

ICLEI's Response to the letter of the High-Level Champions on How to Improve the Marrakech Partnership for Enhancing Ambition

31 July 2020

PREAMBLE

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability welcomes the decision of COP25 in 2019 to extend of the mandate of the High Level Champions and Marrakech Partnership until 2025 as the elevation of the recognition of the global climate action agenda and engagement of stakeholders being an integral element of the Paris Agreement.

While this achievement of builds on the intensive efforts of stakeholders, Champions, Parties and the UNFCCC Secretariat since 2016, it also culminates a broader mobilization dating back to 2012, starting with the WorkStream-2 negotiations of the Ad-Hoc Working Group on Durban Platform on Enhanced Action and evolved through the Lima – Paris Action Agenda.

This new era of global climate action will coincide with the second NDCs, the first half of the UN Decade for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Taking into account heightened expectations, significant challenges, pressing emergencies as well as the enormous potential of the Urban World for the ongoing transformation of the humanity towards a low-carbon, high –resilient civilization, it becomes essential that this new era has to be based on a much holistic, inclusive and ambitious approach.

Pursuant to its active engagement in all phases of the journey of the global climate action agenda, ICLEI commends the efforts of the High Level Champions to seek inputs from stakeholders at such an early stage.

ICLEI proudly presents its inputs as below, and reiterates its commitment to actively mobilize its expertise and network, as well as facilitate the engagement of the constituency local and regional governments and their networks, pursuant to its role as the focal point of Local Governments and Municipal Authorities Constituency to the UNFCCC and Human Settlements Thematic Group.

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ICLEI – Local Governments for
Sustainability is a global network of
more than 1,750 local and regional
governments committed to
sustainable urban development.

1. How would you define success of the High-Level Champions and the Marrakech Partnership in terms of enhancing ambition in the next 5 years and beyond?

1. Aligning Global Climate Action into NDCs

Between 2016 and 2020, MPGCA was only mandated in relation to raise the pre-2020 ambition, which was defined by the limited vision of the NDCs that were all developed without taking into account transformative vision of 1.5oC and climate neutrality goals as well as provisions for stakeholder engagement of the Paris Agreement.

In the pre-2020 era, the focus was more on the individual efforts of sectors or stakeholders.

In the 2020-2025 period, the MPGCA should seek for effective engagement in the 2nd NDCs.

The release of the Action Pathways by November 2020 provides an excellent opportunity to enable and encourage interested Parties to reflect these pathways into their upcoming 2nd NDCs expected to be presented by COP26 in November 2021.

The quantitative and qualitative assessment of the integration of Action Pathways as well as commitments under the Race-To-Zero Campaign into the 2nd NDC, and evolution of this progress in time, should be the most overarching success criteria of the MPGCA until 2025.

2. Expanding community of Global Climate Action

Reaching to the 1.5oC and climate neutrality goals of the Paris Agreement needs an immense global mobilization.

Considering the gap between the current ambitions and level recommended by the scientific community, it is clear that global climate action should reach out to a broader community, beyond the usual suspects.

The narrative, the tools, and mechanisms should be designed so that those who have never been involved or informed about climate action should be able to feel the benefits of the transformative power climate action and find a role for themselves in this process.

3. Tracking progress

All scientific evidences signal the acceleration of the global warming and its dire impacts.

MPGCA should be able to demonstrate that the increased mobilization in global climate action brings benefit to the people, for the communities and the planet so that committed stakeholders can be encouraged to accelerate their efforts.

While the world is getting closer to the edge of its tipping points of the global climate system, MPGCA should also be able to demonstrate that different sectors and stakeholders as well as governments at all levels, communities and institutions are also shifting to a new era and those who are out of this transformation are on the losing side of the history.

2. How can the High-Level Champions and the Marrakech Partnership add the most value and complement existing efforts to drive ambition and transformation in the next 5 years and beyond?

1. Bridge to NDCs

There exist numerous projects and initiatives by many partners and stakeholders to support NDCs.

Pursuant to its role under the UNFCCC, MPGCA should demonstrate an added value by connecting the Thematic Action Pathways partners to the government experts who lead the design and implementation of NDCs.

Over the past years, the interaction of the Thematic Groups with the Parties have been extremely limited, or only informed indirectly through the communications channeled by the UNFCCC Secretariat and Champions.

After the conclusion of 2020 Action Pathways, MPGCA could consider to announce a call to interested Parties to connect them to the partners involved in the Thematic Groups so that they can start consultations on how these pathways can be support, complement, and enhance ongoing or upcoming NDCs.

2. Provide recognition and benefits

Many partners or stakeholders involved in the MPGCA process are relying on their own institutional, political or financial resources to support the work of the Champions and the MPGCA.

The current recognition at the COPs or some documents has limited influence in to the overall visibility of the partners, especially beyond the UNFCCC circles.

Introduction of new tools and mechanisms to provide more concrete recognition and benefits at numerous national or global processes may motivate existing partners to accelerate their efforts, and connect to new actors.

3. Introduce transformative vision

The sectors, relations, technologies, institutions, communities of the world that complies with the 1.5oC and climate neutrality goals will be much different than what we live in or aware of today. MPGCA and Champions should be seen as the lighthouse that connects todays stakeholders to this evolving world so that transformation can be accelerated.

3. How can the High-Level Champions enhance collaboration between Parties and non-Party stakeholders to further catalyze global climate action?

- a) How can Parties benefit from the action resulting from the Global Climate Action movement and how can this action best be reflected in the work of the High-Level Champions?

There is a clear need for Parties to raise their ambition to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. As already underlined by the vision of the Paris Agreement, this is beyond the capacities, mandates and resources of the national governments. By exposing themselves to the cutting edge solutions and stakeholders developed under the MPGCA, Parties can have the opportunity to reflect these efforts and processes to their national contexts and facilitate engagement of their relevant stakeholders in these efforts. These **new and additional processes may help Parties to plan for NDCs** to have higher ambitions and demonstrate concrete progress in implementing the existing ones.

- b) How can the COP and the UNFCCC process be more effective in the collaboration between Parties and non-Party stakeholders to further catalyze global climate action?

1. Advancing the new organigram by connecting Global Climate Action to the UNFCCC processes

As of 1 April 2020, the UNFCCC Secretariat introduced a new organigram to comply with the delivery of the Paris Agreement. This new approach opens doors to connect the work of the MPGCA and Champions to other process, institutions, bodies and teams within the UNFCCC, such as Observer Constituencies, Action for Climate Empowerment, Local and Indigenous People Platform etc. Creating appropriate synergies with the work of MPGCA and Champions could enable the diffusion of Action Pathways to the rest of the global climate community and in return, introduce new elements to improve the pathways as well.

2. mobilize new UNFCCC resources including through Regional Climate Weeks and Momentum for Change and acknowledge voluntary contributions of Thematic Groups

Thematic Groups are channeling a significant amount of financial resources to the MPGCA, by mobilizing their staff time to the working groups.

According to some estimates, these in-kind contributions of partners may collectively exceed easily several six-digit figures in a year. These in-kind contributions should be reflected into the budget of UNFCCC and MPGCA as inputs from stakeholders.

The numerous fundraising and visibility efforts of the UNFCCC Secretariat such as the Regional Climate Weeks or Momentum for Change Awards or similar others should be designed such that these in-kind contributions are compensated, at least to a certain extent, as appropriate.

3. Direct Party/Thematic Groups Dialogues beyond COPs

The connection of the work of the MPGCA Partners to the Parties and across each others is usually achieved at COPs.

However, this is already too late to change any national plan or action, and the traditional intense agenda of COPs does not enable effective dialogues. MPGCA and Champions should explore additional opportunities throughout the year so that these exchanges can be then fed back to the NDC process or national level action as appropriate.

ICLEI is planning to create such opportunities during the Daring Cities – The Global Virtual Forum of Urban Leaders Tackling on Climate Emergency to be held on 7-28 October 2020 .

ICLEI would be ready to design this as a regular element of the annual agenda of MPGCA so that both Thematic Groups and Parties can interact with a broad audience of the local and regional governments.

4. Ensure long term continuity and clarity

Currently, the work of the MPGCA heavily depends on the individual resources and capacities of the Champions, which at time may be even more limited, compared to the COP Presidencies who have much more institutional power and public resources.

The rotating modality for COP Presidencies may also result in cases where Champions may not have any national support either.

The 2020-2021 Work Programme of Champions is an important experience by introducing new elements like Support Teams , but it is not clear whether coming Champions will be able to enjoy such external support. It would be extremely helpful to ensure continuity of such processes in order to ensure long term impacts, in particular for concrete outcomes by 2025.

c) How could the High-Level Champions through their work in accelerating action and ambition of non-Party stakeholders most effectively contribute to the global stock-take of the Paris Agreement

MPGCA and Champions have the advantage to be connected to and informed from different sectors and stakeholders which can enable them **to observe the global trends**. A timely assessment of such trends may be helpful to inform Parties ahead of the global stocktake and in particular introduce a reality-check with corresponding sectors or stakeholders at the national level.

4. On the basis of experience so far, how can the Marrakech Partnership be improved for enhancing ambition, including through new and existing tools?

1. Reshaping High Level Leadership Council by appointing Regional and National Climate Action Ambassadors as well as assigning Local Climate Action Stewards/Custodians

Over the past 4 years, the High Leadership Council met only once and except a few, there were very little ownership from its members and almost no interactions with Thematic Groups.

It may be helpful to introduce a new mandate and composition of this body in order to mobilize the appropriate political support.

One option could be to appoint Regional Ambassador that are defined by the rotating groups hosting COP Presidencies, independent from the COP Presidency so that this appointee does not have to wait until the announcement of the COP Presidency. Each Party can also be asked to nominate a National Ambassador which can relate to the Champions directly.

And finally, Champions may invite interested Mayors, Governors or other local political leaders to act as Local Climate Action Stewards/Custodians so that the work of UNFCCC and Champions can be diffused into each and every community in the world, which can then be fed into the work of the Thematic Groups or Race-To-Zero Campaign as appropriate.

2. Assign UNFCCC Global Climate Action Day/Week/Month building on the experience of November Dialogues

As being one of the 3 Rio Conventions, UNFCCC is an important legacy of the 1992 Earth Summit. The other Rio Conventions, namely biodiversity-CBD and desertification-UNCCD have announced global observance days as 22 May and 17 June respectively. UNEP celebrates 5 June as the legacy of 1972 Stockholm Conference.

Others include 22 April Earth Day or 21 March and 22 March Water and Forest Days. UN Habitat celebrates Urban October with Habitat and Cities days on 5 and 31 October respectively. Very recently CCAC and WHO managed to announce international clean air day.

UNFCCC is the only multilateral environmental agreement that does not celebrate or observe any specific Day/Week/Month for Climate Action. The Climate Week in New York City is trying to fill this gap in New York around the UN High Level Days in September. The Climate Marches by NGOS before or during COPs are also helpful but nce again, does not result in concrete actions. Assigning such observance days are helpful to mobilize global awareness and action and as such MPGCA and Champions may consider to assign one for Global Climate Action.