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In 2009, the group started with just 11 members. But over time, CVF expanded so quickly that currently it has 68 members. This number has kept on increasing, indicating its value as the highest-level political lobbying group, against a very slow-moving UNFCCC process.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina holds a meeting with her Dutch counterpart Mark Rutte on the sidelines of the Conference of the Parties (COP25), known as the UN Climate Change Conference, in Madrid, Spain.

PHOTO: PLO

Bangladesh's leadership of the Climate Vulnerable Forum

How has the world benefitted?

MIZAN R KHAN

"The time to take action to save the planet is not tomorrow, but today."

— Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina as Chair of CVF at CVF leaders' event at the UNGA, New York on October 7, 2024.

"I believe our Presidency's most important legacy will be to shift the narrative from climate vulnerability to resilience and prosperity. In Bangladesh, we are developing our 'Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan'. We believe it can provide a template for other vulnerable countries in their own context."

— Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the virtual handing over ceremony to the president of Ghana, Dhaka, May 5, 2022.

The above two statements by

However, one thread that binds all these countries together is their vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, which knows no national boundaries. In this context, Bangladesh, being one of the most vulnerable countries in the world, has done a phenomenal job in articulating the multi-faceted vulnerabilities of this group. However, before getting into the discussion about Bangladesh's role, let us have a quick look at what the CVF is, what's its mission, which countries have led the CVF, etc.

BACKGROUND OF CVF

The CVF, formed in 2009 in Male under the leadership of the Maldives, is a voluntary non-treaty organisation of countries that are disproportionately affected by the impacts of



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Bangladesh's leadership was always very strong in demanding adequate finance based on justice considerations.

PHOTO: REUTERS



Bangladesh's strong leadership in the CVF on loss and damage as the number one priority strongly contributed to the establishment and operationalisation of the Loss and Damage Fund at COP28, held in Dubai in December 2023.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina as the second time leader of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) is indicative of Bangladesh' bold and strong commitment in addressing climate change, nationally and internationally. But it is not very easy for a country like Bangladesh to provide leadership to the CVF, which is quite a big group of 68 member-states representing about 1.5 billion people (20 percent of the global population), comprising of middle-income, low-income and least developed countries (LDCs), coming from Asia and the Pacific, Middle east, Africa, Central America and the Caribbean regions.

climate change. Its mission is to seek urgent solutions to the increasing impacts of climate change that are devastating the societies and economies of these countries. The CVF is not a negotiating group under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), but a political lobbying group represented by country leaders of member-states. So, CVF promotes a two-pronged strategy: externally, the leaders try to exert political and diplomatic pressure on the Conference of the parties (COP) presidencies and major emitters to initiate decisive action through ramping up their mitigation commitments,

Despite being badly battered by recurring climate disasters, Bangladesh has a knack of building back better quickly. This ability possessed by Bangladeshis earned it commendation from the world press.

and secondly, to live by example domestically through initiating best possible actions to address climate change challenges, given their limited capacity.

In 2009, the group started with just 11 members. But over time, CVF expanded so quickly that currently it has 68 members. This number has kept on increasing, indicating its value as the highest-level political lobbying group, against a very slow-moving UNFCCC process. So far, followed by Maldives, Kiribati, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Philippines, Ethiopia, Marshall Islands, Bangladesh again led the group. In mid-2022 Bangladesh handed over CVF leadership to Ghana. Now the chair rotates every two years. So, Bangladesh had the unique privilege of leading the CVF twice—first between 2011-2013 and then again during 2022-2024. Why was this honour bestowed on Bangladesh by this global group? The answer to that question is important.

ELEMENTS OF LEADERSHIP

Let me start with a little explanation of leadership qualities a country usually requires to lead a global process. According to the literature, some of the factors that are usually considered include a country's geography, natural resources, population, leadership quality,

trends in economic development, industrial capacity, technology, military, ideational elements, national character and morale, quality of diplomacy and foreign support.

Looking at these elements, Bangladesh can be said to have both strengths and weaknesses as a sovereign entity. Having a small landmass—65 times smaller than the US—it is inhabited by a large population, which is half that compared to the US. This extremely high density has been reinforced by the presence of 1.2 million Rohingyas, forcibly evicted by the Myanmar military junta. Still, Bangladesh, for the last two decades, has maintained its position as one of the fastest growing economies, now commanding an economy worth almost half a trillion-dollar. GDP-wise, this places Bangladesh as the 33rd largest economy in the world. So, strong support on a sustainable basis is evident for Bangladesh from both its bilateral and multilateral development partners. Quite a number of our achievements in social and economic sectors are highly acclaimed by the global community, touting Bangladesh as the newly emerging tiger of Asia.

Then comes the leadership of Bangladesh in adaptation and resilience. Despite being badly

battered by recurring climate disasters, Bangladesh has a knack of building back better quickly. This ability possessed by Bangladeshis earned it commendation from the world press. Our disaster management model, highlighted recently (after Amphan) in a column in *The Guardian* written by none other than Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has been emulated by many countries, both developed and developing. Also, Bangladesh as a climate vulnerable country is turning itself into a model of adaptation and learning for the world. Now, I must mention a few intangible elements of leadership that catapulted Bangladesh to lead the CVF.

KEY CVF CONCERNS HIGHLIGHTED BY BANGLADESH AS ITS CHAIR
Bangladesh was the third chair of CVF from 2011 to 2013. Then the government hosted a ministerial meeting of CVF between November 13-14, 2011 in Dhaka, where Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the then UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon were keynote speakers at its inauguration ceremony. Nineteen climate-vulnerable countries supported the declaration and it was adopted on November 14, 2011.

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