The UN Marrakesh Climate Change Conference: Aligning the UNFCCC with the Post-Paris Era
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Summary

- The UN Marrakesh Climate Change Conference in November 2016 concluded a year of tremendous success in global climate governance, with the Paris Agreement on climate change entering into force on 4 November 2016 – less than a year after its adoption.

- The Marrakesh conference can be described as an ‘implementation COP’, or a meeting of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that was not expected to result in a major breakthrough in negotiations but rather had the goal of moving important technical work forward. The Marrakesh COP fared well in this regard, keeping up the Paris momentum in at least three ways.

- In the post-Paris era, this Insight argues, the UNFCCC COPs are best understood as three parallel conferences or ‘workstreams’ meeting in parallel. These three workstreams are involved with: making the Paris Agreement functional; sending strong political messages to provide certainty to investments; and catalysing sectoral and thematic multi-stakeholder coalitions to drive rapid climate action worldwide.

- The first two workstreams are often referred to as the ‘technical’ and ‘political’ negotiations, and are in many ways interlinked. In the third area, the UNFCCC still has potential to increase its contribution to global climate action.

- The Marrakesh COP delivered some progress in the task of making the Paris Agreement operational by advancing discussions in all substantive areas of the Paris ‘rulebook’. The next ‘milestone COP’ is expected to be in 2018 when countries agreed to finalise negotiations on the rulebook, and when they will also take stock of progress so far.

- The Marrakesh conference also sought to send a unified political message of determination to implement the Paris Agreement. The urgency of doing so was heightened by election of Donald Trump as the new US President amidst the conference. It is still too early to say how the new US Administration’s policies will take shape, but a number of factors indicate that the worst-case scenario for global climate governance may not be the likely one.

- In the third area of catalysing global climate action, the Marrakesh attracted high numbers of participants from all sectors and stakeholder groups worldwide, and also helped to provide a clearer structure to the so-called ‘Global Climate Action Agenda’, which is aimed at mobilising state and non-state actors in the pre-2020 period but is not part of the formal negotiations.

- In this area, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states can provide important contributions, including in the context of economic diversification. There are a number of opportunities at the regional and global levels where the GCC states can explore synergies, cooperation and scaling up of efforts in cooperation with their semi-private, private and non-governmental sectors.
The Issue

This Insight argues that in the post-Paris world the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will have three fundamental functions to fulfil: making the Paris Agreement functional; sending strong political messages to provide certainty for investments; and catalysing thematic multi-stakeholder coalitions that drive the global economic transformation.

The Insight evaluates how the first post-Paris UN Climate Change Conference, which took place in Marrakesh in November 2016, delivered in these three areas and looks at expectations going forward.

Regarding the third area outlined above, the paper closes with initial proposals on how the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states could support global climate action in ways that also promote economic diversification and regional cooperation.

Relevance for the GCC States

Participating in the sectoral and thematic multi-stakeholder coalitions that have been emerging around the UNFCCC since 2014 provides a number of opportunities for the GCC states to promote economic growth through diversification with climate change co-benefits. The GCC states are set to benefit from the post-Paris era and from the mobilisation of non-state actors to find climate solutions that also create new economic and social opportunities.

More broadly, the GCC states have a stake in ensuring that the UNFCCC continues to serve the world as the leading multilateral rules-based regime addressing climate change and that it succeeds in the task of preventing dangerous climate change. If the Paris Agreement fails to generate an ambitious enough response, all countries will lose. Alternatives to the UNFCCC, such as major emitters’ clubs, are unrepresentative and would exclude most GCC states.

Understanding COP 22 as Three Conferences in One

The 22nd session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP 22), which took place in Marrakesh, Morocco, from 7 to 18 November 2016, was the first COP since the Paris Conference in December 2015. It concluded a year of tremendous success for the new climate agreement: in April 2016, the Paris Agreement broke the record for first-day signatures to an international agreement and in November 2016 – significantly earlier than expected – it entered into force.

The Marrakesh meeting also took place shortly after countries had reached two major international agreements that will support the emission reduction objectives of the Paris Agreement: the Kigali Amendment on hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) to the Montreal Protocol that mandates countries to phase down the production and consumption of these potent greenhouse gases, and the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA) under the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), which will support ICAO’s goal of keeping carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions from international aviation at 2020 levels.

These 2016 events provided important momentum for the UNFCCC process post-Paris. For the Marrakesh conference, however, they created an expectations management problem. This COP was not expected to reach any major decisions but was rather what could be described as an ‘implementation COP’ – one that takes place between major milestone COPs and is mainly involved with pushing the agenda forward. The mismatch between the speed of international events and what the Marrakesh conference could reasonably be expected to achieve partly explains why some commentators have criticised the conference for lacking concrete outcomes, for example on climate finance.

Also, given the breadth, and technical nature, of the issues on the agenda, the advances that were made in Marrakesh were not easy to communicate in simple language to global media – a well-recognised and long-standing problem for UNFCCC negotiations in general.

This paper argues that, when assessing the success of COP 22 and the Paris Agreement going forward, it is more useful to structure the analysis in three areas in which the UNFCCC was expected to work and deliver. These three workstreams are involved with: making the Paris Agreement functional; sending strong political messages to provide certainty to investments; and catalysing sectoral and thematic multi-stakeholder coalitions to drive rapid climate action worldwide.

While there are obvious linkages, different participants are involved in each area: negotiators, lawyers and technical experts lead on the development of the Paris Agreement ‘rulebook’; political leaders gather to make declarations and build trust; and COPs are also establishing themselves as the place where both state and non-state actors meet annually, in a non-negotiating context, to take stock of progress.
in climate action in different sectors and to catalyse further action through collaboration. At the same time, there is no denying that these three areas of work are highly interlinked and that the technical workstream is in many cases dependent on the political one, in particular when ‘package deals’ are needed in the last days of COPs to reach agreement on the most divisive issues. Nevertheless, it is argued, this division is useful for analytical purposes.

The first two functions are the ‘bread and butter’ of the UNFCCC. The third area, however, is where the UNFCCC still has potential to increase its contribution to global climate action, if the Secretariat and future COP presidencies are able to maintain a clear sense of direction. This is also an area where the GCC states can provide important contributions.

**TASK 1: Making the Paris Agreement Functional**

In the area of making the Paris Agreement operational, Marrakesh was able to make progress on all agenda items. There was, however, general frustration with the slow pace of the discussions, and in some cases (such as on guidance for countries’ national climate plans) many observed that the discussions resembled those held prior to Paris. Arguably, this is partly attributable to the fact that different countries prioritise different issues and do not wish to see their priority issues left behind – or other issues advance faster. Also, the constructive ambiguity that enabled the adoption of the Paris Agreement by consensus means that different interpretations still exist on a number of fundamental questions, most notably how to operationalise differentiation.

Indeed, slow progress can be typical for the UNFCCC technical negotiations where advances are often driven by clear deadlines. The rapid entry into force of the Paris Agreement meant that the work countries had envisaged to conclude by 2020 (when it is generally understood the Agreement’s obligations begin) now required a tighter deadline so as not to convey the impression of a lack of urgency to the world.

**Work programme for the rulebook:** The 25-page Paris Agreement contains 29 Articles. Similarly to its predecessor, the Kyoto Protocol, which contains 28 Articles, it includes the main principles under which its parties agree to take action against climate change but does not in most cases provide detailed guidance. As was the case after the Kyoto COP in 1997, after Paris, countries will need to work on a ‘rulebook’ that will enable the Agreement’s implementation.

Areas of the Paris Agreement in which countries need to flesh out such guidance or rules include:

- how countries should communicate their nationally determined contributions (NDCs, the core instrument of the Paris Agreement) and adaptation plans;
- how carbon markets will be integrated into the Agreement;
- how the transparency framework and global stocktake process (which both will help track progress towards countries’ individual and common objectives) will function;
- how implementation and compliance will be promoted; and
- how developed countries should report on climate financing.

The so-called Paris outcome – UNFCCC Decision 1/CP.21 – under which the Paris Agreement was adopted in December 2015, contains a detailed work programme that delegates the responsibility for different issues (NDCs and mitigation, response measures, cooperative approaches, adaptation, loss and damage, means of implementation, transparency, global stocktake, implementation and compliance, enhanced action pre-2020, and non-party stakeholders) to different UNFCCC bodies and actors.

At Marrakesh, under the first session of the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 1), countries decided that discussions under the work programme laid out in Decision 1/CP.21 should be concluded by COP 24, taking place in December 2018. In 2017, the COP and CMA will hold a joint meeting to review progress in implementing the work programme.

‘Orphan issues’: At Marrakesh, countries also discussed a number of issues relating to making the Paris Agreement implementable that had not been addressed in the work programme but which different countries felt should be allocated a ‘home’ on the UNFCCC negotiating agenda. Of these ‘orphan issues,’ CMA 1 addressed one specific matter that many developing countries feel is crucial, namely linking the Adaptation Fund to the Paris Agreement.

The Adaptation Fund, established under the Kyoto Protocol, has since 2010 committed US$358 million in adaptation finance to developing countries. While the Green Climate Fund, established under the Convention in 2010, is expected to channel the bulk of multilateral climate financing for both mitigation and adaptation, the Adaptation Fund has many features that developing countries find important and therefore worthy of carrying over to the post-2020 era – not
least its track record of delivering adaptation finance on project scale but also its operational direct access system that allows accredited national and regional entities to access and manage financing. Developing countries also want to ensure sustained funding for the Adaptation Fund, which receives a part of its funds through proceeds from the Kyoto Protocol’s Clean Development Mechanism.

Whereas Paris had decided the Adaptation Fund ‘may’ serve the Paris Agreement, Marrakesh decided that the Adaptation Fund ‘should’ serve it. The CMA in 2018 is expected to adopt a decision on this matter, after countries have agreed to the operational details.

The 2018 facilitative dialogue: While Marrakesh was an ‘implementation COP’, the next ‘milestone COP’ will take place in Poland in 2018. This conference will serve as the venue for a facilitative dialogue, as mandated in Paris, to take stock of the collective efforts of parties in relation to progress towards the Paris Agreement’s long-term goal (of reaching a global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible and emissions neutrality in the second half of this century) and to inform the preparation of the next round of NDCs, due by 2020.

The central task for the UNFCCC over the next decade will be getting the Paris Agreement’s ‘ambition mechanisms’ right. This includes ensuring periodic upward revisions of countries’ pledges based on what is required by science, and establishing a system of regular reviews of how countries are delivering on their promises. The 2018 facilitative dialogue, serving as a precursor to the first global stocktake which will take place in 2023, will be a key moment for the first of those tasks. In this regard, COP 22 took an important procedural decision in mandating the COP 22 and 23 Presidents to undertake consultations with parties on the organisation of the dialogue and to report back to COP 23.

Meeting the deadline: The Marrakesh outcomes on the technical track can be described as a modest success: substantive discussions were held on all issues and further technical work was mandated on many. At the same time, a year has already passed since Paris and countries still have a significant amount of work ahead before COP 24 and only four mandated UNFCCC conferences to do so (counting the mid-year intersessional meetings in Bonn). Whereas the 2018 deadline appears a reasonable one, there is a danger that negotiations will get extended – unnecessarily – by a further year or two since most rules will only apply post-2020.

When trying to assess the prospects of COP 23 building sufficient momentum for COP 24 to succeed in agreeing to the full Paris Agreement rulebook, there are at least three simple, yet useful, observations to be made regarding the UNFCCC history:

- not all COPs result in major outcomes – milestone COPs require preparation;
- the need for consensus among nearly 200 countries means that reaching agreement may sometimes take longer than originally planned; and
- the participation of major economies is crucial for the effectiveness of the agreement (see also Box 1).

TASK 2: Sending Strong Political Messages to Provide Certainty for Investments

The second ‘workstream’ at COPs is that of the high-level meetings that take place through the second week and include a ‘high-level segment’ (during which heads of delegation give speeches), several high-level roundtable and other events, and numerous bi- and multilateral meetings on the sidelines.

Before Paris, the main role of high-level participants at COPs had been to provide political guidance and ‘seal the deal’ at the end of the COP. Post-Paris, the main task of leaders is to send clear messages of political determination to implement the Paris Agreement, and of their intention to see through existing national climate plans and to periodically update each country’s NDC until the ‘ambition gap’ in climate action and support has been bridged. (Naturally, ministers will still be required for reaching agreement on a number of issues at each COP, given the well-known fact that ‘technical work’ under the UNFCCC often has highly political underpinnings.)

Marrakesh sent these messages in two ways: through pledges of support and pledges of determination to act.

Pledges of support: The Moroccan presidency had framed Marrakesh as an ‘African COP’ and had outlined means of implementation (capacity building, finance and technology transfer) as its issue priorities. Towards this end, a high-level gathering titled the Africa Action Summit was organised in parallel with COP 22. Mandated high-level events on enhancing ambition and support pre-2020, and on climate finance, among others, sought to draw attention to these issues, which developing countries consider particularly important.

As expected, concrete financing pledges made at COP 22 were significantly fewer than around Paris, but Marrakesh did see some progress in this regard. In
Box 1: How Can the UNFCCC History Inform the Prospects of Delivering on the Paris Rulebook in an Ambitious Schedule?

Milestone COPs do not take place every year: The UNFCCC COP meets every year. However, looking back, a clear pattern is discernible, comprised of ‘milestone COPs’ that take the implementation of the UNFCCC forward by a leap, flanked by a number of ‘implementation COPs’ that focus more on ‘filling the gaps’. Recognising that ‘not all COPs are equal’ may help the UNFCCC and countries better communicate related expectations and achievements. Further, clearly communicating the milestones will help countries plan ahead both domestically and in terms of the composition of their delegations.

In the past decade, there have been a number of such COP ‘cycles’: four years after the 1997 COP, which resulted in the Kyoto Protocol, the 2001 Marrakesh COP agreed on the Protocol’s rulebook – known as the Marrakesh Accords.

Four years later, at the Montreal COP of 2005, with the Kyoto Protocol having finally entered into force, countries agreed to consider long-term cooperative action to address climate change through a series of workshops. This process culminated in the 2007 Bali Road Map and its Action Plan that set forward a negotiating process aimed at agreeing, by 2009, on a global response to climate change beyond the expiry of the Kyoto Protocol’s first commitment period in 2012. As is well known, the Copenhagen COP failed in this task, producing the Copenhagen Accord (which it simply took note of but did not adopt) and agreeing to continue negotiations.

Four years after Bali, in 2011, the Durban COP agreed to launch a process to develop ‘a protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the Convention applicable to all parties’, which concluded with the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015. The next milestones are expected to be 2018 (facilitative dialogue), 2020 (countries’ new/updated NDCs) and 2023 (global stocktake).

Deadlines are not set in stone: The Copenhagen conference in 2009 is an obvious example of how it has not been always possible to stick to pre-agreed deadlines in the UNFCCC process. The development of the Kyoto rulebook is another. Despite the fact that the Protocol’s emission reduction commitments apply to developed countries only, it took four years and a resumed COP session to agree to the 240 or so pages of the Marrakesh Accords in 2001, despite an originally agreed deadline of 2000. Moreover, subsequent COPs continued technical work to flesh out further rules.

Major economies matter: In addition, there is another lesson from the Kyoto Protocol that was made relevant by the election of Donald Trump as the US President in November 2016, namely how the withdrawal of a major emitter might affect the effectiveness of the Paris Agreement. Many fearing a US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement have pointed out that the Kyoto Protocol is an example of the UNFCCC’s ability to resist a key player’s withdrawal: in early 2001, George W. Bush’s Administration withdrew its support from the Kyoto Protocol arguing it would damage the US economy and that it was unfair in not placing commitments on major developing economies.

Even so, countries agreed to the Kyoto rulebook in 2001. It has been pointed out that this ‘triumph of multilateralism over unilateralism’, however, came with a cost, resulting in concessions to a number of other developed countries. Thus, the lack of participation by the US in the Kyoto Protocol not only significantly weakened its effectiveness (given the absence of a major emitter) but also failed to result in a more stringent rulebook (despite not needing to deal with US demands), meaning the result was a ‘lose-lose’ for the UNFCCC. However, there are many reasons to believe that this time will be different, as will be explained below, in Box 2.

the run-up to the COP, developing countries, led by Australia and the UK, published a document titled Roadmap to US$100 Billion, which sought to address the concerns raised repeatedly by developing countries that there are insufficient assurances of the developed countries reaching their climate finance goal, pledged in 2010, of mobilising US$100 billion per year by 2020 for climate change mitigation and adaptation in developing countries. The Roadmap contains information on estimated financing levels through 2020, and presents a number of actions developed countries plan to take to meet the goal. It was received with cautious optimism by developing countries.

Concrete financing pledges made at COP 22 by developed countries included US$23 million for technology support, more than US$50 million for capacity building for transparency, and US$81 million for the Adaptation Fund.

Going forward, the lack of sufficient assurances on financing will continue to be a source of mistrust for developing countries, but it would have been unrealistic to expect major changes in this regard to happen at COP 22. At the same time, COP 22 did some important work in advancing technical work on climate finance reporting and accounting methodologies, which in the longer term can help increase confidence.
**Pledges of determination to act:** Despite no major outcomes being expected from COP 22, the conference drew the participation of approximately 50 heads of state and government and dozens of ministers. The major outcome from this ‘political track’ was the Marrakech Action Proclamation for Our Climate and Sustainable Development. This aspirational one-page document was read out in plenary but not formally adopted. Nevertheless, it arguably played an important role in sending a unified message from the high-level participants on the urgency of climate action and the determination of governments to act. It includes language such as calling for ‘the highest political commitment to combat climate change, as a matter or urgent priority’ and noting that the momentum on climate change is ‘irreversible’.

Messages of determination and unity were also delivered in numerous speeches by leaders and dignitaries. These included a powerful speech by French President François Hollande in which he affirmed that the Paris Agreement is both legally and de facto ‘irreversible’. Outgoing US Secretary of State John Kerry delivered a press conference speech, in which he vowed his country’s commitment to keeping the commitments made in Paris. Also, a group of ministers from the High Ambition Coalition (to which much of the final push in reaching the Paris Agreement has been credited) issued a statement that read: ‘Our commitment to be climate leaders remains steadfast, as is our commitment to work with the whole international community, including the United States, to tackle one of the greatest challenges of our time.’

**Impact of the US elections result:** The importance of the ‘messaging function’ of COP 22 was significantly heightened by news on Donald Trump’s victory in the US presidential elections, which came during the first week of the Marrakesh conference. While this had no perceivable impact on the negotiations on the technical track, on the high-level track this was what many described as the ‘elephant in the room’, casting a shadow of doubt over the future of the advances made in Paris.

The participation of the US, which accounts for approximately 12% of global greenhouse gas emissions (in 2012, according to the World Resources Institute), was a fundamental factor for the success of the Paris Agreement, given the need to get China (responsible for 22% of global emissions) and other major emerging economies on board. The legal form of the Paris Agreement (adopted as part of a COP Decision) and its legally-binding aspects (communication of NDCs instead of their content) were tailored to suit the US domestic situation. Ironically, it was now the US that, for the second time in the UNFCCC history, might walk away from an international climate treaty it had shaped. During his campaign, President-elect Donald Trump had, among other things, said that ‘the concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive’ and vowed to ‘cancel’ the Paris Agreement upon his election.

A number of countries reacted to the election with firm messages of determination and unity. These messages were directed at the new US Administration as much as they were at international investors and markets. Others resorted to peer pressure. President Hollande, for example, declared in his speech he would lead a dialogue on behalf of the Paris Agreement parties with the US to ensure it would respect the commitments it had undertaken. Chinese negotiators were reported to have declared that ‘any movement by the new US government would not affect their transition towards becoming a greener economy’.

Given the high uncertainty at the time of COP 22 regarding how the Trump Administration would eventually operate and which of the President-elect’s various controversial electoral promises would become translated into policy, countries undoubtedly left Marrakesh feeling at great unease with what may be ahead.

Since COP 22, experts and the press have speculated on the possible decisions and policies Trump could adopt that might affect international and US domestic efforts to combat climate change. These can largely be divided into speculation around what a US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement or the UNFCCC could mean for global ambition and commentary around how much damage changes in policy and legislation by the Trump Administration could inflict on the US’s domestic efforts to reduce emissions.

In December 2016, it is still too early to know how the new Administration’s policies will take shape. On the one hand, Trump has since his election told the press he has an ‘open mind’ with regard to the Paris Agreement. On the other, the nominations of climate change deniers Scott Pruitt as the Director of the federal Environmental Protection Agency and Rick Perry as the Secretary of Energy, and ExxonMobil CEO Rex Tillerson as the Secretary of State raise serious questions from a climate action perspective. Also, Trump has previously threatened to cancel the US$3 billion in funding the US has pledged to the Green Climate Fund, which would deal a major blow to a fund that is still struggling to establish its reputation as the leading global vehicle for climate financing. In a worst-case scenario, a US backtracking from
its mitigation or financing pledges could negatively influence other major emitters’ level of ambition.

On the domestic side, Trump has threatened to undo the climate policies set by the Obama Administration, including the Clean Power Plan. In order for the US to reach its current emissions reduction target, the ambition of existing policies would, on the contrary, need to be increased further. Given that the current US emission reduction pledge accounts for 20% of total climate pledges through 2030, backtracking would result in unacceptably high emissions from the US from a global equity perspective. Moreover, reversing existing climate policies could inflict potentially irreparable damage to the US transition to a zero carbon economy, thereby decreasing its competitiveness in the long term.

Fortunately, a number of factors indicate that the worst-case scenario may not be the likely one. These are listed in Box 2.

**TASK 3: Promoting Multi-stakeholder Cooperation**

In recent years, the UNFCCC Secretariat, together with a large number of countries, has made concerted efforts to realise the potential for the COPs to serve as a meeting place and catalyst for cooperative action by governmental and non-governmental stakeholders who do not take part in the technical or political negotiations.

These efforts are becoming crystallised under the *Global Climate Action Agenda*, which is aimed at mobilising state and non-state actors in the pre-2020

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**Box 2: Reasons for Optimism Regarding US Participation in the Paris Agreement**

Despite uncertainties about the new US Administration’s policies on domestic and international climate action and ambition, and a negative experience with the US disengagement from the Kyoto Protocol in 2001, there are a number of factors that give reason to be optimistic about the success of the Paris Agreement going forward. These include the following:

- The Paris Agreement has already entered into force. A US withdrawal from the Agreement would take four years. A withdrawal from the UNFCCC would only take a year but would mean the US would lose its right to have any say in global climate governance.

- Whereas the Kyoto Protocol is known for its top-down approach that divided a quantitative emissions reduction target among a limited number of countries, the Paris Agreement has at its core a bottom-up system of nationally-determined climate plans that are prepared by all countries. This increases the likelihood of countries seeing through their commitments.

- China is now the world’s biggest emitter. Largely due to domestic pollution, but also considerations of economic competitiveness, there are strong reasons for China to take serious action on climate change, and the country has shown serious commitment in this regard. Consequently, the continuation of China’s climate change policies is likely not to fully depend on the US taking measures in tandem.

- There is also a moral argument for the US to keep reducing emissions, as it still remains the leading historical emitter.

- Other major emitters will keep putting peer pressure on the US. Germany has announced that climate change will be a priority at the Group of Twenty Summit in 2017.

- Renewable energy and other mitigation technologies have advanced rapidly in recent years in terms of technological development, and are in many cases economically competitive compared to fossil fuel alternatives. The environmental and social co-benefits of renewables – clean air and new jobs – are getting increasingly recognized worldwide. It may prove economically unsustainable for the Trump Administration to try to revitalise some declining domestic fossil fuel industries, such as coal.

- The global transition to zero carbon, climate-resilient economies is in many ways already underway and in many cases irreversible. According to Bloomberg New Energy Finance, global renewable energy investments grew by 600% over the past decade, to US$329 billion in 2015. The same year, according to the World Bank, governments raised US$26 billion in revenues from carbon pricing mechanisms and, according to the Climate Bonds Initiative, US$41.8 billion worth of green bonds were issued. It would be economically unwise for the US not to invest in this transition.
period but is not part of the formal negotiations. It is under this broad umbrella that the UNFCCC is now well-positioned to expand its work beyond national governments to subnational and regional entities, and to non-state actors, including businesses, investors, international organisations and non-governmental organisations.

The Paris outcome (paragraphs 134 to 137) recognised the importance of non-party stakeholders’ efforts. Having COPs serve as the annual meeting place for these actors to network, share experiences, build alliances and develop sectoral long-term plans is of immeasurable value and importance, as it is widely recognised that government efforts alone will not be sufficient to address the challenge of climate change. Marrakesh delivered in two ways in this regard: in the number of events organised and announcements made, and in providing structure to the Agenda.

Delivering by numbers: The sheer number of events (including 264 official side events, innumerable unofficial ones and several parallel events outside the venue) and announcements on climate actions and plans made during COP 22 demonstrated how climate change is being taken up across all sectors, countries and actors worldwide, beyond Paris.

Examples of announcements made at COP 22 that show the scale of this engagement included: the launch of a US$500 million private investment vehicle for climate change adaptation and resilience; a pledge by the World Bank to double its annual climate financing in the MENA region to US$1.5 billion by 2020; the launch of a five-year global Strategic Action Roadmap on Oceans and Climate; the launch of a multi-stakeholder partnership to support developing countries in achieving their NDCs; and an announcement that 471 companies with more than US$8 trillion in market capitalisation had registered more than 1,000 climate action commitments.

Providing structure to the Action Agenda: COP 22 also launched the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action, which seeks to streamline and provide a clear structure to the Global Climate Action Agenda. The Action Agenda was initially born from discussions at the Abu Dhabi Ascent in May 2014 and the New York UN Climate Summit in September the same year. It was formally launched as the Lima-Paris Action Agenda in December 2014, and finally re-branded in Morocco as the Marrakech Partnership. Since Paris, the Action Agenda has been structured around thematic and sectoral Action Days taking place at each COP (including energy, cities, forests, water, transport, oceans and agriculture), and led by two Ambassadors (one from the acting and incoming COP Presidency each).

The Marrakesh Partnership provides the Action Agenda a clear thematic structure. It also creates a link between COP outcomes and the Agenda, integrates the so-called technical examination process (TEP – in essence a series of workshops under the UNFCCC negotiations track that seek to identify scalable climate actions and promote cooperation around them) in the Action Agenda, and creates processes to report on, and track, progress through 2020.

How the GCC countries can contribute: Given their high economic dependence on oil and natural gas revenues, the GCC states place high importance on economic diversification as a key strategy for addressing climate change. It is in this context that a number of GCC states came forward, in 2012, with a proposal to recognise the synergies between economic diversification and climate change mitigation and adaptation actions, which was welcomed by the COP (in Decision 24/CP.18). The Paris Agreement also recognises mitigation co-benefits resulting from economic diversification plans and adaptation actions as contributions to climate change mitigation (in Article 4.7). Four GCC states (Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE) have framed their (I)NDCs in this context.

It is also evident from the multiple panels and other events organised by the GCC countries at COP 22 that these countries are actively exploring the opportunities and co-benefits associated with aligning economic diversification with climate change mitigation and adaptation. High-level events at COP 22 included a well-attended roundtable on sustainable economic transitions and economic diversification, originally proposed by Saudi Arabia.

There are a number of ways in which the GCC states can seek to scale up climate action both by the region’s governments, and the semi-private, private and non-governmental sectors. Many of these relate to domestic-level actions, but there are a number of opportunities at the regional and global levels where the GCC states can explore synergies, cooperation and scaling up of efforts. These include:

- Encouraging key stakeholders from the government, private sector and academia to actively participate in the thematic workstreams and multi-stakeholder partnerships that convene under the Global Climate Action Agenda;
- Developing thematic or sectoral multi-stakeholder partnerships at the GCC level that focus on specific areas of economic diversification with climate action benefits, and meet on a regular basis to take stock of progress, exchange best practices and explore areas for further cooperation;
• Commissioning studies with a set methodology that benchmark successful examples of economic diversification initiatives with mitigation or adaptation co-benefits within and beyond the GCC;

• Promoting an open exchange of information on data and knowledge relating to successful practices in business and industry that have resulted in mitigation and adaptation co-benefits, for example in annual industry networking events and conferences taking place in the GCC countries (the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week being one example);

• Providing funding for research and development within and beyond the GCC borders that focuses on enhancing the synergies between economic diversification and climate action; and

• Taking an approach to developing large-scale infrastructure projects, including in the areas of public transport, urban planning or electricity generation and transmission, that taps into global alliances and information resources to incorporate the cutting edge of low-carbon, climate-resilient designs and technologies at the system and long-term planning levels.

The GCC states have already taken a major step in recognising that economic diversification and climate action are mutually compatible. The next step should involve incorporating this thinking across all government and businesses. Regional and international cooperation can support this aim, which in turn will enable the GCC states to make further contributions to global climate action.
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