

Climate change – Change Your Attitude



teri

The Energy and Resources Institute



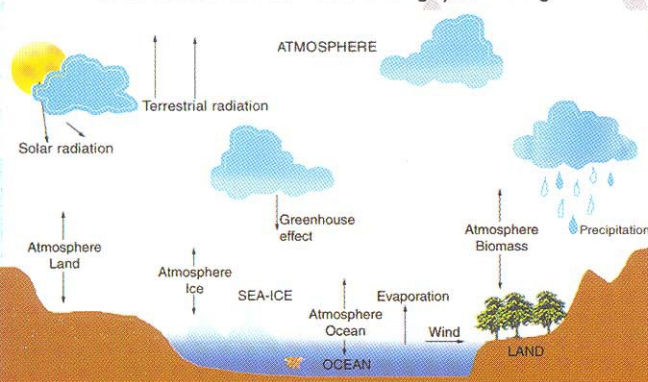
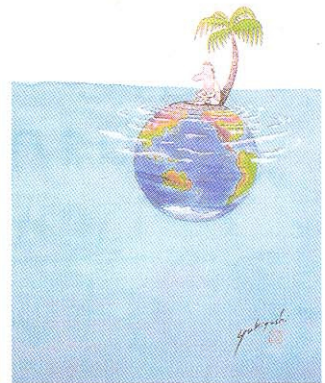
Ministry of Environment and Forests

It is often said that climate is what we expect and weather is what we get. Changes in the weather can be felt in our daily lives but changes in climate take a longer time to settle in. Climate is in fact the average weather of a place over a given period of time.

Climate change is a change in the average weather of a given area or region. It is a natural phenomenon and has been occurring for millions of years – spells of ice ages and warm periods. The earth's climate changes naturally and gradually and all life adapts to this change. However, in the last 150 years or so, it has been observed that the change has been a little too rapid causing worry to scientists and climatologists. This acceleration has mainly been attributed to human activities. In this vast scenario, the greenhouse effect has an important role to play. Human activities such as burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, and agriculture have dramatically increased GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions, far exceeding the ability of natural systems to remove these gases. The change is occurring too rapidly for many species to adjust, thereby leading to their extinction. Changes in climate have had their impacts on human lives as can be seen from the rise in sea levels, increasing floods and droughts, and changing weather phenomenon.

The problems of climate change were first highlighted at the Earth Summit held at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 1992. This was a historic summit as, for the first time, global attention was focused on the fact that environmental conditions were closely linked to economic conditions, poverty, and social life. Five major agreements came up during this Summit – one of them was the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change). This agreement body was formed to try and bring a

halt to climate change by reducing emission levels of GHGs to acceptable levels. India signed the UNFCCC in 1992, but like most other developing countries, India does not have any binding commitment to reduction of GHG



levels as it is a very small contributor to the global GHG emissions.

The countries (Parties) that have signed the FCCC meet once a year to promote and review its implementation. The first Conference of Parties (CoP-1) was held in Berlin in 1994. The third Conference of Parties (CoP-3), which was held in Kyoto, Japan, in 1997, resulted in the signing of the historic Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto Protocol demanded substantial reduction in GHG emissions from the industrialized countries. The US, which is a leading emitter of GHGs, refused to sign the treaty as it would adversely affect their economy and also because the Protocol does not impose binding targets on the developing countries.

New Delhi played host to the Eighth Conference of Parties (CoP-8), held at Vigyan Bhavan from 23 October to 1 November 2002. Over 4000 delegates, representing 180 countries, participated in the various sessions.

At CoP-8, the following points were agreed upon.

- Ensure transparency in the maintenance and review of GHG emissions data by the developed countries
- Provide economic backing to the least developed countries
- Institutionalize the Climate Change Fund after CoP-9
- Initiate a global programme of education and training to sensitize people.

The urgent need for action was universally felt because climate change is closely linked to factors that govern the well-being of any nation. The magnitude of the problem was summed up by Mr Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, during the high-level meet of the Summit. He said,

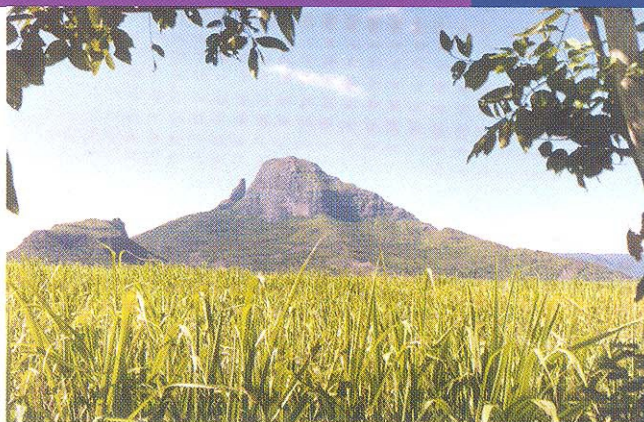


Gandhiji rightly said, 'Be the change that you want to see in the world.'

'Food and nutritional well-being are priority issues for all. Agricultural sustainability is one of the key areas related to adaptation. Water conservation is another. Weather-related economic losses and deaths have grown significantly over the last few decades.

There is a need for strengthening the capacity of developing countries in coping with extreme weather events, which are increasing in frequency and severity due to climate change.'

We all know that we share one atmosphere, and that we have only one planet that offers us a chance of life. Therefore, as citizens of the world it is our collective duty to keep it clean and nurture it carefully. Although the problem is severe, we can make efforts, both individually and collectively, to reduce GHG emissions and thereby mitigate the harmful effects of climate change. Let us put our minds and hearts to it and work towards a better tomorrow.



o see in the world.'



Children's Charter on Climate Change 23 October 2002, New Delhi, India

Presented to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change during
CoP-8, the Eighth Session of the Conference of Parties to the Convention

We, the young citizens of India, deeply concerned about

- the increase in greenhouse gases due to human activities, leading to global warming;
- the impacts of sea level rise on ecosystems, economic losses, and displacement of coastal inhabitants; and
- the threat to flora and fauna, and impacts on livelihoods in agrarian economies

have agreed upon the efficacy of the following remedial measures

- conservation of energy, use of cleaner fuels, and public transportation
- encouragement of afforestation through individual efforts and mass awareness
- sensitization of people about the need to adopt renewable energy resources.

We resolve to make every effort at our level to further this climate-friendly outlook and urge the global leaders present here today to harness their combined influence to maximize the benefits for a safer and more secure earth.

Supported by



UNFCCC



TERI, in coordination with the Ministry of Environment and Forests, United Nations Environment Programme, and the National Museum of Natural History, organized an interactive workshop as part of the side events hosted during CoP-8, to prepare the Children's Charter. Hundred and twenty students from 25 schools in Delhi participated and discussed the main impacts of climate change, and suggested simple ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at home, school, and in the neighbourhood. The children made an appeal through the charter to the world leaders to save the earth for them. This was presented to CoP-8 President Thiru T R Baalu, Hon'ble Minister of Environment and Forests, Government of India, during the high level segment meet on 30 October 2002.

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