

## INTERNATIONAL POLICIES ON COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE FROM FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE TO PARIS AGREEMENT<sup>1</sup>

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*Global warming is the result of industrialization, urbanization and population growth in the world. Climate change is an environmental issue resulting from global warming. For this reason, in the literature, the struggle with global warming and climate change is taken together in this context. First of all, reducing greenhouse gas emission that is the main cause of global warming is the most important part of the struggle with climate change. This struggle is a process within the last 50 years. So, in this study, we dealt with important collaborations and international agreements in the world for the fight against climate change in the last 50 years. From this framework, it is seen that the Framework Convention on Climate Change was signed at the Rio Summit in 1992, which was first called by the UN, followed by Conferences of Parties in different parts of the world, and steps were taken to combat this problem. As a matter of fact, reconciliation was achieved in Kyoto, where the parties held the conference for the third time, and the Kyoto Protocol was signed, then the first concrete step was taken after the Framework Convention. After the Protocol, the fields of application of this international cooperation were discussed and, finally, an important step was taken towards the passing of the Protocol to the Paris Agreement to combat climate change and global warming. When considered historical past of struggle with climate change and the present conditions, it is seen that this struggle ought to continue and to proceed at a higher level.*

**Keywords:** *Climate Change, Environmental Issues, Global Warming, Struggle with Climate Change.*

### 1. Introduction

Even though the efforts to investigate the environmental problems date back to almost 350 years ago, in the general sense, these efforts were independent from each other and did not have any processes in terms of policy making but mostly to gather scientific data. In this sense, tackling environmental problems and taking the first steps of the policies to be implemented was only possible after 1970's. Policies concerning global warming and climate change were affected by this delay and these issues couldn't be effectively addressed until 1988 (Duru, 2011: 309 and Keleş, 2008: 350).

While International Environment Conference held in 1972 in Stockholm emphasised the 'global' aspect of environmental problems, it also provided, in a sense, a basis for the UN Environment Program which was to be established the following year. It was followed by the establishment of MARPOL against sea pollution, the establishment of CITES to protect endangered species and international collaborations such as the Vienna Convention and Montreal Protocol for the ozone layer depletion (Duru, 2011: 309-310).

In 1988, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established with contributions from UN Environment Program and World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

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<sup>1</sup>This work was supported by Scientific Research Projects Coordination Unit of Karabük University. Project Number KBÜBAP-17-YD-354 and presented at the 3rd International Congress on Social and Economics Sciences (ICSSES) in Athens, Greece in November 2017

The purpose of the panel has been to search man-made aspects of the climate change and perform assessments of possible risks. Furthermore, the panel has provided a significant basis for global policy determination process on climate change by conducting the research and assessment process and by gathering scientists and governments on the same ground(Karakaya,2004:2).

## **2. Rio Summit and 1992 Framework Convention on Climate Change**

UN Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 underpins the recent international environmental policies. This conference, while presenting the scale of the environmental problems around the globe, aimed to indicate that all nations were accountable. For this purpose, Framework Convention on Climate Change was opened for signature among essential international treaties like UN Convention to Combat Desertification and Convention on Biological Diversity.

Signed by 155 countries until June 1992, Framework Convention on Climate Change entered into force on 21 March 1994(Engin, 2010: 75).

Objectives of the treaty were,

- To reduce the greenhouse gas emissions to the level of the year 1990 until 2000;
- To guarantee the protection of climate for the benefit of today's humanity and future generations;
- To indicate that the Parties are responsible for the climate change based upon their development levels and their powers;
- To ensure developed nations among the Parties take the pioneering role in protecting the climate and combatting climate change.

When these objectives are examined, it is evident that the treaty has grounded the problem to protect the climate extensively and in a sense, prompted the whole world. In this context, it was announced that the biggest responsibility would belong to the developed nations. Furthermore, the objective to cut down greenhouse gas emissions to the levels of the year 1990 provided a source of inspiration for the Kyoto Protocol (Duru,2011:310-3011andKarakaya,2004:3).

In the Framework Convention on the Climate Change, deriving from the idea that the responsibilities of the developed nations were excessive, a distinction between countries was deemed necessary. Accordingly, while OECD countries presented in Annex I list and developing ex-Eastern bloc countries were only obligated to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to that of the year 1990, OECD countries presented in Annex II list were going to provide the necessary financial and technical support to developing nations along with cutting down the emissions. Moreover, oil-rich Middle Eastern countries and underdeveloped African countries that weren't part of these two lists were accommodated in Non-Annex I list. As of 2005, there are 148 countries in this list (Arıkan,2008:33-34andTürkeş,2008: 13-15).

The treaty was criticised for the inadequate financial and technical support from Northern countries to Southern ones and for the weightlessness of the provisions regarding greenhouse gas emissions. Nevertheless it is recognized that the treaty has contributed to the spread of international collaboration in combatting climate change and in asserting the problem tangibly (Türkeş,2008: 14).

### **3. Important Conferences and Their Results for International Combating Process**

#### **3.1. First Conference of the Parties**

The First Conference of the Parties was held in Berlin from March 28 to April 7 1995 to present implementation provisions of the Framework Convention on Climate Change. The conference was criticised for the emergence of a nonbinding Berlin Mandate and for the inadequate and ambiguous measures. In the end, developing nations were exempted from any responsibility and it was agreed to continue providing technological assistance to these countries incrementally (Duru, 2011: 308-311).

#### **3.2. Second Conference of the Parties**

The Second Conference of the Parties was held in Geneva in 1996 with the participation of ministers from 134 countries. Although it was criticised for not solving any problems, Geneva Ministerial Declaration signed during the Conference had the binding effect on developed nations of cutting down their greenhouse gas emissions until the end of 1997. The issue of "emissions trading" was brought up to the agenda by the USA for the first time at this conference (Duru, 2011: 311-315; Türkiye, 2008: 115-116).

#### **3.3. Third Conference of the Parties**

The Third Conference of the Parties was held in Kyoto in December 1997 with the support and participation of thousands of voluntary NGOs from 170 countries. Pressure from the world public opinion and intensive participation of NGOs helped signing of the Kyoto Protocol, a binding document (Karakaya, 2004: 4).

Kyoto Protocol regulates the implementation provisions of the Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Protocol signed on the last day of the Conference, 11<sup>th</sup> of December 1997 and as described in the agreement foresees the developed nations in the Annex I list to control their greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, it demands for more efficient energy use, protection of forest lands and an increase in forest lands, support for sustainable farming and a limitation of methane gas emissions in waste management and during energy production, distribution and consumption processes (Engin, 2010: 75; Türkiye, 2008: 115-116).

When its objectives, principles and content are reconsidered, it is seen that the Kyoto Protocol is a memorandum of understanding that defines and adopts the implementation provisions of the Framework Convention on Climate Change. The principle of "common but differentiated responsibility" in Framework Convention was effective at the Kyoto Protocol. For this reason, unlike Montreal Protocol, no responsibility was imposed on developing nations. On the other hand, the responsibilities of the developed nations were emphasised. Therefore, according to the Kyoto Protocol that entered into force in 2005, Annex I nations have to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions minimum 5% compared to the level of the year 1990 during 2008-2012 period. While New Zealand, Russia and Ukraine face no changes in their levels of 1990 emissions, EU, both the union and its member states have the responsibility to reduce their emissions by 8%. For the USA, this rate is 7% (Engin, 2010: 76; Türkiye, 2008: 115).

Kyoto Protocol consists of Joint Implementation, Clean Development and Emissions Trade flexibility tools. These tools can be described as the efforts to stretch and decrease liabilities and costs of greenhouse gas emissions. Joint Implementation tool is comprised of emission reduction units that a developed nation gets when it assists another country implementing a project to reduce emissions. Meanwhile, Clean Development tool is the right given to the developed countries for additional emissions when they assist a developing nation in their

projects to reduce emissions. Emissions trade, on the other hand, is the trading of emission rights by developed nations. Emissions trade was added as a result of the persistence shown by the USA and Canada. This issue was also brought up by the USA in the Second Conference of the Parties. These tools were criticised for their advantages for the Northern countries (developed nations) and its disadvantages for countries like Russia and Ukraine accepting due to their tight economy. It was also criticised for its violations of the objectives and principles of the protocol (Engin, 2010: 71-76, Kılıç, 2009: 32, Türkeş, 2008: 116).

### **3.4. Fourth Conference of the Parties**

The Fourth Conference of the Parties was held in Buenos Aires on November 2, 1998, with the participation of 170 signatory states of UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Conference formalised the details about the implementation processes of the decisions taken in Kyoto Protocol. The main agenda of the Conference consisted of the responsibilities of parties regarding greenhouse gas emissions, technology transfers and foreseen flexibility mechanisms. Moreover, as opposed to the previous conferences, there were severe debates between Northern and Southern countries. The USA, for example, expressed that developing nations should also bear with the limitations on greenhouse gas emissions similar to developed nations, stating that in 2015, China and India will surpass them in greenhouse gas emissions. On the other hand, 163 underdeveloped nations led by China didn't want to shoulder this responsibility to cut down their emissions claiming their right to develop. Besides, the proposition from Argentina and Kazakhstan to voluntarily cut down their emissions started a new debate being rejected by the majority of developing nations. Especially China and India were opposed to the idea on the grounds that it would force underdeveloped nations to cut their emissions down as well. The situation of flexibility mechanisms that were designed to let developed nations surpass the protocol liabilities was also discussed in the meeting, however, a final outcome couldn't be agreed upon (Duru, 2011: 321-323; Engin, 2010: 76).

### **3.5. Fifth Conference of the Parties**

The Fifth Conference of the Parties was held in Bonn in 1999 with the participation of 165 countries. The Conference is accepted as an effort to put Kyoto Protocol into practice based on the action plan approved at the Fourth Conference of the Parties. Despite being the main objective of the Conference, before the content of the national reports regarding the Party nations' emissions was drafted the conference was ended (Duru, 2011: 322-325).

### **3.6. Sixth Conference of the Parties**

The Sixth Conference of the Parties was held in the Netherlands in November 2000. The main point of discussion in the Conference was also greenhouse gas emissions. The efforts to bring down emissions by 5% made the conflict between the USA and the EU member states more apparent. While the USA argued that the emissions trade which was formerly mentioned but not concluded should be unlimited, EU insisted on that USA should at least execute its emission reduction rate by emissions trade. In this sense, the USA saw the Kyoto Protocol as a full actualisation of flexibility mechanisms. Another divergence between the two sides was the penal sanctions. While the EU Member States argued that states that violated the rules of the protocol should pay a fine, USA argued that those countries should be forced to face heavy emission reduction penalties. None of the disputed subjects could also reach a final outcome in this Conference (Duru, 2011: 324-325).

As a follow-up to the Sixth Conference of the Parties, the second meeting of the Sixth Conference of the Parties, also named as "COP 6 bis" and "COP 6 +", was held in Bonn in July

2001. In this meeting, some basic issues that couldn't be agreed upon were concluded among developed nations and the Protocol was brought back to life. The point to be emphasized here is that the final compromise was possible only after some provisions of the Protocol were renounced. For example, Canada and Russia were admitted to Protocol conditions without any emission reductions because of their extensive carbon sequestrations. Countries like Australia, Japan, Canada and Russia, upon their request, could add their protection and expansion of forest lands to their emission reduction rates. The increase of emission trades and the reduction of penalties for exceeding carbon emissions provided an example for the "flexibility" efforts laid down in the Protocol (Duru, 2011: 325 and Engin, 2010: 76).

#### **4. Copenhagen Accord**

The 15<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties, which has almost become a tradition, was held in Copenhagen in 2009. Due to the fact that the national and international policies after 2012 were discussed, which was the ending year of the first pledging period, it was thought to be more significant than other Conferences. It was also a summit that 27 heads of governments attended. A compromise couldn't be reached on what could be done after 2012 until the last day of the conference. Due to this uncompromising atmosphere, USA, China, South Africa, Brazil and India drafted the Copenhagen Accord and announced it via the press. This Accord shows the political intentions of these 5 countries rather than being binding and responsibility imposing treaty. According to the Accord, a 2% increase in global warming compared to pre-industrial age was deemed acceptable. For this reason, the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" in the Kyoto Protocol will be adhered by the nations. In addition, it was accepted that developing nations would need more time to comply with this objective. According to the document, Annex I nations have to determine their "non-binding" emission goals and announce them. These goals should be reported to the UN every two years so as to make international record keeping possible. Developed nations should financially support developing nations with a sum of 30 billion dollars until the end of 2012, and this sum should be increased to 100 billion dollars in 2020. Furthermore, as stated in the former conferences, some effort was required to provide technical and financial assistance to prevent emission increase caused by forest destruction. The year 2015 was envisioned to be the year to improve and finalise the Accord. The Copenhagen Accord was criticised for falling behind of the Kyoto Protocol. On the other hand, it is accepted that it can be a progressive document. It is essential that, even though being inadequate, China and the USA have taken a concrete step against global warming and climate change problems. On the other hand, this Accord has created some hope to solve some issues that were stated in the Kyoto Protocol but fell short of being fully put into practice. The emphasis on the financial and technical assistance to developing nations is an example of it. Some have criticised the Accord by stating that the USA was trying to present this Accord as an alternative to the Kyoto Protocol (Engin, 2010: 79-80).

#### **5. Paris Climate Summit and Paris Agreement**

Copenhagen Summit couldn't meet the expectation to define objectives after 2020 and it was thought that the meetings held afterwards wouldn't reach a final outcome. As a result, Durban Platform established in the 17<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties in 2011, envisaged a global treaty in 2015 Paris Summit to define the objectives after 2020. However, starting from the year 2014, constructive attitude from the heaviest polluters, China and the USA, was another factor in the emergence of the Paris Agreement. Another important factor was the social pressure and demands from NGOs. The content of the agreements is as follows;

- Responsibilities to cut down emissions were agreed upon by all parties.
- Requirements for the principle of “Common but Differentiated Responsibilities” would be fulfilled.
- A global warming of 1.5 degrees was considered acceptable.
- Developed nations would provide the necessary climate support to developing nations requiring lower carbon development. In this sense, developed nations will provide a sum of 100 billion dollars as climate financing until 2020 and after 2025, an even higher sum will be provided.
- New findings that scientists have produced will be taken as a basis and countries will shoulder more responsibilities according to the general situation every five years.
- Moreover, the Paris Agreement emphasised the need to adapt to adverse impacts caused by climate change and made commitments to support underdeveloped nations that can have problems dealing with these impacts. To enter into force, the Paris Agreement had to be ratified by countries made up 55% of the greenhouse gas emissions and furthermore by at least 55 countries. All conditions for the Paris Agreement to enter into force were fulfilled on November 4, 2016. Therefore, the Paris Agreement entered into force as of the date with its current conditions (Karakaya, 2015: 13-15).

### **Conclusion**

Climate change is considered together with the concept of global warming as it is an environmental issue caused by global warming. Indeed the global warming issue that emerged with greenhouse gas emissions affects the climate of the world severely. Even though the scientific studies investigating global warming and climate change has a history of 300 years, policy making process regarding these has started in the last 50 years. The issue only received special care after several environmental problems were highlighted more in the international arena. For instance, a conference as Intergovernmental Plan on Climate Change that discussed climate change was able to be convened in 1988. With this step, awareness was created on a global scale and Framework Convention on Climate Change was signed in 1992 in Rio Summit, being as a basis for combatting climate change. The common responsibilities of the world countries regarding climate change issue were emphasised strongly and the fact that these responsibilities were going to be relayed in a “differentiated” way was underlined with the agreement. In this context, this convention paved the way for the Kyoto Protocol and has become one of the cornerstones in the increase of international cooperation. Kyoto Protocol which was signed under pressure from the public and the NGOs has become a binding agreement. The Kyoto Protocol which embraced and defined the implementation provisions of the Framework Convention is also significant as being a memorandum of understanding document that announces the financial and technical assistance will be given to the developing nations by the developed nations. The fact that the discussions in the conferences after the Protocol were based on decisions taken by the Protocol shows that the Protocol had an immense importance in affecting the decisions.

After the Protocol, Conferences of the Parties were held regularly, almost as a tradition, though some of them remained inconclusive. In the end, the Copenhagen Accord, despite many criticisms, has shown that the two biggest polluters, China and the USA, were willing to behave in a more constructive manner. This situation reinforced the belief that some issues that couldn't be solved since the Kyoto Protocol could be solved. Following the development, the Durban Platform established in the 17<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties pointed to the Paris to be held in 2015 for the final conclusion of the 2020 objectives. This attribution to the Paris Summit caught the attention

of the public and intensified the efforts of the NGOs. All these efforts have created the Paris Agreement, a product of 195 countries compromising under the roof of UN. The importance of low carbon production and renewable energy was put forward by the slogan of the treaty, "The World can no longer be as it was". It is also claimed that the Paris Agreement will change the current economic structures, production and consumption habits of the countries. Even the objective of zero emissions in the year 2050 is considered in this context as well.

In light of all this information, it is seen that Paris Agreement was especially essential for the fact that some of the long disputed matters on the process of international policy making regarding climate change were grounded in the Agreement with such an extensive compromise. However, it is important to see whether the agreement will be implemented or only stay on paper. It is evident that the production and consumption habits of the countries will not change in an instant way during the period in which the countries make great efforts for their economic growth. It is therefore important to refrain from saying the agreement will be the final solution in the future, especially since the agreement was recently ratified. The upcoming process will show the impact of the Paris Agreement on the International arena, how it will enforce international cooperation to combat climate change and how it shapes international climate policies.

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