

Beyond Rhetoric: What has changed from 26 Years of International Diplomacy on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction?

¹A. Enyipu, ²J. Mwine, ³M. Masanza

¹PhD Candidate Uganda Martyrs University Nkozi, P.O Box 5498 Kampala Uganda

²Associate Professor, Uganda Martyrs University Nkozi, P.O Box 5498 Kampala Uganda

³Dean, Faculty of Science and Technology, Uganda Christian University Mukono, P.O Box 4 Mukono Uganda

Abstract: Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time. While the first World Climate Conference took place as far back as 1979, discourse on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction has only gained momentum in recent years, particularly following the Earth Summit held in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil in 1992. The resultant adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the putting in place of the Conference of Parties to move the climate agenda forward, particularly marked key milestones. This paper examines the progress made, the challenges met and the prospects in the international community's efforts in climate diplomacy and Disaster Risk Reduction since 1992. Whereas important achievements have been made, especially in raising global awareness on climate change and disaster risk reduction, bottlenecks remain on the journey towards a safer planet. International efforts have particularly been constrained by a general lack of consensus between the developed and the developing nations on issues such as cutting Green Gas Emissions, limited local-level implementation of the commitments agreed upon at the international level, and a resurgence of voices challenging the legitimacy of climate science. By implication, transforming global consciousness on climate change into practical action such as climate change adaptation at the local level still poses significant challenges. Nonetheless, the momentum that the climate discourse has gained in recent years presents an unprecedented opportunity for the international community to finally translate rhetoric into practical action for climate change and reduction of climate-accentuated disaster risks.

Keywords: Climate Change; Climate Change Action; Disaster Risk reduction.

I. INTRODUCTION

Climate change is considered one of the greatest challenges of our time^[1]. Consequently, there is increased focus among the international community on addressing the issue of climate change and associated disaster risks. This paper examines the progress made, the challenges met and the prospects in the international community's 26 years of climate diplomacy and Disaster Risk Reduction since 1992. The review focuses on the work of the Conference of the Parties (COPs) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The review particularly examines the outcomes of the meetings of the COPs that have taken place annually since 1995, but also reviews other key events outside the work of the COPs. These events include the beginning of Political Response to Climate Change; the Rio Earth Summit; the formulation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (ARSDRR), the Hyogo Framework for Action HFA), and the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Throughout the review, emphasis is placed on seeking evidence of how the climate discourse has been translated into practical climate action and Disaster Risk Reduction over the past 26 years.

II. MAIN FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW

Real political concern about climate change started after the international community's adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992. The Convention which entered into force on 21 March 1994 provided a framework for stabilizing atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases and charted the course for subsequent international engagements on climate change^[2]. Earlier (in 1988), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) had been established by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to provide policymakers with regular assessments of the scientific basis of climate change, its impacts and risks, as well as options for climate change adaptation and mitigation^{[3] [4]}. The IPCC was a unique opportunity to provide rigorous and balanced scientific information to decision-makers because of its scientific and intergovernmental nature^{[3] [4]}. The Panel released its first assessment report in 1990 with a call for a global treaty on Climate Change^{[5] [6]}. Whereas the IPCC assessments are policy-relevant, they are not policy-prescriptive. There is therefore no guarantee that IPCC's climate assessments and recommendations are necessarily acted upon by policymakers.

A. Bringing the International Community to a round table on Climate Change (Rio de Janeiro, 1992)

Several high-profile engagements took place throughout the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (1989 to 1999) to highlight the interdependency between DRR and other global challenges such as climate change. Key among these undertakings was the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the *Earth Summit*, which took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 1992^[7]. This historic event brought together governments of 178 countries, and 2400 representatives of non-governmental organisations to rethink the direction of economic, social and environmental activities that place people and the earth in danger. Consequently, most of the UN state parties committed themselves to the pursuit of economic development in ways that would protect the Earth's environment and nonrenewable resources^[7]. Later in 1996, the UNFCCC Secretariat was set up to support all institutions involved in the international climate change negotiations. One of these institutions was the *Conference of the Parties* (or *COPs* as they are famously abbreviated). The COPs, which are UN climate summits or global conferences through which action for climate policy is negotiated, have met annually since 1995 to assess progress in dealing with climate change^[8]. The COPs attract participation of government officials, representatives of non-governmental organizations, the scientific community and the business sector.

Given the effort that went into the Rio summit and the enthusiasm that it generated, there was genuine optimism that the international community was finally on course to put the planet firmly on the path of sustainable development through *inter alia* addressing the challenges of climate change and associated disaster effects. Lack of consensus among the various interest groups, however, proved to be a major constraint to the implementation of the outcomes of the Summit^[9]. For example, disputes arose between the wealthy industrialized nations of the North and the developing countries of the South over the proposed environmental restrictions, with the South viewing these restrictions as a potential threat to its Economic growth. The South therefore argued for increased financial aid from the North to help make their environmentally sound growth possible^[9]. Rio 92 nonetheless provided a platform for rallying the international community to a round table dialogue on climate change, disaster risk reduction and other challenges of Sustainable Development^[10].

B. From Berlin to Bonn: experiences from COP1 to COP 5

The inaugural Conference of the Parties (COP 1) took place in Berlin in 1995^{[11] [12]}. While its theme included the need to combat greenhouse gas emissions (GGEs), COP1 was characterized by uncertainty on the strategies that member states would adopt to achieve this ambition. The COP nonetheless generated "The Berlin Mandate", an agreement between signatories to the UNFCCC in acknowledgement of the fact that the existing convention did not go far enough to mitigate global warming, and therefore required agreement on binding targets.

The work started in COP 1 was carried into COP2 in Geneva Switzerland in 1996^[13]. In addition to endorsing the results of the IPCC's second assessment report on climate change, COP 2 acknowledged and recommended that each member state would not pursue uniform solutions to climate change but would instead find initiatives that were most relevant to its own context^{[13] [14]}.

By 1995, the UN member states had launched negotiations to strengthen the global response to climate change. These efforts fed into the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC which was adopted in COP3 in December 1997^[15]. The Protocol which entered into force on 16 February 2005 with 193 parties, legally bound developed country Parties (known as *Annex I countries*) to reduce their overall emissions of six greenhouse gases by an average of 5.2% below 1990 levels over a five-year period (2008-2012)^[15].

The Kyoto Protocol was celebrated as a breakthrough in international climate diplomacy, especially because it promised substantial emission reductions by the developed world and established a broad international mechanism for widening and deepening subsequent climate protection activities. Critics of the Protocol however rejected it as a “deeply flawed agreement that manages to be both economically inefficient and politically impractical”^[15]. Moreover, subsequent disagreements over ratification especially by Russia and the USA meant that the Kyoto Protocol was viewed as having accomplished very little in terms of GGE reductions^[16]. For these reasons, the Kyoto conference was considered the beginning, not the culmination, of the first serious international attempt to address GGEs and climate change^[17].

The realization that Kyoto was not “the last word but rather only a stage in working toward genuinely binding international agreements” came as a disappointment to those people who had hoped for dramatic action on climate change^[17] and cemented the view that scientists were still “far from a real grasp of the planet’s climatology, just as its diplomats and politicians were far from a consensus on dealing with it”^[17]. Indeed, by the time of COP 4 in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1998, it was quite evident that there were still several unresolved questions on mechanisms of implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. Discussions on these technical questions were inevitably extended into COP5 in Bonn, Germany in 1999. However, it was not until 16th February 2005, that the Kyoto protocol finally came into force, following several years of uncertainty as to whether there would be a sufficient number of countries to ratify it^[18].

C. The Journey beyond the International Decade of Disaster Reduction (IDNDR)

In December 1999, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution No. 54/219 which spelt out actions to be undertaken by member states following the end of the IDNDR. A key follow-up outcome was the adoption, by the UN member states, of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction/ UNISDR in 2000^[19]. The ISDR aims to achieve sustainable reduction of disaster losses and to build resilient communities and nations as an essential condition for sustainable development. In this regard, the ISDR was an important framework for raising political awareness, supporting regional DRR networks or partnerships, and stepping up scientific research on DRR^[19]. The same year, COP 6 took place at The Hague, Netherlands but was overshadowed by heated disagreement over a proposal by the USA to include in the negotiations agricultural and forest areas as carbon sinks^[20]. Commentators saw this as a missed opportunity, noting that if the proposal had been passed, it would have significantly fulfilled the USA’s obligation to reduce its GGEs^[20]. COP 6 was further clouded by uncertainty on exactly which sanctions should be adopted for the countries that did not live up to their obligations to reduce their emissions; but perhaps the straw that broke the Camel’s back was when the EU countries refused a compromise proposal. This refusal led to the negotiations essentially breaking down altogether^[20]. It was consequently agreed that the negotiations would resume at an extraordinary conference in July 2001^[21]. Whereas the meeting did happen, members’ morale and expectations were evidently (and understandably) low^[21]. Nonetheless, agreement was reached on several significant questions, especially the extent to which forests and other carbon sinks could be included in countries’ budgets for GGEs; sanctions relating to countries that did not meet their targets, and financial compensation in return to flexible emissions reduction mechanisms^[21].

The year 2001 also saw the release of IPCC's third Assessment Report, adoption of the Bonn Agreements, and negotiations on the Kyoto Protocol which were completed in the COP 7 in Marrakesh, Morocco^[22]. The following year, during COP 8 held in Delhi, India, the EU countries tried to pass a declaration calling for more action on the Kyoto Protocol from the parties^[23]. The resultant declaration was however rejected by the EU as “disappointing, unacceptable, and biased”^[23]. The EU further objected to attempts to link global warming to sustainable development and to the lack of mention of the Kyoto Protocol in the final declaration^[23]. The G77 countries and China on the other hand expressed their own disappointment and demanded that the Declaration should call for the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol by all the state parties that had not done so. They further insisted that the Declaration should name Africa as the region suffering most from the effects of climate change^[23]. These disagreements meant that the last technical details of the Kyoto Protocol could only be hammered out in COP 9 held in Milan, Italy in 2003^[24].

Climate diplomacy efforts after 2003 mainly focused on the post-Kyoto protocol period and achieved mixed results. The discussions at the COP 10 in Buenos Aires^[25] in 2004 for example were inconclusive and so had to be extended into COP 11 in Montreal Canada in 2005^{[26][27]} and even into COP 12 in Nairobi Kenya in 2006^[28]. COP12 particularly enabled the pending technical questions regarding the Kyoto Protocol to finally be answered^[28], while COP13 held in Bali Indonesia in 2007 dealt with long-term post-2012 cooperation after the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol^[29]. The decisions agreed on in the Bali Road Map charted the course for negotiations in the two years following COP 13^[29].

D. The World Summit for Sustainable Development (Rio+10) Summit, 2002

The World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD), code-named *Rio+10* took place in September 2002 in Johannesburg South Africa, “to review how sustainable changes had been achieved” since the 1992 summit^[30].

The Johannesburg summit observed that for various reasons, countries were at different levels of DRR mainstreaming, with “some not having done it at all”^[30]. More importantly, the Johannesburg summit revealed a glaring structural challenge of a lack of consensus among various stakeholders on climate and environmental-related issues^[30].

E. The Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (ARSDRR) 2004 and the Hyogo Framework for Action – HFA (2005)

The ARSDRR was launched in 2004 as a regional initiative for improving and enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of DRR policies and institutional mechanisms of the African member states^[30]. The strategy had six key objectives, namely: to increase political commitment to DRR; improve identification and assessment of disaster risks; and enhance Knowledge Management for DRR^[30]. The ARSDRR further aimed to increase public awareness on DRR, improve governance of DRR institutions, and integrate DRR in emergency response management. More importantly, the strategy encouraged African governments to focus on strengthening traditional coping strategies and to preserve the local and traditional knowledge for DRR^[30]. The following year (2005), the international community reached yet another milestone during the World Conference on DRR held in Kobe, Hyogo Prefecture, Japan from 18th to 22nd January 2005, with the adoption of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA)^{[31][32]}. The HFA sought substantial reduction of disaster losses in lives, and in the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries by 2015^[32]. To achieve the stated outcome, the HFA emphasised a shift from reactive emergency relief to proactive DRR by stressing disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness. Agreeing on the strategy for achieving the ambitions of both the ARSDRR and the HFA at the local level by the individual countries however, proved to be a major challenge^{[30][32]}.

F. The rise of “Popular Consciousness” on climate change (2007 to 2009)

By the time the IPCC released its Fourth Assessment Report in 2007, climate change and climate science had entered the popular consciousness^[33]. In this regard, COP 14 which took place in Poznan, Poland from 1 – 12 December 2008 was dedicated to ensuring that Governments completed work on the Kyoto Protocol’s Adaptation Fund to help developing countries cope with the impacts of climate change^[34]. Progress was also registered on other wide-ranging issues such as technology transfer, Clean Development Mechanisms (CDM), Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD) and disaster management. More importantly, emphasis was put on future long-term cooperation post-2012 period when the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol would expire^[34]. In line with these trends, the UNFCCC meeting of June 2009 in Bonn Germany agreed to avail the first draft of a concrete negotiating text of an international response to climate change. This, together with the ministerial round table agreement on long-term cooperative action on climate change, laid the foundation for further discussions at the COP 15 in Copenhagen, Denmark in 2009^{[34][35]}.

G. Attempts to “seal the deal”- what was achieved in Copenhagen?

With the coming into force of the Kyoto Protocol, questions arose on what to do after the end of the Protocol’s first commitment period^[35]. The Copenhagen Conference, (COP 15) which took place from December 7-19, 2009, was therefore meant to “seal the deal” by resolving pending questions about the post-2012 Kyoto climate regime^{[35][36]}. The key elements of the conference included limiting climate change to no more than 2° C; establishing systems of "pledge and review" for both developed and developing country mitigation commitments or actions; and the need for significant new financial resources for climate action^{[35][36]}. The conference provided a lot of hope- the reason it was locally referred

to as “Hopenhagen”^[37]. *Copenhagen* generated so much enthusiasm that more than 100 heads of state or government and some 40,000 other delegates registered for the conference, making it one of the largest environmental meetings in history^[36]. The lack of progress in the negotiations in the months leading up to the conference however, meant that hopes of reaching a legal agreement would later prove unrealistic^{[36] [37] [38]}. Instead, the conference only reached a political agreement, *the Copenhagen Accord*, which was negotiated by a group of 25 countries, including the world's major economies^[36]. Objections by some countries meant that the conference was unable to “adopt” the Accord because the process of its negotiation was perceived to be neither transparent nor democratic. Instead, the conference only took “note of” the Accord, leaving its future uncertain^[36]. These challenges prompted some commentators to suggest that the Copenhagen summit will go down in history as one where the greatest expectations were generated, but the least progress was achieved^{[36] [37] [38]}. Others referred to the Copenhagen Accord as a “paper-thing cover-up of what was a near complete failure,” and suggested that the Accord may “represent the worst possible outcome – the overlay of a thin veneer of success over what was a deeply flawed outcome, perpetuating a process that is unable to overcome entrenched differences”^[38].

Despite the shortcomings, the Copenhagen Summit registered some significant breakthroughs which cannot be ignored. The participating states for example agreed to subject their actions to international scrutiny and by February 2010, 67 countries including the United States, the EU member states, Japan, China, India, Brazil, South Africa and Indonesia which accounted for more than 80% of global GGEs had submitted pledges to limit their emissions^[39].

The Copenhagen Accord also articulated a quantified long-term goal for the first time of holding global warming below 2° C and obtained commitments for substantial funds both for the short and medium terms^[40]. For this reason, some commentators considered Copenhagen “a big step forward”^[41].

H. 2010: A year of soul searching

Following the Copenhagen experience, many observers considered 2010 a year of recovery and soul-searching for the UNFCCC^[41]. Similarly, several negotiators and representatives of citizen organizations remarked how, since Copenhagen, low-morale and the lack of a clear path had made it extremely difficult to “keep spirits high” for future engagements” as there was legitimate fear of failing again^[42]. Nonetheless, the parties at COP15 in Copenhagen had agreed to extend the mandates of the AWG-LCA and AWG-KP, requesting them to present their respective outcomes to COP 16, the following year (2010), in Cancun, Mexico^{[42] [43]}.

The major outcomes of COP-16 included the formalisation of measures contained in the Copenhagen Accord and the adoption of a package of decisions contained in the “Cancun Agreements”^[44]. COP 16 further agreed to establish new institutions and processes, such as the Cancun Adaptation Framework and the Adaptation Committee, as well as the Technology Mechanism, which included the Technology Executive Committee (TEC) and the Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN)^[44]. On finance, COP16 created the Green Climate Fund (GCF)^[44] agreed to set up a Transitional Committee tasked with the Fund’s detailed design and established a Standing Committee to assist the COP with respect to the financial mechanism. Besides, developed countries committed to provide US\$30 billion of fast-start finance, and to jointly mobilize US\$100 billion per year towards this effort by 2020.

COP 16 started with significantly lower expectations with the conviction that a binding agreement would not be possible^{[45] [46]}. As it eventually turned out however, agreement in Cancun was almost unanimous with only Bolivia opposing it. This consensus enabled significant progress to be made in terms of measures to adapt, reduce deforestation and set up financial aid for developing countries. This progress motivated the international community to work towards a binding agreement to reduce emissions at the Durban summit (South Africa) in 2011. Compared to the Copenhagen Summit therefore, the Cancun agreement was considered “a moderate or relative success” and a step in the right direction^{[45] [46]}.

I. 2011: a year of critical negotiations

In 2011, three official UNFCCC negotiation sessions were separately held in Bangkok, Germany and Panama as a lead-up to the Durban conference. The Bangkok session focused on key policy issues hindering progress on climate change^[47]. Whereas the Bonn Conference dealt with impacts of climate change on water and integrated water resources management, it reached no agreement on other proposed items, such as blue carbon and rights of nature and integrity of ecosystems^[48].

^[49]. Nonetheless, work was launched on national adaptation plans, and loss and damage, as mandated by the Cancun Agreements. Furthermore, parties agreed that the notes prepared by the facilitators of the Ad hoc Working Group Long-term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA) be carried forward to the third part of AWG-LCA 14 in Panama ^[49].

The Panama meeting mainly focused on outstanding issues concerning mitigation targets, the possible nature and content of rules for a second commitment period, and the role of a possible second commitment period within a balanced outcome in Durban. While progress was reported on some issues, the outcomes of Panama were relatively modest, with the informal group discussions only yielding some text for further discussions at COP 17 in Durban in December 2011 ^[49].

The Durban conference was characterised by a series of events, including COP 17 ^[49] ^[50]. The Durban Conference drew over 12,480 participants, including over 5400 government officials, 5800 representatives of UN bodies and agencies, intergovernmental organizations and civil society organizations, and more than 1200 members of the media ^[50]. The meetings yielded several important decisions: the establishment of a second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol; long-term cooperative action; the launch of a new process towards an agreed outcome with legal force applicable to all parties, and the operationalization of the Green Climate Fund ^[50].

After the frustrations of *Copenhagen* and the struggle to rescue the multilateral climate regime in Cancun, negotiators in Durban “resuscitated” the Kyoto Protocol and, in doing so, adopted a decision that would later lead to negotiations on a more inclusive 21st century climate regime ^[50]. There was particularly a strong sense that elements of the Durban package, guided by a need to fulfill long overdue commitments that dated back to the Bali Roadmap, restored sufficient momentum for a new negotiation process that would cater for the interests of both developed and developing countries ^[50]. While the decisions on the Green Climate Fund, and the Durban Platform, as well as the process to launch an agreement with legal force were widely received, some delegates insisted on the urgent need to significantly scale up the level of ambition to address the gap between existing mitigation pledges and the recommended emission reduction targets ^[50].

J. COP 18: A call for Bolder Action on Climate Change

The COP 18 held in Doha, Qatar in 2012 came in the backdrop of Hurricane Sandy and Typhoon Bopha ^[50]. It was therefore hoped that these examples of the devastating impact of climate change would provide the impetus for bold action from the state parties. COP18 was therefore expected to deliver decisive action on climate change and safeguarding of the most vulnerable populations ^[50]. Whereas much of the work of COP18 was procedural in nature, it at least succeeded in finalising the work of two work streams initiated in Bali in 2007 – the Ad hoc Working Group on the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP) and the Ad hoc Working Group on Long term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA) ^[50].

While COP 18 might not have been the most ground-breaking event in terms of climate diplomacy, it passed as the “Gender COP”, with the first ever “Gender Day” meant to strengthen women’s representation and participation in COP proceedings, and to ensure that “gender and climate change” would be a standing item on the agenda at future COPs ^[51]. The COP further acknowledged the need to enhance action to address *loss and damage* associated with the adverse effects of climate change. There were however no clear commitments on issues such as Agriculture and Finance while there was disappointment among developing countries that commitments for climate finance remained vague. Nonetheless, observers regarded COP 18 “a small step in the right direction”, implying that large steps were required in future efforts ^[52].

K. 2012: Back to Rio

In 2012 the international community headed back to Rio for another summit, 20 years after *Rio 92*. Dubbed Rio+20, the summit was primarily a follow up on the Johannesburg Summit ^[53] ^[54]. The more than 190 nations in Rio+20 declared a pathway for sustainable development and formulated a plan of action to strengthen global environmental management, improve food security and promote a green economy. More importantly, the summit released a ground-breaking document- *The Future We Want*- to move the plan of action forward. One of the outcomes was the agreement by the member states to launch a process of developing a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) designed to converge with the post 2015 development agenda. Furthermore, the member states agreed that the SDGs must be based on Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and fully respect all the Rio Principles and as well be consistent with international law ^[53]. It was further agreed that the goals must build on commitments already made, and contribute to the full implementation of the outcomes of all past summits ^[53]. Despite these important strides, the working document was

almost immediately criticized by environmentalists and anti-poverty campaigners “for lacking the detail and ambition needed to address the challenges and risks posed by a deteriorating environment, worsening inequality and rapid global population growth”^[54]. To this end, Greenpeace declared the summit a “failure of epic proportions”^[54].

L. The urgency caused by typhoon Haiyan

The Nineteenth Conference of the Parties (COP19) held in Warsaw, Poland on 11 November 2013 dealt with three priority issues: a timeline to secure a new international climate agreement; the establishment of a mechanism on *loss and damage*; and the provision of long-term finance^[55]. The devastation caused by Typhoon Haiyan on the Philippines just days before the opening of COP19 however meant that the establishment of a mechanism on *Loss and Damage* would be a critical issue at the Warsaw Conference^[56].

Key differences emerged on the timetable to 2015, the degree of flexibility and the level of commitments required by developed and developing countries^[56]^[57]. Nonetheless, progress was made in other key areas^[57]. For example, countries finalised the remaining details of the Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) framework for verification process for emissions reductions. Significant steps were also taken towards the meaningful implementation of the COP18 *Gender Decision*, namely the launch of a framework on gender and climate change, capacity building for women delegates and women and men negotiators, and the introduction of monitoring systems to track gender sensitive climate policy. However, the completion of the REDD+ programme and its subsequent backing with pledges of \$280 million from the United States, Norway and the United Kingdom was perhaps one of the most recognizable successes of COP19^[58].

M. COP 20: an important milestone towards “a real deal”?

The 20th COP took place from 1 - 14 December 2014 in Lima, Peru. Despite the complexity of the negotiations, the more than 190 nations in attendance for the first time reached an agreement on combating climate change. Perhaps a key feature of COP 20 was its more encompassing nature. Unlike the Kyoto Protocol which involved developed countries only, COP 20 was more inclusive and applied to all countries^[59]^[60]. Moreover, COP 20 witnessed commitments to the Green Climate Fund reach US dollars 10.2 billion, slightly exceeding the target. Furthermore, plans were agreed on rolling out a Private Sector Facility in 2015, a fund which, for the first time, accredited private sector entities could access^[59].

Despite the achievements, discussions at COP 20 were hampered by issues of fairness and the inability of the COP to define how the emissions reduction targets would be distributed among the countries^[60]. Consequently, the agreement reached at the COP was “watered-down” in the sense that it was agreed to leave the door open to continue working on these issues^[60]. Consequently, discussions on these pending issues had to be postponed to COP21 in Paris.

N. COP 21: Paris Climate Agreement- a major Leap towards bolder international commitment

The 2015 Paris Climate Agreement reached at COP21 fundamentally augmented the previous efforts of the UNFCCC and marked a major step in the evolution of the UN Climate Change regime^[61]. The significance of COP 21 was evidenced by the unprecedented engagement of civil society organisations, business leaders, and faith groups. These non-state actors boldly challenged the state parties to reach an ambitious, fair and legally binding agreement to limit warming and set a clear course for a safer future for all^[62]. Consequently, a recommitment was made to keep global temperature rise below 2°C and closer to 1.5°C^[63].

It is widely recognised that the Paris Climate Agreement charts a fundamentally new course in the two-decade-old global climate effort and provides a roadmap for climate actions that will promote climate resilience and adaptation^[64]. For this reason, the agreement was considered “the world’s greatest diplomatic success” and viewed as an answer to the challenges experienced with past similar initiatives^[65]. The Paris Agreement was particularly credited for its hybrid approach that blends bottom-up flexibility to achieve broad participation, with top-down rules to promote accountability and ambition among the member states^[65]. For this reason, the Paris Agreement presented a lot of hope, which could explain why it was adopted amid scenes of great celebrations^[66]. It must however be noted that whereas the Agreement is a treaty under international law, only certain provisions are legally binding^[67]. Indeed, the announcement by Donald Trump, the US President to withdraw the USA from the agreement was considered a major setback to climate diplomacy efforts^[67].

O. Focus on the Post-2015 period: The Sendai Framework and the Sustainable Development Goals

As the world headed toward the end date of the HFA, it was deemed necessary to initiate discussions for the post-2015 international efforts^[67]. To this end, the United Nations General Assembly through Resolution 66/199 launched a process of developing a post-2015 framework. This effort culminated in the adoption of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 at the Third United Nations World Conference on DRR (WCDRR) which took place in March 2015 in Sendai, Japan^[67]. This framework was the first major agreement of the Post-2015 development agenda especially because it set concrete and critical milestones for addressing issues related to disasters and disaster risk reduction^{[68][69]}. Building on the priorities and outcomes of the HFA, the Sendai framework aims to achieve by 2030 the outcome of the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries^[70].

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which were adopted after Sendai were considered to finally represent the much-needed global consensus on sustainable development. Never before had world leaders pledged common action and endeavour across such a broad and universal policy agenda^[71]. Besides, analysts credited the SDGs for representing a wide range of interests and perspectives. This is because, unlike the MDGs that were widely viewed as a product of a group of experts working behind closed doors, the SDGs involved negotiations of all UN member states, civil society and other stakeholders^[72]. Also, while the MGDs primarily focused on the social agenda, the SDGs are broad in scope and cover the key elements of sustainable development, namely economic growth, social inclusion and environment management. Nonetheless, critics almost immediately declared the SDGs as “not fit for purpose”, viewing them as too ambitious and complex to be achieved within the stipulated time-frame of 15 years^[73]. Moreover, observers noted that the success of the Sendai Framework would require the enhancement of the implementation capacity of developing countries^{[74][75]}.

P. COP 22- Marrakech, Morocco (2016)- “An Action and Implementation COP”

COP 22, which took place in Marrakech (Morocco) from 7-18 November 2016, also served as the first meeting of the parties to the Paris Climate Agreement, which entered into force on 4 November 2016^[76]. COP 22 was therefore the first anniversary of the Paris Climate Agreement. As they did in COP 21, the state parties at COP 22 reaffirmed their commitment to the full implementation of the Paris Agreement and agreed to finalize the detailed rules for its implementation within a period of two years^[77]. For this reason, COP22 was dubbed “an action and implementation” COP^[78]. The COP is equally remembered for the action that took place outside of the negotiations, with politicians, countries and organisations using it as an opportunity to announce new initiatives, strategy and finance. The subsequent *Marrakech Action Proclamation*^[79] was therefore in effect a reaffirmation of global commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement.

Q. COP 23, Bonn Germany, 2017

COP 23 made progress on the Paris “rulebook” which was to be adopted in 2018 but disagreements re-emerged over the perennial issues between the developed and developing countries^{[79][80]}. Moreover, COP 23 was overshadowed by uncertainty (and confusion) over whether the United States would stay in the Paris Agreement^[80]. This is because while the US administration officials reiterated President Trump’s announcement that the US would withdraw, U.S negotiators kept insisting that all options were still open (for the USA staying in the Accord). At the same time, a strong contingent of US stakeholders that included congressional, state, city, business and NGO leaders staged several events under the “We Are Still In” banner, highlighting continued support in the United States for the Paris Climate Agreement^[81]. As the US announced its intentions to leave the Paris Agreement, Europe’s long demonstrated leadership on climate change was itself being threatened by a lack of consensus on an ambitious climate policy. This led to some climate activists calling for a (smaller) “coalition of the willing” from within the EU to play the much-needed leadership role on climate change^[82].

R. COP 24, Katowice Poland, December 2018

COP 24 that was held in Katowice Poland in December 2018 involved the regular meeting of the COP, 14th Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 14) and the Conference of Signatories to the Paris Agreement (CMA 1). A total of 22,771 participants registered for the COP: 13,898 representing specific parties, 7,331 from observer organisations (scientists, business groups and NGOs) and 1,541 journalists^[82].

COP 24 is widely considered to be the most important UNFCCC international climate negotiations since the Paris conference and is being recognized as “Paris 2.0”^[82]. This is particularly because the COP was aimed at agreeing on a rulebook (or guidelines) to implement pledges that were made by various countries at the Paris Climate Conference. In the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), planned before the Paris Conference, each country identified the actions it would take and the levels to which greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions would be reduced (mitigation). Countries further specified the actions they would take to improve their capacity to live in a warmer world (adaptation), as well as the required financial and technology transfer support that they would require^[83].

The two weeks of COP 24 at Katowice Poland were characterized by the familiar old disagreements as well as a resurgence of questions on climate change [84]. For example, the oil producing countries, including the U.S, Russia and Saudi Arabia, questioned the validity of climate science and refused to recognize the legitimacy of a report from the IPCC, showing the effects of climate change if temperatures rise more than 1.5°C [84]. The U.S. went further to stage a highly publicized event promoting fossil fuel with the aim of injecting a dose of “reality” in the face of “alarmism” around climate change [84].

Mohamed Nasheed, former president of the Maldives sums up the frustrations that resulted from the prolonged negotiations thus: “Carbon emissions keep rising and rising (and) all we seem to be doing is talking and talking and talking.” [84]. It was therefore not surprising that a deal laying out rules to implement the Paris Agreement and keep the landmark Paris 2015 climate accord intact was only struck at the eleventh hour, and in any case a day after the scheduled end of the conference [84]. Moreover, most of the delegates acknowledged that the agreed deal leaves much to be done if the world hopes to limit temperature rise to 1.5°C.

III. CONCLUSION

So, what has changed from 26 years of global diplomacy on climate change and disaster risk reduction? This paper shows that Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction have gained momentum in the recent years, especially following the adoption of the UNCFCC and the putting in place of the COPs. Since then the international community has made significant achievements in climate diplomacy and in raising awareness on climate change and disaster risk reduction. From Rio 92 to Katowice 2018, there has been growing realization that urgent action needs to be taken to address the challenge of climate change and disasters. The role of the COPs in negotiating climate policy is particularly recognizable. However, until the Paris Climate Conference of 2015, the COPs have mostly focused on how to make action on climate change happen at a nebulous point in the future. The Paris Agreement was meant to be a defining moment for real action on climate change, but the “real deal” to bring this action about is yet to be sealed. International efforts have particularly suffered from low consensus between the developed and the developing nations on issues such as cutting GGEs, the resurgence of voices questioning the legitimacy of climate science, and the limited practical implementation of the related commitments agreed upon at international level. Consequently, transforming the 26 years of international diplomacy and what is sometimes viewed as the rhetoric on climate change into practical action is yet to be achieved. The international community can nonetheless draw inspiration from the momentum that the climate discourse has gained in recent years to finally translate rhetoric into climate action and disaster risk reduction.

REFERENCES

- [1] J. Benedek, 2017. Climate Change is the biggest challenge of our time. *Our World*, 2017. <https://www.neweurope.eu> (accessed 10/12/2018).
- [2] Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC, 2007. Ultimate Objective of the UNFCCC. <https://www.ipcc.ch> (accessed 27/11/2018).
- [3] IPCC, 2018. IPCC Anniversary Highlights 30 Years of Climate Change and Scientific Knowledge. <https://public.wmo.int>. (accessed 26/11/2018).
- [4] IPCC Secretariat, 2015. IPCC Fact Sheet: Timeline- Highlights of IPCC History. <https://www.ipcc.ch> (accessed 26/11/2018).
- [5] J.T. Houghton; G.J. Jenkins and J.J Ephraums, 1990 (Eds.). Climate Change: The IPCC Scientific Assessment 1990.

- [6] W. Parry, 2012. 1990 IPCC Report Successfully Predicted Warming, New Study Shows. www.huffingtonpost.com (accessed 26/11/2018).
- [7] *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2018. United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Revised Ed.). <https://www.britannica.com/event/United-Nations-Conference-on-..> (accessed 28/11/2018).
- [8] Lead India, 2009. What is the UNFCCC? *Climate Leaders*. <https://www.climate-leaders.org/climate-change-resources/india-at-cop-15/unfccc-cop> (accessed 26/11/2018).
- [9] G. Palmer, 1992. The Earth Summit: What Went Wrong at Rio? *Washington University Law Review*. Volume 70 Issue <https://openscholarship.wustl.edu> (accessed 27/11/2018).
- [10] UN Department of Public Information, 1997. UN Conference on Environment and Development (1992). www.un.org (accessed 27/11/2018).
- [11] Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety, 2012. Stages of Climate Change Negotiations. <http://www.bmub.bund.de> (accessed 26/11/2018)
- [12] United Nations Climate Change, 2018. UNFCCC. <https://unfccc.int/.../supreme-bodies/conference-of-the-parties-cop> (accessed 29/11/2018).
- [13] International Institute for Sustainable Development, IISD, 2006. A Reporting Service for Environment and Development Negotiations. *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*. Vol 15 no. 135. Monday 8 May 2006 (accessed 28/11/2018).
- [14] University of Fiji, 2017. UNFCCC COP Outcomes. [learning.unifiji.ac.fj/eco2017study/ClimateChange/UNFCCC COP...](http://learning.unifiji.ac.fj/eco2017study/ClimateChange/UNFCCC-COP...) (accessed 28/11/2018).
- [15] W.J. McKibbin and P.J. Wilcoxon, 2002. 'The Role of Economics in Climate Change Policy', *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 16(2), 107-129.
- [16] Buchner, C. Carraro, and I. Cersosimo, 2002. 'Economic consequences of the US withdrawal from the Kyoto/Bonn Protocol', *Climate Policy*, 2 (4), 273-292.
- [17] .W. Anderson, 1998. The Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change. Background, Unresolved Issues and Next Steps. *Resources for the Future*. January 1998. www.rff.org/files/sharepoint/WorkImages/Download/RFF-RPT-kyotoprot. (Retrieved 23/11/2018).
- [18] A. Schenker, 2014. Earths Friends. The Kyoto Protocol Summary. <https://www.earthsfriends.com/kyoto-protocol-summary> (accessed 23/11/2018).
- [19] W. Garatwa and C. Bolin, 2002. Disaster Management: Working Concept. Eschborn: GTZ. pp.1-36.
- [20] Anup, 2001, COP6—The Hague Climate Conference. *Global Issues*. Social, Political, Economic and Environmental Issues That Affect Us All.
- [21] International Center for Trade and Sustainable Development, 2000. COP6:US-EU Differences Blamed for Failure of Climate Change Negotiations. *Bridges*:4(45). <https://www.ictsd.org/bridges> (accessed 29/11/2018).
- [22] IISD, 2001. Delegates Seal Deal. *Linkages*. Enb.iisd.org.
- [23] W. Yeatman, 2002. COP 8 Summary. *Global Warming.org*. www.globalwarming.org (accessed 24/11/2018).
- [24] K. Shimada, 2004. Key Outcomes of the Ninth Conference of Parties to the United Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 9). The 9th AIM International Workshop 1 to 12 December 2003. www.iam.nies.go.jp. (accessed 24/11/2018).
- [25] Climate Action Network International, 2004. UN Buenos Aires Climate Change Conference- December 2004- COP 10. www.climatenetwork.org (accessed 24/11/2018).
- [26] Anup, 2005. COP 11- Montreal Climate Conference. *Global Issues*. www.globalissues.org (accessed 24/11/2018).

- [27] S. Lisa, and B. Emily, 2006. UNFCCC COP11 and COP/MOP1. At Last, Some Hope? Conference Report. *The Journal of Environment and Development*. Vol. 5(1):75-90. Sage Publications. www.researchgate.net (accessed 28/11/2018).
- [28] Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, 2006. Key Outcomes of the Nairobi Conference (COP 12 and COP/MOP2) and Future Challenges. <https://pub.iges.or.jp> (accessed 24/11/2018).
- [29] P. Christoff, P. 2008. The Bali Roadmap: Climate Change, COP13 and Beyond. Taylor and Francis online. <https://www.tandfonline.com> (accessed 24/11/2018).
- [30] UNISDR, 2004. Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction. <https://www.unisdr.org> (accessed 28/11/2018).
- [31] Stephahn, R. Selvaraju, D. Jenny, and B. Federica. Disaster Risk Management Systems Analysis. Rome: Environmental Climate Change and Bio-energy Division, FAO.pp.1-11.
- [32] Integrated Research on Disaster Risk, IRDR, 2013. The Hyogo Framework for Action. www.irdrinternational.org (accessed 28/11/2018).
- [33] United Nations, 2014. Towards a Climate Agreement- UN and Climate Change. www.un.org (accessed 24/11/2018).
- [34] S. Anup, 2009. COP 14- Poznan Climate Conference. Global Issues. www.globalissues.org (accessed 24/11/2018).
- [35] Bodansky, 2010. The Copenhagen Climate Change Conference: A Post-Mortem. Arizona State University. www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/rome2007/docs/Copenhagen_Climate... (accessed 29/11/2018).
- [36] UNIDO, 2009. The UN Worldwide Campaign “Seal the Deal”. <https://www.unido.org> (accessed 24/11/2018).
- [37] IISD, 2009. Summary of the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference. enb.iisd.org/vol12/enb12459e.html (accessed 29/11/2018).
- [38] M.M. Jones, 2011. Hopenhagen to Nopenhagen? The Role of Public Expectation at the Copenhagen Summit. www.e-ir.info (accessed 24/11/2018).
- [39] N.K. Dubash, 2009. Copenhagen: Climate of Mistrust. *Economic Political Weekly*. Vol 4(52). 2349-8846.
- [40] R. Lavanya, 2010. The Making and Unmaking of the Copenhagen Accord. *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly*. Vo.15(3): pp.824-843.
- [41] Doniger, 2009. The Copenhagen Accord: A big step Forward. <https://www.nrdc.org> (accessed 28/11/2018).
- [42] G.M. Antonio, La Viña and L.G. Ang, 2010. From Copenhagen to Cancun: Challenges and Prospects for the UNFCCC Negotiations. theredddesk.org (accessed 29/11/2018).
- [43] IISD, 2009. Summary of the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference. *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*. 7-19 December 2009. enb.iisd.org (accessed 28/11/2018).
- [44] Global Environment Facility, 2010. UNFCCC COP16. <https://www.thegef.org> (accessed 24/11/2018).
- [45] UNFCCC.2010. Cancun Agreements. <https://unfccc.int> (accessed 24/11/2018).
- [46] R. Stavins, 2010. What happened (and why): an assessment of the Cancun Agreements. *Climate and Energy*. *The Beacon*. <https://grist.org/article/2010-12-14-what-happened-and-why-an..> (accessed 29/11/2018).
- [47] L. Mead, 2018. Bangkok Climate Change Conference Makes “Uneven” Progress in Advance of COP 24. IISD. Sdg.iisd.org.
- [48] J. Redman, 2011. Bonn Climate Talks. <https://ips.dc.org>
- [49] FAO, 2011. Forestry and Climate Change. UNFCCC Negotiations and Meetings in 2011. www.fao.org (accessed 24/11/2018).
- [50] IISD, 2011. Summary of the Durban Climate Change Conference. *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*. 28 November – 11 December 2011. enb.iisd.org (accessed 24/11/2018).

- [51] Population and Sustainability Network 2012. UN Adopts Decision Promoting Gender Balance in Climate Change Negotiations. *Outreach Magazine Stakeholder Forum*. <https://populationandsustainability.org> (accessed 24/11/2018).
- [52] Hewitt, 2012. COP18- a small step in the right direction. *Accaprr*. <https://blogs.accsglobal.com> (accessed 24/11/2018).
- [53] W. Lynn, 2012. Rio+20 Adopts “The Future we Want” Outcome Document, Voluntary Pledges Reported to reach US\$513 Billion. IISD. Sdg.iisd.org.
- [54] J. Watts, and L. Ford, 2012, “Rio+20 Earth Summit: Campaigners decry final document” *The Guardian*. 23 June, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2012/jun/23/rio-2020-earth-summit-document> (accessed 29/11/2018).
- [55] IISD, 2013. Summary of Warsaw Climate Change Conference. *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*. Vol 12 no. 594- Tuesday 26 November 2013. Enb.iisd.org.
- [56] Ryan, 2013. COP 19: Hurricane Haiyan Puts “Loss and Damage” Front and Centre. The Climate Group. www.theclimategroup.org (accessed 25/11/2015).
- [57] Harvey, F., and J. Vidal, 2013. Hosts Poland Accused of Endangering World Climate Talks. *The Guardian*. Theguardian.com.
- [58] UNFCCC, 2013. COP19 Decisions. <https://unfccc.int> (accessed 25/11/2018).
- [59] UNFCCC, 2013. COP Work Programme on REDD Finance. <https://unfccc.int> (accessed 25/11/2018).
- [60] M. Leber, 2014. The Watered-down Climate Deal Won’t Be Enough to Stop Global Warming. *The New Republic Magazine*. December 15, 2014.
- [61] Acciona, 2014. 5 Key Outcomes of the Lima Climate Change Conference (COP 20). www.activesustainability.com (accessed 25/11/2018).
- [62] D. Schwartzman, 2015. COP 21: Achievements and Challenges to the Climate Justice Movement: CNS web. www.cnsjournal.org (accessed 25/11/2018).
- [63] D. Green, 2015. How Civil Society and Others Achieved the Paris Agreement. The World Bank. Worldbank.org.
- [64] United Nations Climate Change, 2018. Paris Agreement Success Requires Investment, Worthy Projects -- LACCF 2017 <https://unfccc.int/news/paris-agreement-success-requires> (access 29/11/2018).
- [65] Harvey, 2015. Paris Climate Change Agreement: the World’s Greatest Diplomatic Success. *The Guardian*, Monday 14 December 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/dec/13/> (accessed 29/11/2018).
- [66] Stockholm Environment Institute, 2015. *SEI Annual Report, 2015*. <https://www.sei-international.org/mediamanager/.../SEI-AnnualReport-2015> (accessed 12/10/2016).
- [67] R. Timmons and A. Angelica, 2017. Is the Paris Climate Deal Legally Binding or Not? *Climate Home News*. Published on 2/11/2017. www.climatechangenews.com (accessed 25/11/2018).
- [68] Preventionweb, 2015. Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015. www.preventionweb.net/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren (Retrieved 4/6/2016).
- [69] R. Megan, 2015. New Global Disaster Plan Sets Targets to Cut Risk, Losses (Reuters). <https://in.reuters.com> (accessed 25/11/2018).
- [70] Overseas Development Institute, 2015. Sendai: a new Global Agreement on Disaster Risk Reduction.
- [71] UNSIDR, 2015. Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. www.unisdr.org (accessed 25/11/2018).
- [72] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNDESA., 2015. Transforming Our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld/> (accessed 25/3/2016).

- [73] C. Barbieri, 2015. Sustainable Development Goals Are Not Fit for Purpose, Experts Warn. www.euractiv.com/.../sustainable-dev/.../sustainable-development-goals (accessed 10/5/2016).
- [74] Kelman, 2015. Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. UCL Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction and UCL Institute for Global Health, University College London, London, WC1E 6BT, UK. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Science*, 6 (2) pp. 117–127.
- [75] K. Mimizuka, 2015. Critics blast U.N. Disaster Risk Framework as Insufficient. *The Japan Times*. www.japantimes.co.jp/.../critics-blast-u-n-disaster-risk-fra (accessed 27th August 2015).
- [76] UNFCCC, 2016. COP 22 Sessions. <https://unfccc.int> (accessed 25/11/2018).
- [77] W. Brittlebank, 2016. Summary of UN Climate Talks. COP22 in Marakesh. *Climate Action*. www.climateaction.org (accessed 25/11/2018).
- [78] Cerame-unie, 2016. COP22. An Action and Implementation COP. The European Ceramic Industry Association. Cerameunie.eu.
- [79] UNFCCC, 2016. Marakesh Proclamation. <https://unfccc.int> (accessed 25/11/2018).
- [80] M. Liam, 2017. COP23 Focuses on Paris Rulebook. *World Coal Association*. www.worldcoal.org (accessed 25/11/2018)
- [81] Centre for Climate and Energy Solutions, 2017. 23rd Session of the Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC (COP23). <https://www.c2es.org/content/cop-23-bonn> (accessed 30/11/2018).
- [82] Bill, and A. Andrzej, 2016. Europe Needs “a coalition of the willing” to rescue its global leadership in the fight against climate change. <https://energpost.eu> (accessed 26/11/2018).
- [83] Sustainable Innovation Forum, 2018. Official COP24 Affiliate Event. <https://www.cop-24.org> (accessed 10/12/2018).
- [84] Worland, 2018. The Paris Agreement Lives on at the U.N. Climate Change Conference. But Political Disruption Still Remains a Threat. time.com/5480146/climate-change-cop-24-paris-agreement.