

Cooperative Actions as a Catalyst for the UNFCCC Process

As Parties negotiate the next climate agreement due in December 2015, there is growing attention to the actions and initiatives that countries, cities, regions, companies, and civil society groups are taking now to mitigate climate change and adapt to its effects. This groundswell of climate action offers an extraordinary opportunity to both complement and catalyze the intergovernmental negotiations and nationally-determined contributions. But what does the groundswell of actions look like and how can it best contribute to the work of UNFCCC Parties in 2015 and beyond?

Broad climate leadership has significant potential to cut emissions and build resilient development

Research by Ecofys, World Resources Institute, and Cambridge University identifies over 20,000 sub- and non-state actors that have participated in international cooperative initiatives since 1990.¹ Participants come from a wide range of countries, with many larger countries having more participants. However, when weighted by GDP - a rough measure of countries' ability to participate - a number of developing countries lead participation. Per unit GDP, cities, regions, companies, etc. from developing and developed country participate roughly equally in cooperative initiatives (Figure 1).

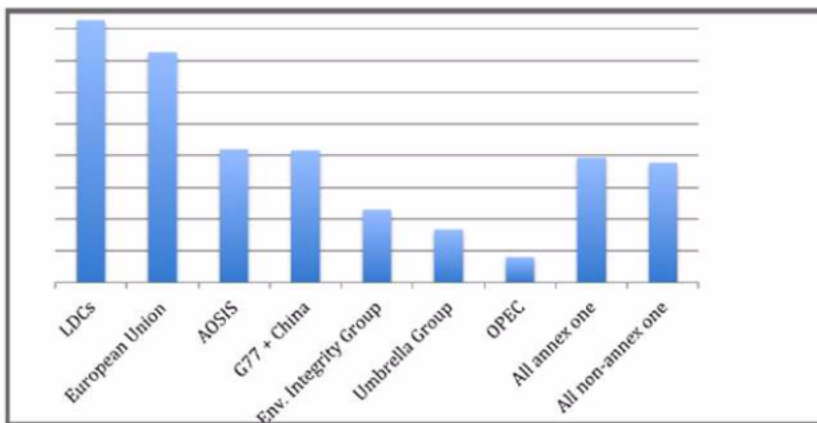


Figure 1. Sub- and non-state actors participate equally in initiatives on a per unit GDP basis across developing and developed countries²

What do these myriad actions and initiatives add up and what is their potential for accelerating action to close the greenhouse gas emissions gap in the pre-2020 period? Scientific analysis has demonstrated the cumulative impact of cooperative initiatives could reduce roughly 10 Gt CO₂e below business as usual by 2020 – almost as much as the emissions gap itself – if adequately supported.³ This emissions reduction potential is additional to existing country pledges extending to 2020, though many countries lead and participate extensively in cooperative initiatives. As well as high-impact mitigation activities, many initiatives also mobilize additional finance and produce significant co-benefits such as addressing national and local sustainable development objectives like air pollution, public health, traffic congestion, and household energy costs (Table 1).

The groundswell of initiatives in developing and developed countries reinforces the conditions for an effective ADP outcome in several ways. First, it has led to concrete emissions reductions and adaptation benefits that help pave the road to Paris and beyond. Second, it brings new technologies, finances, and other resources to countries to help them formulate and implement ambitious climate policies. Third, it signals to governments and markets that climate action is real, supporting the implementation and strengthening of nationally-determined contributions. And fourth, it builds a positive narrative around climate action that focuses on pragmatic steps here and now.

¹ For the extensive list of nearly 200 cooperative initiatives see: www.climateinitiativesdatabase.org

² Andonova, L., T. Hale and C. Roger. 2015. How do domestic politics condition participation in transnational climate governance? Working draft

³ Blok, K., N. Hohne, K. van der Leun, N. and Harrison. 2012. Bridging the greenhouse gas emissions gap. *Nature Climate Change*, 2: 471-474.

Table 1. Cooperative initiatives deliver complementary co-benefits, finance, and emissions reductions

Cooperative Initiative	Actions and Co-Benefits	Finance	Cumulative GHG Reductions vs. BAU
New York Declaration on Forests	Reduces supply chain emissions from tropical deforestation and strengthens local forest governance	-	4.5-8.8 CO ₂ Gt per year by 2030 (UN Climate Summit)
C40 and ICLEI	Catalyzes city climate commitments that also improve local air quality and create jobs and resilience	-	2.8 Gt CO ₂ e by 2020 (C40 and Arup)
Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves	Adopts efficient cookstoves and fuels that empower women, improve indoor air quality, and reduce pressure on local forests	\$413m pledged to 2020 (GACC)	100 million households adopt clean cookstoves by 2020 (GACC)
UN Sustainable Energy for All – vehicle fuel efficiency	Accelerates the deployment and adoption of efficient fuel technologies and practices, and provides clean air benefits	-	1 Gt CO ₂ e per year by 2025 (UN Climate Summit)
Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture	Assist smallholder farmers with crop resilience and efficient resource use, while also improving nutrition	\$21B for climate smart agricultural research and investment (UN Climate Summit)	1-4 Gt CO ₂ e by 2020 (UN Climate Summit)

Cooperative actions support Parties to deliver a strong outcome in Paris and beyond

While cities, companies, and other actors can complement and catalyze national contributions, they cannot substitute for them. The international community must be clear that cooperative initiatives contribute to and enhance Parties' implementation efforts. They are not substitutes for national responsibilities nor do they impose additional obligations on countries. Yet, successes and momentum from initiatives can be fed back into the UNFCCC process.

Linking the groundswell of climate actions more closely to the UNFCCC process can strengthen both realms. Parties can help initiatives and non-state actors identify priority areas for new and deeper action. And initiatives can help Parties deliver strong on-the-ground results in Paris and beyond. Some positive steps have already been taken to realize this potential. At COP20, the Peruvian Presidency launched NAZCA (Non-state Actor Zone for Climate Action) to better understand the scale of action being taken by cities, regions, private sector, and other actors and further and further generate support and momentum for climate action.⁴ Such platforms can serve to better link cooperative initiatives to policy options identified in the TEMs and ADP workstream 2. And at COP21, the "Agenda of Solutions" will provide an historic opportunity to realize the significant potential of climate action at all levels.

Reaching the ultimate objective of the Convention will require concerted action by countries and initiatives inclusive of all stakeholders. Actions by cooperative initiatives and the UNFCCC intergovernmental process mutually reinforce each other by demonstrating momentum and encouraging national pledges to be strengthened, which in turn catalyzes more action. By supporting the broad range of climate action from every country and every sector, we can ensure the global community delivers real results now on climate change.

This discussion note distills findings from a series of multi-stakeholder dialogues over the past year. It raises topics for discussion, and does not necessarily reflect the positions of organizations involved.

⁴ NAZCA can be explored at: www.climateaction.unfccc.int

