

TATA INSTITUTE OF FUNDAMENTAL RESEARCH

Homi Bhabha Road, Mumbai-400 005

January 28, 2018

ASET Colloquium

- Speaker** : **Prof. Tejal Kanitkar** (*Chairperson Centre for Climate Change and Sustainability Studies, TISS, Mumbai*)
- Title** : **India and the Paris Agreement – Concerns and a Possible Way Forward**
- Date & Time** : **Friday 02 February 2018 at 16:00 hrs.**
- Venue** : **Lecture Theater (AG-66.)**

Abstract :

The year 2015 was of critical relevance with respect to climate change. It was expected to be the year by which all nations would conclude a long-term climate agreement as mandated by the Durban Platform of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 2012). This expectation was realized in the form of the Paris Agreement, drafted in December 2015 and ratified by over 160 of the 192 Parties to the UNFCCC as of December 30, 2017. The Paris Agreement signals a commitment to keeping temperature rise to “well below 2°C” from pre-industrial levels and, in fact, “pursuing efforts to limit temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels”. This goal is to be achieved through the self-determination of mitigation efforts by each country termed the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which will be monitored and reviewed from time to time (UNFCCC, 2016).

However, there seems to be a disjuncture between the two most important aspects of the Paris Agreement, viz. the global target for limiting temperature rise and the self-determined mitigation commitments by individual countries. A global target for restricting temperature rise to below 1.5 or 2 deg. C implies in scientific terms a cap on the total carbon that can be emitted into the atmosphere even though such a cap may not have found explicit mention in the Paris Agreement. This cap is not a vague requirement of shifts in emissions trajectories or optimisation of energy costs but a very real constraint on the total cumulative emissions that the world can be allowed to emit into the atmosphere. On the other hand, the sum total of the mitigation commitments put forward by each country as part of their INDCs (now NDCs for those countries that have ratified the Paris Agreement) may be well beyond the emissions allowed to the world to restrict temperature rise to a specific level. This is in fact true at the present juncture as the emissions reductions proposed in the NDCs are well short of what is required to restrict temperature rise to below 2 deg. C, let alone 1.5 deg. C, as has been noted in the text of the Paris Agreement itself (UNFCCC, 2016).

In this context, this talk will discuss the Paris Agreements and its architecture with respect to the physical constraints of climate change, especially in terms of its implications for developing countries such as India. Given the position in which India finds itself now – having ratified the Paris Agreement and at the cusp of its coming into effect with the United States having withdrawn from the agreement and other developed countries unwilling and/or unable to meet their pre-2020 mitigation commitments which were a condition for the acceptance of the Paris Agreement – what are the options before us, both in terms of a short and long term strategy if we are to ensure equity in global climate action.

About the Speaker

Prof. Tejal Kanitkar did her B.E. from Mumbai University, M.E. from University of Massachusetts, USA and Ph.D. from IIT Bombay. She is a Certified Energy Auditor, Bureau of Energy Efficiency, Ministry of Power, Government of India. She joined the Center for Climate Change and Sustainability Studies, Tata Institute of Social Science, Mumbai as an Assistant Professor in 2011 and took over as the Chairperson of the Centre in 2012.



Dr. Satyanarayana Bheesette
(Coordinator, ASET Forum)