

Reflections on the Future of the Marrakech Partnership

At its twenty-fifth session, the Conference of the Parties (COP) acknowledged the important role of non-Party stakeholders, welcomed the continuation of the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action and decided to continue appointing High-Level Champions until 2025, requesting the Champions to explore ways to improve work under the Marrakech Partnership for enhancing ambition. In response to this request, the High-Level Champions have been conducting a robust and thorough process for the past year, and will continue to do so in 2021.

Despite the delay in COP 26 due to COVID-19, the work of the Marrakech Partnership and the High-Level Champions was on full speed in 2020. Building on work carried out last year with the launch of the Climate Ambition Alliance and the first version of the Climate Action Pathways, the Marrakech Partnership stakeholders and the Champions have continued to ramp up work across all sectors and with all types of actors. As laid out in the [work programme for 2020-2021](#), the High-Level Champions have focused on: significantly increasing non-Party commitments and action toward achieving a resilient net-zero economy through the Race to Zero campaign – and the development of a sister campaign, Race to Resilience; working with a diverse range of influential actors within and across sectors to clarify and align around a shared vision and roadmap to achieve net zero; fostering collaboration in support of the concrete actions needed from Parties and non-Party stakeholders to activate the ambition loop in order to trigger the rapid systemic change needed to achieve the Paris Agreement goals; and amplifying the progress and evidence of this exponential transformation already underway.

Through vitalized collaboration among Parties and non-Party stakeholders, across and within sectors and through all levels of government, the High-Level Champions intend to drive systemic breakthroughs in all major sectors, targeting breakthroughs in at least ten sectors in 2021. Doing so requires identifying key actors, aligning them around a shared vision, and getting a critical mass across the system to commit to doing their part.

Figure 4 to the right showcases the High-Level Champions' priorities in driving the changes in the Marrakech Partnership in order to enhance ambition and climate action.

Figure 4

Key priorities from the High-Level Champions



To comply with the COP 25 request, the High-Level Champions also conducted an open process to gather feedback, including 42 written submissions from Parties, groups of Parties (representing in total more than 100 Parties), non-Party stakeholders and meetings with negotiating groups. They have also received input and feedback through informal discussions with hundreds of stakeholders, and have been learning by doing together throughout the year – all of which has begun to crystallize a vision for how best to strengthen the Global Climate Action Agenda to be a driver of action in the short-term, to ensure the Paris Agreement long-term goals are met.

A number of core themes and messages have emerged clearly in the feedback and discussions:

1 Be Bold.

The time is now to move into implementation, accelerate progress and work together to raise ambition for driving down emissions, building resilience and scaling up finance. The science is clear, the Paris framework has set a clear direction, the negotiations of the rulebook are progressing to be completed, there is no time to waste, and there is support from all sides to strengthen the Marrakech Partnership into a central driver of implementation and action.

2 Innovate.

Parties and non-Parties alike have expressed their support for innovation and change, recognizing the shift into a new phase of the climate crisis and our collective response to it. While feedback on the Marrakech Partnership' activities over the past five years has been positive, it was mentioned that the Champions must be creative and innovative on the look ahead, to ensure the Marrakech Partnership is updated and fit-for-purpose at this critical time.

3 Strengthen Party and non-Party connection.

Successful implementation of the Paris Agreement depends on all actors coming together. The Marrakech Partnership is a unique and important bridge between Parties and non-Parties, and both are asking that it be set up to do more to help bring them together. The High-Level Champions are being called to help link the growing momentum and action in the non-negotiation space more directly in support of NDCs, National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), and long-term strategies' implementation and enhancement. These instruments can also be helpful in driving a green resilient recovery.

4 Increase inclusion and diversity.

A broader diversity of actors should be meaningfully and consistently involved. It is clear that more involvement and representation from developing countries and an updated structure that empowers local actors in all regions, connecting them to each other and to the global structure, are needed.

5 Establish a sustained, coherent structure.

Many have identified the need for a more permanent and predictable infrastructure to support continuity of implementation and foster genuine and sustained solutions-oriented collaboration among Parties and non-Party stakeholders. The Marrakech Partnership must support working together in a regular rhythm throughout the year and around the world to drive real action on the ground.

6 Strengthen accountability, tracking and narrative.

There were repeated calls to the global climate action community to help provide a widely understood and shared sense of progress, both to ensure accountability and build a stronger and compelling narrative around opportunity and leadership, what is working and where, and how all the activity and action comes together toward a common goal, including contributing substantively and constructively to the global stocktake.



Photo: NOAA.

Improving the Marrakech Partnership to Drive Action

It is clear that the Marrakech Partnership is a unique platform to foster collaboration, align influential actors around a shared vision to galvanize action and drive truly systemic change across the economy, as is the role of the High-Level Champions. As the formal space for non-Party stakeholders in the UNFCCC process, it must serve as a bridge between Parties and non-Parties to accelerate the positively reinforcing ambition loop on both sides, enabling them to accelerate the collective implementation of the Paris Agreement.

The mandate of the High-Level Champions and the Marrakech Partnership have been extended through 2025, a critical period in which there is a need to see a step change in climate action and progress in order to get on track to limit warming to 1.5°C. The improved, evolved and updated Marrakech Partnership must be a key enabler of that step change, starting on the road to COP 26 in 2021 and carrying us to this decisive decade of implementation.

As the UN Secretary General says, there is a need to enter a new era of “inclusive multilateralism”. Now is the time to build and refine a new infrastructure for ambitious climate action that will steadily build momentum across the economy. Improving the Marrakech Partnership is not only about updating the governance or structure of this work stream. The High-Level Champions’ aim is to contribute to the Parties for a step change in the way the world comes together to address climate change, connecting the massive movement of global climate action underway with the formal process under UNFCCC. The Champions intend to kick

off for the decade of delivery with a COP 26 that is energized, inclusive and solutions-oriented, and that sets increased ambition and bold action.

The core principles around which the Champions are organizing the breakthrough approach to a stronger and nimbler architecture that serves as the backbone for climate action globally, regionally and locally have the following guidelines:

Be guided by science – To limit warming to 1.5°C and curb the impacts of climate change, scientific evidence dictates a carbon neutral world should be achieved by 2050 at the latest. As such, the goal of a net-zero resilient world is the guiding star of the Champions’ work, and the base of their definition for ambition, as the Race to Zero and Race to Resilience campaigns show.

Take a systems approach – In order for increased ambition and bold action to be realized, common pathways must be defined, relevant actors must be mapped – as well as potential barriers and enablers – and all levers should be utilized to push for change.

Foster vitalized collaboration – Any potential divides should be bridged, so as to best connect actors within and across systems and support them where they need it most, facilitating coordination, reducing fragmentation and bringing new initiatives together.

Drive exponential change – Analyses around the pace and shape of technological change should be used as examples to ensure that the Climate Action Pathways and any other plans are informed by a rigorous understanding of the dynamics of exponential growth that drive the diffusion and deployment of technologies and solutions. Similarly, sectoral S curves defining the technology adoption rates needed to deliver sectoral pathways should be provided to encourage more ambitious action.

Accelerate the ambition loop – Aligning non-Party stakeholders with the ambition mechanisms of the Paris Agreement can help accelerate the positive feedback loop in which bold government policies and non-Party stakeholder leadership reinforce each other, and together they can take climate action to the next level. Likewise, it is important to strengthen the support from the non-state actor community to Parties so that they can identify and accelerate opportunities for ambition enhancement.

Maximize diversity and inclusion – Bringing in all actors from across sectors and society, and from around the world in a transparent way will ensure inclusive and creative problem solving, in a platform where all feel safe, empowered and have a role to play.

Looking ahead to the Global Stocktake in 2023, already next year the High-Level Champions intend to develop and put into practice a strong, objective, transparent and replicable process for assessing the state of systems transformation in key sectors with clear linkages to NDCs and the needs of Parties. This is to ensure that the non-Party stakeholders provide concrete and actionable information into the stocktake, and align themselves around opportunities to accelerate progress and support increased ambition in the next five year cycle. The first such ‘non-Party stakeholder stocktake of progress’ should be published ahead of COP 26 and become a key annual deliverable of the Marrakech Partnership.

The Champions intend to create an open source set of supporting tools and progress indicators, building on the Marrakech Partnership Climate Action Pathways, in order to scale up support to Parties in their development and implementation of enhanced NDCs, NAPs, and long-term strategies, around which the climate action community can align and organize their work, including collaboration with financial institutions and policymakers.

They also aim to create a renewed architecture for the Marrakech Partnership that establishes an agile, but durable infrastructure, with a balance representation around the world, supporting the work of implementation of the Paris Agreement, bridging between Parties and non-Party stakeholders throughout the year. For this agile, durable and balanced architecture to be possible, it should include a sustainable and predictable support infrastructure in the UNFCCC secretariat and in the Champions team to assist the High-Level Champions and the Marrakech Partnership. Support should also be provided in underrepresented regions to amplify

connectivity and work throughout the year in support of non-Party stakeholders working on climate action. The intention is not to duplicate existing non-Party initiatives and work, but to add value and provide the central backbone around which the community can organize itself through shared system-wide goals and pathways, address gaps and to strengthen connectivity between Champions year on year so each Champion can hit the ground running.

The High-Level Champions are also planning to review and refresh criteria for participation in the Marrakech Partnership that embeds alignment with a 1.5 °C resilient future, and update governance focused on science-based ambition, inclusive, vitalized collaboration and solutions oriented-convenings and work programs.

The decade ahead will be crucial for achieving the Paris Agreement goals – a small and closing window in which the need for urgent action can still be met in time, if collective action is taken swiftly and with shared purpose and direction. This calls for leadership in all corners of society. The Marrakech Partnership and the Champions can and must provide a core and go-to space in which that leadership can converge, collaborate and execute together. In order for this to happen, the High-Level Champions look forward to continuing to work closely with Parties and non-Party stakeholders to refine this vision and develop a concrete plan in the early part of 2021.