

Submission on the Road Map for Global Climate Action

1) 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?

The description above accurately captures the essence of the current state of play. Maintenance of the political momentum and the focus on climate action is of pivotal importance pre-2020, but even more so in preparation for 2018. Simultaneous efforts on adaptation, mitigation and means of implementation are important, as well as the ability to maintain the sectoral focus to have full understanding of the opportunities as well as the barriers to overcome.

Within IRENA’s scope of responsibility, the focus on energy, and renewable energy in particular, within the climate action agenda was welcomed, especially as renewable energy technologies are available today as technically feasible and economically viable solutions to decarbonise the economy. Continuous falling costs and increasing cost competitiveness, as well as the recognition of broader socio-economic benefits, have resulted in year-on-year record increases in new generation capacity and investments in renewable energy. However, only a fraction of its potential is harnessed and an immediate acceleration of efforts is needed if the Paris ambition is to be met. Therefore, a continuous sectoral focus that allows for showcasing of opportunities and accelerating the global learning curve to overcome obstacles is needed to maintain the momentum and stimulate ambition.

IRENA has been active in mobilizing stakeholder engagement in accelerating the deployment of renewable energy, including as part of global action on climate change. Initiatives put forward have been developed in response to the needs set forward by the Member States, with engagement of a broad range of actors spanning from the private sector, the financial institutions to civil society and academia. IRENA has brought these initiatives and lessons learned into the climate arena, including through active engagement in the TEMs process and as the lead organizer for renewable energy-related events in the lead up, and at COP 21 in Paris.

The climate solutions agenda has provided an opportunity for IRENA to reach an audience wider than the energy sector stakeholders. Conversely, IRENA was able to bring the climate agenda and focus into the energy debate through its governing body meetings and diverse programmatic events worldwide. This cross-pollination remains of utmost importance as we seek to accelerate the solutions agenda.

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?

We welcome the Champions concept. Champions can form the thread which ties the action agenda, sectoral solutions and initiatives together, showcase synergies, identify gaps and carry forward the momentum created during and between COPs. Champions can thus play an indispensable role in mobilizing political and stakeholder support. They should aim to facilitate interaction with other key processes and institutions to further strengthen initiatives towards achieving global sustainable goals, transcending any one institution's objectives and mandates.

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)?

The global climate action agenda can provide the momentum required to support the implementation of NDCs. We see this as a process that includes high level events, regional activities, analysis, information sharing and network and coalition building. But the action agenda should remain an organic process that derives from the active engagement of a broad range of stakeholders. It should inspire and encourage engagement, incentivize the seeking of opportunities and support stakeholders in making their contribution to broader climate goals. Considering the early stage of many initiatives, as well as the nascent phase of the climate action concept, reporting and tracking should remain under the purview of academia and non-government institutions allowing the initiatives to focus on substance and implementation.

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?

We consider the high level events at the upcoming COPs to be of utmost importance in the lead up to the next iteration of NDCs in 2018. The action agenda brings a new dimension by showcasing the contribution that non-Party stakeholders are making or could make, and brings a solution-orientated mindset to a potentially abstract debate. Inclusiveness also brings a greater sense of ownership and better understanding of respective opportunities and limitations, both of which are important for NDC implementation. Strengthened ambition will have to build on experiences of successful implementation, and visibility for the main actors that make this happen will be a key to progress in 2018 and beyond. In our view, the high level event at the COP reflects this mindset by placing an action day into the larger global effort on climate change.

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?

IRENA welcomes the maximum use of existing mechanisms such as the TEMs. TEMs bridge the gap between practitioners and UNFCCC processes that serve as an important avenue to inform negotiators and other policy-makers of concrete examples of action. IRENA has collaborated closely with UNFCCC, using the TEM mechanism to enrich the debate on renewable energy and to showcase opportunities for engagement in initiatives within the climate action.

In light of the Global Climate Action Agenda, TEMs should evolve scope and audience to attract additional stakeholders, such as from key Ministries (Finance, Energy, Economy), who play pivotal roles in NDC implementation. Where possible, TEMs should focus on the regional or sub-regional level, closer to implementation, to allow for inclusive discussion and common understanding among stakeholders. In the lead up to 2018, TEMs can play an important role to raise NDC ambitions by serving as a platform for exchange of experiences and best practice, and for identification of replicability to underpin NDC implementation efforts.

