

Roundtable summary

Implementing the Action Agenda in 2016 and beyond

April 23, 2016

On April 23, 2016, following the signing of the Paris Agreement, Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions convened a roundtable to bring together key networks, initiatives, and stakeholders driving climate action in cities, regions, companies, and elsewhere. Hosted by the United Nations Foundation, the roundtable aimed to build on the successful outcome at COP21 and the additional steps being taken in 2016 to shape the ongoing climate Action Agenda. Participants discussed how best to **coordinate strategies** and identified **priorities** and concrete **next steps** moving forward, as well as **questions for further discussion**. This analytic summary highlights key elements of the enormously rich discussion, with particular attention to follow-up.

The discussion revolved around six overlapping themes:

1. Coordination around the Action Agenda;
2. Institutional arrangements / responsibilities for the ongoing Action Agenda;
3. Priorities for expanding and deepening climate action;
4. Relationship between the Action Agenda and Nationally Determined Contributions;
5. Ensuring meaningful implementation of initiatives and commitments;
6. Tracking initiatives and commitments, and their progress toward implementation.

This summary considers each theme in turn, noting **priorities** and **next steps** for each, as well as more general considerations and questions for further discussion. Where possible, the organizers have **highlighted specific entities** who may wish to take an active role in advancing these priorities. Others may of course offer to help deliver them as well. In some cases, we have distinguished between **short-term** and **longer-term** steps.

Because the roundtable was held under the Chatham House Rule, this summary does not attribute points of view to specific participants. It represents the organizers' interpretation of the discussion.

1. Coordination around the Action Agenda

PRIORITY: COORDINATION AROUND THE ACTION AGENDA

A strong point of consensus was the need to “fertilize the connective tissue” of the Action Agenda. This priority can be accomplished by continuing to convene discussions among the networks and initiatives, COP presidencies, countries, UN agencies, and other stakeholders on the types of strategic questions addressed at the roundtable. Regulators at all levels were also viewed as a missing stakeholder group that could help the Action Agenda accelerate progress. While not every organization needs to be part of every discussion, transparency and broad participation can help to ensure that these discussions are cumulative and progressive, not fragmented and potentially at cross-purposes – creating unity in purpose but diversity in approach. This new model of organization is exponential and decentralized, requiring organizations that are used to operating incrementally to adapt accordingly. The “open source” Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions model of discussions was highlighted as one vehicle. The dense calendar of climate action

events during 2016 (see Appendix) provides a ready set of fora for these discussions to build on each other in a coherent manner.

IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

1. **COP21 and COP22 Presidencies** could hold monthly conference calls for Action Agenda partners to provide updates and align activities. **Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions** can help to coordinate logistics as needed, also in collaboration with the **UN Foundation**. These calls can allow for information exchange across the entire community around the Action Agenda. They would be complementary to more specialized convenings (e.g. Friends of Climate Action).
2. **Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions** maintains an open source Google Doc calendar of climate action events in 2016 and beyond.

FURTHER STEPS

1. Some participants suggested securing more robust logistical support to provide project management for coordination around the Action Agenda. Funding could be sought to retain a consultancy like Meridian to perform this function, or some of the organizations actively supporting the Action Agenda currently may be able to provide additional “secretariat” services to fill this function.
2. The institutional arrangements for the Action Agenda that are established (see below) should incorporate and regularize this coordination function in a light-touch fashion.

PRIORITY: A NEW ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE – 1.5° C

It was suggested that 1.5° C become a new organizing principle around which climate action across the groundswell is organized. An organizing principle for climate action is important because it can help to provide a common narrative for climate action and ensure that the vast diversity of the groundswell of climate action is moving in a common direction of travel with a common sense of urgency – thereby creating the “possibility for a new reality.” Without such a uniting principle, there is a risk of fragmentation of efforts.

IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

1. Discuss and socialize the 1.5° C organizing principle idea with key stakeholders.
2. Initiatives and networks can consider how to build this idea into their climate actions. Some reported that this is already being done.

PRIORITY: A NEW ‘FORCING MOMENT’: NON-PARTY STAKEHOLDER SUMMIT IN SUMMER 2018

It was suggested that the groundswell community coordinate around 2018 as the next major “forcing moment” for climate action. There was strong consensus that time-bound political moments are essential to generate the “discipline” and urgency required to advance climate action. It was suggested that 2018 is both sufficiently far off to provide time to organize, but also close enough to affect the problem. Moreover, COP24 will feature a “facilitative dialogue” on collective ambition, providing a key moment for non-state climate action to “de-risk” the political arena for Nationally Determined Contributions and highlight opportunities to ratchet up those contributions. A key outcome of the summit could be a “non-Party stakeholder stock-take” that assessed the accomplishments of the groundswell and evaluated its future potential. In this way, the 2018 summit could serve a function somewhat similar to the 2014 Climate Summit in New York. Such an event could also become part of the regular “rhythm” for exponential change in the post-Paris climate regime (see below).

NEXT STEPS

1. Discuss and socialize the non-Party stakeholder summit idea with key stakeholders.

2. Initiatives and networks can consider how to build this idea into their climate actions. Some reported that this is already being done.
3. An organizing team of key **Action Agenda partners** should be formed as soon as possible to begin laying the groundwork for a 2018 event and provide continuity, especially in light of the myriad leadership transitions this year.

ESTABLISHING A PREDICTABLE ANNUAL “RHYTHM” OF EVENTS. In addition to these three priorities, roundtable participants discussed how a predictable annual “rhythm” of events might be created. Already in 2016, numerous events are taking place on climate action by cities, businesses, and other actors, around specific themes, and in cross-cutting fora (see appendix). Participants saw an opportunity to provide more “strategic coherence” to these events to reduce fragmentation and transaction costs. This might include seeking agreement amongst and between key platforms about their active role within the Action Agenda based on the comparative advantage of their institutional function. It would also help clarify connections to various intergovernmental meetings, such as the G20, UN General Assembly, World Bank/IMF annual meetings, and COPs. A potential suggestion would be to focus the various non-Party stakeholder events throughout the year on raising ambition, highlighting new opportunities and commitments, and facilitating the various peer-to-peer exchanges and learning opportunities that are the core of business and sub-national events.

In turn, the annual “high-level event” that will occur during each COP, as established by the Paris decision text, could then focus more on assessing collective progress toward delivery and implementation of commitments, providing visibility for initiatives, allowing governments and NGOs to ask questions and provide feedback to harvest learnings, and on linking non-state actions to national policies of UNFCCC Parties (through the Technical Expert Process, for example). In addition, there could be one or more larger “non-Party stakeholder summits” preceding the five-year global stock-takes created by the Paris Agreement; they would serve a function similar to that of the 2014 UN Secretary-General’s Climate Summit.

2. Institutional arrangements and responsibilities for the Action Agenda

Participants agreed that some form of “light-touch” and “balanced” institutional arrangements were needed to sustain the Action Agenda going forward. The Lima-Paris Action Agenda was described as a helpful “pilot” of what might be done going forward, but is too prone to *ad hocism* in the future. Looking ahead, participants emphasized several key points:

1. Avoiding bureaucratization;
2. The need to build on the existing institutional elements, including the high-level champions appointed for two-year terms by COP Presidencies, the NAZCA portal, and the annual high-level event at COPs;
3. The importance of “co-ownership” of the Action Agenda among all actors engaged in the process, but the simultaneous need for leadership and credibility of actors involved. Some version of the “quartet” plus “stakeholder council” model seems to enjoy widespread support, but requires further elaboration;
4. Leveraging the ongoing Action Agenda to prioritize and drive the most important, strategic, and transformational opportunities within the broader groundswell of climate action;
5. A continuation of the sectoral and multi-level approach, which reflects the way actors and initiatives organize themselves. Most sectors should not change from year to year to provide continuity, but some flexibility is needed to allow for shifting priorities;

6. The strengthening of the sectoral focal points / facilitators for each sector. These should be neutral organizations in each sector that not overly UN-centric and are deeply embedded in the sector and widely respected by their peers;

The organizers noted a relatively high degree of convergence among participant views on how the Action Agenda should be structured, at least at the conceptual level. This growing consensus was further evident in various conceptual papers different actors have formulated recently. A key challenge is now to take these concepts to a concrete, detailed level.

PRIORITY: RESOLVING THE INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ACTION AGENDA

Participants noted the importance of putting the Action Agenda on a more stable, but still “light touch,” long-term footing as soon as possible, in order to avoid losing momentum, and in order to focus on the important work ahead.

IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

1. **The COP21 and COP22 Presidencies** could develop a paper on institutional arrangements and modalities for the Action Agenda. **Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions** could assist the Presidencies to consult with a wide range of stakeholders in order to obtain their feedback and technical inputs. This document will establish modes of work, and consider what additional steps might be required to further structure the Action Agenda.
 - a. A final draft of this institutional arrangements paper should be issued no later than June 23rd;
 - b. Any further steps toward institutionalization that are required will be finalized well before COP22.
2. **The COP21 and COP22 Presidencies** can develop a more global name and brand for the Action Agenda, in consultation with the wider community of stakeholders

3. Priorities for expanding and deepening climate action

Participants concurred on the need to expand the groundswell of climate action beyond its current participants. New companies, new cities, new industries, new parts of the world, new thematic areas, and other key targets will need to be engaged in order to realize the ambitious goals set in Paris. Moreover, given the short window of opportunity to peak and decrease global emissions, the expansion of the climate action must be “exponential, not incremental”. This presents an enormous challenge to governments, UN agencies, companies, sub-national governments, and others, who tend to operate through deliberate and lengthy processes.

The key challenge, then, is to identify and target the most productive, high-impact, and transformational “tipping points.” While the roundtable did not come to a definitive consensus on what these might be, participants offered suggestions that revolved around the following themes:

1. Energy
2. Land-use
3. Finance
4. Urban development
5. Aviation
6. Maritime transport
7. Avoiding lock-in of high-carbon infrastructure (particularly in Asia)

Cross-pollination among themes was also viewed as critical in unlocking innovation. In addition to these sectors, participants noted the relative lack of attention within the Action Agenda to adaptation and resilience and to participation from and in developing countries.¹

4. The relation between the Action Agenda and Nationally Determined Contributions

Participants noted the importance of emphasizing the wide array of linkages between the Action Agenda, as well as the larger groundswell of climate actions, and national climate policies. Such links may be relatively indirect but still crucial. For example, participants noted how more robust and ambitious actions by non-Party stakeholders give national governments increasing confidence to ratchet up their own contributions, as well as “politically de-risking” positive policy development. Similarly, they suggested sub- and non-state climate action and initiatives can create, build, and strengthen domestic constituencies for climate action around the world, creating more favorable conditions for ratcheting up ambition and legislation in domestic politics. It was also suggested that the groundswell seek transformation by moving markets, beyond pushing national governments.

Participants also saw the importance of more direct linkages between the groundswell and national policy development. Channeling the energy of non-Party stakeholders’ action into the formulation of future NDCs and country investment plans, or even potentially in the review process, was seen as key mechanism for national governments to unlock additional ambition going forward. The non-Party stakeholder summit proposed for summer of 2018 could be structured such that it feeds directly into the facilitative dialogue at the COP later that year to take stock of collective progress toward the long-term goal and inform formulation of the next round of nationally determined contributions. Similarly, the Action Agenda could help identify the regulatory changes governments that would need to make to allow non-Party stakeholders to move further, faster.

5. Ensuring meaningful implementation of initiatives and commitments

Participants stressed the importance of ensuring meaningful implementation of initiatives and commitments. Delivery of commitments is of course essential to address the climate challenge, but also to enable the groundswell to perform its catalytic role vis-à-vis countries and other actors. It is important that the Action Agenda not include superficial commitments that can undermine the work of those actors and initiatives that are actually delivering ambitious climate actions. Participants suggested that, while delivery was the responsibility of individual initiatives, the Action Agenda as a whole should seek to help initiatives become progressively more robust and aligned with best practices to ensure that they can deliver on their ambitions. It can also further refine the criteria for inclusion in the Action Agenda.

Several questions for further discussion arose:

1. What are the characteristics of successful initiatives? Can a set of best practices be identified? Several NGOs have done preliminary work on this subject.
2. How can the Action Agenda partners best steer initiatives toward best practices over time?
3. What role do funders and grant-makers have in this process?

¹ For further details, see Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions (GGCA) (2015). “Lima-Paris Action Agenda Independent Assessment Report.” December 7, 2015. Available: <http://www.climategroundswell.org/blog-test/lpaa/report>

4. Can sectors develop longer-term “road maps” for deep decarbonization, possibly aligned with the long-term low GHG emission development strategies countries were requested to undertake in Paris? This could help ensure that initiatives move toward the transformational end of the spectrum and move markets, rather than business as usual.

6. Tracking initiatives, commitments, and their progress toward implementation

Related to the question of ensuring delivery of commitments, participants discussed how data can best be gathered to track initiatives, commitments, and progress toward implementation. While many voiced support for NAZCA, it was universally seen as only a first step and that further steps are needed to improve data transparency, access, and analytics as well as perhaps other improvements that were not mentioned in this workshop.

Participants noted that there are different options for gathering data to track climate action, and that incentives should be built into the system. Given limited resources, it will be important to prioritize the data processes that are most useful. Identifying these will require further discussion.

A further consideration is minimizing the reporting burden for individual actors but also initiatives. Wherever possible, reporting should be consolidated and streamlined, as well as financially incentivized.

PRIORITY: BUILD NAZCA INTO A MORE ROBUST TOOL FOR TRACKING CLIMATE ACTION

NEXT STEPS:

1. **Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions** has a data and analysis workstream that brings together the research and analysis community around sub/non-state climate action, and can serve as one forum to take these discussions forward.
2. **Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions** will organize a meeting with the **UNFCCC** specifically on NAZCA during the Bonn negotiating session in May.

PRIORITY: TRACK EXISTING ACTION AGENDA INITIATIVES

NEXT STEPS:

1. Create a questionnaire to send to initiatives to fill out in advance of COP22. Decide how to aggregate and report on this information to various audiences.

Appendix: 2016 Climate Action Calendar (non-exhaustive list)

May 4-6 - Climate Action 2016 Forum and Summit, Washington, DC

May 16-26 - UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies session, Bonn

May 23-24 - Conference on Global Environmental Change, Berlin

June 1-2 - Clean Energy Ministerial 7 (CEM7) and subnational CEM, San Francisco

June 7-8 - US-China Cities Summit, Beijing

June 22-23 - Global Compact Leaders Summit, New York

June 23 – Coalitions meeting, Morocco

June 28-29 - Business & Climate Summit, London

July 11-12 - Mediterranean COP22 hosted in collaboration with Marseilles, Tangier

July 11-20 - High-level Political Forum on sustainable development, New York

July 18 - Partnership Exchange, New York

September 4-5 - G20 Summit, Hangzhou

September 19-25 - UN General Assembly & Climate Week NYC, New York City

September 20 - Sustainable Investment Forum, New York

September 19-26 - Climate Week, New York

September 26-28 - Climate Chance, Nantes

Early October - Delhi Sustainable Development Summit, Delhi

October 17-21 - Habitat III, Quito

November 7-18 - COP22 and associated high-level event and pre-2020 dialogue, Marrakesh

November 12-16 - Low-Emissions Solutions Conference, Marrakesh

November 30 - December 2 - C40 Mayors Summit, Mexico City

Summit of southern multinationals, Morocco

Adaptation Summit, Morocco

Forum on enhancing capacity and pre-2020 action, Morocco

Who we are: Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions

Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions is a series of dialogues that brings together organizations supporting climate action at all levels. Its objectives include:

1. Bringing the groundswell of climate actions from cities, regions, companies, and other groups to a higher level of scale and ambition;
2. Increasing efficient coordination among cooperative initiatives and sub- and non-state networks;
3. Improving analysis and understanding of “bottom up” climate actions;
4. Building a positive narrative of pragmatic, concrete action on climate change; and
5. Identifying opportunities for the groundswell of climate actions and the multilateral process to support and catalyze each other.

Over the past year, Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions has brought together city and regional networks, company networks, cooperative initiatives, governments, international organizations, and researchers to discuss and advance these objectives. By convening the community of actors that make up and support the groundswell of climate actions, we seek to realize the full potential of this extraordinary innovation in global governance.

www.climategroundswell.org