

## Briefing note

# Advancing African approaches through the Global Climate Action agenda at COP27

June 2021

### Key points

- As the UNFCCC process shifts to implementation, “all of society” climate action involving cities, business, states and regions, investors, and civil society has become a core part of COPs.
- Launched at the last African COP in 2016, the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action is the mandated process through which national governments work together with non-Parties. Coordinated by the High-Level Climate Champions, it includes:
  - Global campaigns<sup>1</sup>
  - Thematic workstreams on energy, human settlements, industry, land use, oceans and coastal zones, transport, water, resilience, and finance
  - Roadmaps for achieving resilient and low-carbon transformation per sector<sup>2</sup>
  - Regional Climate Weeks and high-level COP events<sup>3</sup>
  - Reporting of climate actions<sup>4</sup>
- The COP27 Presidency faces the task of consolidating the considerable advancements in the action agenda made to date, while also building stronger links between global processes and African climate action.

### Introduction

The five years since the adoption of the Paris Agreement has seen successive COPs focus primarily on negotiating the operational rules for the Agreement.<sup>5</sup> Following the likely conclusion of negotiations around this ‘Paris rulebook’ at the upcoming COP26, the international climate process is facing an inflection point, where much of the subsequent focus will be on helping national governments implement the goals of the Paris Agreement.<sup>6</sup> Because delivering on climate goals across mitigation, adaptation, and finance necessitates cooperation not only

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<sup>1</sup> <https://racetozero.unfccc.int/race-to-resilience/>; <https://unfccc.int/climate-action/race-to-zero-campaign>

<sup>2</sup> [https://unfccc.int/climate-action/marrakech-partnership/reporting-and-tracking/climate\\_action\\_pathways](https://unfccc.int/climate-action/marrakech-partnership/reporting-and-tracking/climate_action_pathways)

<sup>3</sup> <https://unfccc.int/climate-action/regional-climate-weeks>; <https://unfccc.int/climate-action/marrakech-partnership-at-cop-25>

<sup>4</sup> <https://climateaction.unfccc.int>; [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/2020 Yearbook final 0.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/2020%20Yearbook%20final%200.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.wri.org/paris-rulebook>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.wri.org/insights/insider-4-key-topics-climate-negotiators-must-resolve-cop26>

between national governments but also among subnational and non-state actors,<sup>7</sup> this means that COPs have increasingly focused on facilitating collaborative action between Parties and the myriad of other ‘non-Party’ actors – such as cities, regions, businesses, investors, and civil society groups – in order to deliver on commitments and catalyze transformation across all levels of society.

COP27, to be hosted by an African nation, will serve as a key moment for this next evolution of the multilateral climate process. A central facet of that transition will involve supporting and/or strengthening the existing mechanisms for Party and non-Party actor collaboration within the UNFCCC. This document is intended to serve as an explanatory text for this collaborative climate action ‘space’ within the multilateral process, covering its history and current activities, expectations for the future, and relevant opportunities for the COP27 host country.

### **Background and current activities of global climate action in the UNFCCC**

Growing from the Lima-Paris Action Agenda launched at COP20 in 2014, the Global Climate Action space was formalized at COP21 in Paris, to create a mandated arena within the UNFCCC process to encourage and recognize climate action by non-Party actors and facilitate their collaboration with national governments with the goal of enhancing climate action and ambition at all levels.<sup>8</sup> In order to facilitate engagement between Parties and the many voluntary and collaborative actions taking place outside the international process, the roles of two ‘High-Level Climate Champions’ were created to link the formal multilateral process with the groundswell of global climate action taking place alongside the UNFCCC negotiations. Each set of Champions are appointed by the incumbent and incoming COP Presidencies, with terms of two years each to ensure continuity. The current Champions are from Chile and the United Kingdom, representing the COP25 and COP26 Presidencies.<sup>9</sup>

To further consolidate this official space for driving climate action within the UNFCCC, the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action (MPGCA) was created at COP22 in Marrakech in 2016, the last COP to take place in Africa.<sup>10</sup> The initial mandate of the MPGCA ran from 2016-2020, but Parties decided to extend this to 2025 at COP25 in Madrid, while also asking the High-Level Climate Champions to explore improvements to the MPGCA during this period.

Convened by the two High-Level Climate Champions, the MPGCA facilitates collaborative climate action among multi-stakeholder coalitions, networks and initiatives (involving cities, regions, businesses, investors, and civil society) to help national governments implement their commitments and pursue stronger ambition.<sup>11</sup> The operations of the MPGCA are supported by

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/research/2018-11-28-non-state-actors-climate-synthesis-hale-final.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://unfccc.int/climate-action/introduction-climate-action/history-non-party-stakeholder-engagement>

<sup>9</sup> <https://unfccc.int/climate-action/marrakech-partnership/actors/meet-the-champions>

<sup>10</sup> <https://unfccc.int/climate-action/marrakech-partnership/background>

<sup>11</sup> <https://unfccc.int/climate-action/marrakech-partnership-for-global-climate-action>

the UNFCCC secretariat, with additional support provided by COP Presidencies and partner organizations.

Because action on mitigating and adapting to climate change takes place across different sectors, the activities of the MPGCA are distributed along seven thematic areas (energy, human settlements, industry, land use, oceans and coastal zones, transport, and water) and two cross-cutting categories (resilience and finance). The following list provides an overview of the roles that the MPGCA performs, and the specific activities it conducts to fulfill those functions.<sup>12</sup>

## 1. Catalyzing action and ambition

- a. *Global campaigns*: strategic efforts to converge actors around guiding stars and high-ambition goals to mobilize the global community for immediate climate action.
  - **Race to Zero**: A campaign led by the High-Level Climate Champions under the umbrella of the Climate Ambition Alliance launched in 2019 by Chile, UNFCCC and UNDP. It aims to radically increase the number of subnational and non-state actors committing to net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 or earlier. Participation is granted by the fulfilment of criteria determined by partner organizations relevant to each category of actor. The 3,000+ actors currently participating amount to nearly 25% of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and over 50% of global GDP.
  - **Race to Resilience**: A campaign launched in Spring 2021 aiming to catalyze a step-change in global action on climate resilience. Mobilizing partner non-state actor initiatives around a people- and nature-centred approach, the goal of the campaign is to build the resilience of 4 billion people by 2030 among frontline communities in urban, rural and coastal settings. A robust criteria framework, developed by an Expert Peer Review Group, is currently being developed.
- b. *Setting pathways of transformation*: converging actors to align along roadmaps for transformation in key sectors.
  - **Climate Action Pathways**: Initiated in 2019 and updated in 2020, the Pathways provide a roadmap to help countries and non-state actors identify actions and options needed by 2021, 2025, 2030 and 2040 to achieve a net-zero, climate resilient world for each sector across the MPGCA thematic groups. Produced by MPGCA partner organizations under the leadership of the High-Level Climate Champions, these pathways will be updated periodically to reflect new scientific understandings, regional variation, and new priorities.
  - **Race to Zero Breakthroughs**: Building off of the Climate Action Pathways, the Breakthroughs identify specific tipping points in each sector to highlight what key actors can do to trigger exponential low-carbon and resilient transformations per sector. The current 10 breakthroughs identified are set for activation by COP26, with further tipping points to be identified prior to the Global Stocktake in 2023.

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<sup>12</sup> Refer to the following document for detailed overview of the activities of the MPGCA over 2020-2021:  
[https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/MP\\_achievements\\_progress\\_April2021.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/MP_achievements_progress_April2021.pdf)

- c. *Broadening global engagement*: connecting and galvanizing a diversity of actors across all regions and levels engaged in climate action (particularly in developing and most vulnerable countries).
- **Regional Climate Weeks**: Annual week-long symposiums held across four UN regions (Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Middle-East and North Africa), jointly organized by the UNFCCC, UNEP, World Bank, regional development banks and host countries. These conventions work to catalyze concrete climate action on the ground by bringing together national governments and line ministries, cities, states, businesses, civil society and other non-state actors to engage on regionally-relevant issues through events, workshops and networking opportunities.

## 2. Capacity building and exchange

- a. *Convening and advice*: providing fora for Parties and non-Party actors to cooperate on sectoral climate action at the global and regional levels.
- **Dialogues and events**: The MPGCA hosts a high-level event at each COP, convening key actors to discuss specific priority areas concerning Party and non-Party climate action. The High-Level Champions participate and host other high-level dialogues throughout the year at key multilateral and regional events (e.g. Climate Adaptation Summit, Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, Food Systems Summit, UN Climate Action Summit, etc.). Other dialogues convened by the MPGCA include the recent [Race to Zero Dialogues](#) in November 2020, or [side-events held at COPs](#), Regional Climate Weeks, or other fora.
  - **Advice and conversations**: The MPGCA provides and facilitates advice and conversations between countries and non-Party actors on an ongoing, on-demand basis.
- b. *Technical support and capacity-building*: facilitating exchange of knowledge and resources between Parties and non-Party actors to fulfill key responsibilities.
- **Implementation Labs**: Mobilized at Regional Climate Weeks and other fora, Implementation Labs can serve as hubs to convene line ministries together with relevant non-Party actors to exchange technical expertise on specific sectoral issues pertaining to NDC/NAP implementation.
  - **Global Stocktake support**: The first [Global Stocktake \(GST\)](#) is set to be released at the 2023 COP. The MPGCA can serve as a key mechanism with which to focus and converge non-Party actor inputs for the GST during the 2021-23 period, and to facilitate collaboration with countries on outcomes to enhance their next round of NDCs following the GST.

## 3. Reporting, tracking and communicating progress

- a. *Reporting and tracking progress*: aggregating commitments and actions on global platforms, providing data and analysis to track progress on commitments, ensure credibility, and establish benchmarks.

- **[Global Climate Action Portal \(GCAP\)](#)**: Launched in 2014 as the Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action (NAZCA), GCAP is an online, interactive platform displaying voluntary climate action commitments and initiatives by Party and non-Party actors across the world. Data on climate actions and initiatives are provided to the portal through partner organizations.
  - **[Camda \(Climate Action Methodologies, Data and Analysis\)](#)**: A collaborative network of professionals and organizations mobilized under the guidance of the GCAP team, focusing on (i) coordinating methodologies on data collection and analysis – with a particular focus on adaptation and resilience; (ii) data synergies and determining metrics of progress and ambition; and (iii) aggregation of verified data into reports and analyses.
- b. *Communicating progress*: showcasing climate actions globally, and highlighting best practices and the state of systems transformation globally.
- **[Yearbook of Global Climate Action](#)**: An annual report presenting the current range and state of global climate action by non-Party actors, spotlighting specific actors and actions across each thematic area. The 2020 report highlights the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and opportunities for a green resilient recovery.
  - **[Newsletter](#)**: A bi-weekly newsletter providing updates on the activities of the MPGCA and High-Level Climate Champions, current and upcoming events, and highlights on transformations underway across key sectors.
  - **Websites and social media**: The [UNFCCC MPGCA website](#) serves as a repository for key resources of the MPGCA and current activities, while the [Race to Zero campaign website](#) provides content to amplify progress and key milestones through the year; the High-Level Climate Champions and supporting network remain active on social media platforms providing updates on activities, highlighting key developments, and driving the narrative on climate action.

### **The shift to implementation increases the importance of climate action within the UNFCCC going forward**

The post-COP26 context represents a watershed moment for the multilateral climate regime, which will see a shift from a period focused on negotiating legal arrangements, towards cycles of implementation and commitment-making. Following the anticipated conclusion at COP26 of negotiations around the ‘Paris rulebook’, multilateral efforts will thereafter become more focused on the wholesale delivery and ratcheting of successive waves of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), as guided by the UNFCCC Global Stocktake (GST) and national long-term low emission development strategies (LTS). Notably, this transition in the international regime coincides with what science identifies as the imperative to achieve a halving of GHG emissions within this decade if the goals of the Paris Agreement are to remain within reach.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> [https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/05/SR15\\_SPM\\_version\\_report\\_LR.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/05/SR15_SPM_version_report_LR.pdf)

While the last decade has seen non-Party actor contributions focusing primarily on showcasing ambition in order to help drive the ambition of Parties in their commitments, we now need deeper collaboration between national governments and subnational and non-state actors to drive immediate action at the speed and scale that the challenge of this decade demands. By developing new business models, technologies, widespread behavioural changes or other innovations, non-Party actors create new tools that can be scaled up and utilized by national governments. Conversely, many businesses and other actors require the enabling-environment that is created by governmental policy and regulations to make the impact at the speed that is required in this moment of rapid transformation. Often seen within transnational multi-stakeholder cooperative initiatives, such synergies need to be scaled up and further integrated within the delivery mechanisms of the multilateral regime to drive the “ambition loop.”<sup>14</sup>

This shift towards more collaboration among actors implementing climate actions means that the Global Climate Action space will continue to take on more importance at future COPs and within the UNFCCC process as a whole. In recognition of the priority to engender greater synergy between Parties and non-Party actors on implementation, Parties extended the work of the MPGCA for the additional period of 2021-2025 at COP25 in Madrid. As a provision of this extension, Parties requested the High-Level Champions explore how to improve the MPGCA’s work, with a particular emphasis on strengthening Party and non-Party actor engagement and regional diversity. Following a comprehensive consultative process with relevant stakeholders throughout 2020-21, the High-Level Climate Champions will present this improved MPGCA at COP26 with the support of the Chilean and UK Presidencies.<sup>15</sup>

The extension of the MPGCA signals the greater prominence that the climate action space will have within the UNFCCC during the implementation phase. As this shift takes place, the roles of non-Party actors within the UNFCCC process should increasingly distinguish between negotiations and action. A helpful approach differentiates non-Party actors between serving as ‘Observers’ on the one hand, and ‘Actors’ on the other: while ‘Observers’ observe and provide inputs to the intergovernmental negotiation process, ‘Actors’ work toward the goals of the Paris Agreement alongside Parties. The latter category of non-Party actors includes the subnational governments, businesses, and civil society organizations whose climate actions can assist national governments deliver on their commitments. Likewise, when national governments engage in the climate action space, they are there to engage collaboratively to deliver outcomes – involving government officials in line ministries, such as transportation, finance, energy, or agriculture – as opposed to diplomats involved in negotiations.

### **COP27 can put African leadership back at the heart of global climate action**

The last African COP in 2016 left a defining legacy for global climate action: the Marrakech Partnership. Now, the host of COP27 will be positioned to take an equally significant role overseeing the transition to implementation within the multilateral process. From COP27

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<sup>14</sup> <https://ambitionloop.org/>

<sup>15</sup> [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/Improving\\_MP\\_Design\\_April2021\\_0.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/Improving_MP_Design_April2021_0.pdf)

forward, there will be a clear focus on action and ambition through the implementation of commitments. Serving as the host country for COP27 will allow an African country to leave its mark at this critical juncture for the multilateral regime, whilst also advancing climate action at home and in the wider region.

First, the COP27 Presidency would name the next High-Level Climate Champion, to work alongside the current UK High-Level Climate Champion in driving the agenda of the improved MPGCA. The substantial expansion of the MPGCA since COP25, in terms of relevance and capacity, provides a significant platform for an African Champion to advance important areas of action that still require substantial progress, such as adaptation and resilience and the mobilization of finance in line with sustainable development pathways.

Moreover, an African High-Level Climate Champion can play a key role in improving the regional impact of the MPGCA, and of ensuring a stronger representation of the priorities of African climate action on the global stage. This was flagged as a key priority by the African Group of Negotiators in their comments on the improvements of the Marrakech Partnership in 2020.<sup>16</sup> Linking global level climate action among subnational and non-state actors with national-level implementation is a key priority moving forward. The COP27 High-Level Climate Champion can provide substantial direction in driving this agenda in a manner that is attuned to differing regional and national circumstances, particularly amongst developing and most vulnerable countries.

Second, the Global Climate Action space serves as a natural bridge within the process to engage issues not normally under the remit of negotiation topics, such as good health and wellbeing, decent work and economic growth, biodiversity, and other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated, an integrated approach is an increasing imperative, given the intersectionality of issues such as health, economic development and environmental degradation. The host government can use COP27 to advance an approach of integrated action to highlight co-benefits to taking action on climate change, and promote a new model of public and private collaboration.

Third, as COP27 will take place between the milestone years of new NDCs being submitted (COP26) and the first Global Stocktake (COP28), success for COP27 will primarily centre on demonstrating to the world that serious progress is being made in delivering on commitments and targets. As such, the primary actors and audience of what will stand as the first 'implementation'-focused COP will involve subnational and non-state actors just as much as national governments. Making full use of the Global Climate Action space will therefore be a critical part of a successful COP. Moreover, the COP27 Champion will finish her/his two-year term at COP28, making this position a key part of the Global Stocktake.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/SubmissionsStaging/Documents/202008141506---AGN%20Submission%20on%20Marrakesh%20Partnership.pdf>

Lastly, utilizing the climate action side of COP27 can serve to advance local priorities for African stakeholders. Involving African businesses, investors and civil society actors in the climate action space at COP27 can help catalyze the domestic synergies across multiple stakeholder groups required for delivering on the wholesale transitions across sectors such as renewable energy production, resilient agriculture or sustainable urban transportation. Additionally, doing so with a global audience can attract FDI for private sector ventures which produce positive climate impacts alongside other developmental priorities such as job-creation, poverty reduction and improved health.

### **Key questions for consideration by the COP27 host**

#### *Who to appoint as the COP27 High-Level Climate Champion?*

The High-Level Climate Champion plays a critical role within the changing landscape of the COP process, where she/he will serve as a bridge between the formal process and the action taking place outside in the ‘real economy’. The Champion possesses a powerful platform through which actors across the spectrum can be galvanized towards achieving breakthroughs in key areas of climate action.

The COP27 Champion will have the opportunity to make full use of the strengthened MPGCA structure, allowing them to highlight and drive progress on significant priority areas which require stronger attention at the global level, such as linkages between climate action and sustainable development pathways, and mobilizing private-sector finance for resilience and adaptation among the most vulnerable countries. She/he will also play a key role in the 2023 Global Stocktake.

To succeed, a High-Level Climate Champion requires a unique skill set. She/he must work closely with the COP27 Presidency, but also with the global community of cities, businesses, investors, civil society, and other non-Party actors. She/he must possess a strong vision for global climate action, and the ability to mobilize and communicate action effectively to both governments and the public at large. For COP27, the Champion role will be particularly key to enhance the role and engagement of African stakeholders in the global climate action agenda.

The role provides a unique opportunity to allow passionate and high-profile figures from the private sector, civil society, or government to advance ambitious global climate action at key high-level fora under a UNFCCC mandate. As the current two Champions come from the business sector, and the three preceding Champions from government, the time is perhaps particularly ripe for a female Champion who can draw from – and bring together – a wide range of government, private sector and civil society perspectives.

Name	Country / Presidency	Tenure	Relevant titles
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Ms. Laurence Tubiana	France (COP21)	2015-2016	Climate Change Ambassador and Special Representative for COP21, France
Ms. Hakima El Haite	Morocco (COP22)	2015-2017	Special Envoy for Climate Change, Kingdom of Morocco
Mr. Inia B. Seruiratu	Fiji (COP23)	2016-2018	Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management, Republic of Fiji
Mr. Tomasz Chruszczow	Poland (COP24)	2017-2019	Special Envoy for Climate Change of the Ministry of Environment, Poland
Mr. Gonzalo Muñoz	Chile (COP25)	2018-2021	Co-founder of TriCiclos; Co-founder of Sistema B
Mr. Nigel Topping	United Kingdom (COP26)	2019-2022	CEO of We Mean Business; Executive Director of Carbon Disclosure Project
	<i>African host country (COP27)</i>	2021-2023	
	<i>Asia-Pacific host country (COP28)</i>	2022-2024	
	<i>Eastern Europe host country (COP29)</i>	2023-2025	
	<i>Latin America and Caribbean host country (COP30)</i>	2024-2025	

Table 1. List of previous, current, and future High-Level Climate Champions.

### *How to increase the role of African stakeholders in global climate action?*

Historically, we have seen more participation in the UNFCCC’s Global Climate Action space from developed countries than from developing countries. Although efforts have been made to establish more balance between global South and North actors in recent MPGCA events, the majority of active partner organizations in the MPGCA remain to be predominantly based in the global North. This speaks to a general issue of global climate action often being perceived as being primarily driven by actors from developed countries.

However, this gap is more a “visibility gap” than an “action gap.” For example, a recent study found that the UNFCCC Global Climate Action Portal significantly underreported the number of actors in Kenya committing to and undertaking climate actions.<sup>17</sup>

The shift in attention of the world towards climate action in Africa at COP27 provides a key opportunity to bridge this visibility gap, and turn a spotlight on the action taking place across the continent. Doing so can help properly reflect the state of climate action in Africa to the global

<sup>17</sup> [https://www.geg.ox.ac.uk/sites/geg.bsg.ox.ac.uk/files/2019-02/Nairobi%20TCG%20Workshop%20Report\\_2018.pdf](https://www.geg.ox.ac.uk/sites/geg.bsg.ox.ac.uk/files/2019-02/Nairobi%20TCG%20Workshop%20Report_2018.pdf)

level – balancing the global narrative and thereby attracting greater engagement in the form of greater financing, capacity building, and other opportunities.

*How to consolidate existing work while advancing African approaches?*

The MPGCA has expanded significantly in the lead-up to COP26 under the leadership of the Chilean and UK High-Level Climate Champions. The COP27 Champion will thus start from a strong base, but also face the imperative to continue the rapid and high-impact work. At the same time, she/he must consider how to ensure the priorities of African stakeholders are well-served by existing processes and structures. In other words, the task is to “fly the airplane” when both calibrating it to fly faster while at the same time holding more passengers.

### **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](http://www.climategroundswell.org)