

CliMates Submission

Feedback to the High-Level Champions on How to Improve the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action for Enhancing Ambition

Mandate: Decision 1/CP.25, para 28

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Introduction

CliMates (weareclimates.org) is an international, youth-led think-and-do tank dedicated to raising awareness and empowering young people on climate change issues. We do so by:

- Developing and promoting innovative ideas and tools
- Influencing decision-makers
- Training youth to become change-makers
- Engaging in interdisciplinary research and action-based projects

Our members come from more than 30 countries and are students or young professionals interested in addressing the climate crisis. This submission was first drafted and coordinated by the CliMates' Negotiations Tracking Team. The team consists of around 10 young people who follow and analyse international climate negotiations to raise awareness, build capacity and develop expertise on international climate change negotiations. An active member of the YOUNGO constituency, the Negotiations Tracking Team further organises workshops to train CliMates' delegations and the participation of CliMates to the Intersessionals and Conference of Parties (COP).

CliMates welcomes the decision of the COP to extend the mandate of the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action (MPGCA) to 2025 and is pleased to share its submission on how to improve the work of the High-Level Champions and the Marrakech Partnership for enhancing ambition and further catalysing climate action. In this feedback, we highlight the following points and recommendations:

- The MPGCA is in a unique position to strengthen connections between negotiations, initiatives and events

- To enhance transparency, evaluations done by the MPGCA should be more quantitative: A transparent, data-based and quantitative reporting system would enhance impact and contribute to success and credibility
- The MPGCA is still not well known outside of the UNFCCC process. We, therefore, suggest the MPGCA to focus on visibility and strategic communications and to enhance transparency and communications on the way the MPGCA operates
- To enable environmental, economic and social system transformation, the MPGCA should provide equal space for the views of all stakeholders, especially communities in the Global South who are most impacted by the consequences of climate change. This also means enabling dialogue around contested and often side-lined concepts in the climate negotiations, which are highly relevant for ambitious climate action and vulnerable communities, for instance, climate justice and human rights.

Key elements of success for the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action

The MPGCA's mission is "to strengthen collaboration between governments and key stakeholders to immediately lower emissions and increase resilience against climate impacts" (Marrakech Partnership, 2020: 1), and focuses on environmental, economic and social system transformation. The initiative promotes increased ambition from all stakeholders and it is hoped to play a significant role in closing emission, mitigation and adaptation gaps.

Indeed, the MPGCA has introduced important tools for scaling-up global climate action, enabling cooperation and the formation of global coalitions for climate action. The work of the MPGCA has allowed non-Party stakeholders – including cities, businesses, states and regions, investors, and civil society – to engage in international climate politics and be recognised as important leaders of climate action and the implementation of the Paris Agreement. **Still, there is room to further strengthen collaboration for climate action between Party and non-Party stakeholders. It has never been more important to promote higher ambition to fulfil the Paris Agreement – the window of opportunity to limit global warming to 1.5-2 °C is closing. Below we will, therefore, present our views on key elements for the success of the MPGCA.**

At the Race to Zero Launch Event at the June Momentum, the High-Level Champions communicated the goal of increasing the number of organisations committed to net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 or sooner tenfold by COP26. The success of the MPGCA in terms of enhancing ambition in the next 5 years and beyond includes, as a first step, to fulfil this goal and then to progressively build-up participant numbers in the forthcoming years. **Furthermore, success should also be measured against the concrete implementation of stated commitments by partners, not solely by the number of stakeholders committing to it.**

Success for the MPGCA ultimately means to stimulate not just pledges, but actions. Communications on the commitments to climate action by non-Party stakeholders as on the NAZCA Platform are vital and important to showcase best practices and the importance of non-Party stakeholders for the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Yet, a transparent, data-based and quantitative reporting system which tracks the implementation of action registered on the NAZCA portal is necessary to give credibility and contribute to lowering emissions immediately. **A further success factor is, therefore, putting enhanced quantitative and qualitative monitoring mechanisms for climate action commitments in place, which in turn would enable transparency and trust in the MPGCA, a further success factor.**

- **Enable the active participation of *all* non-Party stakeholders**

Young people across the world are demanding more ambitious climate action to fulfil the 1,5 °C temperature goal. In the words of Marianne Karlsen (2020), the Chair of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation at the June Momentum Closing Event:

“The global mobilisation on climate change in 2019 was led by the youth, calling for climate ambition and urgent actions to deliver the promises made to safeguard nature and people and the future, which is theirs. Today we want to echo their call to remind us all that 2020 remains a key year for climate.”

Climate change is an intergenerational justice issue. The youth of today contributed little to the inherited system and greenhouse gas emissions of the past and present which are causing global warming. At the same time, the lack of ambitious climate action is shaping future opportunities of today’s youth. By 2050, the children of today will have to live with an unstable climate inherited from the actions of their ancestors. Therefore, young people are undoubtedly major stakeholders concerned. Tomorrow’s youth will need to develop unprecedented resilience and adaptation capacities in the face of negative climate impacts and required societal changes in consumption and lifestyle patterns to shift to a low-carbon world. This places an unfair burden on present and future generations and calls for the inclusion of their views at the negotiation table. Integrating the views of young people from across the world in climate strategies is vital for successful implementation of the Paris Agreement and increasing resilience against climate impacts.

One factor for success from CliMates point of view is, therefore, **enhanced participation of youth in the framework of the MPGCA**. We welcome existing initiatives such as the Youth Climate Summit and Regional Weeks and recognise them as useful tools. However, **there is room for more connections between the work of the MPGCA and other UNFCCC programs such as Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE)**. MPGCA’s activities should focus on climate ambition, not only of companies and local governments but also of civil society, which constitutes a key non-Party stakeholder. CliMates supports the idea that **a successful partnership acts on education, public participation and capacity-building of civil society**; in particular of the youth which represents a driving force for global climate ambition at the moment.

- **Truly build back better**

The next 12 months will be of great importance for the long-term success of the MPGCA. Globally, governments are planning stimulus packages totalling \$9tn to recover from the COVID-19 crisis. These will influence the structure of economies for years to come. It is thus a moment of great opportunity and risk. An opportunity to set national economies in line with the Paris goals and invest in our future. A risk to continue with the old ways and lock-in harmful production and consumption practices for years to come. **A successful MPGCA thus actively advocates for a COVID-19 recovery stimulus which showcases climate ambition and equity.** There is no going back to normal. As stated by Patricia Espinosa (2020) in the Race to Zero Launch Event at the June Momentum:

“More than ever we need to show that the path to recovery can be healthy, resilient and in line with zero emissions.”

The MPGCA’s narrative should highlight the opportunities connected with shifting to the decarbonisation of industries and businesses as well as the risks of bailing out high-carbon industries and companies, for instance, airlines, with no conditions on the reduction of carbon emissions, in line with the Paris Agreement, attached.

In light of the COVID-19 outbreak, the MPGCA faces extraordinary challenges for strengthening the interaction between Party and non-Party stakeholders and broadening participation. Due to travel restrictions across the world for an, as of now, uncertain time, the partnership’s mandate is further complicated by the necessary physical distance. First steps for success in terms of enhancing ambition in the next 5 years and beyond are therefore to enable:

- 1) **Clear communication on COVID-19 developments throughout the pandemic.** For that, the work of the High-Level Champions should be made even more visible: Email communication, interviews and other insights should give a clearer picture of the activities of the Champions. This would allow for more identification and familiarity with the officeholders. The June Momentum was a very good example of how this could look like.
- 2) **Clear communications on events which enable participation during COVID-19 from a wide range of stakeholders, with a focus on facilitating the participation of Global South stakeholders.**

- **Enhance clarity on objectives / clear communication**

Over the years, the MPGCA has launched several initiatives, tools and events aimed at implementing its work plans. However, the impression of the authors of this paper is that communication around the MPGCA could be improved. Outside of the UNFCCC inner

circles, the existence and the role of the High-Level Champions remain very little known. A large majority of stakeholders are unaware of the platforms and circles that exist to promote their take on climate action. This is a missed opportunity.

The MPGCA should be the link between the closed and sometimes obscure circle of UNFCCC negotiations and civil society. **A successful MPGCA should be widely known and recognised as a key partner for ambition enhancement.**

CliMates' recommendation to achieve this key factor for success, is to improve the communication strategy of the MPGCA. The Champions should be recognised by all stakeholders as key actors of the climate stage. Tools such as the NAZCA Platform should become the reference for climate action tracking. Events such as the Regional Climate Weeks should gain momentum, especially in the context of a pandemic during which international travel will likely remain restricted in the coming months/years. Climate action cannot afford to be delayed. The years to come will make or break the success of the Paris Agreement and determine our ability to let humanity thrive in a safe and desirable future for all individuals.

A suggested step to enable better communication with and representation of youth in the MPGCA could be to **nominate Youth Focal Points who would be liaising closely with the High-Level Champions and YOUNGO, and thereby facilitate communications. Although this suggestion has not been brought up yet to the wider YOUNGO constituency, CliMates is favourable to the emergence of such a position in the near future.**

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?

Parties benefit by being shown what is possible. Parties can benefit best when engaging in close dialogue with non-Party stakeholders, which could be achieved by the following steps: **A stronger focus on creating interaction, meetings between Parties and non-Party stakeholders at a local, national and international level.** Regional Climate Weeks are going towards that direction, however, a stronger focus on specific countries would enable addressing country-specific challenges. **The MPGCA is uniquely positioned to endorse the role of an intermediary, in charge of facilitating the interactions presented above.**

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

Over the years, the MPGCA has developed a wide range of tools, events, and campaigns aimed at promoting and enhancing the climate ambition of a variety of stakeholders. CliMates has observed the achievements and limitations of previous initiatives. **The current biggest limitation of the MPGCA is the lack of awareness of some stakeholders – in particular civil society, Small and Medium Enterprises, and smaller NGOs – of the work of the MPGCA, their existing tools, and the platforms that have been built for them.** Before developing new projects, CliMates recommends focusing on improving existing ones, and on a strategic communication campaign. The MPGCA should become the reference for climate ambition tracking and enhancement.

CliMates also regrets the lack of dissemination of the Talanoa Dialogue's outcomes. We consider that the Talanoa Dialogue was ambitious and desirable in its objectives and values. Its inclusiveness, openness, and extent made it unique. Sadly, we would have liked to see more efforts given to the inclusion of its outputs into the negotiation processes. We regret that the spirit of Talanoa has been lost quickly after the end of this experience. **CliMates hopes to see similar initiatives to the Talanoa Dialogue in the future, with more effort given to the after-life of the projects.**

These suggestions require a review of the structure of the MPGCA, to guarantee more transparency on how decisions are taken, how projects are built, and how all constituencies can take part in their organisation. It also requires a better consistency of the MPGCA. **The system of one-year mandates for the Champions limits the development of a long-term vision and strategy, the legacy of the Champions and their visibility.** For the wider public, it is hard to identify who represents the Marrakech Partnership. Faces change every year, and the Champions are not visible enough. **CliMates advocates for a greater diversity of profiles in the nomination of the Champions and the involvement of wider society, or at least more transparency in this nomination process (which will lead to a wider identification), and finally a longer mandate of the Champions.**

How can civil society (especially youth) contribute to the Climate Action Pathways

We believe that the Climate Action Pathways are useful for highlighting key milestones and visualising in the most complete way possible the steps towards fulfilling the Paris goals and achieving decarbonisation of all sectors by 2050.

The Pathways powerfully highlight the insufficient climate action taken – across the tables it becomes clear that some of the action points to be taken by 2020 are far from being achieved. In certain sections, it seems that what is stated is an ideal vision of the world but with little indication of achievable milestones. For instance, in the Human Settlements Action Table in the section civil society, it is written: “Civil society including traditional and indigenous groups, in community-take part in human settlements-related planning” (Marrakech Partnership, 2019: 3). Of course, this is true in an ideal world, however, it is often far from reality. **The Pathways do not indicate realistic and achievable steps to achieve this and do not address structural barriers for success as well as national particularities.**

Indeed, the current objectives set for civil society by the Climate Action Pathways are perceived to be general principles that need to be followed to achieve a truly sustainable and carbon-neutral world. However, these lack practicality and ambition. **Guidance and well-defined, achievable, measurable steps would enable stakeholders to work together towards achieving these milestones.**

Similarly, **when expanding on the work of the current Climate Action Pathways, it is essential to take into consideration the varying national circumstances of developing and developed countries.** This would be a first step to enhance the applicability of the Pathways. Highlighting what needs to be accomplished is useful and important – however, it is equally vital to address existing barriers preventing the achievement of the action points and provide tools to overcome them.

What types of conversations need to be convened with policymakers and non-Party stakeholders and with each other to drive systemic change, break down silos and unlock barriers? What are the current challenges?

Human rights are the path towards the ambitious climate action so urgently needed. In recent years, the interconnection between human rights and climate change has been increasingly recognised within the UNFCCC and beyond. It is flagged in the Preamble to the Paris Agreement and recognised under various workstreams, for instance, the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform. **Despite the concepts of Mother Earth and climate justice being acknowledged, few channels have been found in the following years to advance these concepts within the UNFCCC.**

The MPGCA's 2020-2021 work programme highlights its:

“focus on environmental, economic and social system transformation, promoting higher ambition of all stakeholders to collectively strive for the 1.5 °C temperature goal and a climate-neutral and resilient world” (Marrakech Partnership, 2020: 1).

We will only be able to transform our economies and societies after addressing the systemic barriers for a sustainable world. Policymakers and non-Party stakeholders will need to engage in critical conversations on these systemic barriers. **To contribute to system transformation and higher ambition of all stakeholders, the MPGCA could provide a space for discussions on the systemic nature of the climate crisis.** This includes topics which are highly relevant for ambitious climate action, however, are often sidelined in negotiations, for instance, the intersection of human rights and climate change as well as climate justice.

“Taking a rights-based approach leads to more effective climate action because it incorporates the voices and knowledge of indigenous peoples, women, youth, and local communities, ensures their full and effective participation, and considers how best to avoid negative environmental and social impacts” (Lennon, 2019: 2).

A success factor for strengthening collaboration between Parties and non-Party stakeholders for mitigation and adaptation action is thus enabling an exchange between all stakeholders on the need for human-rights-based approaches to climate action.

How can the Global Climate Action portal (NAZCA) be enhanced to credibly take stock of where non-Party stakeholders stand in relation to the goals of the Paris Agreement? What metrics should it prioritise?

The NAZCA Platform is a great tool to follow the commitment of big companies, cities and local governments in greater climate action. However, **it is currently hard to compare these commitments to the required level of ambition for alignment with the Paris Agreement’s objectives.** It is almost impossible to track the implementation and commitment of these stakeholders in implementing their promises. **Finally, ambition on the NAZCA Platform is widely focusing on greenhouse gas emissions reductions, throwing shade on other types of ambition on adaptation, education or awareness-raising.** The current focus on carbon emissions shifts the attention to big companies and big cities. CliMates therefore recommends:

- More quantitative data on
 - The commitments of companies
 - The display of their performance
- More information on the quality of these commitments
- Diversifying the classification of commitments: A better representation of commitments related to adaptation, and cross-topic issues such as education and public awareness, gender, human rights, ecosystem preservation, etc...

Conclusion

CliMates' vision for the new mandate of the MPGCA is full of hope and ambition. We wish that our feedback and recommendations will be heard by its members, and inspire their future work. Our recommendations aim to promote better inclusion of all stakeholders – especially most vulnerable actors from the Global South – and of alternatives to mainstream approaches and narratives around current challenges. This process requires greater transparency of the activities and processes of the MPGCA. We believe that the MPGCA is in a unique position to act as an intermediary between Party and non-Party stakeholders to support the implementation of the Paris Agreement and enhance ambition. In this submission, we presented our views on the main factors for the success of the MPGCA: Increasing the Partnership's and the High-Level Champions' visibility as key partners for ambition enhancement, improving communications on tools and initiatives, promoting a human-rights-based approach to climate action as well as maintaining momentum throughout the COVID-19 crisis and advocating for a recovery stimulus which showcases climate ambition and equity. Moreover, one of the main objectives of the MPGCA is tracking progress, impacts and results. We believe that key for achieving this goal is the implementation of a quantitative and data-based reporting system within initiatives such as NAZCA, which ensures transparency and accountability of the MPGCA. Lastly, the Partnership should strive to enable the active participation of all non-Party stakeholders, including youth, and strengthen interlinkages with UNFCCC streams such as ACE.

CliMates would like to thank the High-Level Champions again for this opportunity to express our views on the MPGCA and is looking forward to contributing further to the global effort for more ambitious climate action.

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