

# International Symposium and High-level Event on Action for Climate Empowerment

Pamhagen, Austria

13–14 October 2019

**Draft concept note**

## Background

The Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) agenda and its six elements—education, training, public awareness, public participation, public access to information and international and regional cooperation—are fundamental requirements for the successful implementation of the Paris Agreement (Article 12, Paris Agreement, COP 21 in 2015). While ACE has been seen as a topic primarily concerning national governments and some specific stakeholder groups so far, it is clear that its full implementation will require a much wider involvement of stakeholders from across the public and private sectors, and civil society.

The private sector has been largely absent from ACE discussions. There is both an opportunity and responsibility for companies and corporations to integrate ACE as a fundamental element of their staff support and corporate responsibility efforts. This also applies to the public sector and civil society, where the responsibilities of different organizations, ministries, or departments may not be directly related to climate action, but where everybody in their individual and professional capacities can move the agenda within their area of influence towards a more climate friendly society.

## Context

2019 has been dubbed “The Year of Ambition” with momentum being sought to increase ambition and participation by all parts of society in the climate action agenda. This is spearheaded by the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, who is organizing the Climate Action Summit in New York in conjunction with the opening of the UN General Assembly on 23 September 2019. The outcomes of the Climate Action Summit will feed into the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process through the 25th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP 25) in Santiago, Chile, in December 2019. The Action for Climate Empowerment agenda is crucial for raising ambition and scaling up climate action. Thus, the importance of mobilizing support to ACE.



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## Description

The International Symposium aims to catalyse wider engagement in, and support to, implementation of the Action for Climate Empowerment agenda, specifically Article 12 of the Paris Agreement and its related Katowice Climate Package, which established the high-level political consensus on the importance of fostering education, training, public awareness, public participation, public access to information, and international cooperation to address the climate crisis.

The Symposium will bring together ACE national focal points, representatives from governments, international organizations, the private sector, local and regional authorities, academia, youth and philanthropic organizations to discuss how to raise the profile of, and mobilize support to, the ACE agenda in order to raise ambition and accelerate the implementation of the Paris Agreement. The High-level Event will mobilize global decision-makers who will commit to climate action in their areas of influence by signing the Burgenland Declaration on Action for Climate Empowerment. Interested countries, companies and other key stakeholders are invited to commit/pledge to provide substantial support to the ACE agenda and to the ACE national focal points.

## Methodology

This two-day Symposium and High-level Event will be organized in two parts:

- The Symposium will take place for one and a half days on Sunday, 13<sup>th</sup> and Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> October in the morning.
- The High-level Event will take place in the afternoon of Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> October where dignitaries, including the Austrian Chancellor, UN Climate Change Executive Secretary, the Federal Minister for Sustainability and Tourism, Austria, the Governor of the Austrian state of Burgenland, the Diplomatic Corps in Austria, CEOs of companies, as well as media, will be invited.



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## Expected outcomes

The Paris Agreement (COP21) and the following Katowice Climate Package (COP24) established the high-level political consensus that ACE is a key component for successfully addressing the climate crisis and committed all countries to undertake actions to that end. The current challenge is how to implement this commitment. It seems clear that although all Parties to the UNFCCC have committed to establishing national ACE Focal Points to drive the agenda at the national level, these ACE Focal Points are often working with little or no support and struggle to even make the ACE agenda known nationally and locally. The support and involvement of the wider society is therefore critical for success.

Public and private actors, including the wider society, can engage in this vital work in two specific ways:

- First, by committing to support and implement ACE within their own organization or sphere of influence, be it in a company, governmental department or ministry, city hall, a civil society organization, or across a network. Such a commitment should go towards enabling practical information, awareness, education and involvement of all colleagues and peers in climate action where it matters.
- Second, by creating a group of ACE supporters, who directly support the work of national ACE Focal Points and the UNFCCC Secretariat to catalyse climate action as part of the ACE agenda. This group would take a more prominent role in building the support needed to implement ACE at the national and international levels, including by increasing the support for ACE through diplomacy.

The foundation for such a commitment will be a new Global Declaration in support of ACE, open for all stakeholders to sign, as companies, organizations, cities, government departments and similar. This Burgenland Declaration on Action for Climate Empowerment will be elaborated and launched at the ACE Symposium in Pamhagen, Burgenland, Austria, on 13-14 October 2019.

## Participants

The ACE Symposium is organized for ACE National Focal Points, representatives from governments, intergovernmental organizations, non-Party stakeholders, the private sector, local and regional authorities, academia, young people, and philanthropic organizations.



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## Place and venue

The Symposium and High-level Event will take place in Pamhagen, Austria, at the Eco-resort Vila Vita. <https://www.vilavitapannonia.at/en/events.html>

## Organizers

The Symposium and High-level Event are organized by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Sustainability and Tourism, in cooperation with UN Climate Change Secretariat and in collaboration with the state of Burgenland and the Austrian-German Friendship Association.

## Contact

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