

Credibility, accountability and transparency for net zero states and regions

Driving subnational accountability towards global standards | June 2023

Introduction

In 2022, the United Nations Secretary General established a [High-level Expert Group \(HLEG\) on Net Zero Emissions Commitments of Non-State Entities](#)

Its aim was to develop stronger and clearer standards for net zero emissions pledges by non-state actors including business, investors, cities and regions.

To fulfil this mandate, the HLEG developed a set of recommendations; guiding principles on what constitutes a credible net zero target. Central to this are credible transition plans.

Building on its long standing commitment to transparency and accountability, the Under2 Coalition is closely engaging with the UN Secretary General's team to ensure the expectations set on individual governments are fully understood and as a network positioned to support state and regional governments on meeting these requirements.

Context

At COP27, the HLEG launched a report called the ["Integrity Matters: Net Zero commitments by Business, Financial Institutions, Cities and Regions"](#)

To implement the recommendations of the report, the UN Secretary General's Climate Action Team is working in close collaboration with the UN's Climate Change Secretariat.

Together they're defining a process and a set of next steps to support net zero voluntary initiatives (both existing and new) with these recommendations.

One of these recommendations includes a call from the UN Secretary General for all non-state and subnational entities – states, regions, provinces and territories - to submit credible and transparent transition plans before the end of 2023.

Implementation of the HLEG Recommendations from UN Climate Change

Based on these recommendations, the UN Climate Change Secretariat in partnership with the UN High Level Champions, recently released a [Recognition and Accountability Framework](#). This outlines the next steps for voluntary action taken by non-party stakeholders, including Under2 Coalition states and regions as well as the Race to Zero members.

A [consultation process](#) to assess the draft implementation plan is currently underway.

Further updates will be provided as this work progresses.

“The purpose of the framework is to give enhanced recognition to non-Party stakeholders that are delivering on commitments, while pursuing transparency and helping to maximize the credibility of climate action pledges and plans by disclosing progress”.

- UN Climate Change Executive Secretary Simon Stiell

The first draft implementation plan under the framework responds to the urgent call by the UN Secretary General made at COP27, to enhance the credibility of net zero commitments.

It aims to establish a process to monitor and analyse voluntary net zero commitments from non-state actors. The process will inform the outcomes of the Global Stocktake in 2023 and the update of countries' nationally determined contributions (NDCs) in 2025.

Net zero initiatives such as the Under2 Coalition continue to update and uphold governance and accountability around net zero commitments from non-state actors, building on the Integrity Matters Report as a guiding reference of leadership best practice.

Update on Race to Zero

The UN Climate Change Secretariat is also engaging through the High-Level Champions to enhance the transparency of progress of climate commitments from non-state actors. And recognising the leadership of those delivering robust and credible contributions to limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

The High-level Champions are working with non-state actors, network partners and other relevant organisations to identify and address both the barriers and opportunities to drive action towards net zero. Specifically, this means mobilising additional net zero pledges and driving momentum through the Race to Zero.

The Race to Zero looks forward to welcoming new members and seeing the progress of the existing members reflected in the outcomes of the UNFCCC Secretariat's recognition and accountability framework.

To this extent, please note that the Race to Zero campaign has extended its criteria framework to include the addition of a 5th P, Persuade. Please see below:

“Persuade: Within 12 months of joining, align external policy and engagement, including membership in associations, to the goal of halving emissions by 2030 and reaching global (net) zero by 2050.”) [Race to Zero | Minimum Criteria](#)

Important Resources

- United Nations Climate Change Website statement, released 5th June: [UN Climate Change Unveils Plan to Showcase Leadership and Enhance Accountability | UNFCCC](#)
- Joint Statement between UNFCCC & Race to Zero: [Joint Statement from UNFCCC Executive Secretary and High Level Champions to Race to Zero partners.pdf](#)
- Letter from Simon Steill to parties: [Message to Parties and Observers - Recognition and Accountability Framework - NPS Climate Action.docx](#)
- Recognition and Accountability Framework, [Full statement here: Consultation process on the draft implementation plan under the framework is underway and further updates will be provided as this work progresses.](#)