



Where the rich got their way

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Katowice signals a global climate regime that leaves the fate of the world hanging in the balance

- The 24th Conference of the Parties (COP-24) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), held at Katowice in Poland, brings little cheer on the climate front for developing countries.
- With the passage of the so-called “rulebook” for the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the developed countries have largely succeeded in establishing a global climate regime that gives them the strategic advantage and assuages some of their core concerns.
- This signals the making of a new, contradictory situation where the scope and complexity of the regime are fundamentally at odds with the very purpose for which the regime has been constructed.

Rollback of differentiation

- At the heart of this strategic success is the substantial rollback of differentiation between the global North and South in climate action.
- The reporting requirements are also marked by a pseudo-scientific concern for stringency, which is far in excess of the accuracy of climate science itself.
- But the crux of the problem is the contradiction between the onerous nature of these universal rules and the total lack of initiative by the developed countries in taking the lead in climate mitigation.
- All developed countries continue to invest in fossil fuels either through direct production or imports.
- In the event, the dispute that broke out at COP24 over whether the Special Report of the IPCC should be welcomed or merely noted must be considered a red herring.
- Indeed, the report itself appears to have been used to generate a sense of urgency in stampeding countries into approval of the “rulebook” rather than point the way to more substantial mitigation by the developed nations.

- The Special Report, for instance, did little to inspire the developed countries to increase the quantum of climate finance as well as speeding up its delivery.
- Much of the pressure exerted by developed countries at COP24 had the active backing and instigation of the U.S.
- Despite the public posturing by other G-8 heads of state outside the climate summits, the marked synergy between the U.S. and its political and strategic allies in pushing through several critical elements of the “rulebook” was no secret.
- India, despite its articulation of the need for equity in climate action and climate justice, failed to obtain the operationalisation of these notions in several aspects of the “rulebook”.
- Regrettably, while India has not been shy to hold out against the global nuclear order it has not extended this attitude to protecting its interests in the emerging global climate regime.

Poor articulation of needs

- Despite the significant number of Indians at COP24, the broad articulation of India’s needs was at the lowest ebb seen in the last several years.
- At the final plenary of COP24, the Like-Minded Developing Countries grouping echoed India’s reservations on the neglect of equity and climate justice in the final form of the “rulebook”, while the broader G77 plus China combine expressed its regret at the unbalanced nature of the outcome, with its undue emphasis on mitigation by all.
- But with the “rulebook” nevertheless having been adopted, COP24 signals a global climate regime that benefits and protects the interests of the global rich, while leaving the climatic fate of the world, and the developmental future of a substantial section of its population, still hanging in the balance.