

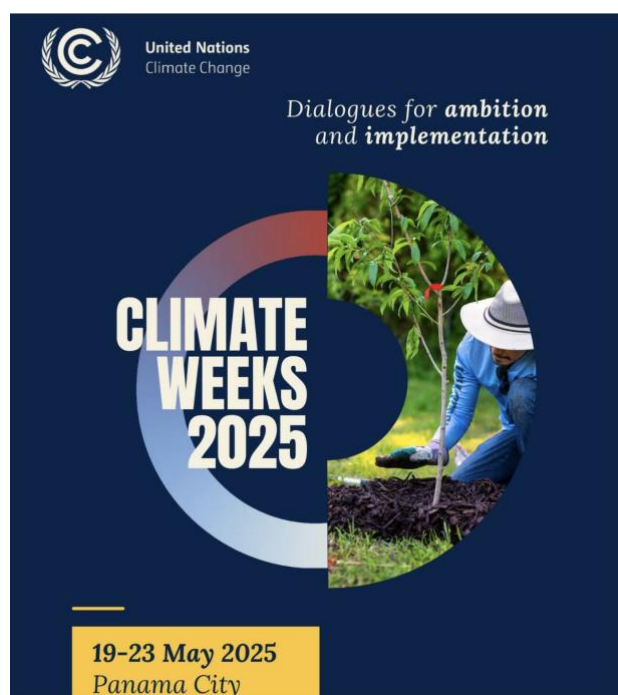
Reimagining COPs and Climate Weeks

ON THE ROLE OF THE UNFCCC GLOBAL CLIMATE WEEKS

Discussion Note

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Can the [re-launched UNFCCC Climate Weeks](#) be a game changer for making climate COPs more effective and streamlined, and the international climate regime more focused on implementation and more closely linked with ground-level concerns?

Climate change continues to pose an existential threat to humanity. Thus, the global community needs to rethink, reimagine, and reform the way existing processes, such as the United Nations climate COPs and Climate Weeks, are run. This Note focuses on reimagining

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these Climate Weeks, to allow COPs to be streamlined and chiefly focused on reporting of climate actions by Parties and other stakeholders.

The UNFCCC Secretariat must be given credit for remodelling the Climate Weeks. Reducing them from four regional to two global weeks (one of them in the UN region of the COP Presidency), is an important move in the right direction. But more needs to be done to maximise their potential.

The adapted COP Presidency Climate Weeks have introduced a few specific thematic dialogues and forums as a follow up to the mandated activities. These may provide more focused discussions on the chosen topics, but they will likely remain within the slow-paced business-as-usual continuum of discussions that are pre-cursors to political negotiations at COPs. As such, the outcomes of Climate Week events will fall far short of the transformational change needed for urgent and breakthrough climate action. If COPs and Climate Weeks are to remain relevant, they must lead on forward momentum rather than merely filling gaps.

As a [recent ecbi Report recognized](#), COPs have become too big, too complex and, among global events, are second only in size to the Olympics. Hosting a COP has become a major undertaking for any government, both logistically and in terms of expenditure – often in the range of USD 200 million and entailing significant infrastructure and security challenges. No small or even medium sized country can afford, any longer, to host such a ‘mega-COP’. Nor is this conducive to efficiently driving the changes, climate governance, and climate action needed not only to help Parties take individual and collective actions, but also to report back on progress made in a transparent and timely manner.

The main reasons why COPs have grown beyond recognition over recent years, are the concurrent climate summits and the increasing numbers of side events and country pavilions, in what the ecbi Report refers to as *Climate Expos*.

The events were envisaged to provide an echo chamber for the negotiations and a vehicle for integrating the real-world and transboundary concerns of non-state actors with the often-politicized approach of state actors. This has proven to be wishful thinking and has not contributed to speeding up negotiations or focusing them sufficiently on making tangible progress on the ground at a critical time. Rather the buzz and activities in the pavilions and the green zone distract and take precious time away from the negotiators, impacting especially the smaller delegations. Meanwhile, the call for inclusivity has just made COPs bigger. We need COPs to be about tracking, accelerating, and enforcing climate action with more accountability and less show!

The ‘COP Presidency Climate Weeks’ provide a unique opportunity for shifting to them most, if not all, of the Climate Action events that currently take place in the [green and blue zones](#) during COPs. In the interest of streamlining and cost-efficiency, the COP Presidency Climate Weeks should also integrate the pre-COP that is usually hosted by the presidency to help prepare Parties for the COP.

One advantage of this would be to reduce the number of COP participants which should allow smaller countries to host COPs and enable them to potentially play a more pivotal role

in setting agendas and steering negotiations. Another key benefit would be to strengthen the role of COPs in international governance and accountability – that is, focusing the negotiations more on taking stock, reporting on progress, holding the international community to account, and addressing remaining institutional bottlenecks that hamper implementation globally.

In short, this represents a fantastic opportunity for the new (COP Presidency) Climate Weeks to fill the critical gap between international negotiations and ground-level implementation. They can and should create a stronger platform for developing and better organising “coalitions”, across sectors and places, that set higher standards outside the slow negotiation system, share successes and experiences which transcend cross-border challenges, and inspire new thoughts and approaches in a non-politicized environment.

The new Climate Weeks would become major events in themselves, focusing on climate action and creating innovation zones, enabling corporate and other stakeholders to showcase their actions and seek partnerships and collaborations. They could also attract senior government and business leaders who can use the opportunity to make announcements and breakthroughs. In addition, they could enable real-world deals beyond national commitments. They could serve as trade fairs (Expos) for renewable projects, methane agreements, and nature restoration compacts, to name a few. Furthermore, the news and developments coming out of the new Climate Weeks have far greater potential to connect with the imaginations of ordinary people than the slow drip of incrementally advancing word games in formal negotiations. If done right, Climate Weeks can be more relatable and understandable to the general public.

With an already highly polarized geopolitical landscape becoming even more complex, stakeholders everywhere, especially younger generations, rightly have high expectations that the UN system can make a transformative impact on bending the global warming curve, speeding up the transition to renewable sources of energy, and adapting to the already inevitable consequences of any temperature increase.

Given the growing calls for bold climate action and the urgency of ensuring we remain within the limit of 1.5°C global average temperature increase, it is time to make the only multilateral platform and process of climate change under the auspices of the United Nations fit for purpose: move all the climate action (Expo) events from COP to (COP Presidency) Climate Weeks and make them exciting, action and solutions-oriented events. As the ecbi Report has demonstrated, separating the negotiations from the Summits/Expo events would shrink the participant numbers of the then stand-alone negotiations (sessions of the Governing and Subsidiary Bodies) to a level which would again enable small or developing countries to host them.

Here are a few specific and concrete actions which could be taken up at the new Climate Weeks to make them more action-oriented, focused on tangible outcomes, and collaborative.

1. **Set Clear, Measurable Goals and Promote Accountability:** Define specific objectives for each event, be they geared to policy commitments, funding pledges, or project launches, and require participants (such as corporations or governments) to make public and time-bound pledges. For example, aim for X number of companies to commit to net-zero by 2030 and, notwithstanding geopolitical realities, secure X number of €s in green investments, through green bonds and other financial instruments. Ensure progress through transparent progress reports. For example, dashboards could be created to track emissions cuts or renewable energy adoption. Establish working groups that continue post-event to ensure plans are implemented, establishing clear roles, responsibilities, deadlines, and results-based metrics.
2. **Prioritize Strategic and Tailored Workshops and Practical Events Over Talks:** Replace passive panel discussions with hands-on working sessions where stakeholders, such as businesses, NGOs and governments, co-create solutions. Examples could be drafting local renewable energy plans or designing community adaptation strategies. Find opportunities to involve local communities, youth, and frontline groups in impactful decision-making. For instance, host town halls where residents propose climate projects that get funded during the week. Tailor events to regional adaptation challenges, which could be in response to drought in one area but flooding in another. Partner with local governments to implement solutions, like retrofitting public buildings for energy efficiency and cost savings.
3. **Launch Projects with Purpose and Funding:** Use Climate Weeks as a platform to kick off small-scale initiatives, such as urban tree-planting and microgrid installations, that can later be scaled-up. Establish tracking and progress reporting by the next event. Redirect budgets from flashy events to seed funding for startups, community projects, or research all of which would have real-world impacts. Announce grants or loans to support impactful climate solutions during the week.
4. **Leverage Technology:** Use digital platforms to crowdsource ideas before the event and share real-time results. For example, create an app through which attendees can vote on priority or track ongoing climate actions.
5. **Integrate Policy Advocacy and Practical Action:** Host sessions with policymakers to draft or refine climate legislation or corporate standards. For example, push for city-wide bans on single-use plastics, advocate for stronger building codes, or find workable sustainable agriculture solutions during the week.

Finally, as with COPs, a concerted and coordinated effort will be needed to ensure powerful and global media engagement, outreach, and attention for the new Global Climate Weeks. Parties and/or corporations should be invited to make breakthrough announcements, launch new and innovative solutions, and reward exceptional and transformative leaders and innovations.

In these ways, Climate Weeks can become implementation focused, impactful, forward-looking, and inspiring, allowing COPs to be more efficient, streamlined, and purposeful.