Innovations in Global Climate Governance

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Governance of the global climate is ultimately in the hands of Mother Nature, not mere mortals. Although humans can—and it is to be hoped, soon will—dramatically curtail their emissions of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases, the atmosphere's response to those gases is beyond human control. Likewise, the resulting temperature increases and associated effects are not subject to negotiation. As the U.S. Department of Defense has noted, these effects mean that climate change is "an urgent and growing threat to our national security, contributing to increased natural disasters, refugee flows, and conflicts over basic resources such as food and water," which in turn will "aggravate existing problems . . . that threaten domestic stability in a number of countries."[1] While the precise extent, timing, and location of climate effects cannot be foretold with certainty, a wait-and-see strategy on emission reductions would be unwise in the extreme: a host of geophysical factors ensures that temperatures would keep climbing for many years, even after emissions are curtailed. Meanwhile, the argument that future generations will be rich enough to adapt readily to the consequences of a changing climate ignores the possibility that severe climate change will itself derail future economic growth.

Fortunately, the need to begin reducing emissions now is increasingly well recognized in much of the world. This recognition prompted adoption of the Paris Agreement in late 2015 and its remarkably rapid entry into force the following year. The agreement remains in force regardless of whether the United States remains a party to it and despite President Donald J. Trump's gross mischaracterization of the agreement's provisions in his June 1 announcement that the United States would withdraw.

While the Paris Agreement is the principal policy mechanism for global climate matters, it is by no means the exclusive forum for climate action. A glorious profusion of state, nonstate, and hybrid entities are demonstrating impressive ingenuity in policy and technology, an abundance that makes it difficult to understand the array of groups active in the battle against catastrophic climate change, much less to parse their governance structures. A tentative taxonomy of these entities and a pair of examples within each taxonomic branch, along with a few governance observations, is provided in the following pages. [2]

From a climate practitioner's standpoint, the critical governance issue boils down to two words: what works? Specifically, what works to scale up global deployment of climate-friendly outcomes as soon as possible? Essential elements include helping spread low-carbon norms, technologies, and innovative finance mechanisms, and aligning with other structures wherever possible in order to maximize efficiency and minimize organizational start-up delays.

Before turning to the taxonomy, it is worth noting that the Paris Agreement (or more accurately its accompanying decision) expressly emphasizes the role of nonstate actors, a term that broadly encompasses the private sector, subnational governments, environmental and development advocacy groups, the faith community, trade unions, labor, academia, youth organizations, and civil society writ large. Among other provisions, the decision calls for a high-level event featuring nonstate actors at each annual climate negotiations conference through 2020. In addition, to help strengthen synergies among

these groups, the decision provides that a "champion" be appointed each year by the nation that is taking up the presidency of the annual climate negotiations. Each champion serves for two years, overlapping for a year with the champion appointed in the prior year.

At the 2016 negotiations conference, the inaugural champions (from France and Morocco) launched the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action to provide a "consistent and structured approach" for advancing these efforts. In May 2017, the current champions (from Morocco and Fiji) issued additional details in a note that identifies the partnership's mission as "strengthen[ing] collaboration between parties and non-party stakeholders" so as to accelerate action and calls for "shared and distributed leadership." It specifies a Climate Action Leadership Network of senior decision-makers; a Climate Action Collaboration Forum, open to groups that meet certain criteria on scale, transparency, results, and other factors; informal Communities of Climate Action Practice; and a support unit housed at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), under which the Paris Agreement was adopted. The partnership emphasizes seven thematic areas: energy, land use, water, industry, human settlements, transport, and oceans/coasts. Also relevant is the Nonstate Actor Zone for Climate Action (NAZCA), a database outlining more than twelve thousand commitments by businesses, subnational governments, and other nonstate actors to reduce their own emissions.

CLIMATE ACTION BEYOND THE PARIS AGREEMENT: A TAXONOMY

Non-Paris climate action can be viewed as a tree with three main albeit somewhat overlapping branches: Paris "relatives," non-Paris plurilateral and multilateral initiatives, and nonstate actor initiatives. [3]

Paris Agreement "Relatives"

These are entities mentioned in or explicitly focused on implementation of the Paris Agreement, in addition to the formal UNFCCC subsidiary bodies. The following are examples:

Green Climate Fund (GCF): Although initially launched under the auspices of the UNFCCC in 2011, the GCF operates as an independent organization with a separate board comprised of twelve developed and twelve developing nations and its own secretariat. The GCF is intended to be a primary mechanism for providing support to developing countries on low-carbon, climate-resilient development and adaptation. Four observers are authorized to participate in board sessions, two representatives from accredited civil society organizations—one each from developed and developing countries—and two from accredited private sector organizations, also one each from developed and developing countries. Known as active observers, these individuals are selected by their sector and may serve for two two-year terms. At present, there are well over two hundred accredited civil-society and sixty private-sector observers.

NDC Partnership: Launched at the annual climate negotiations in 2016, the partnership is a coalition of developing and developed countries and international institutions that characterizes itself as a "club of ambition" to help countries achieve their Paris targets, known as nationally determined contributions (NDCs). The partnership's initial focus is on helping countries connect with financial and technical

assistance through knowledge products such as the NDC Toolbox Navigator. Nongovernmental organizations, development finance institutions, and others are able to participate in the partnership as associate members.

Non-Paris Plurilateral and Multilateral Initiatives

Beyond formal negotiating processes on climate, annual Group of Twenty and Group of Seven gatherings have often addressed climate and energy topics, as have regional plurilateral groups such as the Arctic Council (composed of the eight countries having territory within the Arctic Circle). In addition, a variety of specialized plurilateral entities also work on particular aspects of the climate issue. Two examples are below:

Clean Energy Ministerial (CEM): A forum composed primarily of large emitters including the United States, European Union, China, and India, CEM's twenty-four member countries account for 75 percent of the world's emissions of greenhouse gases. Hosted by the International Energy Agency, CEM operates an annual forum for energy ministers, along with technical programs on critical topics such as highly efficient appliances and lighting, smart grids, and low-carbon cooling, typically involving the private sector as well as governments. CEM describes itself as having a distributed leadership model that "allows it to be more flexible and creative than consensus-based processes. . . . Any government interested in furthering a substantive idea on clean energy technology is encouraged to identify willing partners and proceed. There is no expectation that every government join every initiative; this allows CEM partners to focus their efforts on those initiatives in which they are most interested or most capable."[4]

Climate and Clean Air Coalition to Reduce Short-Lived Climate Pollutants (CCAC): Although carbon dioxide is the principal greenhouse gas responsible for climate change, other substances also contribute significantly to climate disruption. Of these, several are more potent but less prevalent than carbon dioxide, most notably methane, black carbon (soot), and some hydrofluorocarbons. CCAC, a hybrid of fifty plus countries and another fifty plus NGOs and intergovernmental organizations, operates seven sectoral programs aimed at reducing major sources of these substances as well as crosscutting initiatives. CCAC is governed by a senior-staff-level steering committee, which makes recommendations to a working group comprised of all member organizations; the steering committee is comprised primarily of state partners but also has two nonstate partner slots that are selected by the nonstate partners. CCAC's minister-level High Level Assembly meets at least annually and provides strategic leadership.

Nonstate Actor Initiatives

Independent of national governments, substantial and growing numbers of private sector entities, state and local governments, and civil society organizations are playing an increasingly prominent role in the climate sphere.

In addition to steps being taken by individual companies, examples of private sector initiatives by investors and industry sectors include the following:

Breakthrough Energy Coalition: Announced at the 2015 Paris climate negotiations, the coalition was formed by Bill Gates and other wealthy investors to deploy "patient and flexible" capital for new energy technologies; the coalition announced an initial $1 billion fund in 2016.

Oil|Gas Climate Initiative (OGCI): Led by the CEOs of ten companies that jointly produce 20 percent of the world's oil and gas, OGCI collaborates on action to reduce the sector's greenhouse gas emissions.

Subnational governments are also highly involved at various jurisdictional levels, with notable examples such as the following:

Under2 MOU: Known formally as the Subnational Global Climate Leadership Memorandum of Understanding, the Under2 MOU provides that signatories will reduce their greenhouse gas emissions 80 to 95 percent below 1990 levels, or limit emissions to two metric tons annually per capita, by 2050. A total of 170 jurisdictions from thirty-three countries—representing 37 percent of the global economy— have signed or endorsed the MOU.

C40 Climate Leadership Group (C40): Comprised of more than eighty megacities and innovator cities, C40 emphasizes urban action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through peer-to-peer interactions. Its member cities are home to more than six hundred million people and one quarter of the global economy.

Last but by no means least, a prodigious variety of civil society organizations, from academic consortia to think tanks to activist NGOs, work on climate issues. For many of these organizations, climate is a major or exclusive focus, while for others, it is part of a broader environmental, development, or faith-based agenda. Such groups vary widely in their geographic scope: some are active locally, others at the state level, others nationally or globally. Most are involved in formal or informal coalitions, or are themselves coalitions of groups. Examples include:

We Mean Business: A network of business-facing NGOs that interact directly with hundreds of companies and investors worldwide, We Mean Business emphasizes adoption of company-specific emission-reduction targets, voluntary emission reporting, and public policy involvement.

Climate Action Network (CAN): An umbrella group of over one thousand environmental NGOs from around the globe, with formal regional networks in multiple locations, CAN fosters information exchange among its members and helps coordinate development of NGO strategy on international, regional, and national climate issues.

ASSESSING THE GLORIOUS PROFUSION

The landscape of climate actors operating in proximity to and beyond the Paris Agreement is both extensive and varied, but few conclusions can yet be drawn as to which governance structures are most valuable in facilitating progress in reducing emissions and enhancing resilience. This topic is ripe for additional analysis by scholars and practitioners alike, as actions by nonstate actors will be all the more important in light of the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. Indeed, a multi-sector We Are Still In initiative was immediately launched in response to Trump's Paris withdrawal announcement, declaring that signatories "will continue to support climate action to meet the Paris Agreement." Initial

participants include Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Google, and Microsoft, which according to the *Economist* are the world's five most valuable publicly listed companies. To date, additional U.S. endorsers include more than 1,600 businesses, 230 cities or counties, 9 states, 19 state attorneys general, and 300 higher education institutions. Thus, although the Trump administration is abandoning the Paris Agreement—an international accord that the United States played the leadership role in developing and that has been signed by nearly every other nation in the world—much of America decidedly is not.

ENDNOTES

1. "National Security Implications of Climate Risks and a Changing Climate," U.S. Department of Defense, July 23, 2015, http://archive.defense.gov/pubs/150724-congressional-report-on-national-implications-of-climate-change.pdf?source=govdelivery.
2. A more detailed version of this taxonomy appears in the July-August 2017 issue of the *Foreign Service Journal*. See Karen Florini and Ann Florini, "It's Not Just About Paris: International Climate Action Today," *Foreign Service Journal* 94, no. 6 (July-August 2017): 26–31, http://afsa.org/sites/default/files/julyAugust2017fsj.pdf.
3. Not discussed in this paper are two important international agreements adopted in 2016 that address specific sources of climate-relevant emissions: the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol, which provides for a global phase-down of certain hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) that are potent heat-trapping substances, and the International Civil Aviation Organization's "Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation" (CORSIA), which limits post-2020 growth in carbon dioxide emissions from international civil aviation.
4. Clean Energy Ministerial, "About the Clean Energy Ministerial," http://cleanenergyministerial.org/About.