

A new dawn - the paris agreement enters into force!



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Rituraj Phukan 4 November 2016 13220 views

Today represents a new dawn in the history of mankind. Future generations will remember 4th November [2016 as](#) the day the Paris Agreement came into force. The threat of climate change has never been more urgent, but the way forward has never been clearer with the historic climate agreement being among the fastest international agreements ever to be ratified and come into force. Expectedly, all the dates associated with the Paris Agreement will be remembered for eternity [as](#) the decisive moments when the global [community](#) decided to bring back the planet from the brink.

The path was paved exactly a month back when the European Union overcame procedural hurdles to join the agreement and ensured that the conditions for implementation were met, less than a year after the Paris Agreement was signed on the 12th of December, 2015. At least 55 countries, representing at least 55 percent of global greenhouse [gas](#) emissions had to ratify the agreement for it to take force. With the EU member states, 73 parties to the Paris Agreement have now ratified or formally approved the agreement, representing almost 57 percent of global greenhouse emissions.

It took 24 years after the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, which created the United Nations Framework Convention on [Climate Change](#) (UNFCCC), to finally achieve a truly global agreement to address the climate change [crisis](#). But the next UNFCCC meeting in Marrakesh, Morocco, is scheduled days after the Paris Agreement comes into force, from the 7th of November through to the 18th. It is also significant that the first session of the “[Conference](#) of the Parties serving [as](#) the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement”, commonly referred to [as](#) the CMA1, where countries [start](#) practical negotiations about implementation.

That is because, when an agreement comes into force, the compulsory elements are binding on the parties who have joined and the party is under moral obligation to implement the voluntary clauses [as](#) well. These countries now must initiate action to achieve their climate plans, called nationally determined contributions (NDC) and submit a fresh NDC every five years to ensure that the planet stays on track to control global warming.

Earlier this year, [India](#) had surprised the world by announcing its decision to ratify the Paris Agreement, thereby paving the way for its enforcement in record time. Speaking at a [National](#) Council meeting of his party at Kozhikode on 24th September, Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) said the country would ratify the Paris Agreement on the [birth anniversary](#) of Mahatma [Gandhi](#) who led his life with minimum carbon footprint. “There is one work left in the CoP21,” he said, referring to the 21st meeting of [Conference](#) of Parties to the UNFCCC, “Ratification is yet to be done and [India](#) too is yet to do it. Today, on the [birth anniversary](#) of Deendayal Upadhyay, I announce that [India](#) will ratify the decisions under the Paris Agreement on October 2nd, the [birth anniversary](#) of Mahatma [Gandhi](#).”

On April 22, [2016](#), world [leaders](#) from 175 countries inked the historic Paris Agreement, using Earth Day [2016 as](#) a backdrop for the ceremonial inking of the global agreement that will, hopefully, [lead](#) the world away from the age of fossil fuels and save the planet from catastrophic climate change. Several heads of [state](#), officials and civil society representatives were at the United Nations headquarters at New York City to [sign](#) the Paris Agreement.

"We are in a race [against](#) time." U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had told the gathering at the United Nations headquarters in New York. "The era of consumption without consequences is [over](#)." The U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry signed the document while holding his young granddaughter. She was one of 197 children at the event to represent the parties that adopted the agreement, Ban said. "These young people are our future. Our covenant is with them," Ban said. "Today is a day for our children and grandchildren and all generations to come."

[US President](#) Barack Obama has said that the Paris Agreement represents "the single-best chance that we have" to protect the planet from climate change. Its promise lies in the fact that it establishes a durable framework of global action in which all countries, both developed and developing, make improved climate commitments [over](#) five-year cycles.

[India](#) has been leading the world in taking decisive action in recent times; in mid-October, it enabled nearly 200 countries to seal a legally binding [deal](#) that aims to reduce climate damaging greenhouses gases in products ranging from air-conditioners and refrigerators to shaving foams, a pact which will come into effect from January 2019 for developed countries such [as](#) the United States but much later for developing economies. The [deal](#) approved in Rwandan capital [city](#) Kigali, aims to substantially reduce the use of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), known [as](#) super greenhouse gases, by the middle of this century and complement the Paris Agreement on climate change.

The Paris Agreement is an important [success](#) for climate diplomacy [as](#) instead of imposing targets, it is based on voluntary country commitments or the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions. It commits rich and poor countries to take action to curb the rise in global temperatures that is melting glaciers, raising sea levels and shifting rainfall patterns. The Agreement ‘recognizes that climate change represents an urgent and potentially irreversible threat’ to the planet and mankind, and has set the goal for the world’s atmosphere to be a net zero of pre-industrial levels by 2100. By establishing a process where countries will meet every five years to review their progress in cutting emissions, the Paris agreement creates a way to ensure everyone’s living up to their promises. All countries are to review these contributions every five years from 2020 and to aim to achieve carbon neutrality in the second half of the century. Just [as](#) important, this window creates an opportunity for civil society groups and citizens to keep the pressure on governments to increase their commitments to cutting emissions – also submitted every five years.

Rituraj Phukan

Rituraj Phukan is the Chief Operating Officer, Walk For Water; District Manager, Assam, Nagaland & Manipur, The Climate Reality Project India and Secretary General of Green Guard Nature Organization.

BY RITURAJ PHUKAN

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