

Step-up for a more ambitious climate action

BY [LUDWIG O. FEDERIGAN](#) ON SEPTEMBER 13, 2018 [BUSINESS COLUMNS](#)

In the words of Christiana Figueres, former executive secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2010-2016) and (now) convener of Mission 2020, in her article “Climate change is speeding up.

Our response needs to be even faster” published by the World Economic Forum recently, she wrote “Time is of the essence. As we have been rudely reminded this summer, there is no more room in the atmosphere for our carbon pollution. Going forward from 2020, annual global greenhouse gas emissions need to be half of what they were in the preceding decade. The good news is that countries and leaders who understand the need for speed are accelerating their climate action and also accelerating their growth. A new industrial revolution is upon us, one that puts economic development and environmental protection on a level playing field. One that understands that ecological health and balance is intrinsic to long term well-being and prosperity. Those who embrace this change will ultimately win the race.”

By the time this article reaches the press, the Bangkok Climate Change Conference have concluded and the Global Climate Action Summit is already on its second day.

The Global Climate Action Summit

The 2018 Global Climate Action Summit, currently happening in San Francisco from September 12 to 14, brought together governments, businesses and citizens from around the world to showcase climate action taking place, thereby demonstrating how the tide has turned in the race against climate change and inspiring deeper national commitments in support of the Paris Agreement. Along with bold new commitments, the summit gives world leaders the confidence that they can go even further by 2020.

To keep global warming well below 2 degrees Celsius, and ideally pursue 1.5 degrees Celsius – temperatures that could lead to catastrophic consequences – worldwide emissions must start trending downward.

Challenging people, communities, societies and economies around the world to “step up,” the summit focuses in taking ambition to the next level across five key issue areas: Healthy Energy Systems, Inclusive Economic Growth, Sustainable Communities, Land and Ocean Stewardship, and Transformative Climate Investments.

Healthy Energy Systems

Healthy Energy Systems focus on the global shift toward clean and equitable energy and mobility systems advances climate progress and enables healthy people and places. One of this is the Zero Emission Vehicle Challenge where governments, cities and business are being challenged to commit to using their purchasing and policy influence to massively accelerate the adoption of electric vehicles around the world by joining initiatives to hasten the shift to zero emission vehicles.

Inclusive Economic Growth

Inclusive Economic Growth focuses on climate leadership along with the clean technology and energy transition to generate good jobs, broad-based economic opportunity, and inclusive, resilient growth. Two initiatives are offered namely: Science-Based Targets Challenge where businesses around the world are being challenged to set a science-based emissions reduction target, thereby aligning with the Paris Agreement and the level of decarbonization required to keep global temperature increase below 2 degrees Celsius; and Just Transition Challenge where businesses, governments and labor organizations share success stories on and make commitments to manage impacts on workers and communities transitioning away from high-carbon sectors and commitments that promote broad based economic opportunity through the creation of good jobs in newly emerging sectors.

Sustainable Communities

Sustainable Communities focuses on buildings, cities, communities and infrastructure that are clean, healthy and livable, and improve quality of life for all. These initiatives include: Net Zero Carbon Building Challenge where governments, cities, and businesses commit to owning, managing, occupying and designing net zero carbon buildings within their control, as well as identifying opportunities to support uptake through the wider supply chain through core business operations and policy mechanisms; Green and Healthy Streets (Fossil Fuel Free Streets) Declaration where cities 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; and Deadline 2020 where cities are being challenged to commit to develop and begin implementing a climate action plan before the end of 2020, which will deliver action consistent with the 1.5 degrees Celsius goal of the Paris Agreement; and lastly Advancing Towards Zero Waste Challenge where cities commit to reducing the amount of waste generated by at least 15 percent per capita by 2030, while also pledged to reduce the amount of municipal solid waste disposed to landfill or incineration by at least by 50 percent and increase the diversion rate away from landfill and incineration to at least 70 percent by 2030.

Land and Ocean Stewardship

Land and Ocean Stewardship focuses on acknowledging the role forests, food, lands and ocean ecosystems play in mitigating climate change and making our world more resilient, while also ensuring sufficient food supplies for a growing population. Two initiatives include: The 30X30 Forests, Food and Land Challenge where businesses, governments and global citizens commit to taking action for better forest and habitat conservation, food production and consumption, and land use, working together across all sectors of the economy to deliver up to 30 percent of the climate solutions needed by 2030; and Ocean-Climate Action Agenda that defines that the ocean is critical to the global fight against climate change and to all life on Earth and that it plays a central role in absorbing human-caused greenhouse gas emissions and provides myriad other services that underpin the world's economic, political and cultural systems.

Transformative Climate Investments

The Transformative Climate Investments focuses on mobilizing investments on the scale needed to achieve the Paris Agreement, spur innovation and accelerate a clean and resilient economy. These initiatives include: Investor Agenda, a comprehensive agenda for investors to manage climate risks and capture low-carbon opportunities, and a mechanism to report on their progress in four key focus areas: Investment, Corporate Engagement, Investor Disclosure and Policy Advocacy calls on global investors to accelerate and scale up the actions that are critical to tackling climate change and achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement; %+ AUM Challenge where the signatories commit to invest a significant share of their assets in clean technologies and renewable energy by 2020; and Green Bond Pledge where it declares that all bonds that finance long-term infrastructure and capital projects need to address environmental impact and climate risk.

A series of reports is set to be launched over the coming months and at the summit, underlining the contribution of governments, cities, businesses, investors and civil society, also known as “non-party stakeholders,” to national and international efforts to address climate change.

The Global Climate Action Summit leader and, at the same time, governor of California, Jerry Brown, shared “We’re running out of time. There’s been some backsliding since Paris, and our Summit aims to increase the commitments that have already been made in Paris, to make them even greater, and thereby build the momentum going into the conference of the parties at Poland [in December 2018].”

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