

Discussion paper

Building a Vision for Global Climate Action in the UNFCCC after 2020

February 2020

Since before Paris, the UNFCCC process has created institutions to encourage and recognize climate action by cities, business, states/regions, investors, and other “non-Party” actors, as well as cooperative initiatives that involve sub- and non-state actors as well as national governments. At COP25, Parties extended the mandate of this Global Climate Action (GCA) “space” and tasked the High-level Champions to explore how such arrangements can be improved.

This document builds on discussions and brainstorming on the future of GCA carried out through the Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions network over the past year. It puts forward a vision for what GCA might look like going forward. It is intended not as a final statement, but as an input to and stimulus for further discussions over the course of 2020.

Purpose of Global Climate Action in the UNFCCC

The purpose of GCA is to drive climate action from all of society in order to help governments implement their national pledges and create the conditions for greater ambition toward the goals of the Paris Agreement.

Context

The climate regime overall is shifting from a period of negotiation to cycles of implementation and ambition. A “decisive decade” of delivery is beginning. This increases the importance of climate action overall, and comes at an urgent “make or break” moment for the Paris regime around its first ratchet.

To date climate action has focused on mobilizing “front runners” to show that climate action is possible and desirable, in order to inspire and softly pressure others to follow. Going forward, we must shift from this “groundswell” approach to an “all of society” approach in which climate action becomes mainstream across all spheres.

Principles underlying Global Climate Action in the UNFCCC

The Global Climate Action ‘space’ in the UNFCCC focuses on action, not negotiation or decision-making. In the action space, non-Party Actors fulfil a distinct function from Observers in the UNFCCC process:

- **Actors:** Work toward the goals of the Paris Agreement alongside Parties
- **Observers:** Observe and provide inputs to intergovernmental negotiation process

In the same way, when national governments engage in GCA, they are not there to negotiate, but to engage other actors in delivering outcomes. This will typically require not diplomats but government officials in line ministries, including transportation, finance, energy, agriculture, land-use, etc.

The GCA in the UNFCCC is just one element of the larger “ecosystem” of climate action. Its added value is to provide a global point of intersection between the wider world of climate action and the UNFCCC process. This unique position creates two key characteristics, making GCA a *global focal point* in the diverse and complex world of climate action, and providing a platform to link Parties and non-Parties. GCA focuses on delivering those functions that these characteristics make it uniquely suited to perform, including fostering Party - non-Party interaction, aggregation and tracking, and leveraging the UNFCCC’s focal position to catalyze and showcase greater action.

The UNFCCC process should continue to provide such a focal point for climate action via GCA. As negotiations at COPs shrink, the GCA space should grow, globally (at COPs), but perhaps especially regionally (Regional Climate Weeks) and nationally (though countries’ own arrangements). However, if in the future COPs are reduced or scaled back, the GCA space may need another global home to provide this focal point function. Other big summits that may arise (e.g. from the UN Secretary General) can help share with focal point function, but should “dock” into the GCA system as described below.

GCA activities (see table below)

The GCA focuses on three types of activities to fulfill its functions. In all activities, it focuses on its unique role in the larger ecosystem as a *global focal point* and *linking parties and non-parties*.

Catalysing

- Engage with NPAs to get more commitments in key gaps
- Orchestrate new/existing initiatives as needed, e.g. in sectors where current arrangements are inadequate. For example, Champions may seed a new initiative in a sector that is not currently institutionalized (e.g. aluminum), or they may press for an existing sector that is institutionalized to increase ambition (e.g. oil and gas).
- Link to and support a wide range of other events across the climate action community (e.g. C40 Summit, PRI conference, sectoral events, future UN Summits, or summits like One Planet, GCAS, etc.), and also “non-climate” events, for example, relevant economic meetings

Capacity building and information exchange, especially between Parties and non-Parties

- “Implementation Lab” – Parties may invite GCA to consult with them on how to enhance implementation of national policies (NDC, TLS, NAP, etc), better leverage NPA potential locally
- Regional Climate Weeks – linking Party and non-party implementers at regional level
- Sectoral ministerial dialogues between Parties and non-Parties at COPs and/or in sector-specific events
- Parties invited to engage in all GCA events (RCWs, HLE) with implementers, not negotiators
- Helps Parties develop methods and best practices for mobilizing and drawing on NPAs in their country and beyond to facilitate implementation

Reporting and Tracking

- Global Climate Action Platform (formerly NAZCA)
 - Tracks all NPA commitments and progress, reporting in real time
 - Maintains a calendar of related climate action events throughout the year
 - Supported by Camda community (see below)
- Providing visibility (enhanced Yearbook with more comms)
 - Summarizes scale, scope, potential and progress of NPAs annually (snapshot of NAZCA, plus contextualization, estimates of future potential and achieved progress)
 - Identifies key themes related to the above
 - Reports on GCA activities in that year
- Showcasing big achievements/ambition at High-level Event during COPs
- Link to Global Stock Take
 - Facilitate NPA inputs to GST
 - Organize NPA participation in GST dialogues, drawing on Talanoa lessons
 - Every five years, a “Global Climate Action Stock Take Report” (a kind of ‘super yearbook’) is presented as part of GST. First in 2023. Focuses on how NPA action creates more options for Parties

Post-2020 Arrangements for the Coordination of Global Climate Action (i.e. MPGCA 2.0)

To date, GCA has been run by the Champions and Secretariat in consultation with a relatively small group of interested Parties and NPAs. It is important to broaden this engagement and create greater continuity and regularity from year to year, while maintaining a light-touch, transparent, effective structure. Our objective should be co-leadership by Champions and NPA stakeholders, supported by UNFCCC Secretariat with permanent, dedicated staff.

The relevant actors are:

- NPAs, especially the diverse networks that organize and represent them
- Parties (especially implementors, not negotiators)
- High-level Champions
- UNFCCC Secretariat GCA team
- Camda community (data and analysis experts convened by UNFCCC Secretariat)

Short-term: strengthen current model

- Revitalize “Friends of the Champions” advisory board representing rotating set of NPAs

- Establish national focal points for GCA (implementors not negotiators)
- Champions set work plan with support from Secretariat and “Friends of the Champions” advisory board + consultations with broader stakeholder community
- CAMDA is self-organized “professional association” of data providers and analysts that collaborate to support reporting tracking functions organized by the Secretariat

Longer-term option: institutionalize hybrid governance model

- Stakeholder Council with co-governance, as with Marine Stewardship Council, Forest Stewardship Council, Financial Stability Board, etc.

GCA support team

- Comprises a mix of Secretariat staff, Champions’ staff provided by presidencies, and NPA stakeholders (not necessarily sitting in Bonn or formally seconded, but working actively with the team)
- Works closely with UN Secretary General’s team (Assistant Sec Gen on Climate) on catalyzing initiatives
- Tasked with delivering activities described above
- Secretariat has core of permanent staff on fixed contracts supported by regular budget

GCA stakeholder strategy meeting each year, open to all GCA stakeholders

- Option 1: At the end of each COP (ie after GCA sequence closes on Wed, a Thursday/Friday meeting)
- Option 2: special meeting in February in Bonn
- Strategy meeting plans RCWs and other activities for the year

Possible institutional changes for COP26 (menu of options)

To the extent possible, any institutional changes should be described in a Champions document to be recognized by the 1/CP26 decision text (following the model of COP22), not negotiated as an agenda item.

However, the COP’s official recognition of the document may wish to elevate the significance of the “Action” space and emphasize its role for enhanced ambition and implementation, name key functions, etc.

In addition, the discussion on the future of GCA should be informed by broader discussions around the future of the UNFCCC, including possible discussions led by the SBSTA chair.

1. Reaffirm and strengthen the purpose of GCA: to drive both implementation and ambition
2. Create a “non-Party Actor” category and recognize their “Actor Determined Contributions” (Find a better term that emphasises action, implementation)

- a. NPAs include any actors that commit to the goals of the Paris Agreement and report their targets and progress via GCAP. There is no official registration, as for Observers. Even if you never come to a COP, you are an NPA if you are committing to Paris goals and reporting targets and progress.
 - b. Commitments by NPAs could be rebranded as “Actor Determined Contributions” or similar to analogize to NDCs. As per existing GCAP, includes both individual and cooperative actions
 - c. Also include cooperative initiatives as “Collectively Determined Contributions”
 - d. This approach would require some meta criteria for determining inclusion, essentially formalizing the current GCAP practice.
3. Recognize GCA as the ‘space’ for action from all kinds of actors, including NPAs, but also “do-ers / implementors” from governments who are driving action (i.e. not negotiators but line ministry officials and similar). Explicitly invite non-negotiator participation from Parties to engage in GCA.
 4. In parallel, but separate, it may be useful to agree a code of conduct around observers (as opposed to actors) analogous to the WHO code of conduct. This could help address potential conflict of interest concerns.
 5. Recognize the outcomes of efforts to track progress of NPA action
 6. Affirm plan to deliver GST inputs in 2023 (see above)
 7. Shift the physical space of the COP to signal more importance for action. An “inside-out” COP with action at the center and negotiation less visible. Make sure negotiators must pass through the action space.

Questions to think about

1. Marrakech Partnership themes. Keep, Modify, or Abandon?

	Keep	Modify / make flexible	Abandon
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -They exist and people have managed to live with them. -Avoids potentially distracting discussion of what topics to emphasize and how to group them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -We could update them periodically, having a few presidency priorities each year that change plus a stable core -Make them more visible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Allow themes to emerge organically and flexibly -Not spend time having to decide how to categorize things -In practice people focus on what is salient anyway
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Reifying seven of them adds may add little value, and focuses attention on definitions / turf battles. -We may be missing important things that currently, or in the future, are not well captured by these 7 -May undermine our ability to look holistically, or at cross-cutting themes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Too unstable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -We'd have to decide how to structure the GCA events, possible re-"negotiating" each year -May undo some of the community building that has occurred over the past years -Confusing to change

2. How to build better connections to the "non-climate" world? What role, if any, for the themes noted above?
3. How to make sure that external summits (UNSG, One Planet, GCAS, etc.) feed into GCA and have a virtuous relationship with it?

Table: Key functions and actors in the global climate action “ecosystem”

<i>Function</i>	<i>Non-party actors (cities, business, states/regions, investors, etc.)</i>	<i>National governments</i>	<i>Civil society</i>	<i>Specific role of climate action institution in UNFCCC</i>
Catalyze new actions and initiatives and support implementation of existing ones	Generate bold new actions and initiatives to raise ambition and deliver on existing pledges	Orchestrate new initiatives and support non-Party Actors to take climate action, engage sub/non-state actors in policy development and implementation	Advocate for greater and more ambitious action, support implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Steering: Encourage and support climate action that aligns with Paris goals -Galvanize action in key gaps (thematic, geographic, etc.) and across different kinds of actors and thematic areas
Capacity building and knowledge exchange	Peer-to-peer exchange; exchange with national governments	Consult with non-Party Actors, build platforms for linkage and exchange	Evaluate lessons learned and diffuse best practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Support information exchange across different kinds of actors/themes -Distill opportunities for Parties from climate action -Provide fora for Parties and non-Parties to interact globally and regionally -Help Parties develop effective ways to engage NPAs domestically
Reporting and tracking	Track and report their own progress	Account for non-Party Actors’ contributions in national reporting	Hold actors accountable for their commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Aggregate tracking of commitments and progress to understand the “whole” of global climate action’s potential and progress -Promote credibility

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.

www.climategroundswell.org