How Criteria Can Strengthen the Global Climate Action Agenda

Key Points:

- To succeed in its goal of delivering urgent climate action and inspiring further ambition, the Action Agenda must be credible. A clear and robust set of principles and criteria are critical to understanding the commitments and progress of cooperative initiatives, building confidence among actors and ensuring that the Action Agenda effectively contributes to closing the mitigation, adaptation, and means of implementation gaps.
- While the core principles of the Lima-Paris Action Agenda (LPAA) apply across all areas of climate action, they should be refined with clear criteria and indicators that are tailored to the different areas of climate action.
- This memo suggests an initial set of principles and criteria that directly builds on the ones used for the LPAA, and an inclusive yet clear process for initiatives to be recorded in the NAZCA portal, to join the Global Climate Action Agenda (GCAA) and/or to be featured at the High Level Event, where the most effective actions that are at the cutting edge of transformation to a low-carbon and climate-resilient society are to be showcased.
- This memo also proposed options for how the the high-level champions can apply the principles and criteria in order to determine which initiatives and commitments could be featured at the High-Level Event.

1. Overview

1.1 Background

The Global Climate Action Agenda (GCAA) aims to enhance the implementation of urgent climate action and help raise ambition further, by signalling that the global transition to a low-carbon, climate resilient economy is not only possible through ambitious leadership and cooperation, but also well underway. With its innovative role as a platform for collaboration between state and non-state actors and a bridge between the UNFCCC and the "outside world," the clear mandate given to its Champions and its high visibility, the GCAA is uniquely positioned to serve as the beacon of the transformation now underway.

To achieve these aims, the initiatives and commitments highlighted under the GCAA must be internally robust and effective and seen as credible by a wide external audience. Ensuring the initiatives and commitments are effective, robust and capable of delivering requires the application of a core set of principles and criteria that can

distinguish successful, transformational initiatives and commitments from those that are less ambitious or dynamic.

A clear and robust set of principles and criteria is critical to understanding the nature and scale of the commitments put forth by cooperative initiatives, their state of progress, as well as the work that remains to be done during implementation. In so doing, it helps to ensure that cooperative initiatives continue to deliver. A clear and robust set of principles and criteria also helps to ensure the integrity of climate efforts, building confidence among actors and improving investor and donor confidence, which may help unlock further funding and contribute to further success and scale-up. Lastly, a clear and robust set of principles and criteria encourages those taking action to do more and do better to help close the mitigation, adaptation and means of implementation gaps.[1] In sum, a clear and robust set of criteria can help to consolidate a code of practice within cooperative climate action. Strong principles and criteria are critical to ensuring that the GCAA has the catalytic and inspiring effect that it was designed to have.

COP22 presents an excellent opportunity to begin putting these ideas into practice. That said, it is important to recognize that the approach for recognizing and evaluating initiatives and commitments will evolve and improve over time.

1.2 Definitions

For the purposes of this document, principles, criteria and indicators are defined as follows:

- "Principles" are the essential elements that cooperative initiatives should have. They reflect fundamental values and objectives.
- "Criteria" are the more specific conditions that need to be met in order to comply with a principle.
- "Indicators" are meant to capture the measurable states through which it can be assessed whether the criteria are being met.[2]

1.3 Tailored Principles and Criteria for Different Pathways of Engagement

At its broadest, global climate action encompasses a wide range of initiatives that aim to generate emissions reductions, enhance resilience, or both. These initiatives, however, may differ in terms of their level of ambition and implementation. Tailored principles and criteria are therefore needed to address those differences while maintaining a spirit of

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[1] In relation to mitigation, the "Emissions Gap" is the gap between climate change mitigation action committed or currently underway and what science says is needed to limit global average temperature rise to less than 1.5-2°C above pre-industrial levels.

[2] Natural Resource and Ethical Trade Programme (NRET). Theme Papers on Codes of Practice in the Fresh Produce Sector. What are criteria, indicators and verifiers? University of Greenwich. http://projects.nri.org/nret/TP3.pdf
Business and Biodiversity Offsets Programme (BBOP). 2012. Standard on Biodiversity Offsets. BBOP, Washington, D.C. http://bbop.forest-trends.org/guidelines/Standard.pdf

inclusion that encourages action by all, ensuring credibility of the GCAA, and recognising those initiatives that represent best practice. This recognition of best practice is important to inspire others to strengthen ambition and delivery.

The widest range of initiatives and commitments will be welcomed onto the NAZCA portal. At a minimum for inclusion in NAZCA, initiatives and commitments should meet two basic principles: 1.) be consistent with the goals of the Paris Agreement, and 2.) be ready to report (or already report) on their progress. While the basic principles for inclusion in NAZCA may be limited, it should be clear to all what the best-practice principles are and what climate efforts should be encouraged to aim for that best practice.

A higher level of clarity towards best practice would be required for cooperative initiatives and commitments that would like to be officially recognized as part of the GCAA, based on the initial principles developed by the LPAA (see below). An important task is therefore to define these best practice principles and criteria and showcase cooperative initiatives that fulfil or surpass them. That is a critical role of the GCAA and its highly visible High-Level Event.

The high-level champions, in consultation with stakeholders, will be responsible for determining which initiatives and commitments under the GCAA shall receive recognition in the high-level event each year, based on how well they meet the best practice criteria.

1.4 Core Principles and Criteria

Maintaining a minimum set of principles and criteria that initiatives and commitments need to meet to be included on the NAZCA portal can help ensure that the broader climate action agenda retains an inclusive and open atmosphere. As mentioned above, at a minimum for inclusion in NAZCA, initiatives and commitments should meet two basic principles: 1.) be consistent with the goals of the Paris Agreement, and 2.) be ready to report (or already report) on their progress. NAZCA can continue to encompass both climate commitments by individual actors, as well as collaborative efforts that meet these two principles.

However, the GCAA is meant to showcase how the transformation towards a low-carbon and climate resilient economy can be accelerated and scaled up through collaboration among state and non-state actors, and exemplify this through ambitious, inspiring and yet concrete near-term efforts. The principles originally developed by the LPAA last year should continue to serve as a guide for the development of their activities and as a means of determining whether or not the initiatives and commitments achieve this higher standard. The original LPAA principles included: 1.) being cooperative, inclusive, open, and regionally-balanced; 2.) being ambitious; 3.) being science-based; 4.) having capacity to deliver; 5.) having a sufficient level of maturity; and 6.) being ready to report on progress.

However, the Champions can contribute to strengthening the original guidance provided by the LPAA by turning them into more specific principles, criteria and indicators (as defined above) with the help of the experts from the various pillars. While remaining light-touch, the resulting principles, criteria and indicators can establish a framework to inform the design and implementation of cooperative initiatives, and report on their progress and success.

This strengthening is meant to be understood as further elaboration rather than a comprehensive change. Principles should remain light-touch but should be updated to reflect the new context of the Paris Agreement. For example, ambition and science-based criteria should be compatible with the goals of the Paris Agreement and could reflect the pursuit of a 1.5°C pathway. Investing in elaborating the principles and criteria further seeks not to discourage action or undermine the dynamism of the GCAA. Rather, it would enhance transparency, better visualize the contribution to the fulfillment of the Paris Agreement and thematic area relevance, while maintaining basic coherence across pillars of the GCAA.

Below is an initial attempt at elaborating the original LPAA principles and criteria organized into three main aspects: (a) the organization / governance of cooperative initiatives wishing to be considered part of the GCAA; (b) the targets / impacts proposed by them; and (c) their capacity to deliver and monitor commitments over time. These principles and criteria are one way to interpret the LPAA principles and could be further clarified by testing them in the coming year across the GCAA and refining based on specific context within thematic areas.

Organization / Governance

Principle 1: GCAA Initiatives shall catalyze greater short-term ambition around the world through collaboration by being cooperative in nature and inclusive.

Criterion 1.a: GCCA Initiatives shall reflect collective climate action by state and non-state actors (rather than efforts by individual actors). These include actors such as companies, civil society organizations, indigenous peoples federations, as well as national or sub-national governmental entities.

Criterion 1.b: GCAA Initiatives shall aim to include the key actors necessary to address the problem at hand. Depending on the type of initiative, special consideration should be given to the meaningful engagement of marginalized actors that could contribute to, or be affected by, the proposed actions, and to having adequate regional representation to achieve the goals of the initiative.

Targets / Impact

Principle 2: GCAA Initiatives shall be science-based and consistent with the goals of the Paris Agreement, aiming to have a concrete impact on climate change mitigation or adaptation issues, or means of implementation, identified within one of GCAA pillars.

Criterion 2.a: GCAA Initiatives shall directly contribute to the goals of the Paris Agreement, i.e. *"strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, including by: (a) Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change; (b) Increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development, in a manner that does not threaten food production; (c) Making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development"* (Art. 2).

Criteria 2.b: GCAA Initiatives shall set targets that are concrete, measurable, time-bound and directly relevant to at least one of the GCAA thematic areas.

Principle 3: *GCAA Initiatives shall be transformative for their thematic area, ambitious and supplemental.*

Criterion 3.a: GCAA Initiatives shall address strategic challenges and/or opportunities within a given thematic area, and showcase breakthrough solutions that go beyond short-term fixes and could transform the dynamics within a given thematic area (e.g. in the case of mitigation, transform technology, behavior, and/or processes that are crucial to bending the curve on greenhouse gas emissions.). The latter may represent innovative, novel approaches to addressing a problem, or the alignment of political will, technical know-how and financial resources to implement known solutions in a way that had not been done before.

Criterion 3.b: GCAA Initiatives shall propose short- and long-term quantifiable targets that are ambitious, to be understood as significant for the thematic area in terms of the scale of their mitigation (GHG) and/or resilience contribution, their geographic scope and their proposed timescale or durability.

Criterion 3.c: New GCAA Initiatives should represent new and additional actions that go beyond or complement the ones already being undertaken by the participating stakeholders.

Capacity to Deliver and Monitor Commitments over Time

Principle 4: *GCAA Initiatives shall have the capacity to implement at least the initial stage of the proposed target when launched, and over time build the resources to fully deliver on the commitments made and track their progress.*

Criterion 4.a: GCAA Initiatives shall demonstrate that they have the institutional leadership, commitment of the involved stakeholders, and at least the initial –if not full –, financial, human, and technical resources required to make progress towards the proposed targets.

Criterion 4.b: GCAA Initiatives shall demonstrate that they have established work plans and benchmarks to guide implementation.

Criterion 4.c: GCAA Initiatives shall make reasonable progress towards their proposed short- and long-term targets every year.

Criterion 4.d: GCAA Initiatives shall demonstrate that they have the capacity to monitor and report on progress towards the proposed targets on an annual or more regular basis.

These criteria could be further clarified through the definition of indicators. Some of the indicators (e.g. scale of GHG emissions) could be relevant across pillars, while others may benefit from the input of experts from the GCAA pillars to ensure that they are relevant to the key thematic areas considered by the GCAA. The High-Level Champions could create a small team comprised of members of the Presidencies and the UNFCCC Secretariat and engage with thematic area-experts to help clarify what each criterion would mean for a specific thematic areas, and tailor the small set of indicators to each thematic area. The High-Level Champions could then circulate them to the public for review and feedback. These criteria and indicators could be updated and improved overtime. The final clarifying definitions should be publicized and posted on the GCAA website. Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions would be willing to engage in and support this follow-up process if useful.

2. Three Pathways for Engaging in Global Climate Action

2.1 Participating in NAZCA

In keeping with NAZCA's focus on the broad view of climate action, ideally every initiative and commitment that is consistent with the goals of the Paris Agreement and reports regularly in some way should be listed on the NAZCA portal. Individual non-state actors will continue to be verified by the data partners that provide information on commitments to NAZCA. These data partners should ensure their verification methodology for the non-state actors they work with addresses these two principles. Cooperative initiatives do not work with the existing data partners and so UNEP and the Cooperative Initiatives Database could act as a data partner for initiatives and help provide data on cooperative initiatives to NAZCA. UNEP could also help verify adherence with the GCAA principles and criteria for cooperative initiatives.

All initiatives and non-state actors recorded in the NAZCA portal should update their information on an annual basis. This could be similar to the Communication on Progress reporting done for the Global Compact. For initiatives that don't report directly to data partners, this reporting process could be undertaken through an annual survey to initiatives to collect specific information and gather updates on progress.

In the case of initiatives seeking to fulfil the basic principles of the NAZCA portal, the information to be provided to the data partner could be shorter, while in the case of cooperative initiatives wishing to be GCAA initiatives, the information to be provided

would need to cover the GCAA principles and criteria. The survey would target GCAA initiatives including those that are already part of the LPAA, but also new initiatives seeking to join under the GCAA. The survey could include a question to GCAA initiatives regarding whether they want to be considered for inclusion in the high-level event.

Collected information should be made public on the NAZCA portal for transparency purposes. In the case of the GCAA, this information can then be used by the high-level champions to manage the GCAA over the year and determine on an annual basis which GCAA initiatives could be featured at the high-level event.

Additionally, the NAZCA portal should have a designated ombudsperson to answer questions about the accuracy of the information and related inquiries, with contact detailed clearly listed on NAZCA. A feature such as a chat-room, or public Q&A page could also be possibilities.

2.2 Participating in the Global Climate Action Agenda

In addition to being recorded on the NAZCA portal, cooperative initiatives wishing to be designated as "GCAA Initiatives" should have their information reviewed so that they are given formal recognition by the GCAA.

Based on the information collected through the annual survey and verified by UNEP, the high-level Champions, supported by independent experts, can determine if the initiatives meet the GCAA principles and criteria. Special recognition can then be provided to new initiatives that meet the criteria and existing Action Agenda initiatives that have shown progress over the past year. These initiatives can receive a special "GCAA tag" for this year and participate in GCAA-related activities, including technical engagement with the thematic area group during the year, participation in special events that may be organized around the thematic areas during the negotiations (intercessionals and COPs), and being highlighted with announcements and articles posted on the GCAA website (currently the LPAA website) which should be updated each year as well as on the NAZCA portal. Those initiatives that were already part of the LPAA can receive an "LPAA tag" and, if they wish to participate in the annual survey and meet the GCAA principles and criteria, they can also receive a new tag for the GCAA. Initiatives can continue to collect new tags each year they complete the survey and meet the criteria building up a collection as long as they continue to meet the criteria.

One issue that needs to be addressed by the Champions is when the GCAA tag might need to be removed, for example if a GCAA initiatives goes stagnant or dissolves. Being clear about this would contribute to the overall transparency of the GCAA and act as an incentive for GCAA initiatives to keep making progress and continue to provide updates addressing all principles and criteria.

2.3 Participating in the High-Level Event

Cooperative initiatives *and commitments* that meet the GCAA criteria and are determined to be exceptional examples for the year may be featured at the high-level event, which should be considered as the "crowning moment" for the year's work and the opportunity to showcase the most effective actions that are at the cutting edge of transformation to a low-carbon and climate-resilient society.The high-level champions should be responsible for determining who will be featured at the high-level event, but should undertake this evaluation process in a transparent manner. There are several options for how this selection process could be undertaken:

1. The high-level champions conduct the evaluation of candidates and select initiatives and commitments for the high-level event independently. While this would allow the high-level champions greater control over the high-level event, it would also take significant time and attention, but it could also be perceived as a highly subjective process.
2. The high-level champions build a support team comprised of staff members from the UNFCCC Secretariat, the UN Secretary General's office, the COP Presidencies and experts from thematic area to help conduct the evaluation and selection of initiatives and commitments. Similar to the process undertaken before the LPAA, a larger team could help share the burden of evaluating all initiatives and selecting best examples to showcase, but it could also become a resource-intensive process to manage. It will be important to maintain transparency throughout the process, and the high-level champions should provide clear guidance to the team.
3. The high-level champions work directly with experts from the different thematic areas to help each group self-select the best examples of ambitious and transformative efforts of all the cooperative initiatives and commitments that meet the criteria. This would also require significant time and effort on the part of the high-level champions to engage with each thematic area, but with their guidance and based on the GCAA principles and criteria, each thematic area could play a larger role in driving ambition by selecting its own champion effort to highlight at the high-level event.

It may be the case that so many cooperative initiatives and commitments meet the GCAA principles and criteria as to overwhelm the high-level event. While it is important to recognize all efforts that meet the best-practice criteria, further selection may be needed. Some considerations for further selection include:

1. More time could be given to those efforts that surpass the GCAA principles and criteria or display some additional marker of success (including remarkable progress in a short timeframe, such as rapid advancement towards proposed targets, rapid scale-up, leapfrogging and accelerating the transition beyond what was imagined, etc). In such situations, the high-level champions could choose to feature a particularly successful theme or effort more prominently.
2. Each COP host Presidency may want to leave its own "mark" at that year's High-Level Event. For example, the Presidency of Morocco has placed particular

emphasis on the role of innovation as a cross-cutting theme for COP22, including at GCAA's High-Level Event. This could serve as an additional criterion for the selection of initiatives to be featured this year.

3. Thematic areas are being encouraged to analyze key challenges and opportunities for their sector. This could help inform which GCAA Initiatives best exemplify the narrative of momentum for a given thematic area. Additionally, initiatives and commitments often span multiple thematic areas. Those that are particularly effective at addressing multiple challenges and enhance synergies and interlinkages between thematic areas could be featured.

4. The narrative of climate momentum will evolve over time. What may be critical to highlight this year may change next year, and the High-Level Champion need to have the flexibility to frame a powerful political narrative that is attuned to the needs of the moment. For example, this will be critical in 2018, when the GCAA has the potential to inject positive energy and hope into the global facilitative dialogue.

While GCAA principles and criteria are critical to the legitimacy, appeal and ultimate influence of the GCAA, these other considerations can allow the Champions to shape the dialogue so that the GCAA effectively contributes to showcasing the most effective actions that are at the cutting edge of transformation to a low-carbon and climate-resilient society.

Lastly, it is important that the results of the high-level event be captured in an annual report on progress that could feed into the annual Summary for Policymakers for the following year in a continual loop process. This will contribute to creating a sense of continuity and momentum where each new year of the GCCA builds on the previous one, and where the "outside world" feeds the UNFCCC negotiations and viceversa.

Annex B: Summary Table of Pathways of Engagement

	NAZCA	Action Agenda initiatives	High-level Event	
Purpose	Track and make visible full scope of climate action	Recognize and support cooperation and best-practice on climate action	Showcase most effective actions, cutting edge of transformation	
Criteria apply to	Cooperative initiatives (CI) and commitments	Cooperative initiatives	Cooperative and commitments	
Criteria	1. Annual reporting 2. Consistent with goals of	1. Cooperative in nature and inclusive. 2. Be science-based and consistent with the	1. Cooperative in nature and inclusive.	Presidency/ Champion initiatives: Young initiatives

	Paris Agreement	**goals of the Paris Agreement.** 3. **Transformative for their thematic area, ambitious and supplemental.** 4. **Have the capacity to implement at least the initial stage of the proposed target when launched, and over time build the resources to fully deliver on the commitments made and track their progress.**	2. **Be science-based and consistent with the goals of the Paris Agreement.** 3. **Transformative for their thematic area, ambitious and supplemental.** 4. **Have the capacity to implement at least the initial stage of the proposed target when launched, and over time build the resources to fully deliver on the commitments made and track their progress.**	**that fill key gaps**
Who decides?	**Data providers**	**Champions and experts/stakeholders**	**Champions and experts/stakeholders**
Process	**Data providers devise procedures for tracking individual actions; UNEP Climate Initiatives Database tracks CIs**	**Initiatives can formally apply to join. Champions select initiatives in transparent fashion with input from experts/stakeholders**	**Initiatives can formally apply to join. Champions select initiatives in transparent fashion with input from experts/stakeholders**