Meeting summary

Catalyzing climate action at all levels

Lima | December 8, 2014

11:45am – 4:15pm

Westin Hotel and Convention Center, Calle Las Begonias 450, San Isidro, Lima 27

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As we move toward COP21 in Paris in December 2015, there is an enormous opportunity to bring the groundswell of climate actions to a higher level of scale and ambition. Looking to the UN Climate Summit as a template, a key lesson is that galvanizing a groundswell takes a balance of pressure and encouragement.

Participants made several points on how to connect the groundswell of actions to the UNFCCC negotiations. Whether or not there would mini-Climate Summits at every COP, there needs to be a way to build trust and have an annual reporting point. While emissions are a primary measurement for success on climate action, there are many other variables that show how complicated it is to analyze the initiatives. Finally, the more specific, time bound, and public the commitments, the more difficult it is to make them – but perhaps also break them. Determining criteria and indicators for commitments depends on the sector and issue.

Crosscutting themes from presentations by various initiatives included integration, coordination, scaling, amplifying, and enhancing. In considering objectives for a network of cooperative initiatives, four stood out: raising ambition; providing accountability; building the narrative of momentum for change; and connecting the international climate change regime with action happening on the ground.

A global data platform could serve several goals for such a network, including: to act as an advocacy tool; to trigger additional action by showing which initiatives are open for other members, and whether initiatives can be replicated or expanded; to quantify and bring greater transparency to initiatives; and support the UNFCCC and other policy actors.

While participants recognized a proliferation of lists, registries, and databases, this was not necessarily a problem as they have different objectives. Questions still remained about where they were strategically linked, how many narratives exist, and how many databases were needed. The data platform also

requires consideration on how it could fit into the larger climate regime, and particularly processes like the ADP Workstream 2. In discussing the data that would a platform might hold, participants affirmed that data would be centered on commitments, expected that initiatives would provide more public data in the future, saw an opportunity for commitments by initiatives to inform and shape government objectives, and proposed finding a way for data to serve as a marketable knowledge product.

Navigating the complex world of networks and databases requires a meta-discussion. There is a lot of demand for bottom-up initiatives, yet deliberate discussions are needed to learn about what is happening on the ground in order to effectively translate lessons. The network needs a coherent strategy for its agenda within the UNFCCC process and an expanded geography of initiatives. They need coordination to make the groundswell of climate actions realize their full potential.

Background and context

The global architecture of climate change governance is increasingly looking to action from cities, companies, states and regions, and multi-stakeholder coalitions and initiatives to close the emissions gap and build resilient development. Building on momentum from the September 2014 UN Secretary-General Climate Summit, at COP20 in Lima, December 2014, the international community increasingly recognized the imperative of bringing "all hands on deck" for climate action. The groundswell of climate actions at every level was celebrated at numerous events in Lima, including a special Lima Climate Action High Level Meeting, at which the UNFCCC Secretariat launched the Non-state Actor Zone for Climate Action (NAZCA) platform, an online tool to showcase and aggregate climate action by cities, companies, states and regions, and other actors from around the world.

As we move toward COP21 in Paris in December 2015, there is an enormous opportunity to bring the groundswell of climate action to a higher level of scope and ambition. Increasing the number of "bottom up" actions and ensuring their effectiveness makes a direct contribution to the goals of the UNFCCC, while also serving as a powerful catalyst for national contributions and a strong agreement in Paris. How can we maximize the potential of this opportunity? That question has driven a series of workshops at Yale, Oxford, and New York. These workshops have brought together experts from governments, cities, the private sector, civil society, academia, and international organizations.

The fourth of these workshops took place on Monday, December 8, 2014, alongside COP20 in Lima, Peru. This document summarizes the discussion.

Session 1: Linking the groundswell of climate action to the multilateral process.

How can the multilateral process inspire greater climate action? How can climate action inspire a stronger multilateral process?

The United Nations Climate Summit and the climate action groundswell

Through a networked effort by the UNSG's office, the Climate Summit built a community of action. The architecture of the Climate Summit, inviting contributions rather than perpetuating negotiations, struck a chord with politicians, civil society, businesses, and wider audiences.

The summit mobilized over 100 heads of state, more than 100 business and civil society leaders, hundreds of thousands of people on the street. At the time of the summit, United Nations social media experts observed 3 billion impressions on Twitter, reaching more than half of its users, and reaching 150 million users in Weibo. The Climate Summit managed to break through the global wall of silence around climate change, despite the Ebola outbreak, Syria, other global challenges. Governments followed with the European Union's announcement of its pledge, the deal between the United States and China, and the G-20 leader's communique paragraph on climate change.

The key lesson from the Climate Summit is that building a groundswell takes a balance of pressure and encouragement. These initiatives were put together in a way to deliver and hold each other accountable. There could be a broader audience for gathering the data and putting it on the table in a digestible way. Civil society has an important role to play in mobilizing the global community and providing a watch dog function. Yet, the initiatives are very political and fragile and need support to be implemented fully.

Linking the groundswell to the negotiations

The draft text from the ADP included encouragement, cataloging, and tracking of climate action, and a provision for mini-summits [which was subsequently eliminated in the final Lima text]. Participants made several points on how to proceed:

- The UNFCCC process could act as a prime rallying point with its convening power, bringing people from around the world together every six months.
- The difficulty with linking the cooperative initiatives with the multilateral process would be that they could become entrapped in the negotiations. The actors engaged for the Climate Summit did not become involved with a premise of formal and legal recognition in a COP setting.
- Some initiatives lend themselves easily to COP setting, like the forests initiative where the private sector was added to REDD+. Other initiatives would not be "COP-ready," including financial commitments by "actors who would not come near a COP setting with a ten foot pole."
- Whether or not there would mini-summits at every COP, there needs to be a way to build trust and have an annual reporting point.

Expanding and organizing the initiatives

The Climate Summit has created the space for further contributions. How can the will to act be organized and directed?

- To expand climate action, it would be helpful to understand the reasons why alliances signed on to the summit initiatives. CEOs that wanted to act on climate faced many obstacles from

shareholders, the media, financial institutions, and even their own employees. A comfort in numbers helped them confront these barriers.

- Organizing the groundswell of climate action took difficult diplomacy and conversations with leaders over years. The Secretary-General's good offices, traditionally for used peace and security, were directed toward reshaping the global economy in a space that had been badly managed for many years. The forests declaration secured an agreement with over 50 percent of the global forests value chain for the Climate Summit, now expanded to 90 percent.
- The initiatives could be connected to the multilateral process without becoming constrained by it. Initiatives could be endorsed, with sections or boxes of contributions from cities and states, businesses, and central banks. From this, there would be a list with implementable decisions that in fact would be backed by legal force of authority from these actors. These initiatives would validate and support the intergovernmental process, as well as recognize gaps and fill them. The energy for this exists and now structures and channels need to be provided to direct it.

Measuring and holding initiatives accountable

Now that these initiatives have made their announcements, follow-up actions are need to figure out where they are going and to measure success. Who is in charge of managing all these commitments and figuring out how to hold them accountable? How can these initiatives and commitments be credible for civil society and the rest of the world?

- While emissions are the prime measurement for success on climate action, there are many other variables that show how complicated it is to analyze the initiatives. The overall estimate of the impact of the cooperative initiatives from the Climate Summit is 8.9 gigatons. 78 percent of the emissions impact comes from the New York Declaration on Forests, which is also significant for its financial backing and the range of actors involved.
- On many other cooperative initiatives, the commitments are non-specific to emissions impact. One metric many governments and businesses are examining is the shadow price of carbon. The World Bank has been leading on the shadow cost of carbon with the UN Global Compact.
- The more specific, time bound, and public the commitments, the more difficult it is to make them. However, these attributes also help enable monitoring and accountability from peers and civil society stakeholders. Determining criteria and indicators depends on the sector and issue. No one size fits all. For example, the forests sector is comprised of a few large companies, while agriculture has 500 million large and small farmers.
- Some participants suggested that climate actions should be rated based on criteria, and could aspire to "move up the ladder" to gain greater recognition by integrating more stringent criteria.

Session 2: How can existing initiatives coordinate to increase impact?

From the point of view of the cooperative initiatives, how can the groundswell be further generated, implemented, and galvanized?

Crosscutting themes from these presentations by various initiatives included integration, coordination, scaling, amplifying, and enhancing.

Objectives for a network

There are four different objectives the network has come up with, all of which are legitimate and not mutually exclusive.

- The first objective is raising ambition. Ambition is the basis for what the negotiations should achieve. There are only a few initiatives that can have a global effect—most of these were at the Climate Summit, and these were the few that could actually shift the curve on emissions. In forests, for example, the private sector needed government to enact regulation and fulfill finance commitments.
- The second objective is accountability. With actors making promises at large international events, they would need to be held accountable, and in order to hold these actors accountable, there would need to be metrics.
- The third objective is the narrative of momentum for change. The aim would be to create a compelling story around climate change about solutions—that is not about cost and burden-sharing, but action and opportunity by all leaders across society.
- The fourth objective is to connect the UNFCCC with the real world or relate what is happening in the international climate change regime with action happening on the ground. The recognition of non-state actors in the ADP draft text was a part of this. This process is fragile and embryonic, however. Some countries would not want their cities mentioned. Some actors would prefer to keep the climate regime exclusively about states. The alternative case would be that the initiatives should be recognized.

In considering the framing of how climate action can shape negotiations, supporting ambition is what is needed most. The number of initiatives is becoming crowded. In Rio+20, where the negotiations had not made much headway (in contrast to climate at the moment), the model of operating on making commitments and announcements without much follow through took pressure off the negotiations. The lesson from Rio is that a broad narrative and little follow through makes for a dearth of realized ambition in the end.

Scaling the network

The design of the network can be used to direct the initiatives. Two approaches include:

- Those at the center of the negotiation processes—UNSG, UNFCCC, France, Peru—can demand a level of scale, standards, or criteria to encourage major initiatives to make large commitments in Paris.
- Build a data platform, portal, or website, balancing inclusion, stringency, and accountability.

The participants weighed the pros and cons of exclusion and inclusion.

- "The profusion of initiatives is needed as climate change is not a structured problem—it needs a crowd sourced approach with many solutions. A large amount of control over the initiatives would be counterproductive as they need to play out. Even with monitoring, a business-as-usual metric would not fit all the initiatives. Contributions should come before subjection to accounting, which can be built up over time. They cannot all be tracked and known."
- "The narrative of momentum for change must support ambition rather than take off the pressure. There must be accountability over both governments and initiatives in order to accurately assess if they are delivering. A quantitative assessment and rating system could be developed, but separately from a registry as a stringent assessment can push them away. The information on the initiatives will have to be enough to avoid double counting. "

Session 3: What does climate action look like?
Presenting the Climate Initiatives Database

What is the scope of sub/non-state action on climate and cooperative initiatives? What is their potential?

The Ecofys Climate Initiatives Database (CID) plays a role of tracking, supporting, and strengthening initiatives. The information it uses is publicly available. The types of initiatives in the database include contributions to GHG reduction, those international in scope or with potential for global impact, and dialogues, multilateral processes, and implementation. It is also a data warehouse, feeding into other information displays and users.

Ecofys is looking at how to bring additional data to end users. The extent of CID's performance tracking currently shows state impact by the initiatives, but it does not have a rating system. Ecofys wants adaptation and resilience to be featured. The further inclusion of subnational agreements and other data depends on potential global impact. The potential must be systemic, but can come from different types of actions—even incubating technologies, for example. Ecofys recognizes that cities and states have become increasingly important. The CID is grappling with how to retain definition while not losing out on good efforts.

Session 4: How can we best catalyze and support climate action from all levels?
A network and a data platform.

Recommendations from previous meetings: network and data platform concepts. Discussion: How can we take these ideas forward to Paris and beyond?

Navigating the complex world of networks and databases requires a meta-discussion. There is a lot of demand for bottom-up initiatives, yet discussions are needed to learn about what is happening and to avoid duplication. They need coordination to make the climate action groundswell realize its potential.

The initiatives are aware of each other, they already communicate, and have some degree of convergence. The network should facilitate coordination within and between sub-communities, identify gaps, and contribute to the data platform project design and implementation. The network needs a coherent strategy for its agenda within the UNFCCC process and an expanded geography of initiatives. Potential next steps include informing the initiatives of where to go and providing feedback to the UNFCCC and other offices.

Platforms, registries, and databases are proliferating, but this is not necessarily a problem as they have different objectives. Questions still remain about where they are strategically tied, how many narratives exist, and how many databases are needed. The data platform can add value by aggregating actions to better understand, showcase, and make transparent the full scope of initiatives, and build-on and support existing initiatives. The data platform also needs consideration on how it fits into the larger agenda, particularly a process like ADP Workstream 2.

Objectives for the data platform

Given the varied users of the data platform, consideration will need to be given on how to bridge different objectives. Funders could use the platform to understand ongoing activities and gaps. Academics could use the platform for research and analysis. For the initiatives, recognition could be an objective. Performers could be targeted to exchange information and achieve goals. A data platform could enable new actors through learning from others. Watch-dogs could be another form of users. A constellation of linked up data platforms could serve everyone as a global public good.

Objectives for the data platform include the following:

- Support the UNFCCC and other policy actors. "CID feeds into the UNFCCC, policy research, and to identify gaps. CDP serves peers, cities, regions, and companies. ICLEI has another set of members and objectives."
    - A state like California that is not only reporting, but making commitments, would be eager to gain recognition in the UN process. It sees recognition as helpful to building a coalition of the willing and bringing leaders together.
- Act as an advocacy tool. "What is missing is relating all the initiatives together and showing top-level points for a positive narrative."
- Trigger additional action by showing which initiatives are open for other members, and whether initiatives can be replicated or expanded. "One lesson is that the geographic distribution of initiatives and actions is not equal across the world. Only 3 percent of initiatives came from Sub-Saharan Africa. These gaps need to be identified and issues that have yet to appear need to be considered."
- Quantify and bring greater transparency to initiatives. "The data platform can be used to sort out methodological issues. There are other initiatives like technical dialogues and implementation groups, but they need an overarching vision for achieving emissions reductions."

Data considerations

Determining the use of participating in a platform and identifying the benefits requires more formal data. In discussing the data that would a platform would hold, participants:

- Affirmed that data would be centered on commitments. The more significant commitments would be made by those with a strong capacity for obtaining and displaying data. Some contributions by non-state actors could be displayed as legal commitments in the form of contracts, ordinances, or jurisdictions. These obligations could be displayed, structured, organized, and presented as a form of networked agreements, and subsequently analyzed.
- Expected that initiatives would provide more public data in the future. In doing so, initiatives could make their own decisions about coordination, convergence, and spinning off. They could fill each other's resource gaps. A lot of the information would be used outside government.
- Saw an opportunity for commitments by initiatives to inform and shape government objectives. Improved data from the initiatives could break down barriers on topics like sovereignty in intergovernmental discussions, especially on formal processes like measurement, reporting and verification. Participants cautioned that some initiatives might not want their data associated with the intergovernmental process.
  Proposed finding a way for data to serve as a knowledge product. For the data platform, there would to be a sustainable funding model as opposed to piecemeal government contracts. A model like CDP's could be used, in which the data platform administrators would find a market for knowledge products. And like CDP, the model could include putting peer pressure on non-.

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