



## SUBMISSION FROM THE CENTER FOR GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

### *The Road Map for Global Climate Action*

The Center for Global Sustainability at the University of Maryland welcomes the opportunity to submit comments on the Road Map for Global Climate Action, and looks forward to ongoing engagement with the global climate action agenda. Please find below our comments and responses to the issues and questions posed by the high level champions.

#### **1. Reflection of the current situation**

*The sense of urgency that led to the Paris Agreement and sustained the work on workstream 2 (pre-2020 ambition) throughout the whole of 2015 must be sustained. The high-level champions need to make sure that we do “more, faster and now” on enhanced pre-2020 action. Pre-2020 action is a key element for the implementation and success of the Paris Agreement, equally for adaptation, mitigation and means of implementation. Notably, there is a need to quick-start implementation with a sense of urgency and ambition; create an interface with the real world and solutions, particularly the involvement of non-Party stakeholders; and maintain the political momentum.*

*Is this general presentation an accurate description of the current state of play? If not, what can we do more?*

#### **Response:**

We welcome the introduction of the global roadmap by the high-level climate champions, and look forward to the presentation and joint-paper to be released at COP22. The current situation as stated by the climate champions is described well, but there is room for improvement in two aspects.

First, we not only need to quick-start implementation, but we need to exponentially scale action. To adequately convey the sense of urgency, we need to use language that goes beyond the usual rhetoric of ‘urgent’ that we have been using for over 20 years. The type of transformative action needed now is both qualitatively and quantitatively different than anything that has come before. Calls for ‘urgent’ action are no longer sufficient - we require actions that are implemented with a sense of immediacy, and with a level of collective ambition that meets the demands of the challenge. The situation demands much stronger descriptors to jolt all stakeholders into acting.

Second, we fully agree that the momentum on pre-2020 climate action in 2015 must be maintained, but we caution that it may be misleading to characterize this momentum as having been carried in workstream 2, per the description. It is true that in the context of the UNFCCC negotiations, workstream 2 is where such ambition has been highlighted and promoted, but workstream 2 has not caused the bulk of the action that has taken place in the real economy. The rising tide of climate action (e.g. the massive uptake of solar energy globally; the shift towards green institutional investing; the rise of





sub-national actors as a cogent influencing group on climate action; and the divestment movement, to name a very few) is a result of a confluence of economic, political, social and environmental factors. Workstream 2 has played a positive part, but it is only one cog in a very large apparatus. This matters because the description appears to subsume pre-2020 action under workstream 2. Such a characterization of the work of the high level champions would be the equivalent of trying to fit a round peg in a square hole, and jeopardize stated efforts to create a credible interface with the real world and solutions, and non-Party stakeholders. It could lead to fracturation and greater turf battles in the climate action sphere, at a time when this is the last thing we need. In particular, as some of the primary audience for this exercise are those who have not engaged the formal COP process yet, and may not have an appetite to do so, it will be important to emphasize that pre-2020 climate action is happening across various platforms. This would maintain momentum by providing multiple points of entry into the agenda that are attractive and relevant to different actors, and avoid causing confusion.

Therefore, as a first step, we suggest that the description could be revised to acknowledge that the bulk of climate action will continue to take place globally in many platforms and forums. The added value of workstream 2 is to provide accelerating force, and to connect key initiatives with the formal UNFCCC process as appropriate to accelerate momentum in a cohesive way. A possible reformulation would be: “The sense of urgency that led to the Paris Agreement and sustained the work on pre-2020 ambition (including through workstream 2) throughout the whole of 2015 must be sustained.”

More importantly, the high level champions could guard against this possible divergence in the conceptualization of the climate action sphere by ensuring, as soon as possible, a governance mechanism that avoids an exclusivist tone, and instead promotes the race to the top which has characterized and inspired climate action in recent years.

In addition to these two comments on the description of the current situation, as a research center, we offer the following remarks on the implementation of the Paris Agreement. A key component to ratcheting up pre-2020 climate ambition lies in the rapid development of assessment techniques that support climate implementation, and the close linking of these techniques to the demands of their specific circumstances. To be effective in the new climate regime, especially in pre-2020 ambition, requires that implementation be supported and enabled by information, data, knowledge, and analytical inputs. Academic and research institutions, as organizations dedicated to developing collaborative, high-quality, and independent tools and information have a key role to play in supporting expeditious and ambitious implementation.

Enhanced pre-2020 ambition also depends on the mobilization and inclusion of all parties into the global climate action agenda. Through co-hosting the Climate Action 2016 summit in Washington, D.C., the University of Maryland has continued to mobilize support for the multi-stakeholder approach to meeting the goals outlined by the Paris Agreement, as effective implementation requires commitments and actions from a variety of actors. Inclusion of the multi-stakeholder model in climate implementation will make the broad-scale organization of climate action more effective and sustainable.





## 2. The role of the high-level champions

*As champions of global climate action, we believe that we need to be an interface between action on the ground and the UNFCCC negotiation process, between non-Party stakeholders and Parties. We intend to track implementation of existing initiatives to demonstrate credibility, promote best practices and enhance delivery. We will also support new initiatives focusing on adaptation, with a view to broadening the country coverage and including more initiatives coming from developing country Parties and non-Party stakeholders.*

*Is this an accurate description of the role the high-level climate champions should play with regard to the mobilization of non-state actors? Is there anything else they should do, or are there things mentioned here that they should not do?*

### **Response:**

The linkages of non-Party stakeholders to the UNFCCC process is key. We have three recommendations to make in this regard.

First, we suggest that the climate champions should be careful in considering their role in tracking implementation, as this is a very significant undertaking that could consume all their time. We strongly suggest that the champions should find a more efficient, decentralized method for tracking (see response 3 for a concrete suggestion).

Second, we believe that enhancing delivery is a responsibility that belongs to operational actors. The high level champions cannot enhance delivery themselves. At best, they could and should contribute to it as part of promoting best practices that help operation actors enhance delivery. However the champions do not have comparative advantage in seeking to enhance delivery directly.

Third, while it is important and right that the champions advance adaptation initiatives and also focus on developing countries, this should not be at the cost of advancing new mitigation initiatives. The mitigation gap remains large, and there is a very pressing need to accelerate momentum in this regard, both through new initiatives and through advancing existing initiatives (both especially in developing countries). The role of the champions should be consistent with the current situation, which describes pre-2020 action as key element for the success of the Paris Agreement, equally for adaptation, mitigation and means of implementation.



### 3. Transparency and tracking

*We need to help non-Party stakeholders achieve the recognition they seek. At the same time, we owe it to the integrity of the UNFCCC process to make sure that these initiatives and coalitions achieve the targets they set for themselves; that these targets are truly consistent with the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement; and that the participants in initiatives and coalitions are actually doing what it takes to achieve the commitments they made. Therefore we intend to work on improving transparency of action and tracking of implementation to demonstrate the credibility of their work.*

*How do we assess the initiatives? What would be the ideal set of criteria? Who would assess them? What should be the role of the Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action (NAZCA)?*

#### **Response:**

Transparently tracking and assessing initiatives is key to the successful implementation of the Paris Agreement, as credible initiatives create trust in the process that allows Party and non-Party stakeholders alike to enhance the ambition of commitments. When attempting to ensure credibility, we would recommend a flexible mechanism for ensuring alignment and transparency be applied, and not to overburden the Secretariat or non-Party stakeholders with a rigid or bureaucratic process to track efforts. It must be acknowledged that neither the Secretariat nor the champions are capable of undertaking this mammoth task authoritatively. Further, we need to use a twenty-first Century model of governance to achieve this task. Just as one would not use a steam engine to propel a bullet train, so too can we not use the traditional tools and methods of monitoring, reporting and tracking commitments in this hyper-accelerated phase. A decentralized, 'organic' method is required to track and assess initiatives by osmosis, so as to ensure credibility without unnecessarily restraining action.

An innovative way to do this is to harness the Data Revolution in conjunction with the groundswell of global citizen mobilization on climate change, by crowdsourcing citizen assessment and reporting. In other words, climate action needs a 'Wiki', much like the crowdsourced website Wikipedia. Similar to the transformative and path-breaking governance of Wikipedia, the tracking of commitments could be decentralised, with a light governance anchored in the Secretariat to provide structure, conduct quality assurance and resolve disagreements, engaging with the few select 'super' wiki contributors that emerge as champions in their own right of transparency and tracking.

The power of such crowdsourced governance has been amply proven, not just in Wikipedia, but also in sectors as diverse as software development, astronomy and journalism, to name a few. As a research institution, we would be happy to host a working meeting on this idea to make concrete recommendations on the way forward. We suggest that this could be done in time to formally raise this as an option for consideration at the high level event in Marrakech. This would allow the mechanism to be in place and demonstratively robust by the time of the Climate Action Summit or, at the latest, by COP24.



Regarding the role for NAZCA, we strongly recommend that this is the time to move beyond NAZCA. The new climate action is made of the entirety of public and private actors acting in concert. It is not useful to continue to categorize actors as 'non-State' vs. 'State'. The paradigm will succeed only if it is recognised that this is about all actors acting together, and processes must support this integrated approach. While NAZCA has historical relevance, it no longer holds as a concept. This artificial segregation in climate action (similar to the artificial segregation of the SDGs and the climate process) should be avoided going forward.





#### 4. High-level event

*The high-level climate champions will facilitate, through strengthened high-level engagement in the period 2016–2020, the successful execution of existing efforts and the scaling-up and introduction of new or strengthened voluntary efforts, initiatives and coalitions. The high-level event at the Conference of the Parties (COP) is now the main annual showcase of climate action.*

*What do Parties and non-Party stakeholders expect from the high-level event at COP 22? To have a real impact at COP 24 in 2018, the Climate Action Summit showcasing the results of non-state actor initiatives would need to take place sufficiently in advance. Should it be organized in the summer of 2018?*

#### **Response:**

We agree that the Climate Action Summit should take place sufficiently in advance of COP24. How far in advance is a question that may be answered by looking to the lessons and success of the UN Secretary-General's 2014 Climate Summit. That Summit was designed to showcase and advance climate action to inject momentum and political will in the UNFCCC process. It was based on the knowledge gleaned from the UNSG's Summit in 2009, which was held a few months before Copenhagen with the same purpose, but which ultimately did not succeed in its aim. Learning from this, having the 2014 Summit more than one year in advance of Paris allowed sufficient time after the Summit and before Paris for all stakeholders to organize and also for the importance of the advances being made in climate action to permeate and impact the formal UNFCCC process. Although we do not expect difficult negotiations at COP24, the same logic could be applied in terms of the high level event at COP24. By having a Summit as early as possible, there can be sufficient time for all stakeholders to get organized to ensure maximum impact at the High Level Event in 2018.

It is our strong recommendation that the Climate Action Summit be held in Spring 2018 (i.e. April or May) rather than Summer.

We would like to reiterate that it is critical that the Climate Action Summit be conceptualised such that it avoids perpetuating the false dichotomy of 'Party' and 'non-Party' stakeholders. This distinction may exist in the formal process, but it is to the detriment of the task ahead of us. The high level champions should make efforts to minimise this segregation. Success depends on all actors acting together





## 5. The role of the TEMS

*We intend to use the tools created by Parties for the enhancement of climate action prior to 2020, such as the technical expert meetings (TEMs). These meetings have a whole new role to play in the dynamic and should be more concrete, focused, and connected to initiatives of the action agenda.*

*Do you share the belief that the format of the TEMs should evolve in the light of the Global Climate Action Agenda? How could we ensure that the TEMs are more solution-oriented?*

### **Response:**

We welcome the intent to evolve the format of the TEMs so that they are more concrete, focused, and connected to the initiatives of the action agenda. We offer the following comments to ensure that they are more solution-orientated.

Decision 1/CP.21 called for strengthening of the existing technical examination of opportunities with high mitigation potential and associated adaptation, health and sustainable development co-benefits in the period 2016–2020 taking into account latest scientific knowledge. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is the primary vehicle for assessing scientific knowledge and bringing it into the multilateral process, and continues to make important contributions in this charge. However the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change process is not matched to the timescale of decisions being made in the near-term, and to those decisions that will be needed to enhance pre-2020 action. We require a variety of complementary and synergistic efforts to meet the expectations and demands for timely analytical inputs for policy design, formulation, and action, so that the examination of opportunities takes into account the latest scientific information.

Academic and research institutions can act to provide such complementary and synergistic efforts, delivering the research, analysis, and tools necessary for the enhancement of climate action. The TEMs could evolve to be sufficiently solution-oriented by actively engaging with these institutions as providers of the latest scientific and analytical information relevant to the action agenda items of focus. Effective decision-making by the other stakeholders involved in the TEMs relies on the sound technical examination that such institutions can provide.

