

Executive Summary

Engaging Gulf Non-state and Subnational Actors in Implementing the Paris Agreement

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- Efforts by non-state and subnational actors to address climate change are increasingly seen as complementary to those of national governments. Studies suggest that such initiatives, if fully implemented, could make a significant contribution to closing the gap between countries' existing climate plans and what is required according to science to stay well below 2°C of global warming.
- In the past decade, the number and size of transnational climate initiatives, formed by both governmental and non-governmental actors, working on different thematic or sectoral aspects of climate change mitigation and action, has grown significantly. Simultaneously, the role and importance of non-state and subnational actors has received increasing recognition under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are becoming increasingly involved in supporting global efforts to tackle climate change. Their participation in the UNFCCC has evolved over the past few years to include a broader group of actors. Most GCC countries' national development strategies and their national contributions to the Paris Agreement ('NDCs') assign clear roles to non-state and subnational actors.
- Non-state and subnational actors in the GCC countries include a broad range of businesses and industries, investors, researchers, technical experts, environmental groups, local-level governments, cities and municipalities. The potential of these actors to support national and global climate action and ambition has not yet been fully explored. Understanding this potential is key to maximising it.
- In addition to a short account of GCC non-state and subnational actors' participation in the UNFCCC to date, this EDA Working Paper identifies sectors, areas and concrete steps by which these actors can most efficiently contribute to climate action and ambition. It also suggests ways in which national governments can encourage these contributions.
- **How have GCC non-state and subnational actors been engaging with the UNFCCC so far?**
 - Since the 2010s, a growing number of non- or semi-governmental and subnational actors have been attending UN Climate Change Conferences, in what arguably indicates a broader, even if still thin, interest in climate action in the region, mainly as a business or investment opportunity but also as a new area of policy-oriented and applied scientific research.
 - GCC non-state actors participating in the UNFCCC fall in the following categories: networkers who participate to build contacts and gain/share information; information providers, advisors and capacity-builders at the domestic level; and implementers and policymakers at the subnational level (in the case of the UAE). A thematic emphasis on energy is strong and derives from the importance of the energy sector in the GCC economies.
- **How can these actors leverage the UNFCCC to increase their own climate action and ambition?**
 - Targeted participation can be recommended in four areas: the Technical Examination Process (TEP); the Global Climate Action Agenda; UNFCCC side events; and domestic NDC-related processes.

- The TEP and the Action Agenda are most conducive to engagement by companies and subnational entities, and side events mainly cater for researchers, students and subject matter experts. However, each area offers engagement opportunities for most GCC non-state actor groups.
- **How can these actors leverage thematic and sectoral transnational climate initiatives to increase their own climate action and ambition?**
 - While some GCC non-state actors are already engaging in existing transnational climate initiatives (e.g. Dubai is a member of the C40 cities network), there is still a lack of significant representation and interest from the region in these initiatives.
 - A number of opportunities for engagement with existing transnational climate initiatives exist, which align with the GCC countries' strategic economic priorities. These include ones in the following sectors/areas: energy efficiency and cooling; renewable energy; oil and gas; transportation; cities; finance; real estate, buildings and construction; private sector carbon measurement and management; and adaptation.
 - Some GCC non-state actors have also led the development of new transnational climate initiatives that address strategically important topics (e.g. Masdar is coordinating the Global Clean Water Desalination Alliance). Therefore, there are opportunities for GCC non-state actors to form new regional transnational climate initiatives on new topics. These include ones in the areas of climate change risk assessments and adaptation planning, and utility transformation networks to promote renewable energy and energy efficiency.
- **How can GCC governments encourage and enable their non-state and subnational actors in raising their own level of climate action, in support of national action and ambition?**
 - The unique nature of the GCC economies' reliance on hydrocarbons for income, coupled with their strategic drives to diversify economies, leave interesting options for non-state actor involvement. The GCC states could explore a dual strategy of encouraging national oil and natural gas companies to participate in relevant initiatives, while simultaneously engaging with non-state actors from newer sectors, such as renewable energy and energy efficiency, to participate. The latter in particular could provide a useful way to catalyse growth of newer economic sectors.
 - State consultation is most likely to be the best-functioning mechanism for engaging non-state actors, given the socio-political fabric of the GCC. In areas where there is high overlap between the national government and 'non-state actors', the national lead entities could actively encourage strategic partnerships. Lead national entities on climate change could also raise awareness among non-state actors, in particular businesses, about the benefits of measuring and managing GHG emissions, and of energy efficiency and renewable energy as cost-effective mitigation measures. This could help drive greater interest among non-state actors to join relevant transnational initiatives.
 - GCC governments could also explore the possibility of leading in the development of new multi-stakeholder initiatives or networks in areas/issues of regional interest that involve both governments and non-state actors. They could further look into supporting the leveraging potential of coordination roles in global initiatives of/through locally-based non-state actors.
- Overall, the study finds that non-state and subnational actors have the potential to help GCC states reach, and even go beyond, their existing national climate action targets, both in terms of emissions reductions and adaptation. Their engagement could help generate momentum for the GCC countries' emphasis on climate action that simultaneously helps diversify the economy. Non-state actors' efforts can also help increase the overall ambition of GCC countries' future NDCs, and these actors can also help build and expand awareness about the benefits of climate action in their respective sectors.