



Report

Stepping up climate action at home

How local governments, the private sector, and civil society can work domestically help deliver NDCs and raise ambition

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Summary: *As national governments look to step up climate ambition by 2020, they have an enormous opportunity to draw on the dynamism of local governments, the private sector, and civil society in their countries. These actors, in turn, have a key role to play in mobilizing at the domestic level to create conditions that facilitate higher national ambition. Indeed, many around the world are already doing so. While every country's circumstances are unique, this report draws from a wide range of experiences to map domestic climate action around the world. By identifying the range of forms domestic level climate action can take, as well as best practices, barriers, and solutions, it seeks to inform and catalyze further ambition in the lead-up to 2020.*

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“All hands on deck” needed for national climate action

The need to enhance climate ambition by 2020 is clearer than ever. As the impacts of climate change continue to mount, the IPCC’s forthcoming report on reaching the 1.5°C target shows the need for—and tremendous benefits of—rapid, aggressive action. Fortunately, this growing imperative for action is being matched by an expanding arsenal of solutions highlighted by the 2018 Talanoa Dialogue’s focus on “How do we get there?”¹

Many of these opportunities are being developed, adopted, and championed by local governments (including cities, states, provinces, regions, etc.), the private sector, and civil society, either independently or through transnational networks and initiatives, and often in partnership with national governments and international organizations. This groundswell of climate action has become a critical element of the UNFCCC process through the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action.² In 2018, the Global Climate Action Summit in California highlights just how important cities, states and regions, business, investors, and other actors are. Indeed, the most comprehensive global report on climate action by these actors shows that multi-stakeholder cooperative partnerships could, if delivered with maximum ambition alongside NDCs, be enough to close the emissions gap for 1.5C by 2030.³

Cities, states and regions, business, investors, civil society groups, and other “non-Party actors” play a critical role by delivering progress on the ground, by directly reducing emissions, and in the real economy, by driving change in economic systems and technology. But they also support the politics of enhancing ambition and generate new opportunities for *national* governments to strengthen implementation and step up ambition. A previous Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions report has outlined how this mutual reinforcement can support an upward spiral of ambition.⁴

Indeed, we see a parallel domestic groundswell of climate action across many countries. From We Are Still In, America’s Pledge, and the US Climate Alliance in the United States to the Alliance of Pioneer Peaking Cities in China, from Japan’s Climate Initiative to the Argentine Network of Municipalities against Climate Change, domestic stakeholders are delivering results and pushing higher ambition at home. However, domestic climate action is not always connected to transnational networks or recognized in the UNFCCC process, such as on the NAZCA portal. Strengthening the grassroots of the groundswell of climate action, and better linking national action and global networks, is critical to maximizing its potential.

¹ UNFCCC. “2018 Talanoa Dialogue Platform,”
<https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/2018-talanoa-dialogue-platform>

² For further information see: <http://climateaction.unfccc.int/>

³ Data Driven Yale, New Climate Institute, and PBL Environment Assessment Agency. 2018. “Global Climate Action from Cities, Regions, and Businesses,”

http://datadriven.yale.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/YALE-NCI-PBL_Global_climate_action.pdf

⁴ Climate Groundswell. 2018. “Step up together: How local governments, the private sector, and civil society can help countries implement climate action and step up ambition in 2018 and beyond,”

<http://www.climategroundswell.org/blog-test/2018/4/17/memorandum-step-up-together>

To facilitate this process, this report draws on a literature review and range of expert interviews to answer three questions:

1. What forms does domestic climate action by local governments, the private sector, and civil society take? Who are the key players, and how do they interact with national governments?
2. Drawing from these experiences, what best practices can countries adopt between now and 2020 to maximize the benefit they can derive from the groundswell of climate action?
3. What barriers exist to expanded and more powerful climate action from local governments and the private sector? How can these be overcome?

Mapping domestic-level climate action: what forms does it take in key countries?

At a domestic level, local governments, the private sector, and civil society groups involved in climate action interact with national governments to enhance ambition in a number of ways. They take actions to reduce emissions, adapt, and build resilience through their own authority and resources. They build public awareness and support for climate action. They also make recommendations and contributions to national policy programs. The nature of these interactions differs according to 1) which actors are pushing for greater ambition; 2) which actors have resources and authority over policymaking and implementation; 3) and the degree to which the sub-/non-state action is integrated into the national climate policymaking.

This report identifies six main forms of interaction (*Table 1*). Categorizing these various forms of interaction allows us to compare developments across countries. However, it is important to recognize that these categories are not mutually exclusive, their boundaries are porous, and they often combine and change over time. For example, a national government may consult local actors in the policy development stage, and delegate during implementation (e.g. India). A change in interaction dynamics over time also can align with a change in leadership (e.g. USA).

There is not one type of interaction that is inherently better at enhancing national ambition. Instead, the

Argentina – How a national government is building strong connections to local actors

Argentina's administration changed late 2015, and with the new president, Mauricio Macri of the center-right party Republican Proposal, climate change has taken on a new, strategic dimension, and has found strong political support. The first step in this transformation was revising the country's NDC through a new, participatory process. The Environment and Sustainable Development Ministry was created in December 2015, strengthening the institutional structure for climate change governance, specifically the ability for consultation and knowledge sharing amongst non-state actors. Ratification of Argentina's NDC was accompanied by the creation of the National Cabinet of Climate Change, made up of 12 ministries, which became fully functional in March 2016. The National Cabinet of Climate Change allows for greater consultation through formal platforms; the provinces are consulted through a federal council of provincial representatives, and NGOs, work associations, private, academic and scientific sectors and municipalities through the Extended Table of the National Cabinet of Climate Change.

appropriate mix of interactions depends on a country’s political situation and constitutional arrangement. In any setting, effective action by local governments, the private sector, and civil society can drive delivery and ambition.

Table 1: Interactions between national governments and local governments, the private sector, and civil society

	Interaction	Description	Illustrative examples
More state-led initiatives	Consultation	National governments consult with sub/non-state actors on national climate policy (including NDCs)	India, Brazil, EU, many others
	Delegation	Sub/non-state actor are tasked with specific targets to implement national policies	China, India
	Orchestration	National governments call on sub/non-state actors to act, galvanize with platforms, resources, and convening power	Sweden, USA (Obama Administration)
	Vertical integration	National governments fully incorporate sub/non-state actors in design of national policies	Argentina, Canada, South Africa
More sub/non-state actor coalitions	Advocacy coalitions	Sub/non-state actors come together to leverage their own voice and actions to accelerate implementation, build public support and engage with national governments in support of stronger national policies. This can either individually, in peer groups, or, most ambitiously, as multi-stakeholder	Japan (Japan Climate Initiative), Mexico (Alianza para la Acción Climática de Guadalajara)
	Do it ourselves	Sub/non-state actors aim to compensate for lacklustre national ambition/action through their own actions and public positioning	USA (We Are Still In, America’s Pledge)

Best practices: How to maximize the domestic potential of local governments, the private sector, and civil society?

Though national contexts vary significantly, countries can still learn a lot from the experiences of others. As the examples below demonstrate, best practices can apply across all different types of countries.



1. Consult widely to understand what ambition is possible, to identify scalable innovations, and to generate policy recommendations.

When national governments consult with all stakeholders they gain a more accurate picture of what ambition is possible, and also identify policies and practices that can be scaled nationally. Knowing what non-state actors are doing creates reference points for governments, which can translate directly into their ability to set higher NDCs, for example, by quantifying emissions through the Initiative for Climate Action Transparency.⁵ If local government, private sector, and civil society commitments are already delivering a certain level of emissions reductions, national governments will be able to set even higher targets. Furthermore, in a climate policy landscape where innovations are created and tested at sub-national levels, consultation also allows cities, states and regions, businesses, and other actors to share best practices and ideas with peers.

In addition, consultation processes allow governments to receive recommendations on how they can better design national climate policies that allow for cities, states and regions, and the private sector to go further, faster. In many cases, national governments control important fiscal or regulatory choices that affect the ability of local actors to take ambitious actions. For example, lengthy and complex procedures for licensing tend to impede engagement by smaller private sector actors, and rapidly changing regulations have created reluctance on the part of private actors and civil society to make new investments. Widespread consultation brings these barriers to climate action to the attention of national governments.

In order to maximize the benefits of consultation, the consultation process must be rigorous and inclusive. Consultations should be announced well in advance, so domestic stakeholders have ample time to plan their attendance given limited capacity. This year's Talanoa Dialogues have demonstrated one useful format that such consultations can take.

Consultation: National governments consult with sub/non-state actors on national climate policy.

⁵ A set of guidelines for how national governments can quantify sub- and non-state actors' contributions is available here. <http://www.climateactiontransparency.org/icat-guidance/non-state-subnational-action/>. Note that methods and data sources for this challenge is rapidly developing.

India

All of the major organizations that work on climate issues in India were invited to participate in the consultation process leading up to the 2015 NDC formation. These actors belonged to state governments, academic institutes, think tanks, and non-governmental organizations, with the major players in the Indian climate governance landscape. In the data collection stage of the consultation process, the government asked researchers to model projected emissions and warming. In order to complement the modelling results, relevant ministries, such as the Ministry of Power, were asked to provide information on the current status and future scope of emissions. These ministries, in turn, gathered information from departments and industries, including oil companies. Therefore, in addition to widespread consultation, bottom-up data was gathered during the 2015 NDC formation.

European Union

The International Climate Governance Coalition, comprised of the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Committee of the Regions, and the Climate Chance Association organized a European Dialogue on Non-State Climate Action in April 2018.⁶ This event, part of the European regional Talanoa Dialogue, sought to promote the voices of civil society, companies, workers, and regions and cities. The Dialogue provided a platform to boost the visibility of small-scale projects and build awareness of non-state climate actions. The outcomes from the meeting underlined the need for more synergies between national governments and non-state actors, and the potential for greatly enhancing climate ambition and action by connecting the capacity of government structures, resources and expertise with the power of local governments, the private sector, and civil society. Meeting organizers called for recognition of non-state actors as equal partners to state actors in climate action, and participants stressed that the EU has the potential to be a leader in this regard. In June 2018, the European Commission organized the “EU for Talanoa” Conference. Discussions during this conference underlined the need to extend climate action beyond national governments and focused on how to harness bottom-up approaches. The discussions also highlighted the importance of broad-based consultation to design and deliver ambitious climate policies. The aim of this consultative exercise is to build a more robust system for climate action by all actors in the EU.

Canada

Canada’s NDC report explains that the national government’s consultation process engaged Indigenous people, experts, stakeholders and the public, but it is unclear how these interests were actually incorporated into the resulting national climate policy: the Pan-Canadian Framework (PCF). The negotiations with the provinces, on the other hand, were extremely important, as development of the PCF would not have been constitutionally possible without the support of these sub-state actors. Provinces were engaged through extensive high-level meetings. The First Ministers – the leaders of Canadian provinces and territories – were then tasked with hosting consultations. “Under the Vancouver Declaration,” the PCF reads, “First Ministers asked four federal-provincial-territorial working groups to work with Indigenous Peoples; to consult with the public, businesses and civil society; and to present options to act on climate change and enable clean growth.”⁷

⁶ For further information see:

<https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/documents/report/report-and-conclusions-european-dialogue-non-state-climate-action>

⁷ “Pan-Canadian Framework,” http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2017/eccc/En4-294-2016-eng.pdf



2. Forge implementation partnerships to deliver results faster and more efficiently

Achieving ambitious national climate targets can be challenging. Governments benefit when they can mobilize all stakeholders around this task. While each country's system of government differs, many countries are achieving results by forging implementation partnerships around NDCs and other climate targets. These partnerships can take a number of forms.

Orchestration: National governments call on sub/non-state actors to act, galvanize with platforms, resources, and convening power.

Sweden

Sweden is well-known for its ambitious climate policy, but it is less known how the government is leveraging all of society to deliver on this ambition. In 2015, ahead of the COP21, the Swedish government created Fossil Free Sweden⁸, a coordinating initiative with the goal of making Sweden carbon neutral by 2050. Although Fossil Free Sweden was created with government funding, it is independently coordinated. The initiative's coordinator travels across the country engaging with stakeholders in order to learn best practices being implemented in different regions, as well as encourage cities and businesses to sign up to NAZCA. Since January 2018, a climate law has been in effect that gives legal backing to the Fossil Free Sweden pledge. Simultaneously, the government provides financial support for local and regional climate solutions, distributing 700 million euros over the next 3 years.

Delegation: sub/non-state actors are tasked with specific targets to implement national policies.

China

The central government in China, including the State Council and National Development and Reform Council (NDRC), makes macro-policy decisions, although the newly created Ministry of Ecology and Environment may play a growing role. The national government sets overall climate targets and policy trajectories through the five-year plan. Sub-state actors, including provincial governments, cities, and industrial sectors, are consulted on targets and then tasked with designing regionally tailored policies to achieve the national targets.

Vertical integration from below (Canada) or above (South Africa): national governments fully incorporate sub/non-state actors in design of national policies.

⁸ For further information see: <http://fossilfritt-sverige.se/in-english/>

Canada

The PFC, Canada's national climate action plan, requires all provinces to be signatories. This decentralized structure means that targets are decided upon through negotiation with the provinces; and implementation of policy to achieve these targets is also done at a provincial level. Carbon pricing, for instance, will be mandated nationally, but will be implemented on a provincial and territorial level, and the provinces and territories will decide if the carbon price is a tax or an ETS. Therefore, increasing ambition also depends on support from the provinces, as provincial emissions are fully subsumed in the national policy. As noted above, Canadian climate policy prioritizes the vertical integration of the provinces and territories, but also creates space for the integration of other domestic stakeholders in a less binding fashion.

South Africa

The South African NDC report calls for the integration of sub-national and sector-level policy into climate action. Although progress on this action has been slow, there is a new climate change bill, which was under public comment until early August 2018. The new bill sets out tasks for provinces, municipalities, and economic sectors to integrate them into national climate action. The integration of these local actors into South Africa's NDC is made financially feasible by the country's Green Fund established in 2011. As outlined in a Green Growth Best Practice case study, "The Green Fund provides finance directly to projects through various financial instruments such as project and capital development grants, research and policy development grants, and concessional project development loans."⁹ Projects initiated by a wide-variety of non-state actors are funded by the Green Fund, including project developers, municipalities, provinces, the private sector, NGOs, government departments, and academic institutions.



3. Sub/Non-state actor coalitions to accelerate implementation and enhance ambition.

Coalitions of local governments, business, and civil society can be powerful advocates for enhancing ambition. The form these coalitions take depends on the domestic political circumstances in which they operate. **Advocacy coalitions** can operate in both lagging and leading states, and leverage domestic stakeholders' actions to enhance national policies. On the other hand, **"Do it ourselves" coalitions** operate to fill a vacuum of leadership or ambition in national government initiatives. In any setting, such coalitions can be critical drivers of enhancing ambition, and efforts are underway to build advocacy coalitions around the world (see Box "Alliances for Climate Action").

Advocacy coalitions sub/non-state actors come together to leverage their own voice and actions to accelerate implementation, build public support, and engage with national governments in support of national policies.

⁹GGBP. 2014. "South Africa's Green Fund," <https://bit.ly/2MiZARB>

Japan

While the Japanese government's NDC may not be as ambitious as it could be, municipal governments and a broad climate coalition in Japan are propelling decarbonization forward. Yokohama, a member of both ICLEI and C40 city networks, has committed to an 80% GHG emission reduction by 2050 compared to baseline year 2005. This has inspired other cities to announce ambitious emission reduction plans, including those set by Nigata, Hiroshima, Kitakyusyu, Kawasaki and Kobe¹⁰. In addition to these subnational efforts, the Japan Climate Initiative (JCI) has been recently launched as the first cross-sectoral coalition of domestic stakeholders in support of climate action in Japan. Established by over 100 Japanese companies, local governments, research institutions and NGOs, JCI aims to expand and accelerate efforts to build a decarbonized Japanese society. JCI aims to do so by: a) building public momentum to move the whole nation toward a decarbonized society; b) supporting the implementation of climate actions by JCI members; c) support a constructive dialogue with the national government to strengthen climate action by Japan; and d) communicate the climate action efforts of Japanese companies, local governments, and NGOs to the world and collaborate internationally.

Mexico

Subnational leaders in Mexico have also created a multi-stakeholder coalition to ensure the implementation of Mexico's pledge to reduce 22% of its greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and up to 36% with international support. Representatives from the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area (GMA), the second largest metropolitan area in Mexico, joined forces with over 30 Mexican entities - including the University of Guadalajara, the local governments of the GMA, the government of the state of Jalisco and the Mexican company Fortius - to establish the ***Alianza para la Acción Climática de Guadalajara***¹¹. The Alianza aims to accelerate climate action by encouraging individual actions by their own members and supporting the development of collective climate efforts that can allow alliance members to achieve more together than they would alone. The Alianza also aims to identify, together with the national government, enabling conditions that can facilitate additional actions by local actors, as well as to jointly explore opportunities for increasing the ambition of Mexico's NDC based on the opportunities that they see in Guadalajara and elsewhere in the country. Finally, the Alianza aims to collaborate with other actors in Mexico to expand the effort, and internationally to build momentum for climate action.

United States (Obama Administration)

Though the Obama Administration was committed to delivering a strong national pledge at COP21 in Paris, it faced domestic opposition from key groups and especially the Republican Party. The Obama White House therefore wanted to make the case to the public that climate action was both feasible and desirable. To that end it orchestrated a wide range of cities, businesses, states, and other actors to bring forward their own commitments both nationally and at COP21. These time-bound national initiatives then helped link US actors to broader, ongoing transnational networks.

“Do it ourselves” coalition: sub/non-state actors aim to compensate for lackluster national ambition and action through their own actions.

¹⁰ For further information: https://www.japanfs.org/en/news/archives/news_id032745.html

¹¹For further information: <https://alliancesforclimateaction.com>

United States (Trump Administration)

After the US announced its intent to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, a coalition of states, mayors, companies and academic institutions launched “We Are Still In”¹² with the aim to convey their commitment to advance the goals of the Paris Agreement through collaborative subnational action in the US. Launched with 1,200 signatories, the coalition has now grown to over 3,000 domestic stakeholders, with tribes, cultural institutions, health care professionals and faith institutions having joined the effort. Collectively, they represent 155 million Americans and constitute \$9.5 trillion of Gross Domestic Product.

Building on these efforts, America’s Pledge, chaired by Governor Jerry Brown and Michael Bloomberg, was launched as a “new initiative to analyze, motivate and raise ambition for actions of states and cities and businesses” to uphold what would have been greenhouse gas emissions commitments for the US under the Paris Agreements.¹³ In total, 52% of the US population lives in a jurisdiction that has committed to upholding the targets under the Paris agreements.¹⁴ These states, counties and cities (not double counted) account for 2.6 billion metric tons of CO₂e emissions or 41.33% of national emissions according to the EPA. Members of the private sector in the US have also demonstrated commitment to meeting “do it ourselves” targets for reducing emissions. Analysts’ under America’s pledge count seventy-four U.S. companies, representing \$2.6 trillion in market capitalization and responsible for 2 billion metric tons of CO₂e emissions that have either set or committed to setting science-based targets through the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi). In total, if these actions scale up they could put the US within striking distance of meeting its 2025 NDC.¹⁵

Barriers and solutions: How to overcome barriers to effective climate action from local governments, the private sector, and civil society?

Just as national examples point to a widely applicable set of best practices, they also highlight common barriers to effective climate action from local governments, the private sector, and civil society. At the same time, different actors around the world are finding solutions to these barriers from which all can learn.

1. Local governments, the private sector, and civil society lack expertise and resources to take effective climate action

For local governments, business, or civil society groups, taking effective climate action requires significant resources and expertise. Lack of funding, knowledge, and technical capacity to plan and implement effective climate action at the local level and in the private sector is perhaps the single largest barrier.

¹² For further information: <https://www.wearestillin.com>

¹³ For further information: <https://www.americaspledgeonclimate.com>

¹⁴ Data Driven Yale, New Climate Institute, and PBL Environment Assessment Agency. 2018. “Global Climate Action from Cities, Regions, and Businesses,”

http://datadriven.yale.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/YALE-NCI-PBL_Global_climate_action.pdf

¹⁵ Ibid.

Climate action can require complex tasks. Emissions reductions commitments require a GHG emissions inventory that includes detailed information on energy sources for industrial processes, transport, buildings, power, land use, and other areas. Adaptation planning can require even more complex understandings of natural and social systems. Making future commitments further requires an understanding of how these factors may change over time. Moreover, expertise for climate action is not just a “one off” need, but must be maintained over time as implementation requires constant feedback and adjustment.

Even if a plan can be developed, securing funding from national or international funds or private markets to implement projects requires further expertise and staff. Even in the EU, actors report difficulty accessing funding if they are not connected to larger initiatives.

On top of these general considerations, sectoral policies, such as a renewable energy targets or land-use change, often require even more specialized expertise, data, and analysis. For many local actors, the first barrier is simply knowing the range of options they might adopt, and how they might select the most suitable course of action for their own circumstances amongst the flood of information.

Lack of expertise, resources, and personnel can be strong barriers, particularly for smaller actors and those located in the Global South. Many municipalities and state and regional governments lack dedicated personnel to manage climate action. In India, for example, each state has developed a climate action plan (as mandated by national law), but many report a lack of resources to actually implement them.

Staff may also lack technical expertise, or have insufficient funding to travel to international fora to gain access to needed information and contacts. Furthermore, because much information and activities around climate action at the transnational level is conducted in English, language is a non-trivial barrier in many parts of the world.

Solution: National governments and development agencies can provide expertise and resources to local governments, businesses, and civil society. As the discussion of orchestration and delegation above highlighted, national governments can play a direct role in empowering climate action from local governments, the private sector, and civil society. This support can be most effective when it goes beyond simply implementing national mandates builds the capacity of other actors to taken even more ambitious climate action. The Fossil Free Sweden initiative is a particularly interesting example in this regard, as is South Africa’s proposed new climate legislation and its existing Green Fund, which helps local governments invest in low carbon development projects they would otherwise not be able to access. Similarly, at the global level, the Green Climate Fund has developed an “Enhanced Direct Access” program that allows local governments to apply for project funding.

Solution: Link local governments, the private sector, and civil society to expertise and resources through transnational peer networks. Global networks of cities, businesses, and other actors are a critical way to transmit information, expertise, and resources to their members around the world. Through the Under 2 Coalition, for example, the State of California hosts other

sub-national governments from around the world for week-long capacity-building sessions. ICLEI launched the Transformative Actions Program (TAP)¹⁶ with a view to contributing to the creation of new financing mechanisms and the improvement of existing instruments by lowering the barrier to effective and efficient cooperation between local and regional governments and public and private financial institutions. The city network C40 has partnered with donor countries to create a Cities Finance Facility that builds capacity of cities around the world to plan and implement clean development projects. The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy has launched the “Global Urbis” program with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the European Investment Bank. Already the EBRD has committed to mobilize €1.5b to support 40-60 Global Covenant cities to implement Climate projects, while the EIB is supporting the creation of a global knowledge hub for cities.

Solution: Build national and regional platforms to share expertise across local governments, the private sector, and civil society domestically. While global networks are one important way to transmit information and expertise, national and regional information sharing is an important complement because climate action invariably involves national and regional particularities. National governments can create exchange between local governments, business, and others as part of consultation processes. Likewise, domestic multi-stakeholder coalitions such as those supported by the Alliances for Climate Action can promote peer support among domestic subnational and non-state actors, as well as cross-pollination among domestic coalitions. Exchange platforms can also be built by civil society. For example, the Fundación Avina has created the ActionLAC platform to galvanizing climate action across Latin America. One of its programs is an online capacity building course for cities, businesses, civil society groups, and other actors across Latin America.¹⁷ In China, the China Carbon Forum which provides a neutral platform for businesses and NGOs to engage in high-level dialogues with leading practitioners and decision-makers in the government.

¹⁶ For further information: <http://tap-potential.org/>.

¹⁷ For further information: <https://actionlac.net/en/about-actionlac/>

2. Local governments, the private sector, and civil society lack authority to take effective climate action

The authority that local and regional governments, firms, and civil society have over climate action varies considerably from country to country. In federal countries like Canada, provinces have decisive influence over national policy and primary responsibility for setting and delivering on climate policy within their borders. More centralized political systems like France offer subnational governments less autonomy. Private firms also operate with varying autonomy over, for example, energy procurement, depending on national market regulations.

While different countries have different constitutional orders, in all countries climate action can be advanced if policymakers take a more purposeful approach to ensuring that all actors within a country are empowered to act appropriately on climate.

A common problem is a mismatch between where policy authority is located and where decision-making can be most effective. For example, often cities are at the forefront of innovative climate action (e.g. in transportation, building standards, or waste management) but may lack legal standing to enact or even experiment with ambitious new regulations or standards. In other cases, there is a fiscal mismatch between the policies actors wish to adopt and the financial authority they possess. For example, it may be difficult to utilize green bonds to finance a project if a local government does not have sufficient fiscal authority to raise revenue. In other cases, it is important to note, the mismatch is the other way around. Sometimes national governments are eager to push more ambitious policies, but find it difficult because of resistance from certain subnational jurisdictions or other actors. In Canada, for example, provinces with large extractive industries have limited

Alliances for Climate Action

Alliances for Climate Action (ACAs) seeks to realize global ambition at a local level by articulating and strengthening domestic constituencies for climate action that work hand in hand with national governments to accelerate nationally determined processes of transformation towards low carbon and climate resilient societies. In its first phase between now and 2020, ACA will catalyze greater engagement of non-Party stakeholders to drive accelerated implementation of climate actions in support of national commitments (2020/2030) and leverage domestically-relevant opportunities for enhanced ambition in line with the 1.5 °C goal. Alliances for Climate Action will do so by building collaborations across different kinds of domestic stakeholders (e.g. between businesses and cities), building a public narrative of low-carbon transformation led by domestic stakeholders, and supporting domestic stakeholders' engagement with national governments.

So far, sub-national and non-state actors from Japan and Mexico have launched multi-stakeholder alliances in support of climate action - the Japan Climate Initiative and the Alianza para la Acción Climática de Guadalajara - in July and August 2018 respectively. They are reaching out to more sub-national and non-state actors in their countries, and inviting champions in other countries to join them.

The ACA initiative is being jointly advanced by seven international organizations - C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, CDP, the Climate Action Network, Fundación Avina, The Climate Group, the We Mean Business Coalition and WWF – together with leading partners at the national level. For further information, visit: www.alliancesforclimateaction.com.

more ambitious national policymaking through the PCF.

Beyond these formal constraints, there are often political barriers to mobilizing effective climate action from cities, states and regions, businesses, and other actors. National governments that oppose stronger climate action will be unlikely to support cities, states and regions, private sector actors, and civil society from pushing for greater ambition. The Trump Administration, for example, is seeking to curtail the authority of California and other states to set high standards for cleaner air. In other cases governments are eager to maintain central governmental control or reluctant to allow domestic stakeholders to forge international linkages. In China, local governments and businesses must receive approval from the central government to engage in peer-to-peer learning with partners abroad, and restrictions have been placed on domestic and foreign civil society activities.

Sometimes these constraints are not conscious choices but simply a product of habit. For example, in Japan cities and local governments are in general excluded from the central policy making unless the policy has a direct impact on the region. Thus they were not involved in the 2015 NDC formulation process, but were delegated by the government to improve urban planning towards the goal of low-carbonization. Without having a say in the formulation of the policy, however, local governments found it difficult to put this new mandate into their broader planning efforts.

Solution: National governments can create consultative processes that give an explicit role to local governments, the private sector, and civil society. Even when legal, fiscal, or political circumstances limit the authority of local governments, the private sector, or civil society, governments can always create specialized consultation processes like the kind identified above. Consultation processes can overcome many of the informational barriers to more effective action even if they do not change legal, fiscal, or political barriers.

Solution: National governments can formally recognize the role of local governments, the private sector, and civil society in their NDC and other climate policies and measures. Moving beyond consultation, national governments can create new processes and institutions to give local governments, the private sector, and civil society a greater say in national policy making. For example, the Extended Table of the Argentine Climate Cabinet is an innovative way to open the door to substantive participation from more actors on an ongoing basis. This kind of reform formally empowers cities, states and regions, and the private sector to come more forceful leaders in climate action.

Solution: Local governments, the private sector, and civil society can advocate for a more central role in national climate policy. In some political systems, there is significant scope for advocacy coalitions to advocate for a greater say for all stakeholders in national climate policies. Such coalitions can make the case to both citizens and decision makers that a more inclusive climate policy is one that will better serve the interests of the country and be truly “nationally determined.” California, for example, is leading a legal battle in the US to retain states’ power to set higher air pollution regulations.

Cities and Regions Talanoa Dialogues facilitated by ICLEI

Launched on 9 February 2018 at the 9th World Urban Forum, the Cities and Regions Talanoa Dialogues initiative is facilitated by ICLEI with the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy and UN-Habitat as special partners.

More than 50 sessions of Cities and Regions Talanoa Dialogues have been scheduled for 2018 in 38 countries, mostly in the global South. As of August 2018, more than half of these Dialogues took place, whose outcomes demonstrate that active engagement of ministries of urbanization, housing, public works, or their equivalent as appropriate has been enabled, who had not been as adequately involved in the national and global climate efforts so far.

The initiative builds upon the Bonn-Fiji Commitment of Local and Regional Leaders adopted at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP23) in November 2017 and the Call for Vertical Integration of Local Authorities in national climate investment plans issued by the Global Covenant of Mayors at the One Planet Summit last December.

Key outcomes of the Cities and Regions Talanoa Dialogues held so far underline how these Dialogues filled the much-needed gaps in enhancing the creation of synergy between sustainable urbanization and climate change by mainstreaming multilevel climate governance approaches for raising the ambition of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement. (For references see note 18 below.)

3. Gaps between transnational climate action networks and domestic climate action limit learning and recognition

Transnational climate action networks, for example city-to-city networks like ICLEI or C40, or business coalitions like We Mean Business or the World Business Council on Sustainable Development, play a critical role in driving climate action at the UNFCCC and in other international fora. They also work “on the ground” by helping their constituent members make and implement ambitious climate action. Their global reach makes them critical channels to diffuse state-of-the-art best practices between countries.

However, though these networks have enormous reach, they do not engage all of the world’s local governments, businesses, investors, etc. Some countries are more connected to them than others. For example, a recent study of 77 climate initiatives listed on the UN’s NAZCA portal found that only 23% of participants in these networks originate in the Global South, while only a fifth of

¹⁸ “Cities and regions invite national governments to year-long dialogue bridging the New Urban Agenda and the Paris Agreement,” <https://bit.ly/2smcYzM>

“Cities and regions Talanoa Dialogues,” http://www.cities-and-regions.org/cop23/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/talanoa-brochure_web.pdf.

“Fifth ICLEI Webinar on Cities and Regions Talanoa Dialogues,” <https://bit.ly/2N1hvl4>

Reports from the Cities and Regions Talanoa Dialogues have been submitted to the COP Presidencies. “Inputs from Cities and Regions Talanoa Dialogues for the Talanoa Dialogue,” <https://bit.ly/2MkDtdi>

“The Bonn-Fiji Commitment of Local and Regional Leaders to Deliver the Paris Agreement At All Levels,” <http://www.cities-and-regions.org/bonn-fiji-commitment-at-cop23/>.

Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy. One planet summit press release: https://www.oneplanetsummit.fr/IMG/pdf/4-global_covenant_of_mayors-press_release-en.pdf.

ICLEI, GIZ, and UN Habit. “Talanoa and Beyond: Raising Ambition with Cities and Regions,” http://www.cities-and-regions.org/cop23/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/180430_giz-iclei-un-h_talanoa_final_web.pdf.

organizations that set up and lead initiatives are based in the Global South, despite impressive growth in Southern participation over the last few years.¹⁹

Importantly, this *does not* mean that climate action is not happening in the South. For example, NAZCA shows just a handful of Chinese cities and companies taking climate action, whereas in reality the figure is of course much higher. Similarly, a study found that 38 of the 65 companies listed on the Nairobi Stock Exchange have an emissions reductions target, which is also missed on NAZCA.²⁰

This visibility gap is more than just a recognition problem. Much climate action, particularly that which is purely domestic in nature, is not benefiting from the peer-to-peer learning and resource exchange that lies at the core of many transnational networks. There is thus a significant opportunity to close the gap between transnational climate action networks and cities, states and regions, businesses, and investors taking climate action at the domestic level. We must both localize transnational networks and empower local actions through linkage to the broader global context.

Solution: National governments can encourage their local governments, businesses, and other stakeholders to join transnational networks. As part of consultation process or orchestration activities national governments conduct, they should encourage local actors to affiliate themselves with transnational networks that can help deliver resources, expertise, and visibility.

Solution: Create regional chapters of transnational networks and affiliation arrangements between transnational networks and national groups. Many transnational networks have created national or regional sub-networks. For example, ICLEI has a number of regional networks of cities and the UN Global Compact has dozens of national networks. This year the Global Covenant of Mayors launched a South Asia network. The UN Global Compact has dozens of national affiliation networks.

Solution: Increase recognition of action “on the ground” in global platforms. UNFCCC platforms like the Marrakech Partnership and NAZCA should pay increasing attention to domestic and regional climate action processes. This has already begun in 2018, with the Marrakech Partnership organizing events not just at the COP but at regional climate weeks around the world. Countries should look at how they are currently represented on NAZCA, and see what further linkages they can build to help fill out the global picture of climate action.

Conclusion: Advancing national processes for climate action in 2019 and 2020

¹⁹ “Cooperative Climate Action: Global Performance & Delivery in the Global South. Preliminary findings of the ClimateSouth Project for the Global Climate Action Summit.”

²⁰ Ibid.

This reported has mapped the diverse and powerful array of climate action local governments, the private sector, and civil society are taking in countries around the world. It has identified best practices that national governments and other actors can adopt to maximize the potential of this trend. And it has flagged barriers to stronger domestic-level climate action, as well as ways to overcome those barriers.

The next two years represent a critical time to step up climate action at home. The Talanoa Dialogue at COP24 will highlight the urgency of enhancing ambition through NDCs and other means by 2020. And in 2019, the UN Secretary General’s summit will present a key milestone for countries and other actors to signal new ambition. In between these milestones, countries will need to find all the ambition they can muster. The strategies outlined present a powerful and innovative approach for doing so that any government or domestic climate action stakeholders can adopt, appropriate to their national circumstances.