



**Submission by the University of Oxford Blavatnik School of Government
and the Natural Resources Defense Council to the ADP**

27 March 2014

*On opportunities for actions with high mitigation potential, including those with adaptation
and sustainable development co-benefits*

In response to the invitation for submissions expressed in paragraph 3 of the conclusions adopted by ADP 2.3, we write to suggest ways in which the UNFCCC may become a more effective catalyst for ambitious cooperative initiatives. In our view cooperative initiatives have significant potential to drive climate action at all levels, enhancing conditions for an effective agreement at Paris and in the post-2015 climate regime. Moreover, the UNFCCC has a unique capacity to unlock this potential by supporting a clearinghouse and action platform for cooperative initiatives. Though careful thinking is needed regarding the design of this mechanism, we believe it represents a significant and achievable opportunity for the ADP.

Our suggestion grows from the observation that cities, companies, regions, civil society groups, and other actors have and are taking a host of ambitious climate actions. Examples have been highlighted by the UNFCCC Secretariat in its Momentum for Change initiative and related activities. However the groundswell of cooperative initiatives extends beyond a few leaders. New research from Oxford University identifies over 14,000 sub- and non-state actors have participated in international cooperative initiatives between 1990 and 2012 with developing countries actually participating more vigorously relative to the size of their economies.¹ The number of actors taking purely domestic actions is likely even greater.

This wave of action via cooperative initiatives bolsters 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 signals to governments and markets that climate action is real, encouraging more ambitious commitments. Third, it allows a wide array of actors to experiment with climate policies, develop expertise, and share the resulting knowledge with peers around the world. Fourth, it builds a positive narrative around climate solutions that focuses on pragmatic steps here and now.

How can the UNFCCC help bring cooperative initiatives to an even higher level of scale and ambition? More thinking is needed to design the appropriate mechanism, including

¹ Thomas Hale and Louis Chambers, "Design considerations for a registry of sub- and non-state actions in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change." Blavatnik School of Government Policy Memo, February 2014. Available at: www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/news/policies-catalyse-climate-action

discussion among governments, and we and other observer organizations are actively working to define what it might entail. Several principles emerge from these discussions:

1. *Multiple layers building on existing initiatives:* Cooperative initiatives include a range of actors and actions. Instead of trying to lump these diverse initiatives into a common template, the UNFCCC could build a clearinghouse that aggregates sub-registries onto a common platform. A number of these sub-registries already exist (e.g. ICLEI's city platform). The role of the UNFCCC should not be to compete with or replicate these efforts, but to link them together. This would allow the clearinghouse to capture the full range of climate actions, while also embedding sub- and non-state actions in specific networks (e.g. issue-related networks such as those focusing on renewable energy or energy efficiency, actor-specific networks such as those focusing on cities, regional networks, etc.).
2. *A dynamic platform, not a static registry:* Cooperative initiatives are most effective when they represent an ongoing commitment by sub- and non-state actors to address climate change. Instead of recording one-off commitments, the UNFCCC should use its clearinghouse as the basis for an ongoing action network of sub- and non-state actors. The current portal is more of a static registry, therefore increasing its prominence and ensuring wider entry of up-to-date initiatives can create a more dynamic platform that enables cooperation across sectors and actors.
3. *Encourage accountability and reward ambition:* The UNFCCC may also wish to develop crosscutting programs to recognize particularly valuable commitments and enhance the transparency of initiatives. These could include a sub-registry of particularly high quality commitments that achieved a high level of ambition and were subject to more stringent inclusion criteria and reporting and compliance rules. It may also seek to recognize and provide incentives for action by issuing prizes.
4. *Complements, not alternatives:* Finally, it is important to determine the relationship between the sub- and non-state actions included in the clearinghouse, and the inter-state treaty negotiations. While cities, companies, and others can facilitate, catalyze, and inspire national action, they cannot substitute for it. The UNFCCC needs to be clear that cooperative initiatives contribute to and enhance Parties' implementation efforts, and are not substitutes for national contributions, nor are they additional obligations that countries are expected to deliver.

We believe that cooperative initiatives are an important part of bridging the pre-2020 ambition gap and advancing ADP workstream 2. Once the design of the mechanism is more clear, in our view the UNFCCC Secretariat is best positioned to implement this program. We therefore invite the ADP to consider expanding the Secretariat's mandate to further paragraph 5(a) of decision 1/CP.19, and suggest that supportive governments allocate the modest resources building this platform would require.