

# Addressing Bhutan's environmental challenges: pursuing climate justice and reparative action from China and India

## Abstract

In 2023 alone, China's fossil fuel emissions increased by 458 million metric tons, India's by 233 million metric tons, and global aviation emissions increased by 145 million metric tons (Borenstein, 2023). Nestled between these two major carbon emitters, Bhutan, renowned for its dedication to environmental conservation as a carbon-negative nation, confronts a pressing challenge — carbon incursion. Despite its sustainable practices, guided by the development philosophy of Gross National Happiness, Bhutan struggles with transboundary pollution, mainly from China and India. The consequences are evident, from receding Himalayan snows due to heatwaves, shifting seasons, to the drying up of the water sources, and other ecological degradation. For instance, in early May 2024, Bhutan experienced severe pollution, forcing a group of tourists to abort their landing at Paro International Airport. This underlines growing threat to the tourism sector, the nation's second largest contributor. Although Bhutan receives compensation, notably through the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the funds are insignificant as compared to the environmental and livelihood damages it sustains. Additionally, in absence of climate governance and agreement involving Bhutan, China, India, and the neighbouring countries, Bhutan's climate grievances remain unredressed. Therefore, this research will highlight the pressing need for China and India, and the global community, to adequately finance Bhutan's climate efforts. These mutually beneficial compensations should encompass climate and wildlife assistance, socio-economic grants, as well as carbon trading among other measures, for supporting reparative actions, restoring damaged ecosystems, and supporting affected communities in mitigating the impacts of climate change.