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## **GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE: BANGLADESH'S LEADERSHIP IN THE CLIMATE VULNERABLE FORUM**

### **Abstract**

Climate change is a multi-dimensional phenomenon with heterogeneous global effects. At the global level, the key vulnerabilities are water, food, health, land, environment, infrastructure and the increase in extreme weather events. Though climate vulnerable countries like Bangladesh have minuscule contributions to greenhouse gas emissions, they have become the greatest victims. Bangladesh is one of the most disaster-prone countries of the world, and it suffers from losses of human resources and material resources due to these catastrophes every year. The country has achieved remarkable success in managing natural disasters for over a decade, especially on the grounds of disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. The Government of Bangladesh has taken different programmes for preparedness and response activities. The country gives importance to remain engaged in the global negotiations on climate change. Bangladesh is the founding member of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF). Bangladesh acted as the third chair of the CVF from 2011 to 2013 and now chairs the CVF for the second time and the Vulnerable Twenty (V20) Group of Ministers of Finance. Bangladesh, as a role model in disaster management, can share its experience in disaster management with the CVF countries to make them enable to manage disaster in their respective countries. Against this background, the present paper will highlight how Bangladesh can play an important role as the Chair of the CVF for the next two years.

**Keywords:** Global Warming, Climate Change, UNFCCC, The Kyoto Protocol, Climate Vulnerable Forum, V20

### **1. Introduction**

“The impact of climate change on the developing countries, particularly on low-income countries like Bangladesh, is compounded by high population density, low resource base, high incidence of natural disasters, salinity intrusion and submergence of land due to sea level rise. The situation would become disastrous with even a meter rise of sea level due to global warming, as it would inundate a fifth of Bangladesh, displacing nearly thirty million people and leading to mass movement of people”

— Sheikh Hasina  
Honourable Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>“Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s Remarks on Climate Change”, available at <https://asiasociety.org/new-york/bangladeshi-prime-minister-sheikh-hasinas-remarks-climate-change>, accessed on 05 June 2020.

Climate change, a serious issue with heterogeneous global effects, is not a new phenomenon. As climate change is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, its impacts are also multi-dimensional and harder than the effects of any other challenge. At the global level, the key vulnerabilities are water, food, health, land, environment, infrastructure and the increase in extreme weather events. Mentioning climate change as “the greatest economic challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century”, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Christine Lagarde at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2013 pointed out that unless action on climate change is not taken, future generations will be roasted, toasted, fried and grilled.<sup>2</sup>

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has defined climate change as a change in the state of the climate that can be identified (e.g., by using statistical tests) by changes in the mean and/or the variability of its properties and that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer.<sup>3</sup> The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) defines climate change as “a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.”<sup>4</sup> Climate change is one of the greatest challenges that the world is facing. Climate change is taking place due to human activities and will have significant social, economic and environmental consequences. Mostly the developing countries are impacted by the devastating effects of global warming and climate change. Climate change threatens not only economic growth, but also it will act as a poverty multiplier by increasing the number of poor people and by making poor people even poorer. Developing nations seem to be more vulnerable to climate change due to their economy relying heavily on climate-reliant activities, in particular, farming. Climate change and extreme events threaten food availability, hence food security both at the global and regional levels by reducing crop yields, livestock, fisheries and aquaculture.

The key conclusions from the 5<sup>th</sup> Assessment Report (AR5) by the IPCC released in September 2013 also highlighted that “the atmosphere and ocean have warmed, the amounts of snow and ice have diminished, sea level has risen and the concentrations of greenhouse gases have increased.”<sup>5</sup> Greenhouse gas emission is the main cause of global warming and climate change. The industrialized and rapidly industrializing countries, the European Union (EU), Japan, Brazil, Russia, India, China

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<sup>2</sup> World Economic Forum, “Top Ten Quotes of the Day from Davos”, 23 January 2013, available at <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2013/01/top-ten-quotes-of-the-day-from-davos/>, accessed on 12 February 2020.

<sup>3</sup> IPCC, “Glossary, Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5 °C”, available at <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/glossary/>, accessed on 01 June 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Human Influence on Climate Clear; IPCC Report Says*, IPCC Press Release 2013/20/PR, Stockholm: IPCC, 27 September 2013.

and the United States (US) together account for 75 per cent of all greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>6</sup> According to Dora Marinova, the arrogance and stupidity of the developed countries are the main reasons behind the global warming and climate change.<sup>7</sup>

Climate vulnerable countries like Bangladesh emit greenhouse gas insignificantly,<sup>8</sup> but they are the worst victims of climate change. Bangladesh is recognized as one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to the impacts of climate change as almost the entire areas of Bangladesh are vulnerable to different natural hazards posed by climate change. Experts in Bangladesh believe that “climate change is expected to have major physical impacts on agriculture, industry, infrastructure, health and energy and consequently on people’s livelihood.”<sup>9</sup>

The UNFCCC is an international environmental treaty with the objective to “stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system”.<sup>10</sup> The Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) consists of 48 vulnerable developing countries from all different groups of vulnerable countries under the UNFCCC. While addressing the negative effects of global warming as a result of heightened socio-economic and environmental vulnerabilities, this forum actively seeks a firm and urgent resolution to the current intensification of climate change both domestically and internationally.<sup>11</sup> Bangladesh will be the Chair of the CVF for the second time from June 2020 for the next two years.

Against this background, the present paper will highlight how Bangladesh can play an important role as the Chair of CVF for the next two years. The paper is divided into five sections. Following the introduction, the second section focusses on the politics and coalitions in global climate change negotiations. Third section of the paper will discuss on formation and activities of the CVF. The fourth section of the paper will deal with Bangladesh, the CVF and the way ahead, and fifth section concludes the paper.

<sup>6</sup> George E. Pataki and Thomas J. Vilsack, *Confronting Climate Change: A Strategy for US Foreign Policy*, Independent Task Force Report No.61, New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2008, p. 42.

<sup>7</sup> Dora Marinova, “Climate Change and Developing Countries”, paper presented in the International Seminar on *Climate Change and its Policy Implications for Developing Countries*, organized by Bangladesh Institute of Administration and Management (BIAM) Foundation at BISS Auditorium, Dhaka on 11 February 2020.

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Environment and Forest (MOEF), *Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2009*, BCCSAP 2009, Strategic Plan, Dhaka: MOEF, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, 2009.

<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Environment and Forest (MOEF), National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA), Dhaka: MOEF, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, November 2005.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations, “United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change”, 1992, available at [https://unfccc.int/files/essential\\_background/background\\_publications\\_htmlpdf/application/pdf/conveng.pdf](https://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/background_publications_htmlpdf/application/pdf/conveng.pdf), accessed on 20 February 2020.

<sup>11</sup> “Climate Vulnerable Forum Declaration Adopted”, available at <https://daraint.org/2011/11/14/2748/climate-vulnerable-forum-declaration-adopted/>, accessed on 23 February 2020.

## 2. Politics and Coalitions in Global Climate Change Negotiations

Global warming mostly takes place due to the increase of atmospheric Greenhouse Gas (GHG) concentrations caused by human activities, and these anthropogenic emissions have increased by 70 per cent between 1970 and 2004.<sup>12</sup> By mid-1980s, scientist began warning about the occurring of human-induced global warming and the increase of anthropogenic emissions of GHGs. In 1985, an international conference titled, “Assessment of the Role of Carbon Dioxide and of Other Greenhouse Gases in Climate Variations and Associated Impacts” took place at Villach, Austria and scientists called on politicians to collaborate in the exploration of policies to mitigate human-induced climate change. In the scientific journal *Nature* on 16 May 1985, Joe Farman, Brian Gardiner and Jonathan Shanklin from the British Antarctic Survey announced their detection of abnormally low levels of ozone<sup>13</sup> over the South Pole commonly known as the Ozone Hole. Since the 1970s, scientists had pushed for the regulation of chlorofluorocarbons, chemicals found in everyday items like air conditioners and aerosol sprays, due to their adverse effects on this layer.<sup>14</sup> Concerns increased about the ozone layer depletion among the international community through the 1970s and 1980s. In 1985, the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer formalized international cooperation on this issue which resulted in the signing of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (the Montreal Protocol) in 1987. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) established the IPCC as a scientific intergovernmental body in 1988 to assess climate change and to provide decision makers with an assessment of the latest research and its policy implications for mitigation and adaptation.

There are three positions on global warming that: (1) global warming is not occurring and neither is climate change; (2) global warming and climate change are occurring, but these are natural, cyclic events unrelated to human activity, and (3) global warming is occurring as a result primarily of human activity and so climate change is also the result of human activity.<sup>15</sup>

As the responsibilities of the production of greenhouse gases lie with the developed industrialized countries and the worst impacts of climate change are faced

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<sup>12</sup> Laurence Boisson de Chazournes, “United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change”, United Nations Audiovisual Library of International Law, United Nations, 2008.

<sup>13</sup> The ozone layer contains high levels of trioxxygen, which effectively blocks much of the sun’s most harmful ultraviolet radiation from reaching the planet’s surface.

<sup>14</sup> “Discovery of Ozone Hole Announced”, available at <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/discovery-of-antarctic-ozone-hole-announced>, accessed on 02 June 2020.

<sup>15</sup> “Climate Change Primer”, available at [https://warmheartworldwide.org/climate-change/?gclid=EAIaIqObChMlzd3wiYDg6QIVBKyWCh1ItgBoEAAYASAAEgK\\_N\\_D\\_BwE](https://warmheartworldwide.org/climate-change/?gclid=EAIaIqObChMlzd3wiYDg6QIVBKyWCh1ItgBoEAAYASAAEgK_N_D_BwE), accessed on 01 June 2020.

by the developing ones, climate change will affect more than just traditional security concerns and can create new tensions. As a result of this discrepancy, there is a potential to worsen existing tensions and to raise new disputes between developed industrialized and developing poorer nations. Among all the major environmental threats, global climatic change may most likely affect international politics because of its wide scope and magnitude. Climatic changes may cause shortage of a resource (water or food) or the degradation of natural resources (common or exclusive). Thus, environmental stresses are both a cause and a consequence of political tensions and international disputes.<sup>16</sup> Many factors including inappropriate development policies, resource constraints, population pressures and economic inequity affect the connections between environmental stress, poverty and security.

Developing countries felt that their concerns were not properly addressed by the scientifically focused IPCC process and rejected the proposal of a negotiating committee that would work under the auspices of WMO and UNEP.<sup>17</sup> Thus, an International Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change (INC) was established under the auspices of the United Nations General Assembly (Resolution 45/212 of 21 December 1990), with the mandate “to negotiate a framework convention, containing appropriate commitments, and any related legal instruments as might be agreed upon”, which was open to all member states of the United Nations (UN) and its specialized agencies.<sup>18</sup> 140 states took less than seventeen months in the negotiation process, the committee fulfilled its mandate and the UNFCCC was open for signature at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) at Rio de Janeiro from 04 to 14 June 1992 and thereafter at UN Headquarters in New York until 19 June 1993. As of 2018, UNFCCC has 198 parties.<sup>19</sup> The international climate change negotiations in the UNFCCC are based on coalitions or alliances.

The particular division of the UNFCCC negotiations in a North-South divide, also referred to as “the firewall”, can be seen as representing a narrative division of the world into those with greater historical responsibility and capability to combat global climate change and those with relatively less (or no) such responsibility and capability.<sup>20</sup> It was found that at that time it was primarily a scientific and environmental issue for the North, while the South emphasized on poverty and

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<sup>16</sup> Peter H. Gleick, “Climate Change and International Politics: Problems Facing Developing Countries”, *AMBIO*, Vol. 18, No. 6, 1989.

<sup>17</sup> Laurence Boisson de Chazournes, *op. cit.*

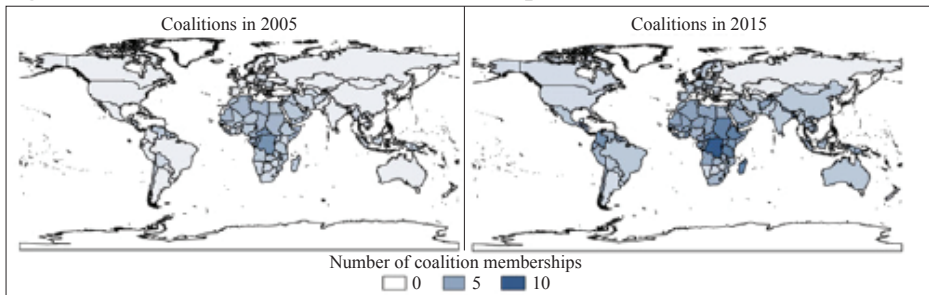
<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> “United Nations Climate Change”, available at <https://unfccc.int/process/parties-non-party-stakeholders/parties-convention-and-observer-states>, accessed on 02 June 2020.

<sup>20</sup> Farhan Yamin and Joanna Depledge, *The International Climate Change Regime: A Guide to Rules, Institutions and Procedures*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

development. This divergent position was based on the underlying interests. In the first group, the majority of Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries favoured the adoption of an agreement that would reduce global GHG emissions. On the other hand, the second group was united in the argument that the new legal instrument must not obstruct their economic development.<sup>21</sup> The Small Island States and States with low-lying coastal areas created an alliance to protect themselves from the threat of rising oceans.

**Figure 1: Evolution of Coalition Memberships Over Time<sup>22</sup>**



The global climate regime is built on the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities”, meaning that those countries who bear historical responsibilities should shoulder a more significant share of the burden and recognize the asymmetries of the international system, especially the differential levels of technological, financial, economic and human capacities between industrialized/developed and developing countries in international environmental negotiations.<sup>23</sup> Despite these asymmetries, every nation has an obligation to participate in the joint efforts to tackle shared global environmental problems according to each nation’s capacity and level of development.<sup>24</sup> The UNFCCC mentions in Article 3(1) that “the Parties should protect the climate system for the benefit of present and future generations of humankind, on the basis of equity and in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. Accordingly, the developed country Parties should take the lead in combating climate change

<sup>21</sup> Laurence Boisson de Chazournes, op. cit.

<sup>22</sup> Paula Castro, “Relational Data between Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change” cited in Carola Klöck and Paula Castro, “Coalitions in Global Climate Change Negotiations”, *INOGOV Policy Brief*, N. 5, August 2018.

<sup>23</sup> Sander Happaerts, “Rising Powers in Global Climate Governance: Negotiating Inside and Outside the UNFCCC”, in Dries Lesage and Thijs Van de Graaf (eds.), *Rising Powers and Multilateral Institutions*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, pp. 238–257; Obijiofor Aginam, “Climate Change Diplomacy and Small Island Developing States”, United Nations University, 08 December 2011, available at <https://unu.edu/publications/articles/climate-change-diplomacy-and-small-island-developing-states.html>, accessed on 01 September 2020.

<sup>24</sup> Obijiofor Aginam, *ibid.*

and the adverse effects thereof.”<sup>25</sup> The UNFCCC is the main forum to debate on global climate change issue, but due to the stalemates in the process of solution and decision making, vulnerable countries have become more interested in forming new coalitions. While the international climate change negotiations have always been based on coalitions, the number of negotiating groups has increased dramatically since 2005 with most developing countries participating in several coalitions.<sup>26</sup> A large number of new coalitions were formed after the Kyoto Protocol came into force. Since 2007 the global climate regime has been focussed on reaching a new universal agreement to mitigate climate change after the Kyoto Protocol with the main challenge to include all major emitters including the US and the rising powers like China, India, Brazil, etc. While five coalitions were active at the very first Conference of Parties (COP) in 1995, 19 different coalitions intervened in the negotiations at the 2015 Paris Climate Summit (COP23).<sup>27</sup>

Among the coalitions, most are formed with developing countries’ group. Developing country Parties generally work through the Group of 77 to establish common negotiating positions.<sup>28</sup> It is seen from Figure 1 that the number of coalitions is increasing, where the developed countries are confined to one or two coalitions. On the other hand, the developing countries have a tendency of joining more coalitions in climate change negotiations which they think could make their voice strong.

Based on the tradition of the UN, Parties are organized into five regional groups, mainly for the purposes of electing the Bureau. These regional groups include African States, Asian States, Eastern European States, Latin American and the Caribbean States and the Western European and Other States<sup>29</sup> which are not usually used to present the substantive interests of Parties and several other groupings are more important for climate negotiations.<sup>30</sup> Lots of coalitions are representing the vulnerable countries in the global climate negotiations. The African Group of Negotiators (African Group), comprised of 54 parties was established at COP1 in Berlin, Germany in 1995, as an alliance of African member states that represents the interests of the region in the international climate change negotiations, with a common and unified voice. The African Group is active and supportive to all aspects of the climate change negotiating process, for instance, regarding vulnerability, mitigation and adaptation to climate change. The 48 Parties defined

<sup>25</sup> United Nations, “United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change”, 1992.

<sup>26</sup> Carola Klöck and Paula Castro, *op. cit.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> “Party Groupings”, available at <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/parties-non-party-stakeholders/parties/party-groupings>, accessed on 07 September 2020.

<sup>29</sup> The “Other States” include Australia, Canada, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland and the US, but not Japan, which is in the Asian Group.

<sup>30</sup> Party Groupings, *op. cit.*



as Least Developed Countries (LDCs) by the UN regularly work together in the wider UN system have become increasingly active in the climate change process, often working together to defend their particular interests, for example with regard to vulnerability and adaptation to climate change. Small vulnerable countries are also forming coalitions to raise their voices. Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), an intergovernmental organization of 44 low-lying coastal and small island countries formed in 1990, with the main purpose to consolidate the voices of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to address global warming.<sup>31</sup> AOSIS has been playing a very active role from the very beginning. In 1994 the organization first put forward the first draft text in the Kyoto Protocol negotiations. AOSIS also pushed for the establishment of an international mechanism on loss and damage at the 2013 Warsaw climate change conference. Although the increased number of coalitions may make the decision-making process harder to reach any agreements, as the coalitions are more regionally and thematically focused, more countries are involved nowadays since they have found an appropriate forum to support each other. Several other groups also work together in the climate change process, including countries from the Arab States<sup>32</sup>, the Environmental Integrity Group (EIG)<sup>33</sup>, the European Union (EU)<sup>34</sup>, the Umbrella Group<sup>35</sup>, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), a group of countries of Central Asia, Caucasus, Albania and Moldova (CACAM), the Cartagena Dialogue, the Independent Alliance of Latin America and the Caribbean (AILAC), the BASIC Group (Brazil, South Africa, China India), the Like Minded Group, the Coalition for Rainforest Nations and the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA in Spanish).<sup>36</sup> The CVF is such an initiative of the developing countries to exert additional pressure for action to tackle the climate change challenges.

### 3. CVF: Formation, Activities and Achievement

The CVF, which serves as a South-South cooperation platform for participating governments to act together to deal with global climate change, is an international partnership of countries who are highly vulnerable to global

<sup>31</sup> "AOSIS", available at <https://www.aosis.org/about/>, accessed on 07 September 2020.

<sup>32</sup> The Arab States is comprised of 22 member states namely Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen.

<sup>33</sup> The Environmental Integrity Group (EIG), formed in 2000, comprises Mexico, Liechtenstein, Monaco, the Republic of Korea, Switzerland and Georgia.

<sup>34</sup> The 28 members of the European Union meet in private to agree on common negotiating positions. However, it does not have a separate vote from its members.

<sup>35</sup> The Umbrella Group is a coalition of Parties which formed following the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol. The Group is made up of Australia, Belarus, Canada, Iceland, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Kazakhstan, Norway, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the US.

<sup>36</sup> Party Groupings, *op. cit.*



warming and climate change. In 2009, the CVF was formed by the then president of the Maldives Mohamed Nasheed in the run up to the COP15 held in December 2009 in Copenhagen, Denmark. Since its inception, the forum is active in building cooperation, knowledge and awareness on climate change issues. The CVF was formed with the aim to increase the accountability of industrialized nations for the consequences of global climate change and to exert additional pressure for action to tackle the challenge. 48 countries are the member of the CVF among which 11 countries<sup>37</sup> are founding members and 32 countries are additional members. 23 countries<sup>38</sup> and the EU have the observer status of the CVF. In September 2012, the CVF established a trust fund administered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN agencies to collaborate in implementing activities linked to the CVF with the UNDP.<sup>39</sup>

The CVF first met near Malé, Maldives in November 2009 where Heads of States, Ministers and other government leaders represented countries threatened by climate change from around the world. President Nasheed wanted to create a cross-cutting group of leaders that joined all the vulnerable countries together at the leadership level, not for detailed negotiations but rather for high level advocacy on behalf of all groups.<sup>40</sup> For this, he invited 20 key heads of nations from the four groups of vulnerable countries—the LDCs Group, the AOSIS, the African Group and the Latin America Group to strategize on one or two high-level advocacy demands on behalf of all the vulnerable developing countries. The Forum first met just ahead of COP15, where 11 nations participated and adopted the first declaration that expressed alarm at the pace of change witnessed to the earth as a result of human-induced changes to the climate.<sup>41</sup> They also decided to focus on a single high-level advocacy message, i.e., to change the global long-term temperature goal from 2°C to 1.5°C, unfortunately, President Nasheed failed to bring the developed and big developing countries in agreement to press for this demand. But he managed to insert a small paragraph at the end of the Copenhagen Agreement mentioning that there would be a review of the long-term temperature goal between 2013 and 2015. The UNFCCC Secretariat set up a scientific group to examine the difference between 2°C warming

<sup>37</sup> Bangladesh, Barbados, Bhutan, Ghana, Kenya, Kiribati, Maldives, Nepal, Rwanda, Tanzania and Vietnam adopted the first declaration, “Declaration of the Climate Vulnerable Forum”, available at <http://daraint.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/Declaration-of-the-CVF-FINAL2.pdf>, accessed on 26 February 2020.

<sup>38</sup> Australia, China, Denmark, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Qatar, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, the United Kingdom and the US.

<sup>39</sup> “Climate Vulnerable Forum Trust Fund”, available at <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/CVF00>, accessed on 26 February 2020

<sup>40</sup> Saleemul Huq, “Bangladesh has an Opportunity to be a World Leader in Climate Change”, *The Daily Star*, 02 June 2020.

<sup>41</sup> Climate Vulnerable Forum, “Brief History of the CVF”, available at <https://thecvf.org/web/climate-vulnerable-forum/brief-history-of-the-cvf/>, accessed on 24 February 2020.

and 1.5°C. In 2015 the scientific group published their report mentioning that while 2°C is good enough to protect most of the countries and people of the world, but still it would affect millions of people living in the poorest countries. For this, 1.5°C is essential if the global leaders wish to protect all the people of the world.<sup>42</sup> This report allowed the CVF to make the global leaders understand the necessity of reducing the long-term temperature goal to 1.5°C from 2°C.

At COP21 in Paris, on 12 December 2015, Parties to the UNFCCC reached the landmark Paris Agreement to combat climate change and to accelerate and intensify the actions and investments needed for a sustainable low carbon future. The central aim of the Paris Agreement is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise of this century well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5°C. Additionally, the agreement aims to increase the ability of countries to deal with the impacts of climate change and at making finance flows consistent with low GHG emissions and climate-resilient pathway. To reach these ambitious goals, appropriate mobilization and provision of financial resources, a new technology framework and enhanced capacity-building are to be put in place to support action by developing countries and the most vulnerable countries in line with their respective national objectives. The Agreement also provides for an enhanced transparency framework for action and support.<sup>43</sup> It was the biggest achievement of the CVF.

The uncertainty of the global commitments to address climate change which are agreed, approved and adopted at the UNFCCC has instigated the emergence of the Vulnerable Twenty (V20)<sup>44</sup>. The V20 Group of Ministers of Finance of the CVF is a dedicated cooperation initiative of economies systemically vulnerable to climate change and the V20 works through dialogue and action to tackle global climate change.<sup>45</sup> Although global warming and climate change are posing a serious threat to the V20 countries, their financial allocation for adaptation and resilience is insufficient. The call to create the V20 originated from the CVF's Costa Rica Action Plan (2013-2015)

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<sup>42</sup> United Nations Climate Change, "IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 °C", available at <https://unfccc.int/topics/science/workstreams/cooperation-with-the-ipcc/ipcc-special-report-on-global-warming-of-15-degc#eq-4>, accessed on 26 February 2020.

<sup>43</sup> United Nations Climate Change, "What is the Paris Agreement?", available at <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/what-is-the-paris-agreement>, accessed on 26 February 2020.

<sup>44</sup> V20 Members: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Barbados, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Fiji, The Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Kenya, Kiribati, Lebanon, Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, Niger, Palau, Palestine, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Samoa, Senegal, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Viet Nam and Yemen.

<sup>45</sup> "V20", available at <https://www.v-20.org/about/>, accessed on 28 March 2020.

in a major effort to strengthen economic and financial responses to climate change. It foresaw a high-level policy dialogue pertaining to action on climate change and the promotion of climate resilient and low emission development with full competence for addressing economic and financial issues beyond the remit of any one organization.<sup>46</sup>

The last Climate Vulnerable Summit, took place on 22 November 2018, called on governments around the world to raise the ambition of their climate targets by 2020 to keep global warming to the 1.5°C limit and save vulnerable nations.<sup>47</sup> It was the first inter-governmental Summit to take place entirely online, which demonstrates their determination to reduce emissions through the creative application of readily available means and to increase inclusivity and transparency while conserving scarce resources. The Communique stated the Forum’s five-point vision of surviving and thriving in a world, by 2030 to 2050 at the latest: 1) climate change dangers are kept to an absolute minimum; 2) maximum advantage is taken of the benefits of climate action; 3) maximum resilience is achieved for people, indigenous groups, livelihoods, infrastructure, cultures and ecosystems; 4) the SDGs and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) targets are achieved and, where possible, exceeded or accomplished ahead of schedule, and 5) LDCs and low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) emerge as wealthy nations through strong economic growth.<sup>48</sup>

#### **4. Bangladesh and the CVF: Way Ahead**

As mentioned above, Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change. The physical, social and economic conditions of the country have also aggravated the vulnerability of the country.

##### **4.1 *Climate Change Impacts and Bangladesh’s Disaster Preparedness***

Natural disasters are a common phenomenon due to the geographical location of Bangladesh. The country is vulnerable to various natural calamities, and the vulnerability is increasing with the gradual change of extreme climate events due to global warming and climate change. The vulnerability to the natural calamities includes changes in average temperature, changed nature of precipitation, changed characteristics in the hydrological cycle due the melting of glaciers in source areas of the rivers of Bangladesh, increased salinity in the rivers in the southern part of

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Catherine Benson Wahlén, “Leaders Call for Increased Ambition at Climate Vulnerable Summit”, available at <http://sdg.iisd.org/news/leaders-call-for-increased-ambition-at-climate-vulnerable-summit/>, accessed on 27 February 2020.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

the country, more powerful cyclones, tornados and storm surges. According to the Global Climate Risk Index 2020, Bangladesh is seventh among 10 countries most affected by climate change impacts in a 20-year period from 1999 to 2018.<sup>49</sup> According to a World Bank report titled “South Asia’s Hotspots: The Impact of Temperature and Precipitation Changes on Living Standards”, “Bangladesh’s average annual temperature is expected to rise by 1.0°C to 1.5°C by 2050 even if preventive measures are taken along the lines of those recommended by the Paris Climate Change Agreement of 2015, and if no measures are taken, then the country’s average temperatures are predicted to increase by 1.0°C to 2.5°C”.<sup>50</sup> The increasing temperature could cost Bangladesh 6.7 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and depress the living standards of more than three-quarters of country’s population by 2050.<sup>51</sup> There is a significant change in the rainfall pattern of the country. The rainy season has become shorter and heavy rainfall occurs within a short period. There is an increase of 3.4 per cent in country-wide rainfall during the pre-monsoon summer season and a 1.7 per cent decrease in monsoon rainfall.<sup>52</sup> The IPCC report has predicted that, in Bangladesh, population at risk to sea level rise will increase to 27 million by 2050.<sup>53</sup> Sea level rise is also another reason that leads to an increase in soil salinity. The increased temperature has accelerated the rate of glacial melt of the Himalayan region. Himalayan glaciers have reduced by 21 per cent (in area) since the 1980s<sup>54</sup> and have lost about 174 giga tonnes of water between 2003 and 2009, which contributed to catastrophic floods in these basins<sup>55</sup>. Bangladesh has a relatively insignificant carbon footprint. Bangladesh produces about 0.44 tonnes of carbon dioxide per person, much lower than the US’s 16.4 tonnes, Australia’s 16.3 tonnes and Qatar’s whopping 40.5 tonnes, according to World Bank figures.<sup>56</sup> In spite of having a tiny carbon footprint, the country is suffering from the worst

<sup>49</sup> “Climate Change: Bangladesh 7<sup>th</sup> Most Affected Nation Over 20 Years”, *The Business Standard*, 05 December 2019.

<sup>50</sup> The World Bank, “Bangladesh: Rising Temperature Affects Living Standards of 134 Million People”, Press Release, 26 September 2018, available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/09/26/bangladesh-rising-temperature-affects-living-standards-of-134-million-people>, accessed on 23 June 2020.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> A. Karmalkar, C. McSweeney, M. New and G. Lizcano, “UNDP Climate Change Country Profiles: Bangladesh”, 2012, available at [http://www.geog.ox.ac.uk/research/climate/projects/undp-cp/UNDP\\_reports/Bangladesh/Bangladesh.hires.report.pdf](http://www.geog.ox.ac.uk/research/climate/projects/undp-cp/UNDP_reports/Bangladesh/Bangladesh.hires.report.pdf), accessed on 23 June 2020.

<sup>53</sup> Helena Wright, “What does the IPCC Report Say about Climate Change in Bangladesh”, *Dhaka Tribune*, 16 February 2015.

<sup>54</sup> World Water Assessment Programme, “Water in a Changing World”, UN World Water Development Report 3, 2009, available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001819/181993e.pdf>, accessed on 24 June 2020.

<sup>55</sup> Javaid R. Laghari, “Climate Change: Melting Glaciers Bring Energy Uncertainty”, *Nature*, Vol. 502, Issue 7473, 2013, pp. 617-618.

<sup>56</sup> Syful Islam, “Climate Threatened Bangladesh to Impose Carbon Tax in June”, *Reuters*, 23 May 2017, available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bangladesh-climatechange-carbontax/climate-threatened-bangladesh-to-impose-carbon-tax-in-june-idUSKBN18J00V#:~:text=Bangladesh%20produces%20about%200.44%20tonnes,according%20to%20World%20Bank%20figures,> accessed on 16 June 2020.

impacts of global warming and climate change.

Bangladesh has a global reputation for its remarkable progress in the climate resilient initiatives. The country is often considered as a climate change adaptation champion and the government also has a strong commitment to the cause. The country has taken several initiatives to facilitate climate resilient development, and at the ground level, it has achieved tremendous success in the area of disaster management. Bangladesh has been able to develop some skills and capabilities in its scientific community to address the problems of assessing vulnerability to climate change and developing appropriate strategic responses.<sup>57</sup> Bangladesh has developed some capacity to deal with the negative impacts of climate change at the national level. Policy response options have been mobilized for vulnerability reduction to environmental variability in general and to climate change in particular. In addition, Bangladesh has, for some time, been recognized as a particularly vulnerable country by the international community and has received disaster management and adaptation support in several sectors.

To address the impact of climate change, the government of Bangladesh has adopted a number of policy and institutional initiatives including preparation of the National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPA) in 2005 and Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP) in 2009, establishment of the Climate Change Unit, creation of the Climate Trust Fund and some high level committees with specific functions to facilitate the adaptation actions.<sup>58</sup> Among the countries of the LDCs, Bangladesh was one of the first to complete a NAPA in 2005. The NAPA was the beginning of a long journey to address adverse impacts of climate stimuli, including variability and extreme events and to promote sustainable development of the country.<sup>59</sup> Following NAPA, the Ministry of Environment and Forest in 2009 formulated BCCSAP as an integral part of the overall national development policies, plans and programmes of the country. The strategy is based on six pillars: (1) food security, social protection and health, (2) comprehensive disaster management, (3) infrastructure development, (4) research and knowledge management, (5) mitigation and low-carbon development and (6) capacity building and institutional development.<sup>60</sup>

In the context of Bangladesh, climate finance basically refers to the flow

<sup>57</sup> Saleemul Huq, "Climate Change and Bangladesh", *Science*, Vol. 294, 23 November 2001, p. 1617.

<sup>58</sup> Saleemul Huq and Golam Rabbani, "Climate Change and Bangladesh: Policy and Institutional Development to Reduce Vulnerability", *Journal of Bangladesh Studies*, Vol. 13, 2011, pp 1-10.

<sup>59</sup> Ministry of Environment and Forest (MOEF), *National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA)*, op. cit., p. ii.

<sup>60</sup> Ministry of Environment and Forest (MOEF), *Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2009*, op. cit., p. 3.

of funds to programmes on adaptation and to a limited extent on mitigation.<sup>61</sup> Government has established Climate Change Trust to redress the adverse impact of climate change on Bangladesh with the aim (i) to take necessary action plan for capacity building for adjustment of the people or groups of people of the affected and risky areas resulting from climate change, upgrading their life and livelihood and facing the long term risk, and to take measures for implementation thereof and (ii) to take measures for adaptation, mitigation, technology development and transfer, capacity building and funds for facing adverse effect of climate change on man, biodiversity and nature.<sup>62</sup> The government has demonstrated its commitment to undertake both adaptation and mitigation efforts as part of its agenda for sustainable development which is evidenced by the fact that every year the government channels a lot of resources for significant investment in projects/programmes for ensuring climate resilience. It currently spends US\$1 billion a year, around 6 to 7 per cent of its annual budget, on climate change adaptation.<sup>63</sup> Three-quarters of the money spent on climate change in the country comes directly from the government, while the rest comes from international development partners.<sup>64</sup> At the COP15 of the UNFCCC in 2009, developed countries committed to mobilize jointly US\$100 billion a year in climate finance by 2020 to address the needs of developing countries, in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation.<sup>65</sup> But the developed countries have not fulfilled their pledge yet. Being one of the most vulnerable countries, Bangladesh was one of the earliest countries to prepare and submit their ‘Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)’ to UNFCCC back in 2015 putting more emphasis on “adaptation” than “mitigation”. Proposing several activities for climate change adaptation, the Seventh Five Year Plan (FY 2016 – FY 2020) mentioned that an integrated approach to climate proofing of Bangladesh development strategy is the way to move forward.<sup>66</sup> Bangladesh government has approved Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100, which is the combination of long-term strategies and subsequent interventions for ensuring long term water and food

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<sup>61</sup> Climate Fiscal Framework 2014, cited in Finance Division, Ministry of Finance, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, *Climate Financing for Sustainable Development*, Budget Report 2019-20”, Dhaka: Finance Division, Ministry of Finance, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, June 2019, pp.7-8.

<sup>62</sup> Ministry of Environment and Forest, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, “The Climate Change Trust Act”, 2010 ACT NO. LVII OF 2010, Bangladesh Gazette, 04 April 2016, available at [http://www.dpp.gov.bd/upload\\_file/gazettes/15741\\_60576.pdf](http://www.dpp.gov.bd/upload_file/gazettes/15741_60576.pdf), accessed on 30 June 2020.

<sup>63</sup> Finance Division, op. cit., pp.7-8.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> UNFCCC, 2009 cited in OECD, “2020 Projections of Climate Finance towards the USD 100 Billion Goal: Technical Note”, OECD Publishing, 2016, available at <https://www.oecd.org/environment/cc/Projecting%20Climate%20Change%202020%20WEB.pdf>, accessed on 30 June 2020.

<sup>66</sup> General Economics Division (GED), Planning Commission, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, *Seventh Five Year Plan FY 2016 – FY 2020: Accelerating Growth, Empowering Citizens*, Dhaka: General Economics Division (GED), Planning Commission, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, November 2015, p. 22.

security, economic growth and environmental sustainability while effectively reducing vulnerability to natural disasters and building resilience to climate change and other delta challenges through robust, adaptive and integrated strategies and equitable water governance, on 04 September 2018 with the aspiration of achieving “safe, climate resilient and prosperous Delta” by 2100.<sup>67</sup>

#### 4.2 *Bangladesh in Global Climate Negotiations*

Bangladesh has given importance to remain engaged in the global negotiations on global warming and climate change. No country negotiates in the UNFCCC as a single country. Bangladesh negotiates as a member of the LDCs group and was once the chair of the group and now remains in the senior group of LDCs negotiators.<sup>68</sup> Bangladesh has also been selected to a number of important bodies set up by the UNFCCC over the years, such as the Adaptation Fund Board, the Green Climate Fund Board and the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage.<sup>69</sup> Bangladesh has received appreciation for its remarkable development in climate resilient initiatives and the country’s leadership in community based adaptation.

At the international level, under the UNFCCC and the World Trade Organization (WTO), Bangladesh plays a significant role in negotiating within the G-77 or China group.<sup>70</sup> Bangladesh has already taken up the chairmanship of the CVF from June 2020. The process of establishing regional Climate Change Adaptation Centre in Bangladesh under Global Commission on Adaptation (GCA) is underway. Climate change, as a development challenge and a security concern, remains as one of the most discussed topics in the United Nations Headquarters (UNHQs) in New York. The Permanent Mission of Bangladesh is engaged in climate change and environment issues, and highlights its vulnerabilities to the climate change. This is one of the priority areas of the Secretary General who had convened a Climate Action Summit on 23 September 2019.<sup>71</sup> Bangladesh was a partner country in the Summit’s Coalition on Adaptation and Resilience, and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina launched a multi-party initiative called Risk-Informed Early Action Plan (REAP) during the

<sup>67</sup> Shamsul Alam, “Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100: Implementation Challenges and Way Forward”, *The Financial Express*, 23 March 2019.

<sup>68</sup> Saleemul Huq, “Bangladesh’s Role in the Climate Change Negotiations”, *The Daily Star*, 17 November 2016.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Saleemul Huq, “Climate Change and Bangladesh: The Way Forward”, available at <http://tiempo.sei-international.org/portal/archive/issue47/t47a4.htm>, accessed on 02 July 2020.

<sup>71</sup> Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh to the United Nations, “Climate Change”, available at <https://bdun.org/bangladesh-priorities-at-the-un/climate-change/>, accessed on 07 July 2020.



Climate Action Summit.<sup>72</sup> The country is committed to the implementation of the Paris Agreement and other existing environmental agreements, and for this, it is now finalizing the National Implementation Plan for implementing NDCs.

### 4.3 *Bangladesh and the CVF*

Bangladesh is the founding member of the CVF.<sup>73</sup> Bangladesh acted as the third chair of the CVF from 2011 to 2013, and the government hosted a ministerial meeting of the forum on 13–14 November 2011 in Dhaka. The meeting adopted a 14-point declaration of the CVF on 14 November 2011<sup>74</sup>, which was supported by 19 climate vulnerable countries. The declaration called to ensure securing of a second term of the Kyoto protocol without a gap between the first and the second and a legally-binding agreement on greenhouse gas emission cuts. It also included committing the group of vulnerable countries to low carbon development and called for a new global Climate Vulnerability Monitor on low-carbon development.<sup>75</sup> The Dhaka Declaration also reaffirms the commitment by climate vulnerable countries to focus on adaptation, particularly in the short term in order to minimize immediate danger and calls on developed countries to support the implementation of schemes. Similarly, the declaration recognizes an urgent need for technology transfer from the international community as a means of ensuring fuller and more pragmatic technological developments.<sup>76</sup> Bangladesh established the first Trust Fund of the CVF.

In Madrid, at the opening day of COP25, the current Chair of the CVF Hilda Heine, President of the Marshall Islands, proposed the Prime Minister of Bangladesh to take over the charge of the CVF. The Prime Minister accepted the proposal and she will be the chair of the CVF for the next two years from June 2020.

Bangladesh now chairs the CVF and the V20 Group of Ministers of Finance of the 48 states that constitute the international body for climate-threatened nations. The country assumed the presidency through an online event on 09 June 2020. Bangladesh took over the presidency from Marshall Islands at a time when the

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> See, the Malé Declaration, at available at <https://daraint.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/Declaration-of-the-CVF-FINAL2.pdf>, accessed on 12 October 2020.

<sup>74</sup> Climate Vulnerable Forum, op. cit.

<sup>75</sup> “Dhaka Ministerial Declaration of the Climate Vulnerable Forum”, available at <https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:wxVOHCzUYEcJ:https://thecvf.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Annex-1-Dhaka-Ministerial-Declaration-of-the-CVF.pdf+&cd=2&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=bd>, accessed on 27 February 2020.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

world is facing an unprecedented crisis due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Bangladesh indicated that it would use its presidency of the CVF to act as a champion for the urgent strengthening of climate action by all, especially to keep the increase of global temperature within 1.5°C and to implement the commitments made at Paris.<sup>77</sup> Under Bangladesh’s leadership, the CVF indicated that it would continue to call for delivery of strengthened contributions to the Paris Agreement, or NDCs, in 2020, seen as a “deadline for survival” to ensure the agreement’s 1.5°C goal remained achievable and progress towards the SDGs is well secure.

Bangladesh also highlighted to advance the following key priority areas under its forthcoming presidency:<sup>78</sup>

- Promoting international solidarity for a successful 2021 climate summit (UNFCCC COP26)
- Strengthening efforts to adapt to changes in the climate, accelerating adaptation action
- Enhancing protection of human rights threatened due to climate issues
- Scaling-up efforts to address loss and damage and to support people displaced by climate threats and establish international responsibility for compensation for displacement
- Contributing to increased public awareness and expanding scientific knowledge
- Promoting progress towards the CVF vision on renewable energy production and access
- Further strengthening partnerships, outreach and the institutional capabilities of the CVF and V20
- Creation of a new CVF and V20 Fund
- Possibility of having a new special rapporteur on climate change
- Appointing CVF’s thematic envoys and special envoys for climate change
- Publishing of the third edition of the “Climate Vulnerability Monitor”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> “CVF Presidency Special Envoy Appointed”, Press Release, 15 June 2020, available at <https://www.v-20.org/category/pressmedia/>, accessed on 04 July 2020.

<sup>78</sup> “Bangladesh: Chair of Vulnerable Twenty Group”, Press Release, 13 June 2020, available at <https://www.v-20.org/category/pressmedia/>, accessed on 04 July 2020.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

Bangladesh indicated that its work within the V20 would continue to aim at mobilizing the economy and financial resources to fight climate change, engage major economies and ensure international financial institutions who are better positioned to respond to climate threats and provide the right support to those most vulnerable.<sup>80</sup>

#### 4.4 *Way Ahead*

Global warming is the consequence of the stock of greenhouse gas emissions, mainly CO<sub>2</sub>, which has accumulated in the earth's atmosphere as a result of fossil fuel based industrial activity in the industrialized countries of the world. There is a difference between the emission of the developing countries and the developed countries. The emissions of the developing countries are mainly related with their survival and the emissions of the developed countries are related to their lifestyle. Developed nations must take responsibility for their emissions and contribute in funding and transferring of technologies to the developing countries to help avoid the dangerous impacts of climate change. If developed countries do not make significant and absolute reductions in their emissions, there will be a smaller carbon space available to accommodate the development needs of the developing countries. Unfortunately, the developed countries, which emit greenhouse gas the most, are doing just the opposite. G20 members account for about two-thirds of the world's population, 85 per cent of the gross world product and 75 per cent of the greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>81</sup> More than four-fifths or 82 per cent of G20 nations' energy supply still comes from fossil fuel which means these industrialized countries are far from being on course to ensure that their CO<sub>2</sub> reductions would help to keep global warming within a manageable 1.5°C rise. Unless G20 nations manage to halve their emissions by 2030, global temperatures are expected to rise by 3.2°C, more than double of the set target of 1.5°C. But unfortunately, only six G20 countries have official long-term plans for reducing emissions.<sup>82</sup> In 2016, the US joined the Paris Agreement, marking a significant contribution towards the early entry into force of the agreement. For the last two years, President Donald Trump has talked about pulling the US out of the Paris climate agreement. The US has told the UN that it has begun the process of pulling off the 2015 Paris Agreement and submitted a formal

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Hayden Higgins, "5 Ways the G20 Can Support Climate Action and Sustainable Development", World Resources Institute, available at <https://www.wri.org/blog/2018/11/5-ways-g20-can-support-climate-action-and-sustainable-development>, accessed on 23 February 2020.

<sup>82</sup> Katherine Ross, "Only 6 G20 Countries Have Official Long-term Plans for Reducing Emissions. Here are 4 Reasons They Need Them", World Resources Institute, 22 October 2018, available at <https://www.wri.org/blog/2018/10/only-6-g20-countries-have-official-long-term-plans-reducing-emissions>, accessed on 18 February 2020.

notice to the UN.<sup>83</sup>

The purpose of the CVF is to channel input from the most vulnerable groups, creating new policies and promoting effective actions on climate change as it evolves. The forum is recognized as a voice on international climate change issues. The members of the CVF also belong to their own well-established negotiating blocs such as the LDCs group, the AOSIS, the Africa group, etc. The CVF should not be seen as a substitute or even a new “negotiating bloc” in the UNFCCC process, rather, the individual countries should remain in their established negotiating groups and continue to work within those groups.<sup>84</sup>

As Bangladesh is going to take the responsibility of the CVF for the next two years, there are some issues which should be taken care of. A two-year programme should be chalked out. It is important that the Head of the Government remains involved with the process. The whole process should be brought under the direct command of the Prime Minister’s office in accordance with other relevant ministries like environment, foreign affairs, finance and planning, etc. The Prime Minister, together with Ban Ki-Moon, Chair of the Global Center on Adaptation, appointed Abul Kalam Azad as the special envoy of the Climate Vulnerable Forum Presidency.<sup>85</sup> After assuming the leadership of the CVF and V20 Group of Finance Ministers, Bangladesh decided to engage six thematic ambassadors to help to strengthen its networking and engagements with key actors throughout the world in six identified core areas—ambition, culture, finance, parliaments, renewable energy and vulnerability.<sup>86</sup> As CVF Thematic Ambassadors, they will create global public campaign and mobilize stakeholders, groups and voices to raise global awareness on climate vulnerabilities and pursue countries to keep the Paris Agreement Goal of 1.5°C alive and advocate on behalf of the CVF countries and coordinate international cooperation to fight against the adverse impacts of climate change.<sup>87</sup> Among the six Thematic Ambassadors, four Ambassadors have been nominated for their outstanding and prolonged expertise and dedication in their respective field of works. The four Thematic Ambassadors are: Saima Wazed Hossain, Chairperson of the National Advisory Committee on Neurodevelopment Disorder and Autism of Bangladesh, Mohammed Nasheed, Speaker and former president of Maldives, Loren Legarda, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Philippines and Tosi Mpanu-Mpanu, lead climate change specialist of DR Congo. The four Ambassadors will

<sup>83</sup> Seth Borenstein, “US Officials Tells United Nations It is Pulling out of Paris Climate Deal”, *Anchorage Daily News*, 04 November 2019, available at <https://www.adn.com/nation-world/2019/11/04/us-officials-tells-united-nations-it-is-pulling-out-of-paris-climate-deal/>, accessed on 02 March 2020.

<sup>84</sup> Saleemul Huq, “Climate Vulnerable Forum: What next?”, *The Daily Star*, 16 November 2011.

<sup>85</sup> “CVF Presidency Special Envoy Appointed”, op. cit.

<sup>86</sup> “Saima Wazed Chosen as Ambassador to Climate Vulnerable Forum”, *The Daily Star*, 23 July 2020.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

work on vulnerability, ambition, parliament and renewable energy respectively and two more Thematic Ambassadors for culture and finance will also be nominated from the Marshall Islands and Costa Rica. With the Thematic Ambassadors, an expert advisory committee could also be established to support the Ambassadors to deal with the issues. The CVF President and former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon while in a conversation with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina informed that the next conference of the CVF will be held in 2021 commemorating the “Mujib Borsho”.

Bangladesh, as the leader of the vulnerable countries’ forum, needs to plan to push the carbon emitting countries to make faster and deeper emission cuts to limit the rise in global average temperatures to 1.5°C. Climate crisis will worsen if the pollution is left unchecked. There is a growing public support for climate action in the developed nations. Pressure from citizens will eventually lead governments “to succumb to the causes of the people”.<sup>88</sup> Bangladesh vowed to put pressure on nations fuelling global warming to cut emissions and help address the plight of people displaced by climate change. Bangladesh needs to become the spokesperson of all the vulnerable countries instead of just focusing on its individual vulnerability and raise voice in various global climate forums continuously. It is necessary to focus on raising awareness campaigns as Bangladesh is unable to take actions against the top emitters. Bangladesh can raise its voice for a legal binding agreement in the UNFCCC, as the CVF can be a good platform to raise a unanimous voice of all the vulnerable countries, so that the developed countries cannot withdraw from the climate negotiations or show unwillingness for the reduction of carbon emission.

In COP25, the CVF leaders highlighted that climate crisis represented the most serious human rights issue the world has ever faced and called for the creation of a UN Special Rapporteur on climate change, pledging US\$50,000 to support such a mandate of the Human Rights Council from a new CVF and V20 Trust Fund announced at the event to be backed by financial contributions of the vulnerable nations and partner donors.<sup>89</sup> Bangladesh, as the new chair of CVF, needs to plan how to make the best use of the CVF and V20 trust fund to help its vulnerable members tackling climate change. It is also necessary to lobby for international progress on responding to rising “loss and damage” from climate extremes, such as floods, droughts, storms or rising seas.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Megan Rowling, “Bangladesh Leads Climate-threatened Nations in Push for Global Action”, *Reuters*, 09 June 2020, available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-climate-change-politics-bangladesh-tr/bangladesh-leads-climate-threatened-nations-in-push-for-global-action-idUSKBN23G2NB>, accessed on 07 July 2020.

<sup>89</sup> Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities, “Vulnerable Leaders Call: COP25 Must Secure 2020 Action for Survival of Nations”, 02 December 2019, available at <https://icsc.ngo/vulnerable-leaders-callcop25-must-secure-2020-action-for-survival-of-nations/>, accessed on 07 July 2020.

<sup>90</sup> Megan Rowling, *op. cit.*

Bangladesh is recognized as one of the most disaster-prone countries of the world, and the country suffers from losses of human resources and material resources due to various kinds of disasters every year. The country has achieved remarkable success in managing natural disasters for over a decade, especially on the grounds of disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. The country has successfully dealt with several disasters in the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The government has taken different programmes, such as improvement in the early warning system, dissemination of information, establishment of cyclone shelters and active engagement of dedicated Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP) volunteers for preparedness and response activities. Under the SDGs, Bangladesh is advancing towards achieving national resilience against natural disasters. All these have made Bangladesh a role model in disaster management. Bangladesh can share its experience in disaster management with the CVF countries to enable them to manage disaster in their respective countries.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

Climate change will increasingly affect basic elements of life for people around the world, i.e. water availability, food production, health and the environment. According to IPCC, if left unchecked, climate change could cause significant economic and ecological disruption, especially for already vulnerable populations, including women and children.<sup>91</sup> Poor people and poor countries will mainly bear the brunt of climate change. This is because developing countries and notably the LDCs, rely heavily on climate-sensitive sectors and have high levels of poverty, low levels of education and limited human, institutional, economic, technical and financial capacity.<sup>92</sup>

As a threat to human and the survival system of the all living being, global warming and climate change are widely discussed issues of the recent time. The perception of climate change differs widely depending on whether it is assumed that global warming will be a continuous process, without major changes in the climate variability or whether global warming causes a higher frequency of extreme weather events. The existing evidence and climate models suggest that climate change will and already is in fact a mixture of both, though there is potentially a difference in the timing. The negative effects of extreme events are likely to occur in higher number much sooner, while the temperature is expected to increase relatively slowly and hence negative impacts will be felt in the future. Climate change is not a

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<sup>91</sup> Eckhard Deutscher, “Climate Change: Helping Poor Countries to Adapt”, Development Co-operation Report 2010, OECD, available at [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/development-co-operation-report-2010/climate-change\\_dcr-2010-8-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/development-co-operation-report-2010/climate-change_dcr-2010-8-en), accessed on 19 February 2020.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

challenge for any specific country. It is a global challenge and it should be handled globally. Sustainable development and climate action will not be the most effective until the world's biggest economies and polluters are fully mobilized for sustainable development and climate action.

Bangladesh is recognized globally for its achievements in addressing climate change and often considered as a climate change adaptation champion. The CVF is an important group of almost fifty states who are mainly developing and vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Bangladesh, as the new chair of the group, could represent the group in attracting the global attention about the negative impacts of climate change and use the CVF platform to raise voice for the wellbeing of the developing climate vulnerable states around the globe.