

## Meeting Summary

# Stepping up Climate Action at Home

**28 September 2018**

On September 28, 2018 at the Instituto Cervantes, New York, Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions ([www.climategroundswell.org](http://www.climategroundswell.org)) convened a meeting as part of New York Climate Week to consider how local governments, the private sector, and civil society can help countries deliver NDCs and enhance ambition in the period 2018-2020. It brought together academics, policy practitioners, and IGO representatives focusing on global climate action. The session provided an opportunity for participants to consider how to align efforts of non-state actors with intergovernmental processes, how emerging domestic and regional climate coalitions can be leveraged, and what tools and strategies will help this as we look towards key future moments such as COP24 and the 2019 UNSG summit. This short summary synthesizes the discussion from the perspective of the organizers.

### **Taking stock of GCAS**

The meeting began with a stocktaking session to reflect on the outcomes of the Global Climate Action Summit (GCAS) held in San Francisco at in the second week of September. It was highlighted how, from the perspective of the original aims of its organizers, the Summit had been a success in its galvanizing of political momentum heading into the upcoming UNFCCC Talanoa Dialogue. GCAS also ended up being a showcase moment for subnational and non-state climate action, and some critics may question how much GCAS truly moved the needle in this regard, but this was not the primary objective of the Summit.

It was identified that key to the success of GCAS was its effective bringing together of diverse stakeholders from all sectors, including those that do not normally work together. One specific strategy for this was developing a “good cop, bad cop” dynamic to encourage competition and ambition. The organizing committee worked hard to achieve cross-sectoral participation and bring them all into a narrative of deep decarbonization and mid-century carbon neutrality. Whether the organizing committee will continue to work together remains to be decided.

### **Climate action trends: domestic and regional coalitions**

Participants shared their perspectives on the important trends shaping climate action at present. It was widely agreed that the locus of action needs to shift more towards the national-level. Discussion centered on how the momentum and coordination that has been built at the global-level can be translated to different contexts to catalyze domestic climate action. Participants identified that, in many ways, 2019 will be a “national year”, characterized by important moments such as the G20 and UNSG Summits as well as the (re)formulation of NDCs and Long Term Strategies.

It was agreed that a major effort was required to support the creation of effective and ambitious new NDCs. Many of the political leaders who oversaw the creation of the current NDCs are no longer in office, so commitment to them cannot be taken for granted. It was suggested that domestic climate action needs to build pressure from the bottom up for them

to be taken seriously and develop collective ownership of them through inclusive design processes.

In addition to spurring more domestic climate action, the importance of encouraging this action to be collaborative in nature was also identified. As with GCAS, it was sensed that there is a growing need to develop vertical integration and more “connective tissue” among the different sectors and constituencies involved with climate action. The Alliances for Climate Action was highlighted as a promising initiative focusing on this.

### **Critical upcoming policy levers for non-state and subnational actors at COP24**

With the IPCC 1.5 degrees report showing very aggressive climate action is needed to keep this temperature goal alive, the climate action community must actively seize the opportunities provided by COP24. It was noted that without a Decision advocating the enhancement of NDCs, getting greater ambition from national governments in 2019 will be very difficult.

It was noted that non-state actors will have space in the Talanoa Dialogue at COP24, which helps formalize the connection between them and Parties. It will also offer the opportunity for non-state actors to bring the momentum created by GCAS to the negotiations including through the reports aggregating the potential impact of non-state climate action and the major contribution this can make to reaching a 1.5 degrees pathway if collaborative efforts are pursued. The forthcoming Yearbook of Climate Action was also highlighted as an advocacy tool for the climate action community along with the creation of long term decarbonization strategies by Parties as an important opportunity for non-state actors to contribute.

### **Strategies and tools for domestic and region-focused climate action coalitions**

Participants brainstormed the tools and strategies that the climate action community and its coalitions can draw upon both to take advantage of COP24 and in their ongoing programs of work. It was pointed out that some best practices are beginning to emerge such as working in alliances and in a multilevel fashion, and that the Yearbook of Climate Action will aim to capture these through a “synopsis of good practice”.

Other strategies highlighted included drawing on SDG17 (“Partnerships”) to frame our work, attempting to break psychological barriers of Parties regarding what is possible, and communicating with the private sector in a way that makes operating in a carbon neutral 2050 a positive, interesting consideration. A tool to achieve the former would be identifying examples where things were achieved that were previously considered impossible or not feasible.

The organizers also shared research outlining models for interaction between non-state actors and governments. These include

- Consultation: where governments allow non-state actors to input into their policy processes;
- Orchestration: where governments actively facilitate or give impetus to non-state action;
- Delegation: where government’s set target or agendas and then have non-state actors deliver them;

- Vertical integration: where actors co-agree on implementation at different levels;
- Advocacy coalitions: where non-state actors come together to encourage government action from the bottom up;
- “Do it ourselves”: where non-state actors take action themselves in the context of government inaction.

Research that outlines these models in detail will be made available by the organizers. While all of these models are happening in the world, it is hoped that systematizing them will help the climate action community become more strategic in applying them.

Participants proceeded to compile a list of specific tools that non-state actors can use to advance domestic climate action. These included:

- Quantify opportunities
- Tracking implementation and impact
- City Talanoa Dialogues
- National Climate Action Conferences
- NDC enhancement
- Direct advocacy to enhance NDCs
- Inputting into the development of long-term plans
- National carbon budgets
- Backcasting (e.g. from target to present, rather than present going forward)
- Sectoral carbon budgets
- NDC partnership plans
- Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) under the HLPF on Sustainable Development 2019 , where SDG13 will be reviewed
- Work with GCF accredited entities that are receiving funds for NAPs to help identify bankable projects
- Piggyback off work done by UNDP to identify countries for NDC/SDG support in order to identify promising geographies for new climate alliances and action

### **Next steps toward COP24 and 2019**

Looking to the year ahead, participants discussed COP24 in Katowice and the UNSG Summit in September 2019 as important moments to focus on. Agreeing on the work program (“rulebook”) for the Paris Agreement is a crucial outcome for COP24 and the climate action community must push to ensure this happens successfully. The importance of the rulebook acknowledging the importance of non-state actors in implementing the Paris Agreement was also highlighted as critical. Other multilateral treaties have multistakeholder involvement in their review processes and it would be unusual for the Paris Agreement to be a laggard in this regard. Participants also reiterated the importance of the Talanoa Dialogue as a key vehicle for the climate action community to influence these outcomes. For the climate action component of COP24, it was noted that the UNFCCC will be taking a “less is more” approach in comparison with previous years.

It was discussed that the aim for the UNSG Summit in 2019 is to deliver the message that countries are enhancing national ambition and that the real economy is shifting. The Summit will aim for a limited number of transformational “mega outcomes”, rather than a “Christmas tree” approach of small outcomes. Participants noted that other countries are at risk of backsliding in their ambition and efforts must be made, potentially through the summit, to ensure that there is a “floor” similar to the America’s Pledge in the USA. The UNSG Summit

will appoint sectoral leads who will soon be looking for transformational outcomes to highlight in the summit, particularly those that occur across sectors. Participants expressed their hope that the UNSG takes advantage of the COP to conduct outreach for these outcomes.

A third development that is upcoming but that has been more under the radar is the GCF's decision to review the overall portfolio of its accredited entities to ensure they are in alignment with the Paris Agreement. Participants agreed further attention to this would be warranted.

### **Wrap up**

The meeting wrapped up by highlighting some additional priorities for the immediate-term including identifying new geographies for climate alliances and turning the abovementioned “tools” into an actionable playbook. Participants agreed that there was also a lot of potential to contribute to the “Friends of Talanoa Dialogue” and the Step-up Campaign. It was noted that through these and other avenues the climate action community must bring the real economy closer to negotiations and break barriers where countries think there is no political will for things that, in fact, cities, states, and regions are already doing.

A final practical suggestion to round off the meeting was to circulate simple, compelling stories from around the world of people and communities successfully implementing the tools and activities that were discussed. It was agreed that there is no need to wait for technical reports to share these stories and that this can be done informally. Many of the stories, it was noted, would not even involve the language of the tools being discussed.

### **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.

Since 2014, 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.