

India National Action Plan on Climate Change: An Appraisal

The Action Plan, released by the Prime Minister on 30th June 2008, would be implemented through a core of eight National Missions comprising inter-sectoral groups involving relevant Ministries, civil society, private players and local governments. The Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change is in charge of the overall implementation of the plan.

The plan document elaborates on a unique approach to reduce the stress of climate change and uses the poverty-growth linkage to make its point.

Plan in a Nutshell

Principles

The guiding principles of the plan are:

Inclusive and sustainable development strategy to protect the poor
Qualitative change in the method through which the national growth objectives will be achieved i.e. by enhancing ecological sustainability leading to further mitigation
Cost effective strategies for end use demand side management
Deployment of appropriate technologies for extensive and accelerated adaptation, and mitigation of green house gases
Innovative market, regulatory and voluntary mechanisms to promote Sustainable Development
Implementation through linkages with civil society, local governments and public-private partnerships
International cooperation, transfer of technology and funding

Approach

The proclaimed approach of the plan is the facilitation of a directional shift in the development pathway through the enhancement of current and planned programmes mentioned in the technical document. The Action Plan identifies measures that promote developmental objectives while also addressing climate change.

National Missions

The core of the implementation of the Action plan are constituted by the following eight missions, that will be responsible for achieving the broad goals of adaptation and mitigation, as applicable.

1. National Solar Mission
2. National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency: Tradable Certification of energy efficiency and fiscal measures
3. National Mission on Sustainable Habitat: Energy Conservation Building Code; Urban Waste Management- electricity from waste; modal public transport
4. National Water Mission
5. National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem
6. National Mission for a Green India -- carbon sinks etc

7. National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture: New thermal resistant crops, new credit and insurance mechanisms
8. National Mission on Strategic Knowledge on Climate Change

Highlights

1. Comprehensive but complex
2. Emphasis on need for growth as well as the development of technology
3. Emphasis on market mechanisms

Reservations

1. Has the plan been developed with inputs from different quarters of the scientific community? First paragraph of the *Overview* squarely blames anthropogenic factors and developed countries for creating the threat of climate change. Even the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) has not so vehemently proffered the view that human kind is solely responsible for causing climate change.
2. The “directional shift in the development pathway” that will not compromise on the need for growth while trying to achieve ecological sustainability has been presented as the core of the action plan. However, the action plan fails to explain effectively the nature and direction of that shift. It seems to be more influenced by energy security concerns than environmental causes even though it covers a whole gamut of other issues.
3. Concrete Goals Missing: The plan does not specify well defined goals and targets to be achieved under the missions in a time bound manner. This casts doubt on the seriousness with which the plan will be implemented.
4. Focus on industries is not at the desired level, especially in the use of climate change enhancing materials and methods of production.
5. Coordination between different missions will be a problem given the past experience with elaborate structures of cross-cutting activities. There is a possibility that the various missions could replicate the poor coordination existing among different ministries and departments as at present.
6. The role of government as a consumer is not acknowledged; this is surprising given that the government is the largest consumer in India. The government is considered to have the roles only of a regulator and a facilitator by the action plan.
7. The action plan ignores possibilities of measures like Green Public Procurement and eco-labelling by focussing largely on energy efficiency labelling.
8. The proposed activities in agriculture more or less aim at adaptation and ignore the possibility of encouraging mitigation strategies by shifting from climate changing inputs.
9. Though the Action plan liberally used the poverty plank to focus on the need for growth, the impact of the Plan on the people living in poverty is questionable. On the contrary, the implementation of the Plan could impact them adversely if the economic burden of the adaptation strategies is not footed by the government.

In Lieu of a Conclusion

While some actions are specified and an alternative approach for managing climate change is outlined, the lack of a concrete framework and specific goals and targets invites scepticism.