POLITICAL CONTEXT

The Global Climate Action Summit (GCAS), taking place in San Francisco this week (12th-14th September) is an important moment for continuing the momentum of climate action. It comes amidst a politically challenging atmosphere where:

- **International** cooperation and diplomacy is strained but the need to work together is greater than ever. In October, the IPCC will release its special report on the 1.5 degree goal (which will likely highlight the rapid and profound global transformation needed to reach this) while in December, at COP24, countries are expected to demonstrate goodwill on the Paris Agreement’s (PA) implementation by adopting a robust rulebook and signalling their intent to increase climate ambition by 2020.

- **Nationally**, California continues to lead the way amongst American states that oppose the Trump Administration’s anti-climate policies. Together with 16 other states and territories committed to upholding their share of the US’ Paris pledge, they formed the U.S. Climate Alliance in response to President Trump’s announcement of his intended withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. The Alliance represents 40% of the U.S. population and accounts for nearly $9 trillion in combined economic activity.
  - On September 10th, Governor Jerry Brown signed a new law requiring the world’s fifth largest economy to generate 100 percent of its electricity from carbon-free sources by the end of 2045, marking one of the world’s most ambitious climate policies; he also went a significant step further on Monday, signing an executive order directing state agencies to figure out how to make the entire economy carbon neutral in that same time frame.

SUMMIT SIGNIFICANCE

Conceived in 2016 by former Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC Christiana Figueres, California Governor Jerry Brown and Former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, the GCAS will bring together non-state actors (NSAs) from across the globe to highlight their commitment to action on climate. The role of NSAs in fighting climate change has been growing since COP15 with NSA mobilization seen as a key contributor to the success of COP21 and the securing of the Paris Agreement. Since Paris, the number of NSA commitments has been steadily growing. At GCAS, NSAs must now demonstrate the seriousness and ambition of their commitments and prove that their actions are tangible and effective in helping to achieve the Paris Goals.

The summit is also intended to be an example of “inclusive multilateralism”[1], by which national governments will work jointly with cities, regions, businesses, and investors to meet the Paris goals. China, as the only national government co-chair of the Summit will be particularly visible and accountable in ensuring the success of this goal, at a time when Chinese climate ambition is under scrutiny. The Chinese delegation, led by Mr. Xie Zhenhua, Special Representative for Climate Change Affairs of China (GCAS co-chair), is expected to make a number of announcements (on philanthropy, business) during the Summit.

Nearly 28 governments will be represented at the Summit; two at a Head of State level, and 18 at a ministerial level. Other confirmed high-level participation includes 18 mayors of major cities, 16 CEOs (including Unilever’s Paul Polman, Kaiser Permanente’s Bernard Tyson, Salesforce’s Marc Benioff, Starbucks’ Kevin Johnson), and political climate leaders and activists (Christiana Figueres, Laurence Tubiana, Al Gore, John Kerry).

In addition to the official Summit agenda, more than 300 affiliate events will also be held this week, both in San Francisco and around the world, contributing to the drumbeat of climate momentum. See the calendar of affiliate events on the GCAS website for more details.

CHALLENGE AREAS & THE CALL TO ACTION

The overarching Summit objective is to increase global climate ambition across five key thematic areas (healthy energy systems; inclusive economic growth; sustainable communities; land and oceans; transformative climate investment). These thematic areas reflect urgent actions required “to peak global emissions by 2020 and achieve carbon neutrality...”

by mid-century”. For each area, high-level thematic dialogues will showcase current actions and challenge NSAs to make new or more ambitious commitments. For more information on the challenge areas and expected announcements please see the annex below.

The Summit will culminate in a "Call to Action" for both greater ambition from NSAs, and for national governments to increase ambition in advance of 2020. This "Call to Action" will be announced during the opening plenary session before being presented to United Nations representatives during the closing plenary on Friday. The "Call to Action" will also be presented to the UN Secretary-General during Climate Week to make the connection between GCAS and the SG’s own climate summit next year.

BENCHMARK OF SUCCESS / CONTRIBUTION TO AMBITION RAISING

To meet the Paris Goals, an increased groundswell of climate action is needed by 2020; countries must enhance their NDCs and NSAs must increase climate action. In this period of ambition building, momentum in the real economy is crucial for leveraging greater political ambition, both nationally and internationally. To be perceived as a success, GCAS must:

- Demonstrate that the coalitions of cities, states, businesses, investors and civil society are stepping up their own action to achieve the Paris goals
  - NSAs and coalitions must demonstrate that action and announcements are ambitious and tangible. There is a risk that GCAS is seen as a “self-congratulation” event with little substance, especially if the gap between commitments made and the required action is too wide. NSAs must use GCAS to demonstrate they are ‘walking the talk’.
  - Beyond GCAS, NSAs and coalitions must demonstrate that they are able to implement and follow up on their commitments (through measurement and reporting). The “Call to Action” will be the main document summarizing the outcome of the Summit, compiling the announcements coming out of the week. It is expected to include annexes containing quantitative analytics (provided by the UNFCCC’s NAZCA Portal which has been capturing the commitments to climate action by NSAs since 2014). Such analysis of progress should be made periodically.

- Build the political momentum and provide political confidence for countries to enhance their climate ambition by 2020
  - The “Call to Action” will be complemented by detailed policy for each challenge area. It must also demonstrate that NSA commitments are supporting countries in the early implementation or enhancement of their NDCs. GCAS should demonstrate that NSAs are preparing the ground and expecting more ambition from countries
  - A challenge coming out of GCAS will be to connect NSA’s commitments to the national policies required to increase climate ambition by 2020. ICP intend to support in this effort by helping to ensure that real economy action and political outcomes from the summit are broken down into nationally useful political indicators for each key country.
  - The “Call to Action” will include a call on all actors to peak emissions, and to develop mid-century carbon neutrality strategies, as early as possible. The number and extent of commitments to carbon neutrality by 2050, as well as the demonstration of implementation, will be an important gauge of success.
  - In the broader global context, where climate action around the world, the UNFCCC negotiations, and international cooperation generally is under strain, GCAS has the potential to infuse a positive narrative that praises renewal and expansion of multilateralism to a broad array of actors. The GSCC network has been working hard to ensure the Summit delivers on this potential.

ANNEX: THEMATIC AREAS AND EXPECTED CHALLENGES

1. Healthy Energy Systems
   This session’s main announcement is expected to be on the progresses of the Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Challenge (run by The Climate Group and C40), in which States, regions, cities and business are challenged to commit to using their purchasing and policy influence to accelerate the adoption of EVs around the world. The objective of this challenge is to ensure that, by 2030, every citizen would have “a safe and accessible choice to walk, bike or use clean public transit”.


2. **Inclusive Economic Growth**
   Divided into several sessions over the Summit, the two main challenges in this area are expected to be:

   - **The Science-Based Targets Challenge**: At present, more than 300 companies have already committed to set science-based emissions reduction targets aligned with the Paris Agreement. At GCAS, this number is expected to rise to more than 470 companies (final number to be announced on September 13th) committing to the Science-Based Target Initiative (run by CDP, WRI, WWF, UN Global Compact and WMB).
   - **The Just Transition Challenge** will bring together labor leaders, CEOs and government leaders committed to managing the impact on workers and communities transitioning away from high-carbon sectors. At GCAS, these actors are expected to share success stories and make commitments to promote broad based economic opportunities through the creation of good jobs in emerging low-carbon sectors.

3. **Sustainable Communities**
   The main challenges in these sessions are expected to be:

   - **The Net-Zero Carbon Building Challenge**: states, regions, cities and businesses are expected to commit to owning, managing, occupying and designing net-zero carbon buildings. The main objective is to eliminate operational carbon emissions from their building portfolios by 2030 in order to meet the Paris Agreement ambition.
   - **Green and Healthy Streets / Fossil Fuel Free Streets**: Cities are expected to pledge to procure only zero-emission buses from 2025, make a major area of their city zero-emission by 2030, and encourage a shift to walking, cycling and public transport.
   - **Deadline 2020**: Cities are challenged to commit to develop and implement a climate action plan before the end of 2020 (consistent with the 1.5 degrees goal). Currently more than 40 cities (out of the 96 C40’members) are already engaged to develop such climate action plans.
   - **Advancing towards Zero Waste Challenge**: cities will commit to reducing the amount of waste generated by at least 15% (per capita) by 2030, while also pledging to reduce the amount of municipal solid waste disposed to landfill and incineration by at least 50%.

4. **Land and Oceans**
   Divided into four high-level sessions during the official summit program, stakeholders are expected to commit to two main challenges:

   - **The 30X30 Forests, Food and Land Challenge**: Businesses, states, cities and local governments will commit to taking action for better forest and habitat conservation and lower emissions food production, consumption, and land use.
   - **Ocean Climate Action Agenda Challenge**: Governments and all stakeholders are challenged to commit to accomplish the goals on the [Ocean-Climate Action Agenda](#).

5. **Transformative Climate Investment**
   GCAS will feature various high-level sessions focused on mobilizing investments on the scale needed to achieve the Paris Agreement goals. Major investors are expected to commit to mobilizing investments through:

   - **The Investor Agenda**: global institutional investors will announce their commitment to the Investor Agenda and discuss the progress they have made so far in achieving its main objectives in four areas (investment, corporate engagement, investor disclosures and policy advocacy).
   - **The 1% Challenge**: launched in 2017 by Christiana Figueres, signatories commit to invest a significant share of their assets in clean technologies and renewable energy by 2020.
   - **The Green Bond Pledge**: a call to action issued by Ceres, the Climate Bonds Initiative, and others, to ask cities, national and local governments and corporations to account for climate risk when designing future infrastructure and capital projects and to consider financing projects with green bonds.

In addition to the above thematic challenge areas, the Summit will address cross-cutting challenges including the **Technology Challenge** (accelerating the pace of change); the **Disclosure Challenge** (commitment to universal public disclosure on climate performances) and the **2050 Pathways Challenge** (states and regions are being challenged to sign the [Under2 MOU](#) and explore viable pathways towards net-zero emissions in their jurisdictions by 2050).