

Concept note and agenda

Understanding and communicating the groundswell of climate actions

New York | April 16-17, 2015

Natural Resources Defense Council, 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011

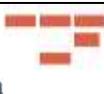
As countries negotiate the post-2020 climate agreement, there is growing attention to the thousands of actions that individual countries, cities, regions, private companies, and civil society groups are taking now to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Given the urgency of addressing climate change, the UN Secretary-General and other leaders have called for an “All Hands on Deck” approach. At the December 2014 Lima negotiations, national governments recognized the range of new actors, with a Call to Action recognizing the power of sub-national and non-state actors to “catalyze and significantly enhance” existing efforts to reduce emissions and vulnerability to climate change. This outpouring of climate action around the world offers an extraordinary opportunity to both implement current targets and catalyze greater ambition in the United Nations climate negotiations.

How can we understand and evaluate this groundswell of actions? Expectations are building towards the upcoming Paris talks, with hopes that these new actions and initiatives will strengthen efforts to reach existing climate goals and raise overall ambition of the global community’s response to climate change post-2020. However, there are many questions regarding the evaluation of these actions by non-state and sub-national actors, which in some cases are taken in collaboration with nation states. Given the diversity of these actions, estimating their potential impact and providing mechanisms for accountability requires new methodologies and research. Moreover, how such actions contribute to national mitigation pledges remains an open issue, as countries are in the midst of preparing their intended nationally-determined contributions (INDCs). Finally, how can we assess the financing, technology-transfer, and sustainable development co-benefits of initiatives? To realize the full potential of the groundswell, analysts and decision-makers will require effective tools to evaluate the range of actions and initiatives and track their delivery.

How can we communicate this groundswell of actions? The groundswell is a “means of implementation” for globally negotiated goals and national contributions. These actions can make a significant impact not only through its direct effects on emissions and resilience, but by building a positive, pragmatic narrative around climate action that catalyzes further ambition by national governments in the post-2020 climate regime. Yet much of the media discussion around Paris is focused only on the legal agreement. How can we best communicate to the media and the public about the groundswell of actions and its critical importance in addressing the climate crisis? How can we ensure that governments, industry, and other key audiences hear this message?



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Rigorous analysis underpins communication; effective communication directs policy. While there is significant value in researchers and communicators discussing strategy amongst themselves, there is also tremendous benefit in bringing the two groups together. Cross-pollination allows communicators to understand the scope and nuances of the groundswell, seeding new ideas for communication and political impact. At the same time, analysts can learn where the most urgent research gaps are, how best to present and communicate their findings, and to receive feedback for high-impact research questions. Moreover, many groups and individuals are working in both domains.

Questions to address: To gain greater clarity on the current state and future potential of the groundswell of climate actions to reduce emissions and build resilient development, several questions must be answered. These include:

- What is the geographic and thematic scope of climate actions? Where are the gaps and opportunities for growth?
- Where can the positive narrative around the groundswell have greatest impact vis-à-vis key stakeholders? What messaging speaks to which groups?
- How does the “groundswell” fit into the larger narrative around the Paris summit?
- How to account for overlaps between initiatives (e.g., if actors participate in multiple fora);
- How to differentiate sub/non-state and cooperative climate actions and national ambitions (e.g., if a state or city pledges emissions reductions that are accounted for by a country);
- How to assess whether efforts are additional to business-as-usual scenarios or supplement existing efforts;
- How to evaluate financing and implementation;
- How to evaluate and potentially aggregate sustainable development co-benefits
- How to address different accounting methodologies among various national governments and other stakeholders
- What ‘next generation’ data- and technology-based tools can be used to incentivize additional climate action, while lending transparency and credibility to these efforts?

Logistics: This workshop, sponsored and hosted by Yale University’s Center for Environmental Law and Policy, NRDC, the Stanley Foundation, and the Century Foundation, will convene leading analysts, communicators, practitioners, and policymakers to address these issues. This meeting is one of a series of workshops convened by the Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Action.



Thursday, April 16

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PRE-WORKSHOP RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS MEETING

This part of the workshop is targeted just at participants carrying out analysis of groundswell actions.

12:30pm	Welcome lunch
1:00pm	Research updates <i>Moderator: Angel Hsu, Yale</i> Each analyst/group can update the others on current and future work. Attendees are asked to provide a 1-2-page summary of their current work -What analyses are you / your organization undertaking or planning? -What are your initial or expected findings?
2:15pm	Data. <i>Moderator: Johannes Friedrich, WRI</i> What data are you using? What other sources are available? Where are the biggest gaps?
3:00pm	Methods. <i>Moderator: Hanna Fekete, New Climate Institute</i> What techniques are you using? What else might be done? What resources are required to do such analysis?
3:45 pm	Coffee break / side discussions

GENERAL WORKSHOP

The remainder of the workshop is targeted at all participants.

4:00pm	Introduction and agenda for the workshop (<i>Chairs: Brendan Guy, NRDC and Angel Hsu, Yale</i>) -Aims and objectives -Outputs -Tour de table
5:00pm	What do we know about the groundswell? (<i>Chair: Todd Edwards, Stanley Foundation</i>) <i>Conversation starters:</i> -Nikki Bartlett, Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership -Thomas Hale, Oxford Discussion: Why measure? What to measure? How can better metrics support the groundswell? What are the limits of metrics? What should we measure?
5:45pm	How can the groundswell contribute to Paris and beyond? (<i>Chair: Jacob Scherr, NRDC</i>) <i>Conversation starters:</i> -French Government -Ian Ponce, UNFCCC -Dan Thomas, UN Secretary-General's Office Discussion: What is the message, and for whom? What narratives can support the groundswell, and help the groundswell support the broader transformation required?
6:30pm	End
7:00pm	Reception and dinner

Friday, April 17

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All participants.

8:30 am	Coffee and introductions	
9:00 am	Introduction and agenda for the day (Chair: Angel Hsu, Yale)	
9:15	Accurate mitigation metrics (Moderator: Hanna Fekete, New Climate Institute) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What ‘next generation’ tools can be used to incentivize additional climate action, while lending transparency and credibility to these efforts? • How to account for overlaps between initiatives (e.g., if actors participate in multiple platforms and registries)? • How to differentiate climate actions from national ambitions (e.g., if a province/state or city pledges emissions reductions that are accounted for by national government)? Differing methods? • How to assess whether efforts are additional to business-as-usual scenarios? 	Identifying key audiences and moments (Moderator: Michael Shank, Climate Nexus) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where can the positive narrative around the groundswell have greatest impact vis-à-vis key stakeholders? What messaging speaks to which groups? • What upcoming communication opportunities should we have on the agenda? Which do we need to create?
10:30	Reports back on parallel sessions (Chair: Neil Bhatiya, the Century Foundation)	
11:00	Break	
11:15	Metrics for finance and co-benefits (Moderator: Sander Chan, German Development Institute) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to evaluate financing and implementation of commitments/actions? • How to evaluate and potentially aggregate sustainable development co-benefits 	Messaging around Paris and beyond (Moderator: Rhys Gerholdt, WRI) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the “groundswell” currently fit into the larger narrative around Paris? • What are risks associated with too much focus on the negotiated agreement alone? • How do we best explain the groundswell to the media and engaged public??
12:15	Report back on parallel sessions (Chair: Todd Edwards, the Stanley Foundation)	
12:45 pm	Lunch	
1:45pm	Stock-taking (Chair: Thomas Hale, Oxford) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What key narratives have we identified? For which audiences? • What analysis supports them, and where is more analysis needed? 	
2:15pm	Developing concrete communication and analysis strategies and media feedback. For each narrative/opportunity identified, decide on concrete messages and analysis needed to support them. Media professionals will provide constructive criticism. <i>Breakout sessions as needed.</i>	
4:45	Summary and next steps (Chair: Brendan Guy, NRDC and Angel Hsu, Yale) <i>Closing remarks:</i> Francois Gave, Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations	
5:00	End	



Who we are

Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions (GGCA) is a series of dialogues convened by the Stanley Foundation, the Blavatnik School of Government at Oxford University, and the Natural Resources Defense Council. Its objectives include:

1. Bringing the groundswell of climate actions from cities, regions, companies, and other groups to a higher level of scale and ambition;
2. Increasing efficient coordination among cooperative initiatives and sub- and non-state networks;
3. Improving analysis and understanding of “bottom up” climate actions;
4. Building a positive narrative of pragmatic, concrete action on climate change; and
5. Identifying opportunities for the groundswell of climate actions and the multilateral process to support and catalyze each other.

Over the past year, GGCA has brought together city and regional networks, company networks, cooperative initiatives, governments, international organizations, and researchers to discuss and advance these objectives. By convening the community of actors that make up and support the groundswell of climate actions, GGCA seeks to realize the full potential of this extraordinary innovation in global governance.



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