

# Global Climate Action Beyond 2020

Bolstering Non-State and Subnational Action for Ambition

*Expert Workshop, 14-15 June 2019, Bonn, Germany*

Workshop proceedings



## Introduction

The Workshop *Global Climate Action Beyond 2020*, held on 14-15 June 2019, explored the role of non-state and subnational actors and cooperative initiatives between them in post-2020 climate governance. The event convened policy-makers, researchers and practitioners from developed and developing countries, conferring an opportunity to exchange and to debate through interactive plenaries and as well as breakout sessions. As the negotiations to formulate a post-2020 agenda are underway, the workshop aimed not only at debating climate action within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), but also within the broader ecosystem of non-state and subnational climate action.

*Global Climate Action Beyond 2020* put forward concrete proposals around four overarching themes: first, key interactions among non-Party actors, as well as between Parties and non-Party stakeholders, with a focus on stimulating actors that are not yet engaged on climate action; second, tracking and transparency to ensure credible climate actions; third, expanding and deepening climate action to overcome geographical and sectoral gaps and imbalances; and finally, just transition and synergies with other sustainable development questions as a premise to build a narrative for climate action.

### Box: Key messages

#### 1- Key interactions

- The action space within the UNFCCC remains crucial. As the main multilateral climate process, the UNFCCC wields convening power that attracts the attention of a multiplicity of actors;
- Post-2020 action agenda will need to strengthen productive linkages between governments and non-Party actors aiming at much higher ambition and accelerated implementation;

#### 2- Tracking and Transparency

- Important gaps, such as more representativeness from finance sector, need to be

- overcome to ensure credible climate actions;
- Foster the interaction within the Global Climate Action community bridging between data providers and data analysts.

### 3- Expanding climate action

- Climate action should address other aspects of climate change, including adaptation and resilience, more consistently;
- Promote opportunities and capacities to strengthen actors in places where action is needed with a special focus on actions and actors in the global South.

### 4- Just transition and synergies with development agendas

- A post-2020 global climate action agenda could maximize synergies with biodiversity conservation and other aspects of sustainable development;
- Acknowledge the inevitable trade-offs that will take place during a just transition and bring people and sectors that may stand to lose into dialogue.

## Key Interactions

Interaction and linkages between government and non-Party actors, as well as among the non-state actors, play a crucial role in stimulating ambition and giving governments confidence for implementing their (Nationally Determined Contributions) NDCs.,

Non-Party actors' potential contributions and achievements may gain visibility in different ways, and can provide support to national governments in the adoption of more ambitious targets. For instance, discussion about good practices within sectors at domestic-level dialogues can play a role, possibly becoming an integral part of the NDC. These dialogues may be anchored within existing processes such as the MPGCA or new space could be created within the UNFCCC for such dialogue, such as "NDCs labs". Furthermore, as non-state and subnational actors often use reporting initiatives to signal and communicate their commitments, linkages between reporting platforms and governments' NDCs might also provide confidence in the implementation of the NDCs. .

At the level of industrial sectors, well-developed and concrete commitments provide a solid basis for the NDC implementation. In general, progressive and engaged businesses convey their commitment through SDG integration approaches, advanced risk management strategies, life cycle assessment and enhanced transparency.

Conversely, the role of governmental processes and policy instruments are particularly relevant. First, governments can encourage non-Party actors to make explicit linkages to NDCs in their reports. Additionally, governments can establish allocation targets for climate action in national spending and also adopt procurement policies with specific requirements. Through laws, regulations, financial mechanisms and fiscal policies government can provide incentives for curbing unsustainable practices. To achieve this, it is crucial that government policies be guided by long-term plans that encourage businesses and financial sectors to engage, ensuring to define a landscape of opportunities.

Two of the major challenges with engaging businesses is to move from a few frontrunners to involving their supply chains and to advance entire sectors, thus engaging

reluctant and high-emitting industries. Frontrunners of each industry can help catalyze action and raise ambition by sharing their experiences and approaches with industry peers, governments and the general public, including through showcasing within the international climate process.

Both governments and consumers have a role to play in making the practices of frontrunners mainstream. With some companies showing the potential for ambitious actions, these practices can be institutionalized, for example by integrating them into the legal framework. Furthermore, long-term strategies and goals are key to successful industry engagement, as they provide stability and a basis for planning. Governments can incentivize self-regulation by setting deadlines for establishing common industry approaches and showing the business case for climate friendly practices. Common sectoral approaches, including shared risk and R&D programs could maximize collaboration and put pressure on laggards while avoiding “unhealthy” competition.

In conjunction with dialogue and incentives, governments can use regulation and enforcement. However, possible negative side-effects and substantive tradeoffs among different SDG goals must be considered to enable just transitions (see below). Apart from direct regulation of industry, the introduction of labeling schemes, including negative labels for particularly harmful products, may enable consumers to show their preference for climate-friendly alternatives in a demand-driven transition. Education and awareness raising of the general public is crucial to make consumer-targeted regulations effective and to build public pressure on companies.

## Tracking and Transparency

Tracking and transparency are crucial aspects of credible climate action. Recent years have seen an increasing volume of available information on climate action. Data is currently available both within the UNFCCC space, particularly the NAZCA Portal, as well as in the broader ecosystem of climate action, thanks to multiple organizations, including city and business networks, academia, and civil society organizations. This allows a better understanding of the potential and actual contributions of the actors and initiatives outside of the UNFCCC. Discussions about “Tracking and Transparency” centered on three topics: (1) the purpose of tracking, (2) the evolution of the tracking within the UNFCCC, and (3) the challenges and opportunities.

The groundswell of climate actions seizes a unique opportunity to bring economic activities together with the intergovernmental process. Tracking these actions allows more understanding of where action is taken, in which sectors and by whom. This can promote ambition among both Party and non-Party actors and the articulation of low-carbon and climate-resilient pathways of action. Hence, tracking is critical to ensure the credibility of commitments. Similarly, transparency emerged as a fundamental procedural element to identify the progress of actions. In sum, tracking and transparency enhance legitimacy of climate action at large.

When Global Climate Action was conceived within the UNFCCC, the monitoring component was not yet present. The main goal was to capture emerging commitments and to

showcase actors' efforts. The tracking system was set up afterwards. Information relating to the commitments recorded on UNFCCC's NAZCA platform are provided by eight core data partners to ensure that actions are credible. The next version of UNFCCC's Global Climate Action Portal will link publicly available information about Parties with information on non-Party actions .

The tracking process has two main functions. First, NAZCA has a monitoring function as it helps to demonstrate the progress of commitments by actors. Second, an analysis of the outputs and impacts of non-Party climate actions should also be conducted. This latter function does not fall under the UNFCCC Secretariat's competency. However, academia can play a critical role in examining global climate action and its alignment to the Paris Agreement.

Important challenges need to be addressed relating to tracking and transparency. NAZCA was not designed to capture all the climate actions worldwide and across all sectors. Nevertheless, addressing some imbalances will be important. First, most of the registered actions take place in Europe and North America. New approaches are necessary to capture more developing country data to increase representativeness. Second, several sectoral imbalances persist, for example comparatively little data is available on finance. Third, adaptation and resilience actions are underrepresented compared to mitigation actions. This may be linked to a lack of methods, including qualitative approaches, to comparatively assess their progress.

Above mentioned imbalances might relate to another important challenge: communication. On the UNFCCC website, information is dispersed and not-well integrated. Moreover, there are also barriers for people at the local actors to convey their action at higher levels as they lack access to channels that could help showcase their action. Finally, many actions may not be labelled as climate actions, but make real contributions to achieving mitigation and adaptation goals.

As for the rationale of the data display, the NAZCA platform can benefit from a refinement of classifications of the actors and cooperative initiatives. In addition, academia can support tracking and transparency with robust and science-based analysis. There is also still a need for a better alignment between data providers and data analysts.

## Expanding climate action

The discussion on expanding climate action can no longer be restricted to closing the emissions gap by only involving actors with high mitigation potential. While the role of actors with high mitigation potential is still central, it is necessary to also address other aspects of climate change, especially when it comes to providing solutions for adaptation and for increasing the representation of climate action in and from the global South.

The process of expanding and accelerating climate action is hindered by several challenges. The first crucial element that would strengthen climate action is clearly access to finance. In many regional and sectoral contexts, the difficulty of engaging the financial sector has been recognized as the main challenge.

Education and awareness have been identified as conditional in enabling the expansion of climate action. It is strategically important to build widespread awareness to ensure a shift in a mindset that considers national governments as the sole responsibility bearers in climate action. Similarly, education is also important to avoid counterproductive outcomes where accelerated development may lead to less sustainable individual behaviors (e.g. middle income trap).

Another challenging aspect is the engagement process. Despite a general positive opinion towards the Regional Climate Weeks, some actors, particularly at the local level, highlighted how these events are not sufficiently inclusive. To avoid tokenism, the engagement process requires strengthening through extending its reach to people who work on the ground and are highly impacted by climate change on a daily basis. Actors at the local level feel affected by the absence of linkages between local communities and the international climate process.

Moreover, expanding climate action is also a matter of how the impact of climate change is communicated. At the national and local level, climate change is not always framed as a development issue. Consequently, actions taken within “non-climate” sectors are not acknowledged, though they are locally relevant. Additionally, in the case of national governments lacking sufficient resources, climate change is often framed and perceived as an additional burden. At the national and local levels, increased collaboration between authorities is necessary to maximize synergies. Many actions addressing climate change already have significant benefits for other SDGs and vice-versa without making these linkages explicit. Integrating climate change into the narrative may serve to strengthen and provide momentum to some initiatives. In other cases, however, a framing in terms of health, prosperity, etc. might be locally more relevant and accepted.

Given this background, opportunities for expanding climate action can be created in several ways. In terms of capacities and resources, enabling mechanisms for climate action are needed. Governmental incentives, fiscal policies, PPPs have been identified as examples to unlock financial opportunities. Moreover, the standards for receiving financial support need to be more accessible for people at the frontline. Technological innovation and more accessible and viable climate knowledge have also been recognized as necessary for strengthening climate action.

However, creating opportunities for expanding and deepening climate action seems to be strongly linked with giving underrepresented actors the capacity and opportunity to engage with the international professionalized context. An attempt to bridge the gap between the UNFCCC process and the local communities is organizing a “COP at home”. During this self-organized event, representatives of the organizations that attended a COP or SB report the main messages at the local level.

Overall, to expand climate action strategies should put weight on (i) inclusiveness and contextualization, (ii) recognition of local knowledge, (iii) a new framing for climate actions’ (co)benefits and synergies, (iv) enabling institutional framework developed by the national government and (v) finance. Enhancing inclusiveness implies a clear definition of who is taking action and what the action is. This is important for the design of more contextualized opportunities. Furthermore, multi-stakeholder partnerships among different actors can produce inclusive solutions only when a fair deliberative decision-making process is guaranteed. Local knowledge needs to be integrated with the existing scientific knowledge and showcased at the international level, especially for the provision of adaptation solutions. The Talanoa Dialogue Platform has been recognized as an effective tool for multi-level communication. A new climate change framing highlighting the synergies between different

sectors may facilitate a better understanding of how the benefits of climate action go across sectors. Lastly, climate action requires national governments to develop an enabling institutional framework, that should also provide local authorities with guidelines and simple and concrete planning solutions.

## Just transition / synergies

The transition to an economy consistent with 1.5°C is not without costs and taking climate action can have significant trade-offs with the other SDGs. At the same time, many potential synergies of climate action with action on other areas of sustainable development exist and should be increasingly leveraged locally, nationally and internationally. At the international level, joint dynamics with other multilateral processes such as the Convention on Biological Diversity can increase policy coherence and overall positive impact. Within the realm of climate change, synergies between adaptation and mitigation deserve attention.

Synergies and trade-offs can be taken up in a just transition from a high-emitting to a climate-smart economy. In this respect, a close consideration of local contexts is important, including institutional structures and capacities, political culture and the needs of affected populations. In particular, differences in vulnerability linked to structures of oppression and privilege along the lines of gender, class, race, health, among others should be considered. In addition, possible SDG tradeoffs in the sectors benefiting from the transition, e.g. poor working conditions in the renewable energy sector, deserve scrutiny. Countries with a small industrial sector - where the aim is not transitioning but leapfrogging - should not be disregarded. In these cases, local development benefits of supporting green economies must be ensured, e.g. through local content clauses.

Given diverse local contexts, also the institutional arrangements promoting the just transition will necessarily differ. Still, information on tools and approaches that have proven useful elsewhere should be provided to relevant actors to facilitate the process. Multi-stakeholder dialogues on just transition in a specific region or sector may be one such approach at the planning stage, while public-private-partnerships might be useful for implementing the necessary economic restructuring. Although just transition pathways have to be locally determined, the Global Climate Action space could play a role by showcasing just transition approaches and tools during Regional Climate Weeks, on NAZCA or in NDC labs.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, four overarching themes highlight communication as a challenge for the post-2020 climate action which shall be built upon the pillars of ambition and implementation. There is a critical need to develop narratives that not only promote the future we want but also take into consideration obstacles and pitfalls, as well as the inevitable trade-offs. Through these narratives, linkages between climate change and other environmental agendas as well as developmental issues can be fostered. And yet, it takes much more than ensuring that the message reaches as many as possible. Transformation should be inclusive, through better and legitimated representation channels across the different governance levels, particularly

for those at the local level. Multi-stakeholders dialogues, designed and operationalized according to the local context, should also be part of a tool-box for a just transition. Lastly, in the context of the UNFCCC, climate action can have its legitimacy and credibility enhanced, by ensuring that commitments are transparent and tracked.