

## Memorandum

# The Action Agenda after Paris: Galvanizing Climate Action in 2016-2020 and beyond

July 29, 2015

Global efforts to address climate change have been energized by a groundswell of action from cities, regions, companies, and other sub- and non-state actors, acting individually and in partnership with each other, as well as with national governments, civil society groups, and international organizations.

Governments from around the world are increasingly supporting these complementary efforts to help them deliver a safe climate and resilient development. Within the UNFCCC, work stream 2 and the Technical Expert Meetings have stressed the value of early action from all actors in all sectors. Alongside the formal intergovernmental process, the quartet behind the Lima Paris Action Agenda (LPAA) – the governments of France and Peru, the UNFCCC Secretariat, and the UN Secretary-General’s Climate Change Support Team – have made an enormous contribution to the groundswell of climate actions by seeding and orchestrating initiatives, and by recognizing and supporting actions at all levels in the lead up to Paris.

Now there is a historic opportunity to build on this success after COP21. This memorandum outlines concrete options to sustain and enhance the Action Agenda for the 2016-2020 period. The memo:

1. Identifies the functions needed to galvanize the groundswell of climate actions;
2. Maps the current ecosystem of actors and institutions providing these functions and proposes strategic linkages to build across this ecosystem;
3. Suggests reconfigured or new processes/institutions to fill anticipated gaps; and
4. Considers how a strengthened Action Agenda can be implemented and resourced.

## 1. Functions needed to galvanize the groundswell of climate actions

The ultimate aim of a long-term Action Agenda is to stimulate non-state and sub-national actors (individually or in collaboration with their peers and/or national governments and international organizations) to realize their full potential to contribute to mitigation, adaptation, and resilient development. Strengthened climate actions can also help national governments implement their contributions and go further and faster by demonstrating the viability of ambitious emissions targets and other climate policies. This is possible through demonstrating the technical feasibility of a wide array of innovative climate solutions, and by transnational exchanges of information, technology, and resources.

In the 2016-2020 period and beyond, a strengthened Action Agenda will make a powerful contribution to further innovative climate solutions and enhance national ambition by providing several key functions that are elaborated below:

1. Visibility
2. Aggregation and tracking
3. Implementation and follow-up
4. Orchestration and scaling
5. Learning and diffusion

### ***Improving the visibility of climate actions***

A long-term Action Agenda needs to continue improving the visibility of the varied landscape of climate actions, and capture as-of-yet unrecorded climate actions. Such an overview is necessary in a fragmented and complex climate governance system, where many activities take place outside of traditional venues.

The widest possible overview of climate actions is doubly useful. First, it reinforces the ‘new normal’ that all sectors of society are transitioning to a low carbon world by showcasing the breadth, depth, and extent of climate actions. Second, it highlights particularly effective or ambitious climate actions. Such highlighting can occur through various means, including a central stage at UNFCCC meetings, online visibility, and other media outreach activities. Partners in the long-term Action Agenda could highlight climate actions that are: (1) high impact – in term of mitigating a substantial portion of GHGs, significantly improving resilience, or mobilizing substantial resources toward those goals; (2) high ambition – actions that inspire leaps beyond business as usual, including smaller scale actions (relatively low impact, in absolute terms) that display leadership; (3) innovative – actions that embody creative new thinking for how to address climate change and its impact, and that have potential to be adopted by other actors at scale.

### ***Aggregation and tracking of climate actions***

Greater visibility improves tracking of climate actions. In turn, tracking supports two additional key functions: 1) capturing information on implementation leading to learning and diffusion, and 2) enabling the identification of both gaps and opportunities across the broader landscape of climate action in which new initiatives may be seeded.

Aggregating information through the NAZCA platform is crucial to obtaining these benefits. Because the groundswell is so diverse, no single tracking or assessment framework is applicable to the great variety of climate actions. Instead, the LPAA has wisely designed the NAZCA platform to aggregate information from an expanding number of existing platforms. Hence, a tracking function is distinctly different from a formal reporting mechanism.

While we think it is unlikely and undesirable for the Action Agenda partners or UNFCCC Parties to agree on a common tracking mechanism for groundswell activities, a range of progressively harmonized assessment methods could be applied to climate actions that share certain functional, geographic, and thematic characteristics. For instance, subnational governments increasingly use the Global Protocol for Community-Scale Greenhouse Gas Emission Inventories (GPC) to track their emissions. Progressive convergence toward common metrics over time can help strengthen the groundswell.

In addition, the Action Agenda would gain credibility from verification through external or peer assessments. The publication of periodic assessment reports could synthesize third-party analyses on the estimation of aggregate impacts. For instance, mitigated quantities of GHGs, the number of people affected, or quantified leveraged means, could be estimated and thereafter synthesized. Periodical overall assessments could become drivers in advancing climate actions as they demonstrate the progress and the impact of climate actions, and as they could strategically inform subsequent mobilization efforts by identifying gaps in the existing groundswell.

### ***Follow-up to support implementation of climate action***

A lack of effective governance, staffing, and financial resources has often prevented ambitious initiatives from being implemented. Looking at the experience of the 330 partnerships launched at the Rio+10 Summit, one study of found that 38 percent showed no measurable activity, while 26 percent pursued activities not directly related to their stated goals.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore important for the Action Agenda to encourage initiatives to be structured in a way that maximizes their ability to achieve their goals, for example, by following SMART criteria.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, it is useful to provide a regular forum for initiatives to report back on their progress, and to troubleshoot challenges that will inevitably arise. From the perspective of individual mayors, CEOs, or initiatives, there is long-term added value to perceive them as partners rather than participants in a single summit.

### ***Orchestrating and scaling climate actions***

The groundswell of climate actions has emerged in part through “bottom up” actions by cities, companies, and others. But many initiatives have also been initiated, supported, steered, or otherwise “orchestrated” by international organizations and national governments.<sup>3</sup> Going forward, partners within a long-term Action Agenda, for instance COP presidencies or a UN body, could help align climate actions and multilateral priorities. These potential partners can employ a range of measures to stimulate and to steer action by cities, companies, regions, civil society groups, and other states and international organizations toward more ambitious climate actions over time. In particular, the Action Agenda should continue to leverage its convening power to bring together leaders from business, civil society, and all levels of local and national government to facilitate the brokering of new or enhanced climate actions and to strategically recognize particularly ambitious or scalable initiatives. A long-term Action Agenda could furthermore leverage synergic capacities and finance by engaging a variety of stakeholders with different capacities.

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<sup>1</sup> Pattberg, P., Biermann, F., Chan, S., and Mert, A. (eds) (2012) *Public-Private Partnerships for Sustainable Development: Emergence, Influence, and Legitimacy*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

<sup>2</sup> For an extended discussion of SMART criteria for initiatives, see Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions, “Accelerating the Action Agenda through Robust and Credible Climate Commitments from Non-state Actors,” Memorandum, May 28, 2015. Available: <http://www.climategroundswell.org/s/Accelerating-the-Action-Agenda-through-Robust-and-Credible-Commitments-General-sosp.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> According to one estimate, around one-third of international cooperative initiatives have been “orchestrated” in this way. Thomas Hale and Charles Roger, “Orchestration and transnational climate governance,” *The Review of International Organizations* March 2014, Volume 9, Issue 1, pp 59-82.

### ***Facilitating diffusion and learning***

The wide variety of climate actions allows for cross-learning, innovation, and experimentation. Much of this work is done within particular initiatives or networks (e.g. city-to-city knowledge exchanges). On top of this, partners within a long-term Action Agenda can help create a supportive environment for initiatives brokered across sectors, regions, and public and private stakeholders, including national governments, to learn from each other (e.g. via the TEM process). For this purpose, a long-term Action Agenda should support existing networks and, where necessary, help establish new networks with non-state and subnational stakeholders and create venues for interfacing amongst themselves as well as policy-makers, politicians, and representatives of cooperative initiatives. These venues can be virtual (for instance, an online clearing house or platform for exchanging knowledge); they can also be physical such as in- and out-of-session week-long workshops hosted annually.

### ***A comprehensive approach***

As a long-term Action Agenda performs the above functions, it effectively builds a comprehensive framework that records and mobilizes actions; facilitates information exchange and networking; and assesses aggregate impacts of climate actions. However, the development of such a framework should avoid over-regulation, and intricate compliance procedures that significantly add to administrative burdens that could inhibit climate actions. Rather, the long-term Action Agenda should engage with existing reporting schemes and data platforms to build on existing reporting.

The development of such a framework should also avoid an overemphasis on a single function while neglecting others. For instance, experiences in the realm of global sustainable development demonstrate that an emphasis on increasing visibility of actions without the tracking of performance undermines credibility of frameworks for non-state and subnational actions and might even help to present business as usual activities as green and clean. Finally, a long-term Action Agenda should not involve a heavy institutional footprint. Rather, it should be a collaborative effort, building on the strengths of collaborating partners, and largely building on improved and scaled existing functions.

## **2. Mapping and strengthening the current ecosystem**

Many of the functions required to galvanize the groundswell of climate actions are already being met, at least partially, by different actors operating through different processes. Table 1 maps the current ecosystem of actors, institutions, and processes, describing what groups/organizations are contributing to which functions. This section also outlines several options for how the existing ecosystem can be strengthened by building strategic linkages.

**Table 1: What functions are currently being provided by whom?**

Function	Visibility	Aggregation & tracking	Implementation & follow-up	Orchestrating & scaling	Learning & diffusion
<b>ACTORS</b>					
<i>COP presidencies</i>	X			X	
<i>UNFCCC Sec.</i>	X	X		X	
<i>UNSG team</i>	X			X	
<i>Leading orchestrators</i>			X	X	X
<i>Initiatives</i>			X	X	X
<i>Cities, companies, regions, NGOs, natl. govs</i>			X		X
<i>Analysts</i>		X		X	X
<b>PROCESSES / INSTITUTIONS</b>					
<i>LPAA</i>	X			X	X
<i>NAZCA</i>	X	X			
<i>Work stream 2</i>					X
<i>Mmtm. for Change</i>	X				

### **Constituting an Ongoing Action Agenda**

After Paris, the LPAA could become simply the Action Agenda, an ongoing collaboration among the existing organizations and/or new ones. These may include:

1. UNFCCC Secretariat
2. UNSG's Climate Change Support Team
3. Past, present, and future COP presidencies (see below)
4. Umbrella initiatives (e.g. Compact of Mayors, We Mean Business, Compact of States and Regions)
5. Key supporters / orchestrators of climate initiatives (e.g. World Bank, UNEP)
6. Experts and civil society groups
7. Supportive national governments ("Friends of the Action Agenda")
8. Potential High Representative(s) for climate action and supporting secretariat (see below).

Some or all of these entities may be considered part of the Action Agenda in either a horizontal or tiered way:

- Horizontal option: the Action Agenda would become a truly multi-stakeholder enterprise, with different kinds of actors participating as relative equals. It would be important to clearly define criteria for inclusion to maintain the legitimacy of the Action Agenda while also finding a manageable trade-off between inclusion and effectiveness. The coordinating mechanism for this group could be an Action Agenda Secretariat as described in the next section.
- Tiered option: The Action Agenda would continue to be a collaboration of the UNFCCC Secretariat, UNSG's Climate Change Support Team (dependent on their status post-COP21), and COP presidencies. However, there could also be a less formal multi-

stakeholder “Action Agenda Advisory Council” that includes representatives of various umbrella initiatives and civil society groups and experts, as well as a “Friends of the Action Agenda” group of supportive national governments and international organizations.

It may be useful to consider several alternative governance arrangements from other issue areas:

1. *Forest Stewardship Council*: A private timber certification scheme, the FSC is governed by a tripartite multi-stakeholder governing council that includes representatives of government, the private sector, and civil society with equal representation from the global north and south.
2. *Clean Technology Centre and Network*: The UNFCCC technology transfer mechanism is guided by a committee of experts appointed by Parties. It has a small secretariat based in Copenhagen that links to a broader network of public and private, national, and international, technology institutions that can answer questions and provide assistance regarding technology transfer.
3. *Nairobi Meeting of Focal Points*: Under the Nairobi Convention, national focal points (officials in relevant government agencies) coordinate directly with each other to guide implementation of policy under the Convention.
4. *Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)*: the key global regulator of internet domain names is registered as an NGO, but has a number of technical advisory committees on which national governments, private sector groups, NGOs, and international organizations sit.

### ***High-level meeting and link to work stream 2***

To maintain momentum, the Action Agenda could use the High Level Meeting encouraged in the COP20 agreement as a regular forum to galvanize action at all levels. This meeting, which could take place during the COPs (along the lines of Lima and Paris) would be co-hosted by the UNFCCC and the COP President. An annual event for initiatives could review progress on initiatives and give greater visibility to those who perform at the highest standards. The event could also serve as a launching pad for new initiatives.

To maximize the impact, this type of event should then be woven into the TEMs under workstream 2. Initiatives should report on their progress at the TEMs under the thematic lines countries have identified as part of work stream 2. Where possible, policy options considered under workstream 2 should be linked to concrete initiatives at TEM meetings and via the NAZCA portal.

At the same time, it is likely valuable to encourage additional national- and regional-level dialogues to review initiatives in their jurisdiction, provide geographic-specific recommendations, and develop geographic-specific reports.

### ***Annual Report on the Action Agenda***

In general, the Action Agenda should let initiatives speak for themselves through open data and visibility while also providing incentives for robust-self reporting and third-party verification. Over time, progressively harmonized reporting procedures across NAZCA data providers can facilitate analytical studies and benchmarking across multiple levels.

In addition, it may be useful to begin an annual overview report on the groundswell. Two types of possible Action Agenda reports include:

1. Progress monitoring to track aggregate delivery of initiatives' commitments over time, interpret broader trends, and provide incentives for progressive harmonization around reporting standards and key performance metrics;
2. Impact assessments that conduct in-depth studies about the effectiveness of different approaches and their long-term impact.

### ***Inclusion of future COP Presidencies in the Action Agenda***

It is important to maintain an ongoing connection to the COP presidencies. We therefore propose that the Action Agenda team follow the rotating "sherpa" model used by the G20 and other institutions. In any given year, three governments are responsible for leading on the action agenda: the past COP president, the current COP president, and the future COP president. In this way, COP presidents would be involved with the Action Agenda for (at least) a three year overlapping term. This would serve two important functions: allow individual COP presidents sufficient time to identify, seed, and nurture new initiatives; and provide the overall initiative incubation process a consistent, but evolving linkage to the UNFCCC.

## **3. What should be added to the ecosystem?**

It is important that institutions not be created without purpose. That said, there are a number of gaps in even a strengthened version of the current ecosystem that may need to be filled. This section outlines different options for new additions to the ecosystem.

### ***High-Level Representative(s) for Climate Action***

One functional gap in the institutional ecosystem for 2016-2020 is the ability to seed and orchestrate new initiatives. In the pre-Paris period, most initiatives have come forward of their own volition, as well as through seeding and orchestrating efforts by leading convenor organizations (UNEP, the World Bank, and prominent global business organizations and large environmental NGOs stand out). In the last year, the UNSG made a powerful contribution to these efforts through the September 2014 Climate Summit, and the COP presidencies and the LPAA team are carrying forward this work through Paris. There is a danger, however, that the UNSG's office and COP presidents will have less ability and incentive to play this role in the 2016-2020 period. There may therefore be a need to give the Action Agenda additional convening power through the appointment of a High Level Representative (or Representatives) for Climate Action. This role would take responsibility for the overall guidance and sustainability of the Action Agenda, particularly through mobilizing new initiatives and match-making existing actors and efforts together to fill gaps.

To succeed, the Representative(s) would need the global name-recognition, charisma, legitimacy, and 'convening power' to make the case for bold climate action to a range of relevant actors. Appointing an individual(s) with strong existing networks across various sectors will likely be a large advantage. Given current geographic imbalances in the Action Agenda, appointing someone with connections to emerging economies would likely be of significant value as well. Most importantly, however, the Action Agenda will require a dynamic individual(s) with a sufficient mandate to seed and galvanize climate action wherever potential exists.

A High-Level Representative must be carefully embedded in the broader Action Agenda. In particular, it is important for the representative to work closely with the other stakeholder groups that form the Action Agenda and lead work on developing specific thematic areas.

### ***NAZCA Ombudsperson***

Ensuring the credibility of the commitments and initiatives aggregated on the NAZCA platform and otherwise recognized by the Action Agenda has been a crucial question on the road to Paris, and will continue to require proactive remedies in the 2016-2020 period. Poor or insufficient information can undermine confidence in the groundswell of climate action, and therefore undermine the goals of the Action Agenda.

However, the consensus view is that it is extremely difficult technically to define a common set of precise criteria for the heterogeneous array of climate actions. At a political level, the task is likely even more difficult.

A potential solution to this dilemma is not to try to define overly precise criteria, but instead to create an ombudsperson who could review potential complaints/inquiries into the accuracy of information listed on the NAZCA portal or otherwise associated with the Action Agenda. The process could be designed so that anyone could register a complaint that a specific piece of information on the NAZCA platform or that is produced via a High Level Meeting is inaccurate, misclassified, or otherwise wrong. These complaints could then be investigated by a designated ombudsperson, who will make a determination as to whether the information is indeed misleading and suggest steps to remedy the problem. These decisions and the reasoning behind them could then be published publicly. Similar ombudspersons exist at other international organizations and public agencies. While some of these are quite institutionalized (e.g. the various inspection panels located at multilateral development banks), the Action Agenda would only need a relatively light-touch, information-oriented ombudsperson.

Such a system would have the technical advantage of moving the burden of ‘certifying’ climate actions from *ex ante* criteria to *ex post* review. This would allow the Action Agenda to focus more on real problems that emerge, rather than on trying to think through in advance hypothetical situations that may arise. Politically, it would also be very useful for entities involved in the Action Agenda to “outsource” the question of credibility to an independent ombudsperson, rather than placing their own credibility on the line.

### ***Action Agenda Secretariat***

It may be desirable to create a small secretariat to house and support a few minimal functions of the ongoing Action Agenda. These secretariat functions could include:

1. The NAZCA portal team, including potential NAZCA ombudsperson;
2. Administrative support for Action Agenda meetings;
3. Support for potential High Level Representative(s);
4. Contracting potential annual reports (perhaps to UNEP).

It is our view that a Secretariat, if it is created, should be jointly “owned” by the Action Agenda as a whole (see discussion of governance issues above). If it sits only under one institution there is a



danger that the Action Agenda will not receive the full support of the broader set of relevant actors, and therefore diminish its central coordinating function. At the same time, it is important not to create a new agency that will simply get lost in the larger institutional ecosystem. Seconding staff from existing organizations (in the UN system or from across the galaxy of groundswell institutions) may also help to build connections among the secretariat and the larger Action Agenda.

The key functions needed for the Secretariat staff would include:

1. Administrative capacity to organize high-level meetings and support high-level representative and potential ombudsperson;
2. Sector-specific knowledge to seed and orchestrate new initiatives in priority areas;
3. Capacity to liaise and follow up with national governments, UN agencies, and groundswell actors and initiatives;
4. Communication capacity to bring attention to the groundswell;
5. Technical capacity to develop and maintain the NAZCA portal.

## 4. Resources and implementation

The Action Agenda will not be able to deliver on its potential without an adequate political, institutional, and financial base. This section considers how the different options suggested above might be financed and implemented.

### ***Political Support and COP decisions***

The last two years have seen a radical increase in party support for early, ambitious climate action at all levels. Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions has prepared a memorandum summarizing Parties' views on the groundswell in official submissions to the ADP.<sup>4</sup> The results show strong support from every corner of the globe. The Alliance of Small Island States, the Alliance of Independent Latin American Countries, the Environmental Integrity Group, Mexico, the Nordic States, and the Netherlands have been particularly supportive. Interestingly, no Parties have voiced formal opposition to such actions in public provided they do not substitute for national contributions or impose new obligations on developing countries.

That said, Parties differ on whether and how the groundswell might be recognized in the Paris Agreement and/or accompanying COP decision. While additional recognition of the groundswell in the formal texts to be agreed at Paris is of course desirable, from our perspective, we believe there is adequate support in existing COP decisions to continue to strengthen the Action Agenda over the 2016-2020 period. The broad political support across UNFCCC Parties gives additional scope for enhanced action, and early engagement with future COP presidents is likely to facilitate further support. Over time, UNFCCC Parties may wish to more formally recognize or "welcome" the Action Agenda or its constituent parts in COP decisions as appropriate.

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<sup>4</sup> Available at: <http://www.climategroundswell.org/blog-test/2015/7/29/unfccc-parties-and-observers-views-on-the-groundswell-of-climate-actions>

## **Financing**

In the lead up to COP21, it is important to recognize the significant political, human, and financial resources that the French government and its partners in the Lima-Paris Action Agenda have invested. Funds for an effective Action Agenda for 2016-2020 will be minimal compared to the long-term value-added returns it will produce, yet a plan for regular and predictable financing is necessary. Because an effective framework for climate action at all levels makes the individual and cooperative actions of cities, companies, regions, and partnerships more effective, investing in the infrastructure of the Action Agenda helps supporters maximize the value of other investments in concrete actions on the ground. That said, all investments in the Action Agenda supporting infrastructure must be carefully justified. It is crucial not to divert resources away from concrete climate actions.

Governments who support innovative climate actions would find a value multiplier in enhancing the enabling environment in which those actions take place. The United States, the United Kingdom, Norway, Denmark, and Japan, in particular, may be called upon to help endow the Action Agenda going forward. A very rough estimate for the funding required would be USD\$25 million over the five-year period from 2016-2020. Further support could be secured through philanthropic contributions, including the foundations that originally supported the UNSG's Climate Summit. Additional resources could be mobilized through international networks, such as those representing cities and businesses, who may be able to provide in-kind support for staff time and efficient functioning of the Action Agenda secretariat.

### **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.

Over the past year, 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)