

OPINION

It's time to follow through on the Glasgow Climate Pact

What I'm calling for today is action – action to fulfill the promises made at COP26 to assist nations like mine in facing the harshest realities of a warming planet.



The people of Sylhet in Bangladesh faced the worst floods in a century | Md Abu Sufian Jewel/AFP via Getty Images



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Sheikh Hasina is the prime minister of Bangladesh.

At no other point in human history has a cause proved more urgent than tackling climate change; never has there been more at stake for us on this planet we call home, and for every species we share it with.

However, rousing speeches and inspiring language are but hollow sentiments now — just empty rhetoric and fine-spun nothings in the absence of the robust action that scientists have long been urging.

For the people of Sylhet in Bangladesh, facing the worst floods in a century, words aren't close to enough. Words didn't prevent flash floods from carrying away their homes, destroying their livelihoods, killing their loved ones. And tweets of support or small aid packages aren't nearly enough for the 33 million affected by the floods in Pakistan last month.

Instead, what I am calling for today is action — action to fulfill the promises made last year at COP26, the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, to assist nations like mine in facing the harshest realities of a warming planet. And as world leaders prepare to gather once again, this time Sharm El-Sheikh, I call upon my esteemed colleagues to find the means to honor the commitments they made, and to at least double the provisions for adaptation as well as finance by 2025.

This pledged financial support from developed countries should be considered a moral obligation — and it is vital to climate vulnerable countries such as mine. This can't be left to some future date either. If it is to protect against the wide-ranging consequences of climate change that we have been battling, and continue to battle at this very moment, assistance needs to be immediate.

Bangladesh currently contributes 0.56 percent to global carbon emissions, and yet, the proportion of damage inflicted upon our nation from climate change is overwhelming.

Rising sea levels, coastal erosion, droughts, heat and flooding will all continue to take a serious toll on our economy. They will wreak havoc on our infrastructure and agricultural industry as we face considerable challenges in averting, minimizing and addressing the loss and damage associated with climate change impact, including extreme and slow onset events.

Studies show that our GDP is expected to be significantly reduced due to human-caused warming, and average income is projected to be 90 percent lower in 2100 than it would have

otherwise been. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Assessment Report projects that Bangladesh will experience a net increase in poverty of approximately 15 percent by 2030 due to climate change.

It would be easy to become despondent when faced with such bleak forecasts, when the call for urgent action is going unheard by many and progress is so slow. It would be much easier to succumb to the paralysis of anxiety — but we must resist.

And in Bangladesh, we're doing just that.

In the face of such grave threats, we have so far been able to achieve relatively resilient and consistent growth. We have also unveiled the Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan in order to deal with matters of climate change, from decarbonizing our energy network to green investment initiatives — both now and in the future — all in a bid to shift our trajectory from vulnerability to resilience and, in turn, to prosperity.

We were the first among developing countries to adopt a comprehensive Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan back in 2009. So far, we have allocated \$480 million to implement various adaptation and mitigation programs.



▲ Temperatures in the U.K. this year surpassed 40 degrees Celsius for the first time in recorded history | Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

Currently, we're also implementing a housing project for climate refugees in our coastal district of Cox's Bazar, aiming to construct 139 multistory buildings to shelter about 5,000 climate refugee families. And during my 18 years of premiership, my government has given homes to about 3.5 million individuals to date.

Meanwhile, we've adopted the "Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100," which aims to shape a safe, climate-resilient and prosperous delta. And every year, my party plants millions of saplings to increase our country's tree coverage as well.

As the former chair of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) and the V20, Bangladesh continues to focus on promoting the interests of climate vulnerable countries. It isn't enough to just survive; we intend to succeed, to be a global leader, to show our neighbors and the world that there's still a path to a hopeful future — but we cannot do this alone.

The words of the international community must turn to deeds, once and for all.

The \$40 billion increase in adaptation funding agreed upon in Glasgow must be regarded as an initial investment in our common future. Otherwise, the cost of inaction will be immense: Last year's IPCC Working Group II report already warned that global GDP loss could hit 10 to 23 percent by 2100 — far higher than previously predicted.

Each passing year more powerfully highlights the deeply interconnected nature of our planet in the 21st century, with supply lines and energy reliance casting a long shadow over us all. This year has already brought more record-breaking heat events across the world, with temperatures in the U.K. surpassing 40 degrees Celsius for the first time in recorded history.

Climate change, loss and damage are already with us, wherever we care to look. It's playing out across the world in a myriad of ways. and the issues facing climate-vulnerable nations like mine will be at the door of other nations soon enough.

If we are to have any hope of surmounting this great challenge, we must recognize that the floods in Bangladesh, the fires in California, the droughts in Europe — all triggered by just a 1.2-degree rise in temperature — are interconnected and must be confronted together.

The promises made last year must be fulfilled; words must finally lead to action.

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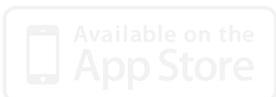
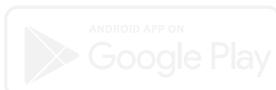
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