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GENERAL STUDIES 3: ENVIRONMENT

TOPIC: ENVIRONMENT

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FOUR UN ENVIRONMENTAL SUMMITS FELL SHORT IN 2024. WHAT HAPPENED?

Failures at Key Environmental Summits

1. Objectives of the Summits:

- The primary goal of the summits was to foster global alignment on key environmental issues such as biodiversity conservation, climate action, land degradation mitigation, and plastic pollution.
- Ensuring equitable accountability by holding nations responsible for their environmental commitments was a critical focus.
- Mobilizing adequate and sustainable financing to support developing nations in addressing environmental challenges was a central agenda.

2. Outcomes:

- Despite these ambitious goals, the summits achieved limited progress.
- Disagreements among nations led to stalled negotiations, postponing critical actions on global environmental crises.
- The consequences are most severe for vulnerable countries that lack the resources to adapt to worsening environmental challenges.

Diverging National Priorities

1. Developed Countries:

- Developed nations often cite domestic economic constraints as a reason for their reluctance to increase financial or technological commitments.
- Their focus remains on addressing their internal priorities rather than supporting global collective efforts.

2. Developing Countries:

- Developing nations emphasize the need for financial aid and technological transfer to bridge the gap in their capacity to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution.



- They argue that their historical contribution to environmental degradation is minimal and that their pressing economic needs require international support.

Examples of Stalemates

1. Biodiversity Summit (Colombia):

- Discussions centered around a proposed \$700 billion annual fund for biodiversity conservation.
- A lack of consensus on financial responsibilities resulted in no actionable agreements.

2. Climate Summit (Azerbaijan):

- Developing countries called for \$1.3 trillion annually in climate finance, but only vague commitments were made to raise funds through various sources.
- Key issues such as transitioning away from fossil fuels and implementing the Paris Agreement's global stocktake failed due to disagreements over accountability mechanisms.

3. Plastics Summit (South Korea):

- Proposals for a legally binding treaty to curb plastic pollution faced resistance from economies dependent on plastic production.
- Instead, discussions were redirected towards less impactful solutions like improving recycling initiatives.

4. Land Degradation Summit (Saudi Arabia):

- Focused on drought mitigation and reversing desertification trends, the summit highlighted the need for \$200 billion annually to combat land degradation.
- Developed nations resisted binding commitments, citing economic constraints, while developing nations stressed the urgency of action due to their disproportionate vulnerability.
- This impasse delayed the adoption of effective policies and financial mechanisms.

Challenges from Global Crises

1. Resource Diversion:

- The COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing geopolitical conflicts, and economic instability have diverted global attention and resources from environmental priorities.

2. Dual Burden on Developing Nations:

- Many developing countries are grappling with high inflation and mounting debt while simultaneously facing severe climate vulnerabilities.



- These factors weaken their bargaining power and ability to implement environmental measures.

Implications of Failed Negotiations

1. Delayed Action:

- The postponement of critical measures exacerbates environmental issues, increasing the likelihood of crossing irreversible tipping points.

2. Fragmented Efforts:

- Without cohesive multilateral agreements, regions may adopt uncoordinated strategies that fail to address global environmental problems effectively.

3. Erosion of Trust:

- Repeated failures in international negotiations undermine confidence among nations, making future collaboration more challenging.

4. Increased Pressure on Future Summits:

- Expectations for upcoming meetings are significantly heightened, adding to the difficulty of achieving meaningful results.

Strategies to Rebuild Momentum

1. Climate Finance:

- Developed nations must honor their **financial and technological commitments** to create a more equitable negotiation process.
- Mechanisms for predictable and transparent financing should be established to meet the needs of developing countries.

2. Transparency and Accountability:

- Effective systems must be implemented to **monitor** progress on commitments, ensuring that nations fulfill their pledges.

3. Inclusive Diplomacy:

- Efforts to reduce geopolitical tensions are essential to foster equitable participation, particularly for vulnerable nations disproportionately affected by environmental crises.

4. Implementation Focus:



- Nations should shift from making lofty promises to adopting measurable actions and tangible outcomes.
- Accountability frameworks should prioritize results over rhetoric.

5. Integrated Solutions:

- Recognizing the interconnections between environmental challenges, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, and plastic pollution, is crucial for devising comprehensive strategies.

Conclusion

- Addressing global environmental crises is not only urgent but also critical for the future of humanity.
- Nations must rise above short-term, self-serving interests to embrace a shared vision for sustainability.
- Collective action, rooted in trust, equity, and measurable commitments, is essential to mitigate the escalating risks of inaction.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/four-un-environmental-summits-fell-short-in-2024-what-happened/article69049058.ece#:~:text=The%20United%20Nations'%20efforts%20to,failing%20to%20deliver%20meaningful%20outcomes.>