



MY MEETING NOTES

COP 21 Paris Climate Conference Paris, France 27 November-10 December 2015



Dr V V Sadamate attended the 2015 Paris Climate Conference (COP21) from 27 November to 10 December 2015. He shares his experiences here.

CONTEXT

The goal of the 2015 Paris Climate Conference, commonly referred to as COP21 (Box 1), was to achieve a legally binding, international agreement to keep average global temperatures no more than 2°C above pre-industrial temperatures. After two weeks of negotiations, 190 nations of the world have adopted an agreement to “holding the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C”. To achieve it, the nationally determined contributions (NDCs) for emissions reduction are recognized by the text, and although not legally binding, the deal commits all countries’ contributions to a review every 5 years with each successive contribution to be more ambitious than the last.



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COP - What's it all about?

The international political response to climate change began at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, where the 'Rio Convention' included the adoption of the UN Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This convention set out a framework for action aimed at stabilizing atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases (GHGs) to avoid "dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system." The UNFCCC which entered into force on 21 March 1994 now has a near-universal membership of 195 parties.

The main objective of the annual Conference of Parties (COP) is to review the Convention's implementation. The first COP took place in Berlin in 1995 and significant meetings since then have included COP3 where the Kyoto Protocol was adopted; COP11 where the Montreal Action Plan was produced; COP15 in Copenhagen where an agreement to success Kyoto Protocol was unfortunately not realised and COP17 in Durban where the Green Climate Fund was created.

COP 21 held during 30 Nov to 11 Dec 2015 at Paris, France, was aimed at achieving a legally binding and universal agreement on climate, with the aim of keeping global warming below 2°C. France played a leading international role in hosting this conference. About 38,000 delegates representing national governments, UN agencies, charities, campaign groups, universities, companies and media organizations participated in this event.

MY PARTICIPATION

Panel discussions and events

I attended this conference as a representative of the NGOs South Asia Forum for Environment (SAEF), Kolkata, and the National Council for Climate Change, Sustainable Development and Public Leadership (NCCSD), Ahmedabad. During this period, I had the opportunity to participate in several interesting discussions and events.

Sustainability of Wet Lands

South Asia Forum for Environment (<http://www.safeinich.org/>), Kolkata works on conservation of wetlands and providing empowerment and livelihood opportunities to the local communities around these wetlands. SAFE organized a side event on sustainability of wetlands at COP 21. I have been working closely with the SAFE and IWMI, Hyderabad, for the last couple of years and providing extension related inputs in the



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wetland conservation process. SAFE released a documentary on ecosystem services of peri-urban wetland and heritage bodies of Kolkata. This documentary titled, United Voices and Sustainable Solutions, is a joint output of IWMI, Hyderabad and SAFE, Kolkata.

Scaling up Adaptation Strategies for Climate Resilient Agriculture in India

In order to showcase India's adaptation efforts and achievement in climate resilient development of agriculture sector, a side event "Scaling up Adaptation Strategies for Climate Resilient Agriculture in India" was organised on 5 December 2015 at the India Pavilion. The side event was co-ordinated by the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MOEF&CC). The NCCSD (<http://nccsindia.org/>), through its two major presentations, one on weather advisories and other on Innovative Agricultural Extension Model in Gujarat discussed pathways for scaling up climate resilient agriculture models through nationally driven integrated development initiatives. The side event brought together India's policymakers, scientists and civil society organizations to share successful highlights of technology innovation and adoption, capacity building, knowledge dissemination, community driven approaches and enabling policy environment.

Dr Ch Srinivas Rao, Director, ICAR-Central Research Institute for Dryland Agriculture (CRIDA), briefed the audience about the climate resilient agriculture packages being implemented via several government schemes and the progress made so far. He also talked about the achievements of the ICAR project NICRA (National Initiative on Climate Resilient Agriculture) which included development of several strains of tolerant breeds/genotypes in field crops, horticulture, livestock, poultry and fisheries.

I spoke about *Krishi Mohotsva* Extension Model of Gujarat State initiated in 2004. Introduced by the present Prime Minister of India when he was Chief Minister of Gujarat, this model focused on climate resilient agriculture, doorstep delivery of extension advisory in all the 18,000 villages, selection of crops as per suitability of the soils and direct dialogue between the farmers and the field functionaries. India's strategy to achieve its national commitments for climate resilient development in the agriculture sector through nationally driven programmes and policies was also highlighted.



"Development Alternatives" (<http://www.devalt.org>) made an excellent case for mobilization of the rural communities in general and farmers in particular, driven by the community. It urged for adaptation and resilience strategies for water harvesting, sustainable and low input agriculture and natural resource management.

Global Landscape Forum – Women in Development Process

Dr. Shelat and myself representing NCCSD, participated in Global Landscape meet, held on 8-9 Dec 2015. It was coordinated by the UN Women Organization. Over 50 participants from different countries attended besides International agencies, CSOs and governments. The topics covered were climate smart technologies and decision making process by women for its adoption. Majority of the participants opined that there is inadequate involvement of women in decision-making process and suggested intensive campaigns for the purpose. Highlighting Indian context, our suggestions in this regard were as follows:



- Re-orientation of Field Extension Agencies to attend to the climate advisories as per needs of women
- Women share in the family land resources and in decision making
- Promoting gender friendly technologies
- Promoting women leadership, as it had been mandated to 30% reservations for women in local self Governments
- Training and capacity building of women and promoting success stories
- Empowering women groups for climate education and action
- Exchanging international experiences through organized visits
- Taking up a few pilots in selected countries with International support.

OTHER INTERESTING INITIATIVES

Country Pavilions

Almost every country has set up their country pavilions at the venue to showcase how climate change is impacting their country and what measures are being taken currently. These pavilions served as the venue for group discussions, lectures, presentations, videos and film shows all through the week. India's Environment Minister, Shri. Prakash Javadekar, guided the proceedings and actively participated in the discussions in the India Pavilion. There is need for viewing agriculture as a source of mitigating climate change, he pointed out.

Green Zone

COP21 has a special space called “Green Zone” for activists and NGOs to share their views. A good number of pavilions in this zone were allotted to indigenous communities from Latin America and Africa and they shared their experiences related to the impact of changing climate on their livelihoods. There was also a smart city pavilion in the green zone wherein strategies

for urban management were discussed by the international experts. Several international organizations including World Resource Institute, World Bank and UNESCO also had their pavilions in this zone.

NGO Pavilion

A large area of the conference was devoted to national and international NGOs numbering over 300. From India about 15-20 NGOs participated in this space and depicted their efforts in promoting climate change concerns, technologies applicable and the community participation.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EXTENSION

While the meeting illustrated the potential of scientific solutions to climate change, there needed adequate appreciation on the challenge of translating the scientific solutions to action at a scale where extension and advisory services have to play a major role. Extension and Advisory Services (EAS) have a major role in organizing farmers to adopt measures aimed at adaptation to climate change and communicating climate advisory to farmers. In fact the whole adaptation at the ground level is fully dependent on extension and there is a need to enhance the capacities of extension personnel and of farmers in this area.



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There is a need to learn from the successful experiences of different countries and different actors in implementing adaptation measures and this should feed into the training of extension staff. We need to seriously review and strengthen the capacity development efforts in the area of climate change adaptation, perhaps it needs focus on developing training modules for the purpose. Block action plans for climate change, formulation and implementation, was another area that needs to be considered.

FINAL REMARKS

Overall the conference provided a great opportunity to everyone in better understanding the nature of climate change, its impacts on the ground and the measures that are currently on.

The concerns of developing countries were better presented and these were considered in the negotiations. These concerns were also reflected in the final draft of COP21. India's Environment Minister expressed happiness at the outcome and noted that the "final text addressed the concerns raised by India in all areas — mitigation of carbon emissions,

adaptation to climate change, financing, technology development and transfer, capacity building and transparency”.

The role of NGOs in articulating the concerns and in experimenting with alternative approaches was well recognized.

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