

INTERNATIONAL

RE-INVIGORATING THE UN CLIMATE REGIME IN THE WIDER LANDSCAPE OF CLIMATE ACTION



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A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Parties will complete the first global stocktake (GST) under the Paris Agreement in 2023, presenting an important opportunity to reflect more widely on the UN climate regime (the regime).¹ The world is a very different place from when the Paris Agreement was negotiated. This moment invites consideration of whether there is room for improvement to ensure that the agreement is fit for an evolving purpose and responsive to a dynamic and challenging geopolitical context.

This report first examines whether the logic of the regime, and the Paris Agreement in particular, is effective.

The Paris Agreement is having a positive impact: if nationally determined contributions (NDCs) are fully implemented, projected global temperature rise would be around 1 degree C less than it would have been had the agreement not been adopted.² Yet the pace of action is not enough to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement—the world is on track to overshoot 1.5 degrees C, and even staying within 2 degrees C of warming is far from certain. Clearly, incremental improvements in climate ambition and implementation are not enough. A transformational shift is essential.

The report then examines how the regime’s “norm-setting” function can be strengthened to make it fit for an evolving purpose, remain functionally relevant, and deliver on the goals of the Paris Agreement. More specifically, recommendations are made in the following areas:

- enhancing ambition and fairness by increasing peer pressure that encourages and inspires ambition in light of different national circumstances and fair shares
- accelerating implementation and strengthening accountability across sectors and within nations with improved systems and processes to understand and follow up on the progress made
- strengthening cooperative action on adaptation and loss & damage (L&D) in the context of urgent needs and overshoot pathways
- expanding coverage to prepare for the future demands that will require agreement on a range of issues that are currently not addressed by the regime well or at all
- streamlining and fine-tuning processes to enhance responsiveness to an evolving purpose.

Finally, this report reviews the regime’s catalytic role in the wider landscape of climate action. The wider landscape includes relevant international organizations and agreements, international cooperative initiatives (ICIs), multilateral development banks (MDBs), international financial institutions (IFIs), and voluntary commitments by non-Party stakeholders (NPS).³ There is considerable potential in leveraging the actors in this landscape to narrow remaining ambition and implementation gaps in relation to mitigation, adaptation, and means of implementation, as well as fulfilling governance functions in ways that complement and reinforce the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process.

At the same time, there remain core challenges related to transparency, accountability, and the thematic and geographical balance of the wider landscape. To ensure that this wider landscape effectively contributes to and strengthens the catalytic role of the climate regime, this report highlights key findings and makes the following broad recommendations:

- Parties should harness existing agenda items under the UN climate regime, or establish a targeted mechanism or process, to foster substantive exchanges with other international organizations and treaties, including IFIs, and to recognize, consider and promote alignment of their goals and actions with the objectives of the Paris Agreement.
- Parties should enhance the role of, and engagement with, all types of ICIs, in the context of an upgraded Global Climate Action Portal, including by strengthening their transparency and accountability as well as their thematic and geographical balance.

Parties, the UNFCCC Secretariat, the High-Level Climate Champions/Marrakech Partnership, the UN Secretary-General, and/or the Conference of Parties (COP) Presidencies could advance and implement these recommendations variously, including through leveraging the GST process.

B. INTRODUCTION: IS THE LOGIC OF THE UN CLIMATE REGIME EFFECTIVE?

The UN climate regime (the regime) has reached a critical juncture in its evolution. The rule-making phase of the multilateral negotiations is largely concluded with the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015 and the completion of the guidance to operationalize it (the “rulebook”) in Glasgow in 2021. The climate rules that have emerged from this phase place an emphasis on procedural rather than substantive obligations and obligations of conduct rather than of result—including in relation to nationally determined contributions (NDCs).

This regulatory approach—known as obligations of conduct—is premised on the idea that the processes designed and operationalized under the Paris Agreement will inevitably generate peer-to-peer comparisons that will in turn inspire and encourage—rather than impose—actions and influence social norms and external drivers to align with the goals of the Paris Agreement.⁴ As Parties implement their targets, the logic goes, opportunities to enhance ambition will emerge, triggering both competition and collaboration in a race to the top. Is this theory of change beginning to work? If it is, will it deliver in the narrow window of opportunity available to stabilize the climate? If it is not working as designed, what tweaks and retrofits—within, alongside, and beyond the regime—are needed to make the regime fit for its evolving purpose?

This report uses the term “evolving purpose” to signal the need for dynamism in the face of a rapidly shifting international context that includes: mounting “unequivocal” evidence of human influence on a changing climate; galloping climate change; increasingly severe impacts and loss and damage (L&D); advances in science and technology; growing opportunities for climate action; and increasing popular consciousness and advocacy. The geopolitics of energy as well as the political significance of energy and food security are also key contextual factors, as is the rise of populism in several countries. Together, these factors have contributed to increasing headwinds against climate action since the Paris Agreement was adopted in 2015.

Arguably, the logic of the regime is beginning to work but falteringly, and only in part. Until now, the regime has doubled down on goals and targets. In 2021, the Glasgow Climate Pact shifted the emphasis in the 2015 Paris Agreement’s temperature goal to a stronger focus

on limiting the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees C above preindustrial levels; moved forward the target for achieving net-zero emissions to midcentury;⁵ and further created additional processes and mid-cycle check-in points for enhancing NDCs.⁶ The Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan confirmed these emphasis shifts in 2022.⁷ These shifts have resulted in some more ambitious and better designed NDCs and a proliferation of midcentury net-zero targets.

First, **there is manifest lack of sufficient ambition to address climate change** with the urgency and in the all-of-society way science demands.⁸ To be consistent with the goals of the Paris Agreement, emissions need to halve in what the United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG) has dubbed the “critical decade.”⁹ It is estimated that, without the Paris Agreement, emissions would result in an increase in the global average temperature to 3.7–4.8 degrees C.¹⁰ The most optimistic projections estimate that current NDCs, if fully implemented, will lead to 1.7 degrees C temperature rise by 2100.¹¹ However, many NDCs are conditional and have not attracted the support necessary for their fulfilment. Even as NDCs become more ambitious, emissions have continued to rise. Prevailing implementing policies, the most accurate reflection of the level of ambition, are estimated to result in 2.4–2.5 degrees C temperature rise by the end of the century.¹²

Arguably, by current estimates, the Paris Agreement is working—but not fast enough. We are still far from where we need to be and are on a pathway to overshoot 1.5 degrees C. Even staying below 2 degrees C cannot be assumed. These shortfalls hint at some of the ways in which the logic of the Paris Agreement has yet to take effect as intended.

Second, **the Paris Agreement, borne of compromise, was deliberately negotiated without mechanisms to review the adequacy of individual national contributions, to evaluate the fairness of contributions in light of the latest science, or to hold Parties individually accountable for the implementation of their NDCs.** Instead, it establishes a dynamic “ambition cycle” comprising:

- regular updates of NDCs
- an expectation that successive contributions will represent a progression from previous ones, and reflect each Party’s “highest possible ambition,” as

well as “common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities in light of different national circumstances”

- an enhanced transparency framework (ETF)
- a five-yearly global stocktake (GST) to review collective progress towards long-term goals
- a mechanism to facilitate implementation and compliance.

There are other important, top-down, and binding requirements of the Paris Agreement, such as the need to have an NDC and the need to pursue domestic mitigation measures to achieve the NDC.¹³

This ambition cycle is intended to promote and enhance fairness, accountability, and ambition, as well as track and enable timely and effective implementation. The Paris Agreement’s architecture is designed to require *Parties* to *give account* of their actions, but not to hold *Parties to account* for these actions, meaning that there is no review or evaluation of the adequacy of an individual Party’s action (or therefore any resulting consequences). It is also important to note that the current transparency and accountability regime, focused as it is on formal commitments of Parties (in particular NDCs), does not consider voluntary initiatives. The current regime also relies largely on greenhouse gas inventory estimations rather than real sectoral or local emissions data. Furthermore, the architecture is very much focused on mitigation.

The first GST concludes at the end of 2023, and the ETF will be fully operational in 2024.¹⁴ It remains to be seen whether the elements of the ambition cycle that

have been operationalized, premised as they are on self-selection and assessment of collective rather than individual progress, will have a decisive influence on individual accountability and ambition such that they align with the goals of the Paris Agreement or notions of equity and fairness (“fair shares”). The collective nature of the GST mandate poses significant challenges as to how the ambition cycle can generate outputs that are relevant to, and actionable in, specific country contexts, or how such outputs can serve to enhance international cooperation. The Paris Agreement and its implementing guidance say little about the period between the end of the GST and the submission of NDCs, nor do they provide for a clear political endpoint to each five-year ambition cycle.

Third, **the wider landscape of climate governance and action beyond the regime is fundamental to achieving the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement**, but it is yet to be effectively integrated in, or promoted by, the regime. This wider landscape comprises relevant international organizations, treaty regimes, multilateral development banks (MDBs) and other international financial institutions (IFIs), and numerous mostly sector-focused international cooperative initiatives (ICIs) driven by governments and/or non-Party stakeholders (NPS)¹⁵ in various configurations (See **Table 1**). The rapidly growing number of initiatives cumulatively present a sizeable potential to narrow remaining gaps in mitigation, adaptation, and finance, where these initiatives can also complement the governance functions carried out by the regime.¹⁶

Table 1: Examples of the Wider UNFCCC Landscape

<i>Relevant International Organizations</i>	For example, the International Maritime Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization, and the UN Environment Programme.
<i>Treaty Regimes</i>	For example, the 1987 Montreal Protocol, the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity, and the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.
<i>Multilateral Development Banks & other International Financial Institutions</i>	For instance, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the New Development Bank.
<i>Sector-focused International Cooperative Initiatives</i>	For example, ICIs primarily include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • intergovernmental arrangements and commitments (e.g., Global Methane Pledge) • hybrid initiatives including both public and private actors (e.g., Powering Past Coal Alliance) • arrangements among: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ private actors (e.g., Oil and Gas Climate Initiative) ▪ subnational authorities (e.g., C40 Cities). <p>In addition to these initiatives, many NPS have made their own voluntary commitments, with the Global Climate Action Portal listing more than 32,000 commitments.</p>

There is considerable potential for:

- greater integration of this wider landscape in the regime
- enhanced action
- improved coordination
- more effective implementation through strengthening accountability across initiatives and actors.

The systemic transformations needed to transition to a climate-safe pathway require a step change at the sectoral level, all-of-society ownership or buy-in, and incentives for progressive and cooperative action at multiple levels and across actors and sectors.¹⁷ Such systemic transformations also require the broader financial system to mainstream climate change into its portfolios and transactions, internalize the price of carbon, and more broadly align financial flows with the Paris Agreement's goals.

The regime has in many ways recognized and fostered broader systemic change through a wide range of actors, in particular, through the Global Climate Action Agenda (GCAA), including the improved Marrakech Partnership¹⁸ and the work of the High-Level Climate Champions (HLCs). But in what ways and to what extent actions in the wider landscape can and should intersect with the regime's processes underway and the commitments of Parties, in particular their NDCs, is yet to be fully considered. The alignment of the voluntary commitments of actors and initiatives in the wider landscape with the Paris Agreement's goals, and the delivery of these commitments, also merit greater attention, as do their thematic and geographical spread and balance. We specifically shine a light on the potential of the wider landscape to complement the regime in Chapter D.

Fourth, since it is becoming increasingly evident that staying within the 1.5 degree-C limit will require urgent and robust action until the end of the century, and that temperatures may exceed 1.5 degrees C and perhaps even 2 degrees C before then, the regime will likely have to contend with even more "serious, pervasive, and irreversible" impacts than those occurring today. 2023 has seen accelerating warming trends that are difficult to align with previous models.¹⁹ The regime must move beyond the current emphasis only on target-setting for mitigation to focus also on implementation, the management of impacts, increased cooperation, and support. The establishment of funding arrangements,

including the L&D fund at COP27, is a first step and a sign that such cooperation and support will become increasingly crucial going forward.²⁰

More broadly, the regime—focused as it is on regulating the emissions and removals of greenhouse gases rather than on directly regulating specific sources and sinks of greenhouse gases—may not be sufficiently equipped for the task of comprehensive global climate governance. Going forward, the effort to stabilize the climate system will require answering questions relating to stranded assets, phasing down and out of unabated fossil fuels, and ensuring a just transition away from them. The regime, as currently structured, only addresses these crucial issues at the margins or not at all.

The lack of follow-up processes to track implementation of collective goals agreed at COPs is also a major issue. For example, there has been little accountability for delivering on the collective call made at COP26 and reiterated at COP27 to phase down unabated coal and phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies.²¹

The regime does not yet consider the compatibility of carbon dioxide removal (CDR) technologies with the normative framework of the Paris Agreement, nor the associated risks, potential benefits, and uncertainties. The regime will need to better govern their use, which will be critical to bringing greenhouse gas concentrations back to a level commensurate with 1.5 degrees C. At the very least, the long-term low-emission development strategies of Parties, as well as their NDCs, need to provide consistent and clear information on the extent of their reliance on CDR, and the risks and uncertainties that attach to such reliance. This shift will in turn fundamentally influence the ability of the international community to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement.

Finally, the process and dynamics of the **UN climate negotiations and its COPs are not suited to deliver implementation, nor to be dynamic and responsive** to the demands of this critical decade and beyond. For instance, career diplomats and negotiators—rather than officials responsible for developing and implementing domestic climate policy across sectors—dominate the process. Additionally, the Party-centric UN negotiating process is not generally receptive to the inclusion of policy developers and implementers. However, the regime, including the GST process, needs to send clear signals to these actors, among others, to effectively

catalyze climate ambition in the domestic context. While the regime is beginning to send such signals (e.g., the Glasgow Climate Pact on phasing down unabated coal and eliminating fossil fuel subsidies; COP27's signal to MDBs), these signals need to be strengthened and targeted so they reach those that drive and implement relevant policies at the domestic level.

The annual COPs have also expanded dramatically over the years—from less than 5,000 delegates in attendance at COP1 (Berlin), to nearly 40,000 delegates at COP26 (Glasgow) and COP27 (Sharm el-Sheikh).²² Now, half to a majority of those attending COPs are NPS.²³ While the action agenda has grown significantly over the years, the architecture of the COP is still unhelpfully geared toward the drama of the final plenary, where negotiators argue over subtleties of language while the rest of the world at best looks on with bemusement.

As COPs grow in size and complexity, it is increasingly important to focus on the core functions that the regime is uniquely placed to perform, and to simplify the process so as to make those functions more effective in catalyzing climate action. Moreover, those that attend the COP—Parties and NPS—need to be there to be counted and to be held to account, not just to be seen.

This is vital to the credibility and future relevance of the regime.

As noted earlier, the evidence supports that the logic underpinning the design of the Paris Agreement is beginning to work. But, it is doing so falteringly and out of step with the speed and momentum necessary to make it through the narrow window of opportunity available to limit temperature rise to 1.5 degrees C and avert the most devastating climate impacts. The findings of the synthesis report on the technical dialogue of the first GST (GST-SYR) support this view.²⁴ It is also becoming clear that if the regime is to function as a comprehensive node for global climate governance, there are blind spots in its current coverage and approach, including underexploited potential to mobilize and promote action in the wider landscape beyond the intergovernmental regime.

How then might the regime, and the Paris Agreement in particular, be bolstered and fine-tuned so that it functions more efficiently and at the speed envisioned by the logic of the Paris Agreement, its mechanisms, and its goals of climate stabilization and resilience? And how is this to be done through an accelerated evolution of the current regime, rather than an iterative revolution that risks losing years to challenging negotiations?

C. STRENGTHENING THE UN CLIMATE REGIME'S NORM-SETTING FUNCTION

Box 1: Recommendations

To remain functionally relevant and responsive to evolving purpose, as well as to deliver on the goals of the Paris Agreement, the UN climate regime (the regime) should significantly strengthen norms, and generate supportive practices by:

Enhancing ambition and fairness

- enhancing the quality and transparency of nationally determined contributions (NDCs)
- developing a standard of “due diligence” for Parties
- cultivating an understanding of equity and fair shares
- agreeing an operational rights-based template for just transition across sectors, within and between Parties.

Improving implementation and accountability

- shifting from its current focus on target-setting to one that recognizes that rigorous implementation of NDCs, means of implementation and the provision of appropriate support, drive ambition, including by:
 - focusing on Parties’ domestic mitigation measures
 - assisting Parties in enhancing the quality of their NDCs
 - identifying cost and non-cost barriers to implementation and opportunities for action and cooperation across sectors and Parties.
- transitioning from asking Parties to account for their actions to holding Parties accountable for their actions and announcements inside and alongside the formal COP process, including by enhancing the functionality of the steps of the enhanced transparency framework (ETF) and expanding the role of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat in initiating follow-up processes.

Driving cooperative action on adaptation and loss and damage

- shifting from its current siloed approach—which treats mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage (L&D) as independent from each other and addresses climate action separately from other global agendas, goals, and targets (on sustainable development, biodiversity, desertification, among others)—to an integrated approach that focuses on harnessing synergies and minimizing trade-offs between them. Such an approach should emphasize taking forward the recommendations outlined in the UN expert group report, “Sustainable Development Goals Synergy Solutions for a World in Crisis: Tackling Climate and SDG Action Together.”²⁵
- scaling up attention, action, and support for adapting to climate change impacts, enhancing resilience, and minimizing and addressing climate-related L&D.

Streamlining and fine-tuning the process

- shifting from the current focus on media-directed, big-bang negotiated outcomes at the COP to elevating norm-strengthening exchanges among states and NPS to enable peer pressure to build towards greater implementation, higher ambition, greater sense of ownership, and fairer outcomes.

Box 1: Recommendations (cont.)

The global stocktake (GST) can help strengthen the UN climate regime’s norm-setting function by speaking to leaders as well as their constituencies and stakeholders by:

- creating space in the GST process for both Party and NPS leaders to act
- seeding and strengthening the norms of the regime as identified in the key findings of the synthesis report on the technical dialogue of the first GST (GST-SYR), and the outputs of the GST
- addressing on-the-ground (cost and non-cost) barriers to implementation, including in relation to the feasibility of NDCs, as reflected in the findings of the GST-SYR
- highlighting epistemic gaps that rendered collective assessment of progress in the GST challenging—e.g., assessing progress in adaptation in the absence of rigorous benchmarks
- operationalizing findings from the GST-SYR pathways across sectors using repositories of high-impact solutions that can be leveraged across sectors
- identifying opportunities for cooperation across Parties and NPS, thereby speaking to key stakeholders and creating the space for more leadership and ambition
- calling on the UN system, multilateral development banks (MDBs), and international financial institutions (IFIs) to align in supporting countries to produce and implement high-quality NDCs capable of attracting investments
- initiating follow-up processes once the GST concludes to ensure recommendations are implemented, including:
 - by providing means of implementation to those Parties that need it to integrate the findings of the GST into their commitments, such as NDCs
 - through enhanced international cooperation²⁶
 - by activating existing coalitions, as well as Party and/or NPS international cooperative initiatives (ICIs), to mount an effective 2024 response to the GST outcomes and to operationalize identified opportunities to be harvested in new NDCs
 - by increasing the transparency and accountability of relevant international organizations, ICIs, and NPS in 2024 and beyond, as further discussed in Chapter D.
 - by ensuring that the epistemic gaps identified in the first GST are systematically addressed leading up to and after subsequent GSTs.
- inviting the United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG) to convene world leaders in the first quarter of 2025 to receive their new, more ambitious NDCs.²⁷

This chapter offers illustrative options to strengthen the regime, based on the assumption that the Paris Agreement operates as a treaty that respects national determination but is comprised primarily of procedural obligations and obligations of conduct rather than of result. As such, it is best suited to performing a facilitative, norm-setting function, with the responsibility for the full implementation of these norms shared across multiple regimes, actors, and levels of governance.

The ability of the regime to deliver on its full norm-setting potential depends in part on streamlining, fine-tuning, and managing the unwieldy, seemingly arcane

negotiating process. To remain functionally relevant and to deliver on the goals of the Paris Agreement, it needs to significantly strengthen norms and generate supportive practices in relation to ambition, fairness, implementation, accountability, and cooperation across all thematic areas. The GST needs to create space for Party and NPS leaders to act. To do so, it needs to speak to their constituencies and stakeholders as much as to them.

A crosscutting theme of our proposals is that robust implementation of pledges—including in NDCs, and the provision of appropriate means of implementation

(MOI) necessary to do so—generates increasing levels of ambition. Implementation generates practical knowledge of the challenges, barriers, and opportunities inherent in climate action. It also builds confidence and, where it is matched by appropriate MOI, a sense of fairness.

A more muscular role for the UNFCCC Secretariat in assisting Parties in strengthening norms, generating accountability, and coordinating a shift away from generating big-bang negotiated outcomes at every COP, will also be important.

AMBITION AND FAIRNESS

The theory of change of the Paris Agreement's ETF is that, as part of the dynamic ambition cycle, reporting and review will build peer pressure, which in turn will drive increasingly enhanced action and implementation.

While acknowledging that the Paris Agreement's ETF will only become operational in 2024, in order to build peer pressure to encourage and inspire ambition we propose the following:

- strengthening the quality and transparency norms for NDCs, in particular to require more fine-grained explanations of how an NDC is fair and reflects a state's highest possible ambition²⁸
- developing, through an initial, exploratory technical dialogue, a standard of "due diligence" in relation to the obligations Parties have with regard to undertaking domestic mitigation measures and to their implementation²⁹
- developing a shared understanding of equity and fair shares, and an operational template for just transition, with a view to catalyzing the necessary just transitions across and within Parties and sectors
- agreeing on or endorsing recognized sectoral benchmarks of ambition (e.g., for 2030, 2035, and up to 2050)
- encouraging the provision of information on the extent of reliance on carbon dioxide removal (CDR) in NDCs, national long-term low-emission development strategies and corporate net-zero transition plans, including risks, uncertainties, and costs of use
- promoting Paris alignment of goals, policies, frameworks across the wider climate governance landscape, including relevant international organizations and regimes, as well as ICIs and various NPS actions (see Chapter D).

These norms can be generated and strengthened through:

- taking forward the key findings of the GST Technical Dialogue, some of which seek to address the issues identified above, and the outputs of the GST, including in particular by:
 - initiating follow-up processes after the GST concludes to ensure implementation of its recommendations
 - providing support to those Parties that need it to integrate the findings of the GST into their NDCs
 - ensuring that identified epistemic gaps are systematically addressed in the lead up to the next and subsequent GSTs.
- the ETF itself, particularly by enhancing the profile and functionality of the multilateral consideration of progress and technical expert review, which can be designed to include a discussion on assessments around equity and highest possible ambition, and the criteria Parties have chosen to justify the fairness and ambition of their NDCs
- future reviews of the guidance for the transparency, clarity, and understanding of NDCs, as well as their features³⁰
- special events hosted by the UNFCCC Secretariat highlighting path-breaking developments in national and sectoral policies
- informal exchanges among heads of delegation held in parallel to the formal negotiations.

More broadly, we would suggest that the annual COPs strive to reduce (through the President, Secretariat, and other relevant actors) the focus on media-directed, big-bang negotiated outcomes and instead elevate norm-strengthening exchanges among Parties and NPS through the above recommendations, and so better enable peer pressure to build toward greater implementation, higher ambition, a stronger sense of ownership, and fairer outcomes.

IMPLEMENTATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Regardless of their stated ambition, the implementation of many current NDCs is patchy given the lack of adequate support and capacity. Moreover, the regime has not been effective in setting up conversations or building momentum on implementation and collaboration among Parties in the formal negotiating process. There is also limited real-time accountability that holds Parties,

international organizations, ICIs, and NPS responsible to credibly implement what they have committed to do, including in NDCs and in staged announcements at COPs.

To enable better implementation and enhance accountability, we propose primary recommendations. First, rather than focusing only on target setting, accountability would be better served by increasing focus on the domestic mitigation measures Parties have (or have not) put in place with the aim of achieving their NDCs.

Second, the UN system can do more to assist Parties in enhancing the quality of their NDCs (in terms of process, ambition, robustness, and feasibility) and their ability to attract investments—in other words positioning NDCs as investment opportunities.³¹ While most Parties have significantly improved the quality of their second NDCs, these have not attracted finance at scale, detrimentally affecting implementation and confidence in the process.³² In this context, the UN system, MDBs and IFIs could usefully align to ensure they are pulling in the same direction.

Third, the UN system can help identify cost and non-cost barriers to implementation and opportunities for action and collaboration across sectors, within and between Parties, international organizations and NPS; as well as enhancing recognition for action taken.

Fourth, the UN system should bolster the accountability of Parties for NDCs and commitments made in COP decisions, as well as the accountability of international organizations and ICIs, including for initiatives launched and announcements made by both Parties and NPS alongside or outside the formal COP negotiations (see also Chapter D below).

These norms can be generated and strengthened in the following fora, and in the following ways, among others:

- **The Conference of Parties serving as the meeting of Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA) decision on the GST:** The decision text could set out—based on the findings of GST-SYR—those on-the-ground costs for and non-cost barriers to implementation, including in relation to the feasibility of NDCs. It could also translate lessons from the GST-SYR into operational pathways for action across sectors, using repositories of high-impact and leverageable solutions across sectors. It could further identify

and set out opportunities for cooperation, across both Parties and NPS.

- **The annual Mitigation Work Programme (MWP):** The MWP can identify high-impact opportunities for action and cooperation, including sectoral transformation, as well as additional voluntary commitments that can subsequently be harvested through the Paris Agreement’s ambition cycle.
- **The Glasgow-Sharm el-Sheikh work (GlaSS) programme on the Global Goal on Adaptation:** The work programme can put forward key opportunities on how to enhance resilience, increase adaptive capacity, and reduce vulnerabilities, particularly in those countries most affected by the impacts of climate change.
- **The Sharm el-Sheikh dialogue on Article 2.1(c) of the Paris Agreement:** The dialogue can develop results-oriented guidance on aligning finance flows. This could include, for instance, taxonomies of sustainable financial flows. The role of MDBs and other IFIs, as well as relevant action by ICIs and NPS will be critical.
- **ETF:** The ETF should promote in-country visits as opportunities to build capacity, share knowledge, celebrate progress, and encourage accelerated action. These technical-level visits should be combined with senior official and political-level engagement between the international community and the in-country team.
- **The Paris Agreement’s Implementation and Compliance Committee (PAICC):** The PAICC’s work should be highlighted, including by tracking significant and persistent inconsistencies of information provided by Parties. It can support them in generating and submitting robust information.
- **The Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT):** This important work can also be elevated; it provides quick-access support to countries and boosts their capacity to enhance transparency of action and support received.

UNFCCC Article 7.2(b) mandates the COP to “promote and facilitate the exchange of information on measures adopted by the Parties to address climate change and its effects.” Given that this provision applies to the UNFCCC’s “related instruments,” it covers the Paris Agreement as well. Since it does not expressly limit

the remit of the COP to measures embedded in the regime, it arguably covers measures announced outside the official COP process as well. The COP can direct the Secretariat to undertake these functions under Convention Article 8(2)(g). As such, Parties could ask the UNFCCC Secretariat, among other things, to take a number of actions.

- A follow-up process could track actions taken to implement the commitments made in COP cover decisions. It could, for instance, examine whether Parties have credibly taken steps since Glasgow to phase down unabated coal power as agreed in Decision 1/CP.26. This process could start with an assessment by the Secretariat and/or input from NPS tracking action at an informal public review session at the COP. Any outcomes from the assessment or review could be published on the UNFCCC website.
- Separately or as a part of the above, a follow-up process could track to what extent the initiatives launched and announcements made by Parties on the sidelines of the COP are being implemented. To what extent, for instance, are Parties delivering on the seemingly game-changing Glasgow Leaders Declaration on Forests and Land Use?³³
- Using this mandate, Parties could ask the Secretariat to produce periodic synthesis reports to track whether Parties are integrating the announcements made on the sidelines of COPs and agreed ICIs into their NDCs, including tracking progress on the UNFCCC website.
- Parties could also use the forthcoming review of guidance on features of NDCs in 2024 to help define what constitutes a “quality” NDC, and therefore capable of attracting investment.³⁴

In proposing an enhanced role for the UNFCCC Secretariat, we take our cues from the UNFCCC Executive Secretary Simon Stiell’s professed intent to act as the regime’s “Accountability Chief” as well as the UNSG’s bold stance on addressing climate change with the urgency and seriousness it merits.³⁵

COOPERATIVE ACTION ON ADAPTATION AND LOSS & DAMAGE

It is self-evident that the extent of global heating will determine the nature and extent of adaptation needs, L&D, and associated global costs. The current regime provides limited support and solidarity for adaptation, climate-resilient development, and L&D, especially in the context of our current overshoot trajectory.

While climate finance is a critical part of the response, it is not the only part. It is also important to frame adaptation as part of the required global energy transition and systems transformation. The goal of adaptation should not be to return communities and Parties to the status quo ante, but to acclimate them to a new, improved position, one that is in line with just transitions, climate resilience, and long-term sustainability. We propose, in this context:

- scaling up attention, action, and support for adapting to climate change impacts enhancing resilience; and averting, minimizing, and addressing climate-related L&D
- accelerating planning and implementation processes
- promoting flexible, multi-sectoral, inclusive, and long-term visions
- harnessing synergies and reducing trade-offs between mitigation, adaptation, sustainable development, and biodiversity objectives and targets
- improving tools and information to assess effectiveness of action and support
- enhancing adaptive capacity and resilience through the formulation and sharing of development pathways
- developing disaster response networks
- developing regional migration routes and safe passage
- integrating climate risk management, including climate-related disaster risk management, into adaptation planning and implementation
- enhancing and strengthening international cooperative action on adaptation and L&D
- expanding funding streams and sources for averting, minimizing, and addressing L&D.

COVERAGE

As indicated above, the regime has blind spots that will need to be addressed. Preparing for the future demands on climate governance will require agreement on a range of issues critical to reaching the goals of the Paris Agreement, such as the direction of travel in relation to fossil fuel production and use, as well as governance of CDR and other technologies.

STREAMLINING AND FINE-TUNING THE PROCESS

The multilateral climate negotiations are plagued with unwieldy, sprawling, competing agendas; time-consuming, seemingly never-ending processes; and consensus-based decision-making. As such, they move at a glacial pace relative to the speed and dynamism needed to avert dangerous climate change. Given that the big-ticket negotiations are largely over, there is an opportunity for reform. In this context, we propose the following efforts.

The negotiations need to be infused with a clear sense of purpose. To quote one of our interviewees, “It is a dangerous thing in rough waters if you don’t know where you are sailing and why.” This sense of purpose, in our view, would serve to strengthen and deliver on the norm-setting function of the regime towards achieving the goals of and ensuring the environmental effectiveness of the Paris Agreement. This norm-setting function is best performed by a legitimate universal process, such as the UN climate negotiations.

The process should move away from the current model of media-directed negotiated outcomes at every COP. These consensus-based outcomes absorb vast quantities of negotiating capital and time. With limited follow-up mechanisms, they deliver little concrete, on-the-ground change at the pace urgently required.

The process should also shift from the current model of COP Presidencies. Presidencies, given the exponentially rising costs of hosting COPs, are understandably focused on delivering momentous headline-grabbing outcomes. A new model of COP Presidencies should demand a less interventionist role and be directed instead toward strengthening the regime by ensuring continuity, follow-up, and implementation. Parties could also consider appointing a team of Presidencies, rather than one Presidency passing the baton to another. Such an approach would enhance joint ownership, consistency, and follow-through. Parties should consider a high-profile end to each COP that is decoupled from the final gavel of the negotiations—

which are an increasingly small part of the COP and yet attract disproportionate, often unhelpful, and distracting media attention.

The process could standardize how Presidencies approach the integration of the political and technical components of the negotiations. Politicians should be tasked more directly and predictably with devising compromise solutions and following up on them. Streamlining the ministerial speech-making function can further integrate the technical and political components as well as signal a shift away from announcements toward active follow-up and implementation.

The role of the UNFCCC Secretariat should also be strengthened to provide the necessary continuity and follow-up, support implementation, and facilitate enhanced accountability. The Secretariat is less driven by the need to produce headline-grabbing outcomes and has greater institutional expertise and memory.

Parties should seek to improve the strategic coordination of the three key elements of the COP, namely participation of world leaders, the action agenda, and the negotiations. Parties should also exploit more fully what can be done beyond consensus-based processes. The UNFCCC Secretariat, with the support of the Presidency, can initiate and manage several follow-up processes, as discussed above, without passing through a consensus-based decision-making process. Parties could also use ministerial declarations (e.g., on finance or ambition) amongst a sub-set of Parties to forge ahead and encourage others to follow suit.

In order to streamline the agenda and demands on negotiating time, some defunct agenda items should be allowed to wither on the vine with strategic benign neglect. One approach is to address some agenda items biennially, rather than annually. Under the Secretariat’s initiative, agendas could be structured by logically grouping items and using headings and subheadings.

As is customary in other UN processes, Presiding Officers should be encouraged to take on a more robust role in developing and proposing textual suggestions for the consideration of Parties. They could draft COP decisions in plain language so they are easily accessible and understandable to those that need to take action.

Finally, the UNSG should be invited to convene world leaders in the first quarter of 2025 to receive their new and more ambitious NDCs. Such a moment creates a political endpoint to the first ambition cycle under the Paris Agreement.³⁶

D. STRENGTHENING THE UN CLIMATE REGIME'S CATALYTIC ROLE IN THE WIDER LANDSCAPE OF CLIMATE ACTION

The regime relates in various ways to the different components of the wider landscape of global climate governance, including: (i) international organizations and agreements; (ii) multilateral development banks (MDBs) and other international financial institutions (IFIs); and (iii) international cooperative initiatives (ICIs) and non-Party stakeholder (NPS) action. As the focal point for international action on climate change, the regime can act as a “catalytic institution” in this wider landscape.³⁷ By providing for flexibility and an iterative

process (through nationally determined contributions [NDCs] and, as relevant, long-term low-emission development strategies, national adaptation plans, adaptation communications, and other instruments, as well as the global stocktake [GST]), it has the potential to incentivize other institutions and actors to scale up action.³⁸ However, the existing links with the wider governance landscape leave significant room for further enhancing the regime's wider catalytic role.

Box 2: Recommendations

To advance alignment of the goals and actions of the wider landscape with the Paris Agreement's goals:

- Parties should pursue more substantive exchanges with other international organizations and agreements through relevant and appropriate existing United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) agenda items, such as the Mitigation Work Programme and cooperation with relevant international organizations. For IFIs, Parties should seek to strengthen alignment through the agenda item on cooperation with relevant international organizations, the Sharm el-Sheikh dialogue on Article 2.1(c) and deliberations on the New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG).
- The UNFCCC Secretariat, the UN Secretary-General (UNSG), and the Conference of Parties (COP) Presidencies should establish a targeted mechanism or process for considering the goals and actions of relevant international organizations and agreements, including IFIs, based on information provided by these organizations and agreements and independent assessments.
- The Marrakech Partnership and the High-Level Climate Champions (HLCs), with the UNFCCC Secretariat, the UNSG, and the COP Presidencies as appropriate, should build on and expand the current work on a Recognition and Accountability Framework (that has so far focused on net-zero pledges by non-Party stakeholders [NPS]) by:
 - upgrading the Global Climate Action (GCA) Portal to make it the central registry for all types of ICIs, including the multitude of initiatives announced at COPs
 - establishing and promoting transparency standards through the GCA Portal to facilitate the benchmarking of a gold standard for ICIs committed to and implementing high-quality reporting and review
 - establishing appropriate review arrangements for all ICIs
 - tying the opportunity to present ICIs at COPs to registration in the GCA Portal and adherence to minimum transparency standards
 - reinforcing and intensifying efforts to address gaps in the geographical and sectoral/thematic balance of ICIs and mobilize new initiatives, including through the establishment of a dedicated capacity-building facility.

Box 2: Recommendations (cont.)

Building on the synthesis report on the technical dialogue of the first global stocktake (GST-SYR), the GST could pave the way for these recommendations, including by:

- highlighting the important catalytic role of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement in enhancing action in the wider climate governance landscape
- encouraging other international organizations and agreements, MDBs, IFIs, ICIs, and NPS to fully align their activities with the goals of the Paris Agreement, as well as enhance international cooperation to fully implement related targets
- fostering enhanced transparency and accountability of commitments and their implementation as well as improving the geographical and thematic balance of ICIs (including announcements at previous COPs)
- inviting the UNFCCC Secretariat, the Marrakech Partnership, the HLCs, and the COP Presidencies to advance and accelerate action, welcoming their related initiatives and emphasizing the need to further expand and fully implement them.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND AGREEMENTS

Relevant sectoral international organizations and agreements, such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the Montreal Protocol, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and others, have had their home in the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) under the standard agenda item “Cooperation with other/relevant international organizations.” In practice, relevant international organizations have mainly reported on their activities under this agenda item. In addition, the UNFCCC Secretariat has been involved in important coordination efforts and information exchange across relevant organizations. These activities include participation in coordination bodies such as the Joint Liaison Group of the Rio Conventions, as well as coordination with other treaty bodies and international organizations (e.g., related to ICAO’s Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation).³⁹ However, few substantive debates have occurred among Parties pursuant to these agenda items, which have in turn rarely led to substantive outputs such as guidance by the COP, the Conference of Parties serving as the meeting of Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA) or their subsidiary bodies (e.g., in the form of decisions or conclusions).

Hence there is considerable potential to establish targeted mechanisms or processes under the UNFCCC

and the Paris Agreement that recognize, review, or consider the capacity and the implications of actions by other international organizations and treaties. These mechanisms or processes could serve to strengthen the alignment of the ambition and implementation of actions of relevant international organizations with the goals of the Paris Agreement. In this respect, ICAO and IMO policies addressing greenhouse gas emissions from international transport have been found especially unambitious and ineffective. By comparison, efforts under the Montreal Protocol to address emissions of fluorinated greenhouse gases has been considered more adequate.⁴⁰

To this end, the following options could be pursued:

- **Leveraging UNFCCC agenda items:** Parties could encourage alignment of action under other agreements and organizations with the goals of the Paris Agreement through long-standing agenda items on cooperation with relevant international organizations (see “International organizations and agreements” in Chapter D) and on bunker fuels. Parties could also adopt new agenda items or utilize spaces such as the Mitigation Work Programme. In doing so, Parties could seek more active engagement and interaction with these organizations and where joint meetings or joint work programs could be considered, e.g., between the UNFCCC and the CBD. However, given that Parties have been reluctant to consider other

treaties and organizations, informal options under these agenda items, such the organizing of dedicated workshops, may be a way forward.

- **Establishing a process under the auspices of the UNFCCC Secretariat, the COP Presidencies, and the UNSG:** Such a process could include a regular review, for instance by the UN Environment Programme (e.g., as part of its Emissions Gap Reports) on an annual or biennial basis. Through this process, other treaties and international organizations, such as ICAO and IMO, could be encouraged and inspired to set ambitious goals, requested to provide specific information (including on how their goals and actions align with the Paris Agreement’s goals), and/or encouraged to offer detailed information on progress made, including in response to related questions.
- **Including information in NDCs:** Parties could report, on an individual basis, information on actions taken pursuant to other treaties and international organizations. For instance, Parties could include international aviation and shipping emissions in their NDCs, and subsequently report on progress made through their biennial transparency reports under Article 13 of the Paris Agreement.

MULTILATERAL DEVELOPMENT BANKS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

The potential for intensifying discussions on and with MDBs and other IFIs on the alignment of their activities with the goal under Article 2.1(c) of the Paris Agreement is critical and needs to be more fully exploited. Existing links have not provided for structured exchange, reporting, and review. Only a few IFIs have a formal relationship with the UNFCCC (i.e., the Green Climate Fund, the Global Environment Facility, and the Adaptation Fund). But the much wider range of MDBs and other IFIs—despite their broader roles and centrality to realizing the objectives and goals of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement—have hardly appeared on the formal multilateral climate agenda.

Significantly, COP27 broke new ground for climate finance. The Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan explicitly called for reforms of MDB policies and practice. It also called for MDBs and IFIs to align with the goals of the Paris Agreement and to scale up funding.⁴¹ The Standing Committee on Finance has begun to collect relevant information related to the

long-term climate finance goal enshrined in Article 2.1(c) in accordance with a mandate issued at COP24.⁴² COP27 also launched the Sharm el-Sheikh dialogue on Article 2.1(c) between Parties, relevant organizations and stakeholders.⁴³ These work streams may also address IFIs.

To advance alignment of the IFI policies and activities with the Paris Agreement, the following options could be pursued:

- **Leveraging existing agenda items and processes:** Parties could encourage alignment of action by IFIs with the goals of the Paris Agreement, especially Article 2.1(c), through existing agenda items and processes, including the agenda item on cooperation with relevant international organizations (see “International organizations and agreements” in Chapter D); the Sharm el-Sheikh dialogue on Article 2.1(c) (and any follow-up processes); and deliberations on the NCQG. This could also serve to develop practicable methods and metrics for reporting information on Paris alignment of financial flows.
- **Establishing a process under the auspices of the UNFCCC Secretariat, the COP Presidencies, and the UNSG:** Such a process could comprise a request for information provided by IFIs and its review and assessment. Through this process, IFIs could be encouraged and invited to provide specific information on how their actions align with the Paris Agreement’s goals. They should offer detailed information on progress made, including in response to related questions posed by Parties and NPS. This could build on the decision of COP27 on funding arrangements for loss and damage (L&D) that invited the UNSG and IFIs to consider funding for responding to L&D.⁴⁴

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIVE INITIATIVES AND NON-PARTY STAKEHOLDERS

ICIs and NPS action can complement the UNFCCC process by fulfilling a number of governance functions, including:

- providing guidance and signals (e.g., the G20’s commitment to phasing out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies)
- setting standards (e.g., net-zero standards for corporations)
- strengthening transparency and accountability (e.g., through the accounting and reporting

tools developed by the Greenhouse Gas Protocol, or the IMO's data collection system for fuel oil consumption)

- offering financial support and other means of implementation (e.g., through the Coalition of Finance Ministers for Climate Action)
- allowing for knowledge-sharing and learning (e.g., about specific policy instruments through the Carbon Pricing Leadership Coalition).⁴⁵

From the start of negotiations on the Paris Agreement until now, ICIs and NPS action have increasingly been recognized by, and therefore linked to, the official UNFCCC process. Under the Paris Agreement, the HLCs (established in 2015) and the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action (GCA) (launched in 2016) have developed and elaborated the GCA Agenda.

As an aside, thought could be given to whether the mandate in Article 7.2(c) of the UNFCCC for the COP to: “[F]acilitate, at the request of two or more Parties, the coordination of measures adopted by them to address climate change and its effects [...]” could be invoked as a way to better implement ICIs involving Parties.

The GCA and the work of the HLCs have frequently been referred to in official texts, such as decisions. Important elements structuring the evolving GCA ecosystem include:

- the GCA Portal (previously known as the Non-state Actor Zone on Climate Action [NAZCA]), through which NPS and ICIs can register their commitments and provide some information about progress made⁴⁶
- the Race to Zero and Race to Resilience campaigns, aimed at catalyzing new commitments from NPS that meet certain minimum criteria
- the Climate Action Pathways, which set out sectoral visions for a 1.5-degree-C, resilient world by 2050 and offer roadmaps for achieving that vision⁴⁷ and the related 2030 Breakthroughs, which specify sectoral “tipping points” that can help realize the Climate Action Pathways⁴⁸
- the government-led Breakthrough Agenda, which aims to scale up clean technologies in particular sectors (thus far focused on power, road transport, steel, hydrogen, and agriculture, with buildings and cement to be added)⁴⁹
- other activities, including the Global Climate Action Awards, the Global Climate Action Yearbook, and regional climate weeks.

The Marrakech Partnership and the HLCs emerged from an increased emphasis on spurring engagement and commitments by a broad range of actors to advance global climate action. These efforts, however, have focused less on fostering accountability for commitments, their credible implementation, or the capacity needed for their delivery. Parties, on the other hand, have received guidance on both information that should be included in NDCs to facilitate a better understanding and assessment of the contribution made,⁵⁰ as well as information that should be reported on the implementation and achievement of their NDCs.⁵¹ The enhanced transparency framework (ETF) also governs processes for the reporting and review of information reported by Parties.

While similar procedures and standards do not exist for ICIs and NPS, several efforts have been initiated to enhance accountability, particularly for activities by NPS, including:

- recommendations on credible net-zero pledges by the UN High-Level Expert Group on the Net-Zero Emissions Commitments of Non-state Entities (HLEG)⁵²
- ongoing and planned activities and developments in the context of the Marrakech Partnership, including screening the robustness and credibility of NPS actions and commitments, tracking progress through the Global Climate Action Portal (including for the Race to Zero), and annual publication of the Yearbook on Global Climate Action⁵³
- most recently and importantly, the launch of a process and consultation by the Secretariat on a Recognition and Accountability Framework (RAF) for NPS climate action and a Draft Implementation Plan with respect to Net-Zero Pledges of non-State actors and Integrity Matters⁵⁴
- the Breakthrough Agenda progress reports⁵⁵
- work by research organizations and think tanks.⁵⁶

It is especially worth noting that the work following from the HLEG, including the recently initiated work on a RAF, captures only a part of the spectrum of ICIs—it focuses on NPS and net-zero pledges. ICIs, both in terms of actors and substance, are not captured by the RAF, given that they may involve the participation of two or more Parties and/or NPS, and may work toward a non-net-zero target, for example, one finance- or adaptation-based.

To bring ICIs and NPS action to full fruition, two challenges in particular need to be addressed. First, the links between the GCA initiatives and the regime remain underexploited. While the Marrakech Partnership’s activities have appeared on the official program of UNFCCC meetings, these activities have primarily served to share information on GCA activities rather than created moments of enhanced accountability or to create a coherent and parallel program to the official negotiations. To the extent that NPS and the GCA have been addressed in COP/CMA decisions, such decisions have rarely gone beyond a general acknowledgment and a soft encouragement for Parties to engage with them, including through the Marrakech Partnership.⁵⁷ Substantive engagement with the GCA has generally been lacking.

Second, as recognized in the Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan, there is an urgent need to further strengthen transparency and accountability of GCA initiatives beyond the focus of the currently discussed RAF on net-zero pledges by NPS, including the broad set of ICIs.⁵⁸ In addition, GCA initiatives need to be further developed toward an enhanced geographical and sectoral/thematic balance.⁵⁹

To strengthen the transparency and accountability of and enhance engagement with ICIs, Parties, the Marrakech Partnership, the HLCs, the UNFCCC Secretariat, the UNSG, or the COP Presidencies, in various partnerships, could variously pursue the following options:

- **Making the GCA Portal more inclusive and promoting it as the central and main registry for all types of ICIs**, including the multitude of initiatives announced at COPs. As of November 2023, the GCA Portal listed 149 ICIs, whereas other data sets have identified more than 600.⁶⁰ Many intergovernmental initiatives and many of the initiatives announced at COPs, especially since 2014, have not been included. A central registry and overview of ICIs would crucially support understanding and assessment. A more general and much-needed upgrade of the GCA Portal could further improve its utility.
- **Establishing and promoting clear transparency standards**, including for the quality of commitments made, annual progress reports, and review. Commitment to and implementation of relevant standards could be reflected in the GCA portal, which would help improve the

understanding of the quality of the commitments made through ICIs, particularly their underlying assumptions and their alignment with Paris Agreement goals. Information on implementation of such standards would also serve to address concerns about the sustainability a lack of stability and impact of ICIs. Requirements could be differentiated for different types of initiatives (e.g., mitigation, adaptation). They could further draw on existing criteria developed for the Race to Zero and Race to Resilience. The GCA Portal would therefore facilitate the development of a “gold standard” quality label for ICIs—an important incentive for ICIs to join the portal as well as commit to and implement key transparency standards.

- **Establishing appropriate review arrangements:**
 - An independent panel of experts could review the ambition and implementation of ICIs, on the basis of relevant guidance and guidelines. Independent reviews and assessments by qualified research organizations and think tanks (similar to the Climate Action Tracker for country commitments) could also be encouraged.
 - Public review events of (or groups of) ICIs at COPs could provide transparency and accountability. To this end, initiatives might usefully be grouped (e.g., sectorally or thematically). Such events could be organized by the Marrakech Partnership and the HLCs in collaboration with the UNFCCC Secretariat and the UNSG as well as the COP Presidencies. Building on the results of the independent review referred to above, they could be a prominent part of the COP itself (e.g., convened by the Secretariat and the COP Presidency).
- **Tying the opportunity to present ICIs and their progress at COPs to registration in the GCA Portal and to the commitment to implement minimum transparency standards.**
- **Reinforcing and intensifying efforts to address gaps in the geographical and sectoral/thematic balance of ICIs (and the GCA at large) and mobilize new initiatives.** The establishment of a dedicated capacity-building facility under the Marrakech Partnership could be considered, which could support the implementation of transparency standards, as suggested above.
- **Strengthening the relationship between ICIs,**

NDCs and, as relevant, long-term low-emission development strategies, national adaptation plans, adaptation communications, and other relevant instruments, by encouraging:

- ICI to explain how they will contribute to NDC ambition, if at all
- Parties to reflect significant ICIs in their NDCs and, as relevant, long-term low-emission development strategies, national adaptation plans, adaptation communications, and other relevant instruments, and to provide information (in NDCs and through reporting pursuant to the ETF) on steps taken at the national level to promote greater transparency and accountability of NPS action.

The initiation of consultations on a RAF and Draft Implementation Plan for net-zero pledges of non-state actors provides an opportunity to enhance the transparency and accountability of NPS net-zero pledges, those taken individually and through alliances. The RAF could be the starting point for the establishment and elaboration of further transparency standards

for ICIs more broadly, including those covering other areas of mitigation, adaptation, L&D, and means of implementation.

These suggestions have significant resource implications, in particular the establishment of arrangements for regular review of ICIs (e.g., an expert panel, independent assessments) and/or the establishment of a dedicated capacity-building facility. Philanthropy could play an important role in this regard.

The GST could, building on the GST-SYR, principally support and pave the way for the suggestions above, including by:

- fostering enhanced transparency and accountability of ICIs and NPS action (including announcements at previous COPs) and their implementation
- highlighting the important potential of the catalytic role of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement in triggering, promoting and orchestrating action in the wider landscape of global climate governance
- inviting the UNFCCC Secretariat, the Marrakech Partnership, the HLCs, and the COP Presidencies to advance action on transparency and accountability.

E. CONCLUSION

The Paris Agreement is having a positive impact: it is working. At the same time, the science is telling us that it is not working fast enough to stay within the temperature limits of the Paris Agreement. Even as nationally determined contributions and other Party pledges, or the commitments of international cooperative initiatives and non-Party stakeholders (NPS), become more ambitious on paper, emissions and average temperatures continue to rise.

Moreover, as the global temperature increases, so does the frequency and severity of climate impacts. Yet the most climate vulnerable people around the world are not receiving the help they require to recover from climate disasters or to transition to climate resilience and climate safety.

The first global stocktake (GST) under the Paris Agreement provides an important opportunity to review collective progress and—importantly—to inform Parties and NPS of the most effective ways to raise ambition in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement. Furthermore, the GST could serve as a moment to make the overall UN climate regime more effective.

This report suggests a number of ways—through radical evolution rather than revolution—that both the regime itself and the way that it catalyzes climate action in the wider landscape could be made more effective. It is important that this GST lives up to the challenge: while it is the first GST under the Paris Agreement, occurring in the middle of this critical decade, it is also likely to be its most consequential.

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G. ENDNOTES

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2 While nationally determined contributions (NDCs) are required to address mitigation, the Paris Agreement leaves it open to Parties to communicate pledges in areas other than mitigation in NDCs or through other instruments (e.g., national adaptation plans). In this report, we use the term NDC to also refer to these other relevant instruments under the Paris Agreement, as appropriate.

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The Center for Climate and Energy Solutions (C2ES) is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization working to forge practical solutions to climate change. Our mission is to secure a safe and stable climate by accelerating the global transition to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions and a thriving, just, and resilient economy.



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