

Commonwealth wants ambitious, legally-binding deal in Paris

29/11/2015 20:13 by admin

Valletta (Malta): Ahead of the Paris summit, the Commonwealth yesterday committed itself to working towards an "ambitious" and "legally-binding" climate deal as it asserted that vulnerable countries must be assisted by the rich nations in combating climate change.

The 53-nation bloc, including India, agreed to work towards a legally-binding outcome at the COP21 and said the climate change challenge could only be met by an urgent global response.

Coming out with a statement after two days of deliberations at its biennial summit, the Commonwealth referred to the "disproportionate" burden on least-developed countries and small island states in tackling climate change and sought assistance for them, a view shared by India.

"We are committed to working towards an ambitious, equitable, inclusive, balanced, rules-based and durable outcome of COP21 that includes a legally-binding agreement," the Commonwealth said in the statement.

Commonwealth countries agreed to abide by the target to hold the increase in global average temperature below 2 degrees Celsius or 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

"We recognise that, in our different ways and in varying proportions, our countries have all been contributing to climate change. At the same time, it is equally clear that least-developed countries and Small Island Developing States are bearing a disproportionate burden from the impacts of climate change," the statement said.

"We are now mobilising global and national efforts to hold the increase in global average temperature below 2 or 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and to achieve sustainable economic and technological transformation, both in mitigation and adaptation," it said.

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj represented India at the 24th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).

"We are deeply concerned about the threat posed by climate change, which continues to grow and to put at risk the economic, social, environmental, and cultural well-being of our member states and citizens," the statement said.

"Many of our most vulnerable states and communities are already facing the adverse impacts of climate change, which can roll back decades of development gains; for some it represents an existential threat," it said. Earlier, Commonwealth countries pledged billions to fight global warming with Canada topping the list, announcing a USD 2 billion assistance to help poor countries in limiting green-house gas emissions.

India pledged USD 2.5 million for the small states in the Commonwealth to help them combat climate change.

"India has announced 2.5 million dollars for the Commonwealth small states trade finance facility. As you are aware, Commonwealth has 31 small states as its members out of the 53 countries and trade finance is very important to them," External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Vikas Swarup said.

Maltese Prime Minister Joseph Muscat yesterday unveiled a USD 1 billion Commonwealth Green Finance Facility to support environmental projects within the 53-nation bloc. Separately, the UK has committed 21 million pounds for

disaster management and 5.5 million pounds for the ocean-based economy.

Australia has committed USD 1 million for a new Commonwealth ideaâ€”a Climate Finance Access Hub.

- IANS