing countries.

The country's submission has total eight goals which include three updates including its commitment to propagate a healthy and sustainable way of living based on "traditions and values of conservation and moderation", including through a mass movement for LIFE -lifestyle for Environment as a key to combating climate change.

Remaining five targets, which India submitted as its first NDC in 2015, remained unchanged. It includes the country's goal to "create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030".

Referring to updated NDC, Yadav said, "This update to India's existing NDC translates the 'Panchamrit' announced at COP26 (Glasgow, UK last year) into enhanced climate targets, after carefully considering national circumstances and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities".

NDCs are the voluntary targets of countries under the Paris Agreement on climate change to collectively reach the goal of keeping the global average temperature rise well below 2 degree Celsius while making efforts to limit it to 1.5 degree C above pre-industrial (1850-1900) level. The Article 4 (paragraph 9) of the Agreement provides that each country will communicate/update a NDC every five years.

India in its updated submission said that the country's "NDC is ambitious, and it is a significant contribution towards achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement. Environmentally sustainable, low carbon initiatives are underpinning all key sectors of the Indian economy."

Reaffirming its commitment to the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, India's submission noted that it has not proposed any change in other sections or text of the document containing its first NDC (submitted on October 2, 2015) at this stage.

INDIA'S EIGHT GOALS

1. To put forward and further propagate a healthy and sustainable way of living based on traditions and values of conservation and moderation, including through a mass movement for 'LIFE'– 'Lifestyle for Environment' as a key to combating climate change.
2. To adopt a climate friendly and a cleaner path than the one followed hitherto by others at corresponding level of economic development.
3. To reduce Emissions Intensity of its GDP by 45 percent by 2030, from 2005 level.
4. To achieve about 50 percent cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030, with the help of transfer of technology and low-cost international finance including from Green Climate Fund (GCF).
5. To create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.
6. To better adapt to climate change by enhancing investments in development programmes in sectors vulnerable to climate change, particularly agriculture, water resources, Himalayan region, coastal regions, health and disaster management.
7. To mobilize domestic and new & additional funds from developed countries to implement the above mitigation and adaptation actions in view of the resource required and the resource gap.

8. To build capacities, create domestic framework and international architecture for quick diffusion of cutting edge climate technology in India and for joint collaborative R&D for such future technologies.