OPINION IN LEAD
COP26 refocuses on climate finance

The 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) saw the countries updating their climate pledges but richer countries failed to keep up the promise of raising US$100 billion in climate funding to vulnerable countries.

COP26, which was hosted in Glasgow, Scotland from 31 October to 13 November 2021, after repeated delays caused by the pandemic brought together leaders from all around the world to discuss and accelerate the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Adaptation, mitigation and finance were heavily discussed and emphasized during the conference. The event saw countries pledging to work towards ways to limit the increase of global average temperatures to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C. One-hundred thirty countries have pledged to halt and reverse deforestation and land degradation by 2030. Likewise, more than one hundred countries signed the U.S.- and European Union–led Global Methane Pledge and agreed to collectively slash methane emissions by 30 percent by 2030. The countries also agreed on what is being called the Glasgow Climate Pact, which called for renewed efforts to raise ambition on cutting emissions, climate finance, adaptation and the loss and damage already being caused by warming. Twenty-three countries went further than the Glasgow Climate Pact, making new commitments to phase out coal.

REPORT
The future of food security in an age of pandemics: Building a modern and resilient food system in Sri Lanka and Nepal.

A pandemic with the scale and severity of the current coronavirus has not been experienced in any of the South Asian countries in recent decades. Furthermore, even apart from challenges presented by the pandemic, South Asia is one of the hotspots of global food insecurity. This study, published by Southern Voice, investigates ways to strengthen agri-food markets and value chains—and related social-protection mechanisms—to build a more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive food system in Sri Lanka and Nepal, with the aim of helping these countries make a speedy recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic shock. Combining secondary research with primary data collected through in-depth interviews, the study, undertaken by Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS) and South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) analyses the impacts of COVID-19 on rice and vegetable value chains in the two focal countries.

In the shorter term, the study suggests that ensuring a smooth supply of inputs, such as seeds, fertiliser, and agro-chemicals; improving access to agricultural financing; establishing efficient decentralised public and private procurement and distribution systems that feature buffer stocks and utilise e-commerce; and strengthening food-related social security programmes can help mitigate the effects of the pandemic. In the medium and longer terms, the study recommends addressing several larger, structural issues in the food system; these issues are related to agri-extension, food-system monitoring, food processing and value addition, and farm-market linkages.

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