



Glasgow Climate Pact is a mixed bag of modest achievements and disappointed expectations

1.5 degrees Celsius

The Glasgow Climate Pact is a mixed bag of modest achievements and disappointed expectations. The achievements include a tacit consensus on a target of keeping global temperature rise down to 1.5 degrees Celsius with the Paris Agreement target of 2 degrees being no longer appropriate to the scale of the climate emergency. The notional target of 2 degrees remains but the international discourse is now firmly anchored in the more ambitious target and this is a plus.

Coal to be phased down not the entire spectrum of Fossil fuels

1. The Pact is the first clear recognition of the need to transition away from fossil fuels, though the focus was on giving up coal-based power altogether. The focus on coal has the downside of not addressing other fossil fuels like oil and gas but a small window has opened.
2. The original draft had contained a pledge to “phase out” coal. India introduced an amendment at the last moment to replace this phrase with “phase down” and this played negatively with both the advanced as well as a large constituency of developing countries. This was one big “disappointment”.
3. As the largest producer and consumer of coal and coal-based thermal power, it is understandable that China would prefer a gradual reduction rather than total elimination. India may have had similar concerns.
4. However, it was inept diplomacy for India to move the amendment and carry the can rather than let the Chinese bell the cat. The stigma will stick and was unnecessary.

Adaptation:

1. There is a welcome recognition of the importance of Adaptation and there is a commitment to double the current finance available for this to developing countries. Since this amount is currently only \$15 billion, doubling will mean \$ 30 billion. This remains grossly inadequate.
2. According to UNEP, adaptation costs for developing countries are currently estimated at \$70 billion annually and will rise to an estimated \$130-300 billion annually by 2030.

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3. A start is being made in formulating an adaptation plan and this puts the issue firmly on the Climate agenda, balancing the overwhelming focus hitherto on mitigation.

Climate Finance:

1. On the critical issue of finance, there was little to cheer about. The Paris Agreement target of \$100 billion per annum between 2005-2020 was never met with the shortfall being more than half, according to some calculations.
2. There is now a renewed commitment to delivering on this pledge in the 2020-2025 period and there is a promise of an enhanced flow thereafter. But in a post-pandemic global economic slowdown, it is unlikely these promises will be met.
3. In any event, it is unlikely that India will get even a small slice of the pie. As long as ambitious targets are not matched by adequate financing, they will remain ephemeral.

Loss and Damage:

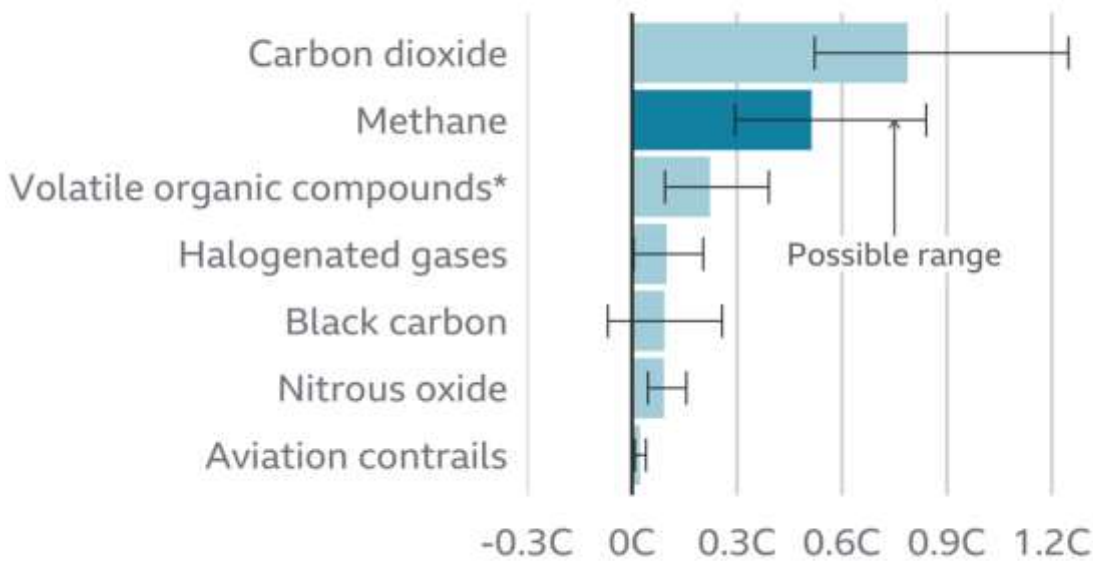
1. The same applies to the issue of compensation for loss and damage for developing countries who have suffered as a result of climate change for which they have not been responsible.
2. This is now part of the multilateral discourse and the US has agreed that it should be examined in working groups. That is a step forward but is unlikely to translate into a meaningful flow of funds any time soon.

The **methane** pledge at **COP26** is the first international agreement targeting **methane emissions**. Countries have pledged to cut methane by **30%** by **2030**, compared to **2020** levels. If successful, warming is projected to decrease by **0.2°C** by **2050**.



Methane is a major contributor to global warming

Contribution to warming in degrees Celsius



Figures are for contributions to 2010-2019 warming relative to 1850-1900

*Volatile organic compounds and carbon monoxide

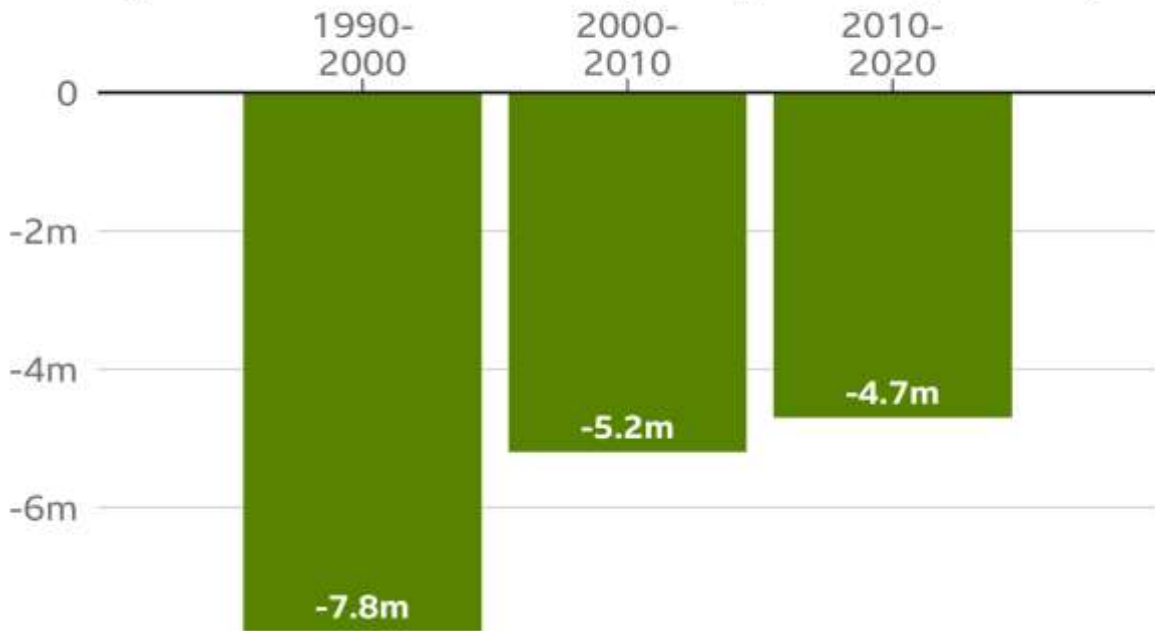
Methane

1. Two important plurilateral outcomes could potentially develop into more substantial measures. The most important is an agreement among 100 countries to cut methane emissions by 30 per cent by 2030. India is not a part of this group.
2. Methane is a significant greenhouse gas with a much higher temperature forcing quality than carbon — 28 to 34 times more — but stays in the atmosphere for a shorter duration.
3. Cutting methane emissions, which is generated mainly by livestock, is certainly useful but there is a much bigger methane emergency around the corner as the earth's permafrost areas in Siberia, Greenland and the Arctic littoral begin to melt due to global warming that has already taken place and will continue to take place in the coming years.
4. There are warnings that as the permafrost melts huge volumes of carbon and methane would be generated by the plant and animal material that has lain trapped under the ice.



The world's forests are still decreasing in size

Average area of forest lost each year by decade (hectares)



Source: UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, 2020



Deforestation:

1. Another group of 100 countries has agreed to begin to reverse deforestation by 2030. Since the group includes Brazil and Indonesia, which have large areas of forests that are being ravaged by legal and illegal logging, there is hope that there will be progress in expanding one of the most important carbon sinks on the planet.
2. However, Brazil has subsequently clarified that its commitment only applies to illegal logging. India did not join the group due to concerns over a clause on possible trade measures related to forest products.

India:

1. Indian commitment to achieving net-zero carbon by 2070 compared favourably with China's target date of 2060. Indian announcements of enhanced targets for renewable energy were also welcomed.
2. However, the favourable image wore thin by the end of the conference with India declining to join the initiatives on methane and deforestation. India's ill-considered amendment on the phasing out of coal pushed the positives of its position off the radar.



INDIA'S 'PANCHAMRIT' AT COP26

by Prime Minister Narendra Modi

1. Reach non-fossil energy capacity to 500GW by 2030
2. Fulfil 50% energy requirements via RE by 2030
3. Reduce 1 bn carbon emissions by 2030
4. Reduce carbon intensity >45% by 2030
5. Achieve the target of Net-Zero by 2070



Failures of COP-26:

1. There is more ambition in the intent to tackle climate change but little to show in terms of concrete actions. These have been deferred to future deliberations.
2. Enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are expected to be announced at a meeting next year and further deliberations are planned on the other pledges related to Adaptation and Finance.
3. There are no compliance procedures, only "name and shame" to encourage delivery on targets.

What provides a glimmer of light is the incredible and passionate advocacy of urgent action by young people across the world. This is putting enormous pressure on governments and leaders and if sustained, may become irresistible.



Holes in Metaverse

Facebook papers reveal the company's disregard for social consequences of misinformation in non-Western markets.

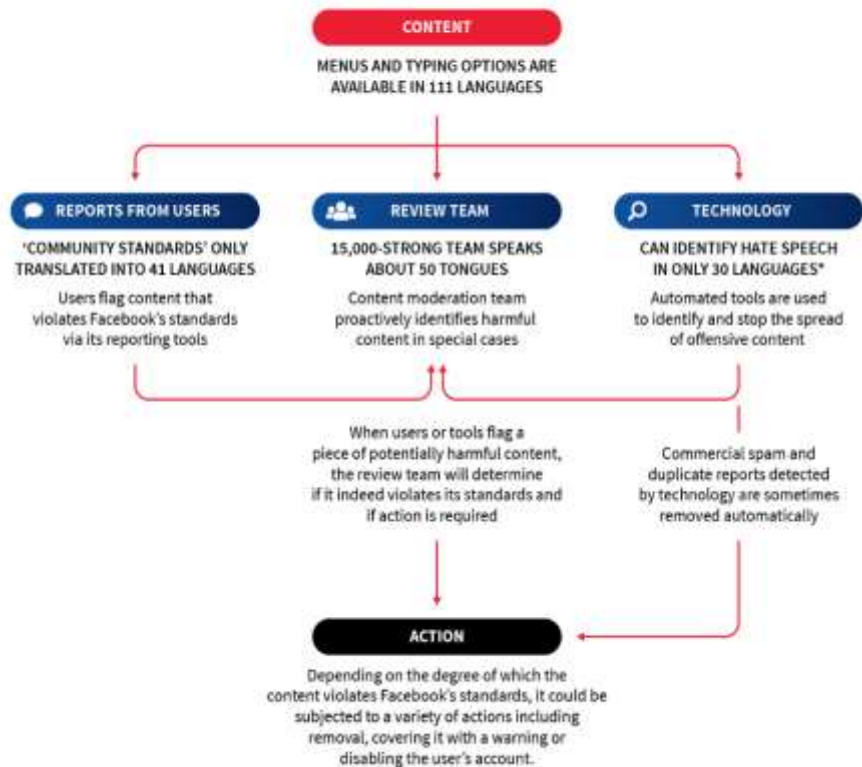
Highlights:

1. The documents about the internal functioning of Facebook, now Meta, outline two sets of voices within the company. On one side, are staff memos and internal reports that flag issues such as misinformation, particularly about minorities, by politicians during the 2019 Lok Sabha election campaign, hate speech, and posts that could be seen as incitements to violence.

2. On the other side, is Meta's leadership seemingly either brushing these concerns aside or insisting that it has done enough to deal with them. Given the clear social and political harm caused through and, perhaps, by Meta and its products, it is unfortunate that the leadership seems to win the day more often than not.

How Facebook detects harmful content

Under pressure from regulators, users and investors worldwide, Facebook expanded its ability to take action on offensive content. It hired more contract workers to review content, fortified automated defense tools and vowed to launch a robust appeals system for moderation decisions. However, the social network company is struggling to keep up with the flood of regional languages now being used on its services in developing countries.



Sources: Facebook; Reuters
C. Chan 18/04/2019

* Tools work in 30 languages for hate speech and 19 languages for "terrorist propaganda"



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3. Between 2018 and 2020, staff memos highlighted a “constant barrage of nationalistic content”, “misinformation” and content denigrating minorities in India. In West Bengal, as many as 40 per cent of posts actually viewed by users were found to be “inauthentic”.
4. Yet, as hate content spiked in India, Meta shrunk the budget for its review team.

Disregard for social consequences of misinformation in non-Western markets

A host of technical, managerial and political reasons can account for the egregious inaction in Facebook's biggest market:

1. The company lacks the capacity or has not invested in AI and manpower to tackle misinformation in “vernacular” languages;
2. Meta continues to take its ethical responsibility in Western markets more seriously;
3. India lacks both the regulation and political will to clamp down on polarising and false political speech.
4. However, the fundamental problem highlighted by Haugen's revelations is that Meta continues to see its prime mandate as maximising views and screentime.
5. For it, concern for the social and political consequences of this drive seems secondary. Meta's AI needs to factor in ethics and social impact in its operations.
6. Having said that, a mature constitutional democracy cannot merely place the blame for the erosion in the standards of its political and public conversation on the algorithms of a multinational company.
7. Political parties, so-called cultural organisations, and those who seek and hold constitutional office must not use social media platforms for political gain through polarisation, because it takes a larger toll.