



ISSUE BRIEF

THE ROAD FROM PARIS: GALVANIZING A GLOBAL CLIMATE ACTION AGENDA

The Paris Climate Conference not only finalized a new international agreement to reduce global carbon pollution, it also mobilized a groundswell of climate action from cities, regions, business, investors, and others to tackle the climate challenge. This Global Climate Action Agenda serves as a dynamic platform for initiatives from non-state and subnational actors, in partnership with national governments, to accelerate climate action on the ground and support the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

OVERVIEW OF THE GLOBAL CLIMATE ACTION AGENDA

The Global Climate Action Agenda seeks to mobilize climate action through government cooperation at all levels, the private sector, and civil society. At COP21, countries decided that each successive COP president should appoint a high-level champion to further strengthen the Agenda's initiatives. The governments of France and Morocco have both appointed such champions to lead progress on the Action Agenda, in close collaboration with the United Nations and a network of organizations working across diverse sectors.

The Action Agenda has helped to orchestrate nearly 75 “transformational” cooperative initiatives around COP21 involving cities, regions, businesses, investors, and civil society as well as national governments to expand and

showcase their efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change (see Table 1). And many cooperative initiatives are already implementing concrete climate action across COP22's eight key themes, which include energy, forests, business, and cities and human settlements (see Table 2).

The Action Agenda also includes the Non-state Actor Zone for Climate Action (NAZCA), an official clearinghouse of registered climate commitments. NAZCA currently captures commitments from 582 cities and 98 states and regions representing more than 1 billion people, nearly one-eighth of the global population. More than 1,000 companies have made commitments with NAZCA for a marketplace capitalization of \$9 trillion—equivalent to the combined gross domestic product (GDP) of Japan, Germany, and France.¹

THE PARIS AGREEMENT

In late 2015, the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was held in Paris. The 196 nations that are part of the UNFCCC approved the Paris Agreement, which aims to limit global temperature rise to 2 degrees Celsius, and to make best efforts to keep it to 1.5 degrees. To that end, countries submitted intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs) detailing the level to which they planned to cut emissions and their plans to reach that goal. The Paris Agreement entered into force on November 4, 2016—and the INDCs are now formally enshrined as part of the Agreement—and hereafter referred to as nationally determined contributions (NDCs). The Global Climate Action Agenda allows cities, regions, businesses, investors and civil society to engage in this global effort as a part of the UNFCCC and national NDCs.

Table 1. Key Facts About the Action Agenda

Number of transformational cooperative initiatives	Nearly 75 and growing
Emissions reduction potential of cooperative initiatives	Only a subset of all initiatives could save 2.5 billion to 4 billion tons of greenhouse gases (GHG) per year by 2020 ²
Commitments to climate action on NAZCA platform	Nearly 9,000 commitments and growing, including more than 1,000 companies representing \$9 trillion in market capitalization and cities and regions representing one-eighth of the global population ³
Total participants in international cooperative initiatives	More than 20,000 cities, regions, companies, investors, universities, and other participants around the world ⁴

Table 2. Cooperative Initiatives Deliver Concrete Climate Action and Other Benefits

Cooperative Initiative	Overview and Benefits	Expected Impact
Compact of Mayors	More than 570 cities representing more than 440 million people have committed to reducing their GHG emissions, tracking their progress publicly, and preparing for the impacts of climate change ⁵	Committed cities could eliminate more than 2.8 billion tons of GHGs from the atmosphere by 2020—more than the annual emissions of India in 2012 ⁶
Under 2 MOU (Memorandum of Understanding)	Signed by 136 jurisdictions in 32 countries on 6 continents, and representing nearly 800 million people and more than \$22 trillion in GDP, the MOU commits cities, states, and countries to limiting GHG emissions to 80 to 95 percent below 1990 levels (or below 2 tons per capita) by 2050 ⁷	The combined GDP of the signatories exceeds that of the United States and Germany. The MOU commits them to cutting carbon pollution in line with the latest climate science to stay under the 2-degree Celsius threshold
New York Declaration on Forests	Dozens of governments, the world's largest companies, and influential civil society groups have jointly pledged to reduce emissions from tropical deforestation and strengthen local forest governance and the rights of indigenous peoples	Commitment to cutting natural forest loss in half by 2020 and ending it by 2030 could eliminate up to 8.8 billion tons of GHGs by 2020—greater than the 2013 emissions of the United States ⁸
Divest-Invest Global Movement	By divesting from fossil fuels and investing in clean energy, thousands of institutions and individuals across the world are taking direct action on climate change	More than 436 institutions and 2,040 individuals, representing \$2.6 trillion in assets, have committed to removing fossil fuel companies from their portfolios ⁹
en.lighten	More than 60 national governments, companies, and regions are accelerating the phase-out of incandescent bulbs with highly efficient lighting technologies	Phasing out inefficient incandescent lamps by 2016 means a potential 52 percent reduction in global energy consumption from lighting—equivalent to Germany's total GHG emissions ¹⁰
Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves	A public-private initiative to promote the adoption of efficient cookstoves and fuels aims to empower women, advance economic opportunities, improve indoor air quality, and mitigate super GHGs like methane and black carbon	Participants are committed to help 100 million households adopt clean cookstoves by 2020 ¹¹

THE ACTION AGENDA SUPERCHARGES NDCS

Harnessing the momentum of climate action at all levels will be critical to post-Paris success. According to the United Nations Development Programme, decisions at the subnational and local levels can influence 50 to 80 percent of GHG emissions.¹² And globally, cities account for 70 percent of GHG emissions from energy.¹³ So fulfilling the Paris Agreement will hinge on strong action by subnational and local decision makers.

The diversity of climate action across society makes assessing its potential a challenge, and researchers are just beginning the task. Two recent reports found that

cooperative initiatives could close the emissions gap between NDC targets and the likely pathway to limiting global temperature rise to below 2 degrees Celsius rise by one-quarter to one-third by 2020—approximately equivalent to India's 2012 emissions.¹⁴ By 2030, cooperative initiatives could be expanded to deliver up to 96 percent of the emissions reductions needed to close the gap, with significant economic benefits.¹⁵ Therefore, national climate commitments can be enhanced by engaging a variety of stakeholders and through international cooperation. Multistakeholder cooperation will help inspire the kind of virtuous cycle that must occur now that the Paris Agreement has entered into legal force.

The Action Agenda and the broader groundswell of climate action help to reinforce country climate commitments in two ways. First, these actions help develop the domestic policies, measures, financing mechanisms, technologies, and other means to enable national governments to meet and even surpass their targets. Second, they will help prove that more aggressive actions are possible in the coming years. By reducing emissions even further, these actions will help create the necessary conditions to empower countries to strengthen their commitments well before 2020.

AN ENDURING ACTION AGENDA

The Action Agenda is one of the key pillars of the Paris alliance that was forged at COP21. To ensure its enduring legacy beyond COP22, several key elements should be taken forward.

The leadership of the Action Agenda, particularly the high-level champions, should signal that it will continue to serve as an ongoing interface to leverage climate action at all levels. This includes defining a more precise institutional geometry that allows the Action Agenda to maintain the necessary capacity and continuity over time and successive high-level champions.

Cooperative initiatives were required to meet a minimum set of criteria to be included in the Action Agenda at COP21.¹⁶ To ensure credibility going forward, initiatives must regularly document progress on deliverables beyond the minimum criteria. Civil society monitoring and review—through clearinghouse platforms such as NAZCA—will be critical to ensuring that commitments are met and initiatives are held accountable.

Finally, the Action Agenda must include more dimensions than purely reducing GHG emissions. Many cooperative initiatives promote sustainable development benefits—such as public health, gender empowerment, and economic opportunity—as primary objectives, with climate action as an associated benefit. Aligning cooperative initiatives with other international priorities, such as the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, can help ensure that all countries, particularly developing countries, have strong ownership of and benefit from an ongoing Action Agenda.¹⁷

The Action Agenda and the broader groundswell of climate action will be vital vehicles for accelerating the implementation of the Paris Agreement and for setting more ambitious goals in the future. Channeling the momentum of climate action from cities, regions, companies, and investors in partnership with national governments and international organizations is one of the most powerful ways the global community can fulfill the commitments made in Paris and beyond.

ENDNOTES

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