



Climate Action Network

Submission: Feedback to The High-Level Champions on How to Improve the Marrakech Partnership for Enhancing Ambition

July 2020

Climate Action Network (CAN) is the world's largest network of civil society organizations working together to promote government action to address the climate crisis, with more than 1300 members in over 120 countries.

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic is taking place against the backdrop of an ecological crisis. Just like the pandemic, the climate crisis has no borders and will require sustained international efforts and global solidarity.

There are no doubts that capacities and resources are being stretched as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds in different regions, but countries still need to act to fulfill the tasks ahead of them in terms of stepping up climate action in the short and long-term. In a context in which global climate meetings are being postponed to protect people's health, it becomes even more critical to have stakeholders and initiatives that act to both ensure that more ambitious climate commitments are made by governments, and that civil society participation and demands pledges aren't left behind in the process.

All actions taken now, whether as part of climate ambition or as part of a COVID-19 response, should reinforce the transformational shift we need for just, fair, equitable, resilient, healthy, inclusive and sustainable societies. The inclusion, support and empowerment of civil society groups and of the most vulnerable and marginalised communities is a fundamental aspect for a just and effective global strategy to address the climate crisis and the other interrelated challenges (e.g. poverty eradication, food security, social and racial justice, and gender equality). In the light of this, the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action (MPGCA) needs to provide space for civil society consultation, partnerships and participation, and should, therefore, constantly work to embrace and stimulate diversity, inclusiveness, and increase in representation, meaningful participation and voice from civil society organisations, in particular in the Global South.

Response to the questions of the champions

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

The current objectives (Strengthening interaction between Parties and non-Party stakeholders; Broadening participation; Creating enabling conditions for breakthroughs in tipping points for systems transformation; Following up on and ensuring continuity and coherence of action; Tracking progress, impacts and results with a view to identifying best practices) are aligned with the overall mission of the MPGCA. However, an assessment is needed to identify how much of the proposed objectives are being achieved and if the ways in which they are being pursued are still the most adequate ones to ensure successful outcomes.

In addition to the current objectives, CAN suggests the following recommendations to be observed:

- The MPGCA should be action-oriented and every action must be science-driven, closely following the recommendations and expertise of the IPCC;
- Success would also mean that strong and ambitious commitments by non-Party actors facilitate and catalyze stronger Party commitments and overall shifts in individual sectors so that they become drivers for climate ambition and action, rather than stand alone commitments;
- The MPGCA should provide a space dedicated to implementation with concrete projects and measures, rather than being only discussion space. Measures and projects - even if voluntary - should follow a stringent methodology in order to allow transparency;
- The voices of the most impacted and vulnerable communities must be taken into consideration for non-state actors' climate targets. The MPGCA should therefore play a key role and provide a platform for climate vulnerable groups to showcase their leadership and contributions to climate action.

It is also important to recognize that COVID-19 changes the context in which the MPGCA operates. The objectives must be seen through the lens of an economic recovery to the COVID-19 crisis that could deliver emissions reductions and fulfil the goals of the Paris Agreement. Success in the High Level Champions' actions and programmes is, therefore, directly linked to the ability and capacity of whether the MPGCA can support us 'build back better' or not. This is a challenge that the MPGCA must seize immediately as the transformational window is only open to influence for so long.

A short publication, mentioning the successes and challenges that the Partnership faced during the last years would be interesting and informative, being also a tool to show Parties the opportunities for them to be present inside the MPGCA's discussions.

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

There are four main roles that CAN believes should be further embraced by the MPGCA during the next 5 years:

- a. Acting as listeners and conveners:** The High-Level Champions and the Marrakech Partnership could play a key role in acting as listeners and conveners of what civil society considers as ambitious climate action plans, helping to drive and push those elements forward and ensuring they are taken into consideration by Parties when developing their climate commitments and implementation plans. This also includes promoting the inclusion of civil society groups in consultative national processes, highlighting the need to partner with various societal actors to ensure the successful implementation of ambitious targets. To support this work, CAN has developed the Transformative NDCs paper, providing a reflection of the most central elements.

This convener role could be extended to other fronts as well, given that the MPGCA is uniquely suited to promote exchange and learning across constituencies, regions of the world and thematic areas in light of the unparalleled scope of UNFCCC as a global multilateral institution. For example, by reporting on green recovery elements to show the link between non-Party action and economic recovery.

- b. Actively promoting a narrative of hope:** In addition to the above, the MPGCA could promote a narrative of hope and success on climate ambition, so that it speaks louder than negotiated outcomes at UNFCCC COP and in media stories throughout the year, through for example the Climate Ambition Alliance. Strengthening such a narrative is key to support and encourage action by all actors in alignment with a set of transformational sectoral pathways that help deliver on the Paris Agreement. This way civil society will be better placed to assess and monitor whether enhanced NDCs (pre-COP26 and for COP 31) fully incorporate and build on achievements and opportunities generated by GCA domestically and internationally. This narrative could ensure the visibility of actors who are truly respecting the Paris Agreement's goals, without giving space for initiatives or actors which can use the NSA-spaces for greenwashing.

- c. Creating a space for experience exchange and support related to NDCs:** In terms of NDCs and long-term strategies, the High-Level Champions, in conjunction with the MPGCA and the broader climate action community could support their enhancement and implementation by creating a communication and interaction channel on NDCs. In this sort of "NDC laboratory", governments could communicate their implementation challenges and in

return, the MPGCA would strongly suggest, support and encourage them to involve all socioeconomic sectors and to form alliances and partnerships with non-Party stakeholders on climate action. This would stimulate greater engagement between implementing actors within countries and among non-state actors, as well as involve ministries and government agencies that may have not been taken into consideration before. Moreover, functioning as a platform that tracks and aggregates information on global climate action, the MPGCA provides a useful tool for other non-party stakeholders to hold governments and initiatives accountable in relation to their commitments. Moreover, showing the scale and irreversibility of the current momentum for systemic transformation, the tracking of progress made by Party and non-Party stakeholders' actions could indeed galvanize further actions.

- d. Engaging other international organisations:** By engaging other international organisations for non-state climate action, the MPGCA can help broaden the spectrum of civil society that is engaged in the climate and NDC movement and closely following the implementation and commitments outcomes - such as CBD, ILO, WTO, WHO, ITUC, etc).

In addition to the above, the MPGCA should have a more strategic role: this should be a moment where Parties and non-state actors adopt the annual work programme of the partnership together, with the presentation of key activities aligned with realizing the goals of the Paris Agreement.

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?**

The High-Level Champions can act as an important facilitator to bring non-state actors, especially civil society, further into the climate discussions taking place among governments and other key actors. The four roles outlined above will definitely help increase collaboration between Parties and non-Party stakeholders. Such a collaboration is important given that:

- Non-state actors often hold key knowledge and can provide powerful examples of good practices on climate action (faster, cheaper, more inclusive and effective actions). This knowledge is of utmost importance for ambitious and transformative NDCs to be developed and needs to be expressed in discussions on climate commitments;
- Parties need the support of civil society to implement actions, related both to mitigation and adaptation efforts. This could ensure legitimacy, transparency and ambition of climate policies and related NDCs.

These benefits are important advantages that can come from the Global Climate Action movement and need to be integrated into the MPGCA narrative. Actions that reinforce these messages and needs would be welcomed by civil society organizations. As an example, the High Level Champions could invite to their planning meetings important line ministries (e.g. transport, agriculture etc). These experts can enhance the link with non-state actors, also during climate weeks for example, where there should be a better connection with the regional states and ministries involved.

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?

Parties and non-state actors need to have a real moment of effective common planning. UNFCCC events and processes could provide that space. While there may be multi-stakeholder meetings held at current MPGCA events, Party and non-Party stakeholders do not plan or make decisions together. An annual work plan of the MPGCA, clearly reporting the agenda and objectives of non-state actors and parties together, would help to reinforce collaboration and transparency.

Events such as the regional climate weeks can further link non-state actors with their respective regional/national governments and should therefore take place regularly in all regions. There are several multi-stakeholder spaces inside the UN as well that could be used, such as the UN Climate Summits. These summits, while susceptible to non-state greenwashing, can showcase best practices and encourage real collaboration without the formalities of Party/non-Party divides.

Inside the MPGCA more specifically, the Climate Ambition Alliance can be used during COPs to show good examples of multi-stakeholder dialogues, with an inclusion of the voices of those most vulnerable, NGOs and other actors that are not adequately represented and have not been provided with adequate platforms to showcase their contributions to the ambition and action agenda. Finally, it is important to continually reaffirm and build on the mandate of the MPGCA and the Champions at every COP. Trust from Parties is important to continue the discussions on non-state climate actions, which are mainly possible through the MPGCA.

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 stocktake of the Paris Agreement?

Enabling and strengthening the collaboration between non-Party stakeholders, the High-Level Champions and the MPGCA can play a major role in the Global Stocktake (GST), facilitating the inputs of non-state actors.

They could encourage and support the involvement of non-state actors in the GST by:

- Organising dialogues as part of the GST process where non-state actors can participate and contribute their submissions.
- Presenting a 'stocktake report' focusing on non-state actors' action and re-emphasising to Parties the opportunities that the MPGCA has opened up for them to further their own ambition. This could be a follow-up of the annual assessment report mentioned above.
- Developing MPGCA strategic communications to ensure that the dominant narrative of the global stocktake points to the strengths and successes of non-Party action.

Overall, transparency and impact evaluation are also key for Parties to understand why non-state actors can contribute to enhance the ambition of their NDCs, with the GST serving as a critical moment to highlight these aspects.

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

Meaningful civil society participation must be at the centre of enhancing ambition processes. Civil society organisations, vulnerable and marginalised groups should be given a stronger voice. The MPGCA is well positioned to provide such a space, but it still needs to grow in diversity in terms of Party and non-Party representation from the Global South, as well as representation of marginalized and vulnerable minority groups.

Inclusivity

Inclusivity means better engaging and reaching out to civil society, indigenous groups, local communities, marginalised groups, but also ensuring the balance of South-North, young and older, women and men. During the MPGCA Strategic Meeting in London held in February 2020, people in the room suggested conducting a survey of the "members" of the partnership to identify who is participating and – most importantly – who is not, and why. This survey would help in identifying the areas needing greater inclusivity within the Partnership. More generally, there should be greater effort to organise meetings outside the Global North and to decentralise decision-making processes; regional climate weeks can be important tools in this regard for making these changes.

Evaluation and impact assessment

Evaluation and impact assessment of non-state climate action is essential for a better efficiency of the MPGCA. The Global Climate Action Portal should be reinforced and better coordinated with the UNEP Climate Initiative Platform. Every actor or initiative should fully report the required information on the Global Climate Action Portal following a coherent methodological framework that allows for sufficient ability to track and monitor the implementation process of initiatives. This way, the MPGCA

would be able, through an annual assessment, to evaluate the impact of the non-state actors. This evaluation can be supported by other UNFCCC entities or groups, such as the Technical Examination Process groups, who developed expertise in that manner. Initiatives or actors which do not respect this reporting process, or are encouraging/implementing activities against the Paris Agreement goals should not be visible inside UN spaces until they rectify their behaviour and align with Paris Agreement goals and processes. Further “red lines” could be developed, to avoid greenwashing inside the MPGCA and more generally inside the UNFCCC and UN climate spheres.

Capacity Building

The MPGCA could be improved by creating a Capacity Building Unit, both for Parties and non-state actors. This Unit could help the Parties and non-state actors to collaborate to enhance NDCs, but could also support non-state actors for reporting and impact assessment. Special attention should be given to countries or initiatives coming from the most vulnerable regions, which often have less monitoring and evaluation capacity.

Governance of the Partnership

Another point would be to work further on the governance of the Partnership: it is important to clarify the role of Partnership members, as they are not sufficiently defined. If there is a work plan each year, it means that decisions should be taken by members themselves with the support of an executive body that would ensure transparency and effectiveness of such decisions.

A permanent team inside the MPGCA

In order to effectively perform the new tasks proposed above as well as pursue long-term strategies, funding of a permanent MPGCA team at the UNFCCC Secretariat would be important, rather than it being subject to Champions or COP Presidency commitments. The composition of this permanent team would need to ensure regional and thematic representation. Parties should recognise the needs of this funding, and also the independent role of the MPGCA while assessing climate action.

Clear labelling of voluntary action versus action within the scope of NDCs

Voluntary actions, such as the actions under the MPGCA, are good if they complement and fasten state-actors’ climate ambition. They complement, but never substitute, the legally binding climate action negotiated under the UNFCCC in a multilateral framework. While the legally binding climate actions from parties are enshrined in the NDCs, there is a lack of clarity on how pledges from non-state actors, such as cities, regions, or multinational companies, made within the MPGCA are linked to their respective NDCs. Therefore, the MPGCA should differentiate between (a) pledges that are outside of their respective NDCs and thus fully voluntary and (b) pledges that embody a concrete implementation of an NDC-obligation of a non-party stakeholder. Most probably, with the submission of enhanced, more ambitious NDCs, some pledges would move from the voluntary

category into the NDC category, as the scope of NDCs broadens. This would need to be recorded transparently. In such a scenario, MPGCA pledges could serve as an incentive for more ambitious NDCs as their registry could inspire Party negotiators on how to make their NDCs more ambitious – as they would be able to see where and what type of actions are already underway in their countries.

Conclusions

Through their work and the role they play within the international community, the MPGCA and the High Level Climate Champions can indeed contribute to accelerate enhancing ambition processes and catalyze global climate action, although there is scope for improvement. Given that the most vulnerable, less represented and marginalised groups are often the most impacted by the climate crisis, providing a space for meaningful and inclusive civil society participation should be a key objective of the MPGCA. Encouraging the dialogue and collaboration between state and non-state actors, the MPGCA could contribute to increase the legitimacy and transparency of climate policies and NDCs. Moreover, supporting both Party and non-Party stakeholders in their capacity building and development, the MPGCA would further mobilize action and ambition. Through an improvement of the tracking system and impact assessment of the Global Climate Action Portal, the MPGCA could be the 'evaluation point' of the UN, increasing transparency on climate action. Finally, the establishment of a permanent team could be an important step that would increase the capacity of the MPGCA to effectively perform the new tasks as well as pursue long-term strategies.