India is a leader in the realm of climate change and sustainable development goals (SDGs). It is the only G20 country to make it to the top 10 of the Climate Change Performance Index. The Sustainable Development Index ranks India 8th in terms of the positive spillover effect of its actions on other countries' ability to achieve the SDGs. When India performs, it also enables the rest of the world to deliver.

The growing sensitivity to climate and environment action domestically also enabled India to raise ambition and emphasize implementation through its G20 presidency via the Green Development Pact.

Its forthwith objectives and initiatives for all member countries to rally around and identify building blocks for ambitious Green Development Pact. For instance, for enabling transition to clean energy, G20 countries agreed on voluntary principles on hydrogen, to enable emission reductions in hard-to-ablate sectors; working towards facilitating access to low-cost finance; accelerating universal energy access; and developing global value chains of critical minerals.

While not bereft of challenges, achieving consensus in G20 sends a strong signal to national policymakers and international markets. To be action-oriented, we focused on unifying the G20 around key targets and scalable processes that ensure implementation. Foremost to this was securing agreement on tripling of global renewable energy capacity; scaling up investment and climate finance; and paving the way for the climate vulnerable African Union to join the G20 as a permanent member.

The Green Development Pact, as a whole, will stand as a unique legacy of India’s G20.

Africa as a whole has contributed least to the accumulation of GHG emissions in the atmosphere. Yet, it is most vulnerable to climate impacts. Having the African Union in the room – a region whose development gains are at serious risk of being undercut by increasing climate impacts – we can expect a greater emphasis on implementation and accountability of the decisions and declarations made at the G20.

Within the Green Development Pact, the Indian presidency also gave prominence to pursue environmentally sustainable and inclusive economic growth and development. The pact highlights tackling unsustainable consumption patterns by mainstreaming of Lifestyles for Sustainable Development (Life) through G20 High-Level Principles. As per ISEA, these can deliver one-fifth of the emission reductions needed by 2030.

The critical role of circular economy, extended producer responsibility and resource efficiency in achieving SDG was further emphasized.

The G20 also expressed its determination to end plastic pollution, committed to conserving, protecting, restoring, and sustainably using the world’s ocean and marine ecosystems; reiterated its commitment to increase efforts to phase-out and rationalize, inefficient fossil fuel subsidies.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had emphasized that climate action must ensure the rise and development of the last person in our global society. This has guided our efforts to promote the interests of the Global South while raising the climate and SDG agenda in the midst of a geopolitically fraught environment.

India’s presidency with support from our G20 partners across the aisle has successfully brought consensus on action-oriented decisions to serve three broad purposes: enhancing ambition and prioritizing implementation of climate targets and SDGs; spurring optimism for a substantial increase in climate finance; and ensure a strengthened voice of the Global South for influencing the future course of climate action and SDGs.

The Green Development Pact, as a whole, will stand as a unique legacy of India’s G20. In achieving consensus on important elements of this pact, we have paved way for unprecedented climate mitigation and revitalized SDG delivery in G20 countries and beyond.

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