

Reforming the UNFCCC Process - Challenges, Criticisms, and Proposals

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UNFCCC Latest News

- The article discusses the **ongoing credibility crisis in international climate negotiations** under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (**UNFCCC**).
- Despite repeated conferences and global commitments, **progress on climate action has been limited**, especially regarding **climate justice** for developing nations.
- The article evaluates the **structural inefficiencies of the UNFCCC**, highlights reform demands, and outlines Brazil's efforts to revive confidence in the process ahead of COP30.

About the UNFCCC

- The UNFCCC is the **UN process for negotiating an agreement to limit dangerous climate change**.
- It is **an international treaty** among countries to combat dangerous human interference with the climate system. The main way to do this is **limiting the increase in greenhouse gases** in the atmosphere.

- It was **signed in 1992 by 154 states** at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), informally known as the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro. The treaty entered into force on 21 March 1994.
- “UNFCCC” is also the name of the Secretariat charged with supporting the operation of the convention, with offices on the UN Campus in **Bonn**, Germany.
- By 2022, the UNFCCC had 198 parties, and its supreme decision-making body, the Conference of the Parties (**COP**), meets every year.

Background - The UNFCCC Credibility Crisis

- **Failure to deliver climate justice:**
 - **Developed countries** have failed to meet emission targets and financial commitments.
 - **Developing nations**, especially small islands and vulnerable states, feel ignored in negotiations. Complaints include being left out of decision-making and **lack of accountability for developed nations**.
- **US withdrawal impact:**
 - The withdrawal of the United States under Trump’s administration **eroded trust** in climate negotiations.
 - Led to a perception that the **process** of climate negotiations is **ineffective and increasingly irrelevant**.

Bonn Climate Meeting and the Road to COP30

- **Bonn (Germany) climate meet (June 2025):**
 - It is held **annually** to prepare for COP summits.
 - This year’s focus is on rebuilding confidence in the process before COP30 in Brazil.
- **Brazil’s leadership role:** As COP30 host, Brazil is proactively seeking reforms by floating a **30-point ideas list**, aiming to make negotiations more inclusive and efficient.

Key Reform Proposals

- **Structural streamlining:** To –
 - Eliminate overlapping agenda items.
 - Shorten negotiation time.
 - Limit delegation sizes to avoid crowding and dominance by wealthier nations.
- **Limit on host countries:**
 - Proposals to bar countries with poor climate action records (like fossil fuel dependency) from hosting COPs.
 - Backlash against hosting COPs in oil-dependent states like the UAE (Dubai, COP28) and Azerbaijan (Baku, COP29).
- **Mainstreaming UNFCCC:**
 - Brazil’s idea to hold discussions in other multilateral forums (e.g., UN agencies, financial institutions).
 - Proposal for **alternate mechanisms** that complement UNFCCC and speed up implementation.

Developing Nations' Demand - More Climate Finance

- **Finance deficit:**
 - The biggest hurdle for developing countries is the lack of adequate climate finance.
 - To fulfill the **2015 Paris Agreement**, developed countries are required to collectively mobilize at least **\$100 billion annually** to assist developing nations in climate action.
 - However, their recent pledge at the Baku meeting fell short, **offering only \$300 billion per year starting from 2035**, while the actual needs of developing countries are estimated at **\$1.3 trillion annually**.
- **Bonn meeting outcome:**
 - Developing nations (like **BRICS**) have demanded more urgent and increased financial support, calling on developed countries to honor their UNFCCC and Paris Agreement financial commitments.
 - They demanded a decision on a new climate finance goal, emphasizing the urgent need for **accessible, predictable, and sustained finance flows**.

Civil Society and Observers' Role

- Civil society groups must **push for more transparent, inclusive negotiations**.
- Demand for **a restructured format of the COP meetings** that limits the influence of fossil-fuel-dependent entities/ companies.

Conclusion

- Despite strong proposals and Brazil's leadership, major structural reforms to the UNFCCC process are unlikely to be adopted soon due to **lack of consensus and entrenched interests**.
- However, these efforts represent an important push **to make global climate governance more accountable, inclusive, and action-oriented**.

Source: IE

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