



Accountability within the Ecosystem of Climate Commitments

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Through high-visibility events such as the 2014 UN Climate Summit, climate initiatives and commitments made by sub-national and non-state actors help galvanize a society-wide response to the climate challenge and demonstrate momentum for leaders at all levels to undertake enhanced action.

However, many commitments often lack effective accountability mechanisms. Enhanced accountability frameworks can ensure commitment-makers are supported to deliver on their promises and prove that their commitments are not only words. Fledgling initiatives and commitment platforms may feel anxious of alienating potential partners or causing commitment-makers to scale down ambition. However, an effective accountability framework enhances credibility from broad initiatives to specific projects and can open avenues to financing and other resources, and further galvanize public and private climate action.

Climate commitments are by nature diverse and efforts to provide accountability mechanisms must be as 'open-source' and heterogeneous as the commitments they seek to improve. The Natural Resources Defense Council has undertaken a survey of platforms for commitments and partnerships involving a broad spectrum of stakeholders in both the climate change and sustainable development realms, and synthesized fundamental best practices for accountability. We recommend that stakeholders making commitments, initiatives soliciting commitments, and platforms registering commitments to foster:

- **SMARTS commitments** - Specific, Measureable, Ambitious, Resource-based, Timebound, and Significantly Scaled up or New
- **Network-building, peer assistance, and peer comparison** to encourage a 'race to the top'
- Formal (often **independent** or **third-party**) **monitoring, review, and evaluation** programs
- **Transparency** and engagement of **civil society**
- **Resources** to facilitate accountability, often from a **UN or government** source

Best Practices in Accountability

Every Woman Every Child (EWEC), a UN-backed multi-stakeholder partnership to improve the health and well-being of vulnerable women and children, and the **Clinton Global Initiative (CGI)**, a privately organized commitment platform, are consistently praised for cultivating accountability in the commitments they promulgate. EWEC and CGI coordinate with diverse stakeholder groups and only accept **SMARTS commitments** in order to effect established benchmarks. Each provides **monitoring, review, and verification services** to commitment-makers from initial commitment design through fulfillment. CGI **networks partners** within thematic 'action groups' for **peer assistance** to implement commitments, while EWEC **transparently** showcases commitment progress **to an engaged civil society** and maintains a **relationship with the UN** and rigor through an **independent Expert Review Group**.

UN-affiliated sustainable development commitment platforms register commitments with the **SD in Action Registry**, which has an emerging institutional home at the UN's **High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development**. The formal linking of these commitments to the UN process **grants legitimacy and resources** (often to **facilitate accountability**), which in turn **induce credibility** and financing and inspire additional action.

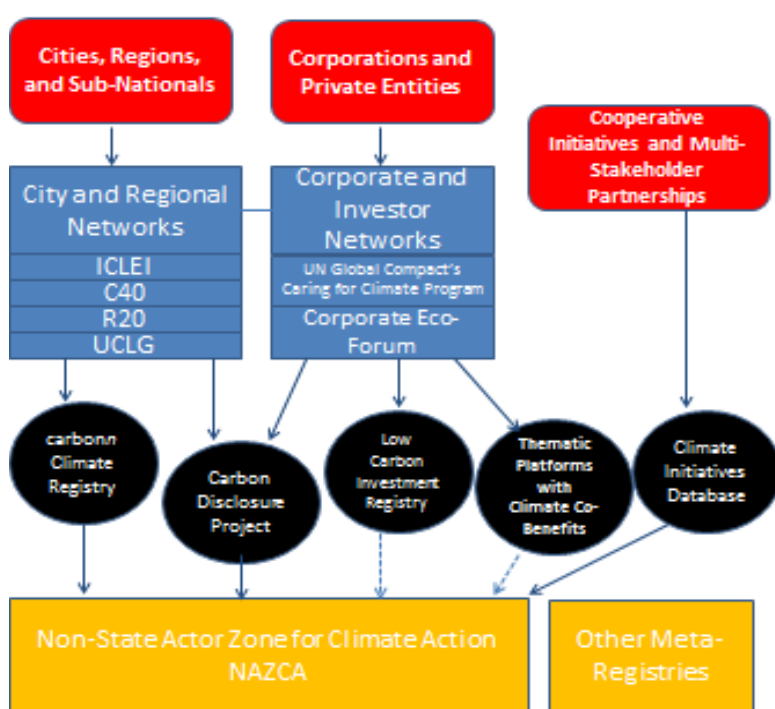
Finally, the **Environmental Performance Index** and the **Climate Action Tracker**, which analyze country-level commitments and actions on climate and the environment, provide a standardized framework for effective **peer comparison** to facilitate comprehension by **civil society** and encourage a **race to the top**. This technique has promise for a similar effect among non-state and sub-national climate actors.

Climate Commitment Platforms

Cities and Regions have organized through several **network groups** including **ICLEI, C40, UCLG, and R20** to share and track climate actions. C40 and R20 encourage partners to **disclose emissions** to the **Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP)**, while ICLEI **registers commitments** and offers **review, evaluation, and auditing services**. ICLEI, C40, and other city-focused groups encourage or require membership in the **carbonn Climate Registry (cCR)**, a leading reporting platform for climate actions. cCR offers **transparency** by showcasing commitments and actions **and assessing performance**. Increased harmonization of reporting standards among these groups, such as through the Global Protocol for Community-Scale GHG emissions, can foster peer comparison and more robust accountability.

Corporations and private organizations operate in and across many sectors and industries. Groups which accept and tracks private climate commitments include the **UN Global Compact's Caring for Climate** program which hosts a forum to **accept commitments** at each COP and the **Corporate Eco Forum**. The Caring for Climate Program requires **annual reporting** and forbids misuse of stakeholders' Global Compact affiliation (i.e. no green-washing), while the Eco-Forum encourages **standards-based reporting** on sustainability alongside the typical corporate financial reporting. Companies and Investors may also report to CDP and the Low Carbon Investment Registry. There is room for improvement in encouraging SMARTS corporate commitments, peer comparison, transparency, and independent review.

Cooperative initiatives and multi-stakeholder partnerships inherently convene stakeholders across sectors, and can be ill-suited for reporting to platforms which target specific stakeholders such as regions, cities, or corporations. The **Climate Initiatives Database** shows promise in the heterogeneity of programs it showcases and its emerging wiki-style functionality could serve as a useful forum for **engaging civil society** and **tracking the progress** of initiatives. The **Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action (NAZCA)** platform aggregates commitments from a wide array of diverse stakeholders, **partners with accountable registries** like CDP and cCR, and provides a useful taxonomy of actors by industry and by theme/purpose to **facilitate peer comparison**.



- Make SMARTS commitments**
 - Submit to monitoring and review**
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- Require SMARTS commitments**
 - Provide monitoring, review, and evaluation services**
 - Facilitate network-building**
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- Facilitate network-building and peer comparison**
 - Provide and distribute resources**
 - Link to formal UN processes**

Recommendations

There is tremendous promise among existing climate commitment platforms to showcase and catalyze greater climate action. Providing for enhanced accountability can only improve the effectiveness of these tools. There is notable room for improving accountability structures for corporate commitments, as well as those pledged by multi-stakeholder initiatives. In promoting or accepting climate commitments, platforms, initiatives, and governments (including the COP presidency) should seek to promulgate these accountability recommendations.

Commitment platforms and orchestrators should require commitment to be structured **SMARTS from the start** because if there is not a strong benchmark when commitments are initially pledged, then all other aspects of accountability become much more challenging. Platforms should also support more opportunities for **network-building** and **transparent review and evaluation**, especially **peer comparison**. Platforms with formal mandates such as NAZCA should bring **UN or other international resources** to bear in order to facilitate coordination and effectiveness of climate commitment accountability frameworks.