

# 3

## The Evolution of International Environmental Bureaucracies

### *How the Climate Secretariat Is Loosening Its Straitjacket*

THOMAS HICKMANN, OSCAR WIDERBERG, MARKUS LEDERER,  
AND PHILIPP PATTBURG

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the growing influence of the Secretariat of the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC) in contemporary global climate governance. Compared to other intergovernmental treaty secretariats, the political influence of the UNFCCC Secretariat has traditionally been considered rather limited. Most notably, Busch (2009: 245) characterized the role of the UNFCCC Secretariat as “Making a Living in a Straitjacket.” However, we contend that the UNFCCC Secretariat has lately adopted a novel strategy to exert influence on the outcome of international climate negotiations and global climate policymaking by orchestrating the various climate initiatives undertaken by sub-national and nonstate actors. Orchestration offers a “soft touch” approach and is an indirect mode of governance whereby a given agent interacts with intermediaries to influence a certain target group (Abbott and Snidal 2010; Abbott et al. 2015). Building upon this concept, we conceptualize the UNFCCC Secretariat as an international (environmental) bureaucracy that uses and works with cities as well as civil society groups, investors, and companies in order to aim at creating a momentum that nudges national governments to take more ambitious climate actions (Abbott and Bernstein 2015).

We perceive the UNFCCC Secretariat as an illustrative case for studying how international environmental bureaucracies can evolve from a rather low-key and servant-like secretariat to an actor in its own right – taking on the role of an orchestrator that seeks to shape policy outcomes through changing the behavior of others. Using orchestration as a conceptual lens, we identify new types of influence that were apparently not in the minds of those authors that studied the role and function of international bureaucracies as managers of global environmental problems about ten years ago (Biermann and Siebenhüner 2009). In particular, we recognize (i) awareness-raising, (ii) norm-building, and (iii) mobilization as forms of influence

that the UNFCCC Secretariat exerts in global climate policymaking. This new way of how soft power is deployed underscores the increasingly proactive role of the UNFCCC Secretariat in the global response to climate change.

Empirically, this chapter zooms into three initiatives: the *Momentum for Change Initiative*, the *Lima–Paris Action Agenda (LPAA)*, and the *Non-state Actor Zone for Climate Action (NAZCA)*. These initiatives have been created to enhance the overall effectiveness of the global response to climate change and push the inter-governmental process forward by coordinating the myriad initiatives of subnational governments, nonprofit organizations, and business entities. This in turn has contributed to the shift away from a “regulatory” climate regime toward a “catalytic and facilitative” approach, in which subnational and nonstate actors play a much more prominent role (Hale 2016: 12). Thus, the main argument of our contribution is that orchestration entails indeed a specific form of influence, and although we cannot evaluate whether this will ultimately lead to more effective global climate policymaking, we show that the UNFCCC Secretariat is no longer a passive bystander but has adopted new roles and functions in the global endeavor to cope with climate change.

To advance our argument the chapter is structured as follows: Section 3.2 reviews the literature on influence exerted by international environmental bureaucracies. Then, we link this discussion to the concept of orchestration and sketch our methods of data collection. Section 3.3. provides a brief overview of the UNFCCC Secretariat and then focuses on the three initiatives in which the secretariat interacts with sub- and nonstate actors. Finally, Section 3.4 draws conclusions about the growing influence exerted by the UNFCCC Secretariat in global climate policymaking and points to some aspects that from our point of view merit attention in future research.

### **3.2 The Growing Influence of International (Environmental) Bureaucracies**

Biermann and Siebenhüner (2009: 1) asked, “What is the role of international bureaucracies in world politics?” The two scholars argued that the literature in the fields of international relations management and legal studies underestimates the degree and variance of influence that these institutions have in global affairs. Influence is defined by Biermann et al. (2009: 40) who follow *Webster’s Dictionary* as “the bringing about of an effect ... by a gradual process; controlling power quietly exerted.” They deliberately do not speak of power as the connotation of coerciveness would be inherent, although the association to soft power (Nye 2004) is quite obvious. They further differentiate the observable effects that bureaucratic agents can bring about on the levels of *output*, *outcome*, and *impact*.

The following sections mainly focus on *outcome* since effects on the output level are easy to achieve but do not change much and measuring the (environmental) impact of administrative practices is already difficult within a domestic setting while hardly possible in global multilevel settings. Analyzing influence on the level of outcomes thus implies studying how the behavior of other actors has been targeted and has eventually changed, for example, in the sense of the targeted actor doing something different and becoming more compliant to an international rule-setting (Biermann et al. 2009: 43). In the analysis in this chapter, we will build on these conceptual ideas and analyze what kind of observable outcomes the UNFCCC Secretariat can achieve in terms of changing the behavior of actors softly and indirectly through orchestration techniques.

Any exercise in assessing the influence of intergovernmental public agencies, be it the bureaucracies of international organizations or small treaty secretariats, faces the well-established (neo)realist criticism that such effects are at best intervening factors and that the true power lies with nation-states and their respective central governments (Krasner 1986; Mearsheimer 1994). Hence, international bureaucracies might be able to facilitate or provide technical assistance and services to national governments but will in the end anticipate the preferences of the most powerful national governments (Drezner 2007). However, we would argue not only that the power of international organizations is gradually growing (Barnett and Finnemore 2004) but also that international secretariats have lately adopted more authoritative functions in global policymaking and gained increasing autonomy vis-à-vis their principals (Bauer and Ege 2016). International bureaucracies are capable of not just providing more and more output through setting up rules and procedures. They actually provide goods and services and influence other actors also on the outcome level. In fact, they do so independently from the broader development within the institutional structure they are part of and embedded in. We thus claim that international bureaucracies are distinct and partially influential actors that exercise important policymaking tasks (Eckhard and Ege 2016). While we see this as a broader phenomenon of global politics, it is particularly prevalent for international environmental bureaucracies (e.g., Hickmann and Elsässer 2020; Manulak 2017).

Studies in this field have advanced our knowledge on the role and function of international bureaucracies by looking at the specific mechanisms that bureaucracies have at their disposal to provide meaningful outcome and thus have achieved a certain level of influence (e.g., Jörgens et al. 2017). In line with these scholars, we investigate the new influence of international environmental bureaucracies and the attempt to use subnational and nonstate actors for achieving progress in the international environmental negotiations. The UNFCCC Secretariat does so through (i) awareness-raising, (ii) norm-building, and (iii) mobilization and we claim this can be best understood as elements of orchestration.

### 3.3 Taking Influence on Global Environmental Policymaking through Orchestration

Orchestration is a mode of governance that has gained increasing prominence in the disciplines of international relations and international law since it was popularized by Abbott and Snidal in 2009. These two scholars argued that a new regulatory structure started to emerge from the ashes of a failed “old governance system,” in which subnational and nonstate actors take a more pronounced position by creating innovative transnational norms for regulating businesses (Abbott and Snidal 2009). Private and voluntary standards (Abbott 2012; Green 2013; Hickmann 2017b) are changing the global system of rules and norms away from traditional international governance through multilateral treaty-making under UN auspices toward a more heterogeneous, hybrid, and polycentric structure (Abbott, Green, and Keohane 2016; Biermann et al. 2009; Bulkeley et al. 2014; Hickmann 2016, 2017a; Jordan et al. 2015; Keohane and Victor 2011; Ostrom 2010). International organizations could use these new transnational institutions to “attain transnational regulatory goals that are not achievable through domestic or international Old Governance” (Abbott and Snidal 2009: 564).

Taking up this thread, Hale and Roger (2014: 60–61) defined orchestration as “a process whereby states or intergovernmental organizations initiate, guide, broaden, and strengthen transnational governance by non-state and/or sub-state actors.” Hence, orchestration moves beyond the classical sender–receiver model of other governance approaches. It rather follows a so-called O–I–T model, in which an *Orchestrator* uses an *Intermediary* to influence a certain *Target* group. International organizations and their bureaucracies can in principle make use of various intermediaries, such as transnational networks, nongovernmental organizations, or public–private partnerships (Abbott et al. 2015: 6). Orchestrators have a wide range of techniques at their disposal to influence the intermediary, including direct assistance, endorsement, and coordination.

In theory, the orchestrator can thus choose to *manage* or *bypass* its targets that are in this study conceived of as nation-states. More precisely, orchestrators manage states when they enlist “intermediaries to shape state preferences, beliefs and behavior in ways that enhance state consent to and compliance with IGO [*international governmental organization*] goals policies and rules” (Abbott et al. 2015: 11). Orchestrators bypass nation-states when they approach and enlist intermediaries directly, to supply some kind of a common pool resource or public common. In the case of international organizations or bureaucracies as orchestrators, these can hence fulfill their purpose without needing “time-consuming, high-level political approval” (Abbott and Snidal 2009: 564).

Orchestration techniques employed by international organizations or bureaucracies as a mode of governance represent a shift in direction of authority, in particular

if one adopts a traditional *principal–agent* perspective that centers around delegation of authority *from* a principal *to* an agent (Hawkins et al. 2006a). In the case of the UNFCCC Secretariat, nation-states can be considered the principals and the secretariat the agent. Any deviance by the agent from the mandate it has received from the principals constitutes *agency slack*, which generally means minimizing the effort by the agent to fulfill its primary mission (shirking) or taking actions that are contrary to the principals' desired policy direction (slippage) (Hawkins et al. 2006b: 8). Moreover, managing and bypassing nation-states would arguably be beyond what can be considered the *discretionary space* that an agent may be given within the mandate by the principals to accomplish certain tasks.

Whether and to what extent the UNFCCC Secretariat has been engaging in such shirking or slippage actions by orchestrating subnational and nonstate initiatives is an open question. In the past few years, the UNFCCC Secretariat has been described as a potential candidate for orchestrating climate governance at various stages of the policy cycle. Hale and Roger (2014: 80) argue that “it is possible to imagine the UNFCCC taking a more ‘orchestrative’ role than it does today.” Yet they also acknowledge that “[w]hile it is unlikely to adopt and support, much less launch, particular transnational initiatives, it ... could nonetheless be used as a forum for information-sharing, standard-setting, and accountability for transnational initiatives, and for focusing expectations on such practices” (Hale and Roger 2014: 80). A similar argument has been made by Chan et al. (2015: 470) who suggest that

[t]he UNFCCC secretariat on its own lacks the necessary resources, the mandate to ensure nonstate accountability, and the connections with nonstate actors to manage a comprehensive framework, hamstringing its operational effectiveness and experimental and catalytic abilities. At the same time, the secretariat has an important role to play. With universal membership, the UNFCCC provides the secretariat great legitimacy to convene and orchestrate nonstate initiatives in pursuit of public goals.

Thus, these scholars argue that the UNFCCC Secretariat could likely adopt an important role as an orchestrator, while it lacks the mandate, budget, and capacity. Nevertheless, even within these constraints, the suggestions by Hale and Roger as well as Chan et al. go far beyond previous understandings of the secretariat as “Making a living in a straitjacket” (Busch 2009: 245). While previous research has by and large discussed the potential of the UNFCCC Secretariat as an orchestrator, we move toward empirical assessment. In order to understand the mandate under which the secretariat operates, the following sections explore three illustrative examples of how the UNFCCC Secretariat has expanded its influence on the outcome level on global climate policymaking by using orchestration as a mode of governance, in particular after the failure at the 2009 climate summit in Copenhagen to reach a new international climate treaty.

The analysis relies on three sources of information: (i) an extensive desk study of existing scholarly work on the role and function of international bureaucracies and the UNFCCC Secretariat; (ii) a systematic content analysis of official documents, online material, and “grey” literature on the different initiatives in which the UNFCCC Secretariat interacts with sub- and nonstate actors; and (iii) a series of seventeen semistructured expert interviews with staff members of the UNFCCC Secretariat as well as representatives of different subnational bodies and nongovernmental organizations.

### 3.4 Studying the Influence of the UNFCCC Secretariat

The origins of the UNFCCC Secretariat date back to early 1991 when the then Secretary-General of the United Nations, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, assigned a higher official in the *United Nations Conference on Trade and Development* with the task of building up a team of about a dozen people to support the intergovernmental negotiations that led to the adoption of the UNFCCC in 1992 (Yamin and Depledge 2004: 487). After a steady increase in tasks and personnel over the past two decades, the UNFCCC Secretariat now employs about 500 people (including both higher level employees and administrative posts) and possesses a yearly budget of approximately USD 90 million (UNFCCC 2017g).

Several scholars have addressed the role and functions of the UNFCCC Secretariat in global climate policymaking (Bauer, Busch, and Siebenhüner 2009; Busch 2009; Depledge 2005, 2007; Hickmann et al. 2021; Jörgens, Kolleck, and Saerbeck 2016; Michaelowa and Michaelowa 2016; Yamin and Depledge 2004). These scholars concede that the UNFCCC Secretariat maintains an important position with regard to the organization of the international climate negotiations and in supporting the various associated institutions and subbodies. However, most scholars have considered the broader political influence exerted by the UNFCCC Secretariat on other agents as rather low and have not claimed that a real influence on behavioral change is really discernable. Only the most recent accounts hold that the secretariat has developed an observable influence on global climate policymaking (Jörgens, Kolleck, and Saerbeck 2016; Michaelowa and Michaelowa 2016).

As previously indicated, Busch (2009: 251) most prominently claims in his case study that “[t]he climate secretariat is a ‘technocratic bureaucracy’ that has not had any autonomous political influence.” He identifies the particular problem structure of the policy domain of climate change as a main reason for the limited leeway of the UNFCCC Secretariat and argues that the UNFCCC Secretariat has been put into a “straitjacket [which] reduces the potential for the climate secretariat to effectively exploit its key position and to have autonomous influence” (Busch 2009: 256). However, we put forward the argument that the UNFCCC Secretariat

has lately been involved in a number of initiatives that seek to incorporate subnational and nonstate actors more directly and this potentially allows new forms of leverage.

In the following analysis, we first outline interactions between the secretariat and subnational and nonstate actors within the intergovernmental process. Then, we discuss three initiatives of the UNFCCC Secretariat's engagement with subnational and nonstate actors (i.e., the *Momentum for Change Initiative*, the *LPAA*, and *NAZCA*). We do not claim that the UNFCCC Secretariat has substantially altered the international landscape of climate politics and it can be questioned whether the described activities will have a discernable impact. Yet influence in the sense of changing the behavior of actors through orchestration is clearly visible.

### *The UNFCCC Secretariat and Subnational and Nonstate Actors*

The UNFCCC Secretariat has a long tradition in working together with nongovernmental organizations. Since the first *Conference of the Parties (COP)* to the UNFCCC, in 1995, the UNFCCC Secretariat has coordinated the participation of the constantly growing number of observer organizations in the international climate change conferences and the various accompanying events. Moreover, it has taken responsibility of the administration of side events conducted by all kinds of nongovernmental organizations. By this means, the UNFCCC Secretariat creates a forum for these actors and facilitates the informal exchange between different stakeholders that provide input to the intergovernmental negotiations and stimulate debates on a great variety of topics connected to the issue of climate change (Schroeder and Lovell 2012). However, these activities do not necessarily have a direct influence on national governments.

The COP17 held in Durban in 2011 and the *Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action* provided an opportunity for the UNFCCC Secretariat to interact with subnational and nonstate actors under an expanded mandate (UNFCCC 2011b). This subsidiary body of the UNFCCC was structured according to two different *workstreams*. Under the first workstream (WS1), nation-states agreed to negotiate a new legally binding agreement applicable to all parties to the UNFCCC, which led to the adoption of the *Paris Agreement* at COP21 in 2015 (UNFCCC 2015b). The second workstream (WS2) aimed to reduce the gap between the current efforts to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions and the goal of limiting global warming within the range of 1.5°C to 2°C. It established a framework for concrete short- to medium-term mitigation actions (up to 2020) to ensure the highest efforts by all nation-states as well as other relevant actors, including subnational governments, civil society groups, and private companies.



The UNFCCC Secretariat had two important tasks under WS2 relating to sub-national and nonstate climate action. First, it organized a number of workshops and conducted so-called *Technical Expert Meetings* involving both public bodies and private/business actors “to share policies, practices and technologies and address the necessary finance, technology and capacity building, with a special focus on actions with high mitigation potential” (UNFCCC 2014c: 6). In this context, the secretariat was asked to synthesize the outcomes of the events into reports and summaries for policymakers (Hermwille et al. 2015: 15–16). Second, it was asked to compile information on action that could enhance the mitigation ambitions of governments, including many hybrid and private initiatives, into *Technical Papers*. These initiatives acknowledged the role the Secretariat could play in helping parties to support such “cooperative initiatives” (Widerberg and Pattberg 2015). Moreover, the secretariat launched a database to gather information on the various so-called *International Cooperative Initiatives* undertaken by national or subnational governments and all types of nongovernmental organizations (UNFCCC 2017f).

While the actions undertaken by the UNFCCC Secretariat under WS2 could largely be considered to fall within its mandate to facilitate the international negotiations, the remainder of this analysis focuses on initiatives of the secretariat to take a stronger impact on global climate policymaking by incorporating subnational and nonstate actors more directly into a policy dialogue. In these initiatives, sub- and nonstate entities are not merely observers of the international negotiations but have become actors that implement climate projects by themselves. According to a staff member of the UNFCCC Secretariat, the new strategy pursued by the executive secretary was to reach beyond the “usual conference hoppers.”<sup>1</sup> In these initiatives, we recognize (i) awareness-raising, (ii) norm-building, and (iii) mobilization as new forms of influence exerted by the UNFCCC Secretariat that changed the behavior of these actors.

### ***Awareness-Rising: The Momentum for Change Initiative***

An early initiative that was spearheaded by the UNFCCC Secretariat is the *Momentum for Change Initiative* (UNFCCC 2011a). It was officially presented to the public in 2011 to “get in a sense of optimism” into the negotiations and to “showcase climate solutions.”<sup>2</sup> The initiative was not directly funded through the UNFCCC Secretariat’s budget, as such activities would not have been

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Ian Ponce, Programme Officer with the UNFCCC Secretariat in the area of Strategy and Relationship Management, October 6, 2016, in Bonn, Germany.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Luis Dávila, Programme Officer with the UNFCCC Secretariat in the Momentum for Change Initiative, October 6, 2016, in Bonn, Germany.



covered by its mandate. Instead, the team led by Christiana Figueres started to contact institutions like the *Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation*, the *Women in Sustainability, Environment and Renewable Energy Initiative*, the *World Economic Forum*, the *Rockefeller Foundation*, and the *Global e-Sustainability Initiative* to gather funds. In this way, national governments could not officially object to this outreach campaign and in the end even welcomed the process, a fact that surprised some of those who were involved in the project from the beginning.

The proclaimed goal of this initiative is “to shine a light on the enormous groundswell of activities underway across the globe that are moving the world towards a highly resilient, low-carbon future” (UNFCCC 2017d). To reach this goal, the initiative recognizes a number of so-called *Lighthouse Activities*, which are described as innovative and transformative solutions of civil society organizations and business associations or firms addressing both climate-related aspects and wider economic, social, and environmental challenges in a given geographical area. According to the initiative’s webpage, these particular activities are practical, scalable, and replicable examples of what societal actors are doing to cope with the problem of climate change.

Since 2012, the initiative confers the *Momentum for Change Awards* to particularly successful climate change mitigation or adaptation projects conducted by nonstate actors from around the world. The initiative has four different focus areas: (i) Urban Poor: recognizing climate actions that improve the lives of impoverished people in urban areas, supported by the *Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation*; (ii) Women for Results: recognizing critical leadership and participation of women, implemented together with the *Women in Sustainability, Environment and Renewable Energy Initiative*; (iii) Financing for Climate Friendly Investment: recognizing successful and innovative climate-smart activities, in cooperation with the *World Economic Forum*; and (iv) ICT Solutions: recognizing climate-relevant projects in the field of information and communication technology, carried out with the *Global e-Sustainability Initiative*.

In the past few years, the UNFCCC Secretariat has put considerable efforts into the development of this initiative and established numerous partnerships with the private sector to engage in mutually beneficial collaborative interactions in order to raise public awareness on climate actions taking place on the ground (e.g., UNFCCC 2012, 2014a, 2015a, 2017e). In late 2016, four staff members were working on this initiative.<sup>3</sup> Among insiders, it has also been described as the “pet initiative” of Christiana Figueres, and when asked how the project evolved,

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Luis Dávila, Programme Officer with the UNFCCC Secretariat in the Momentum for Change Initiative, October 6, 2016, in Bonn, Germany.

one of the responsible officials simply answered “only the sky is the limit.”<sup>4</sup> This underscores that the UNFCCC Secretariat has acquired a new form of influence in global climate policymaking by using nonstate actors to raise awareness on the issue of climate change and push national governments to take a more ambitious stance on climate change.

### ***Norm-Building: The LPAA***

In the run-up to Paris, the LPAA was launched in December 2014, during COP20 in Lima. Its primary goal was to boost the positive momentum created by various conferences organized by the United Nations Secretary-General’s Office throughout 2014 that targeted sub- and nonstate actors. The LPAA was jointly launched by the Peruvian and French COP presidencies, the Executive Office of the United Nations Secretary-General, and the UNFCCC Secretariat (United Nations 2015). The common intention of these four actors was to accelerate the growing engagement of all parts of society in climate action and to build concrete, ambitious, and lasting initiatives that will help reduce global greenhouse gas emissions and promote measures to better adapt to the various adverse effects associated with the problem of climate change (Widerberg 2017).

While the UNFCCC Secretariat had only a relatively small part in the launch and the run-up to the initiative, it adopted a substantial role throughout 2015. Prior to COP21, for instance, it published a policy paper that called for further evolution of the initiative together with the Peruvian and French governments as well as the Executive Office of the United Nations Secretary-General (UNFCCC 2017b). Moreover, the secretariat supervised the initiative and occupied two seats in its steering committee that is responsible for the initiative’s strategic development and implementation. It did not, however, go as far as some of the other partners in the LPAA that provided temporary administrative bodies and acted as conveners for new initiatives to be launched in Paris (Widerberg 2017).

Yet the LPAA allowed the UNFCCC Secretariat to explore new territory and acquire new forms of influence in global climate policymaking by involving nation-states, cities, regions, and other subnational entities, international organizations, civil society, indigenous peoples, women, youth, academic institutions, and companies and investors to build a norm that a new climate treaty should be adopted in Paris.<sup>5</sup> The LPAA was designed to catalyze climate action in the short

<sup>4</sup> Interview with a former staff member of the UNFCCC Secretariat who wished to remain anonymous, October 7, 2016, in Bonn, Germany.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Ian Ponce, Programme Officer with the UNFCCC Secretariat in the area of Strategy and Relationship Management, October 6, 2016, in Bonn, Germany.

term, especially by building momentum toward the end of 2015 and support the negotiation of a new agreement, as well as in the long term, before and after 2020 when the *Paris Agreement* took effect.

### ***Mobilization: NAZCA***

The third initiative concerns the secretariat's engagement in the launch and maintenance of NAZCA. In 2014, the UNFCCC Secretariat supported the Peruvian government in the launch of NAZCA, which is an online platform to coordinate the various climate-related activities of nonstate actors and to register their individual commitments (Chan et al. 2015: 468). The aim of this initiative is to improve the visibility of climate actions by subnational and nonstate actors (UNFCCC 2017a). In particular, NAZCA should demonstrate how the momentum for climate action is rising and showcase the "extraordinary range of game-changing actions being undertaken by thousands of cities, investors and corporations" (UNFCCC 2014b).

The "theory of change" is that national governments would be more inclined to reach an ambitious agreement in the Paris meeting if they knew that their constituencies also favored strong climate action (Widerberg 2017). Jacobs (2016: 322), for instance, argues that "[b]y orchestrating the narratives of science and economics to demand strong climate action, and organising the business community, NGOs and many others in support of a strong agreement, it was civil society that pressured governments into the positions that made the final negotiations possible." NAZCA draws on data from established and credible sources with a strong record of reporting and tracking progress, such as the *Carbon Disclosure Project* and the *carbonsn [sic] Climate Registry* (Widerberg and Stripple 2016). In 2017, the platform comprised 12,549 total commitments, out of which 2,508 have been announced by cities, 209 by regions, 2,138 by companies, 479 by investors, and 238 by civil society organizations (UNFCCC 2017c).

In addition to running the platform, the UNFCCC Secretariat regularly carries out consultations with stakeholders on potential improvements. This also indicates that the UNFCCC Secretariat has recently expanded its role and attained a new form of influence by actively working together with actors other than national governments in the pursuit of the general aim of mobilization of global mitigation and adaptation actions. In this context, a staff member of the UNFCCC Secretariat noticed that NAZCA also contributed to the formal inclusion of sub- and nonstate actors into the Paris Agreement "shining a light on the numerous existing successful climate actions."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Ian Ponce, Programme Officer with the UNFCCC Secretariat in the area of Strategy and Relationship Management, October 6, 2016, in Bonn, Germany.

### 3.5 Conclusions

This chapter explored the growing influence of the UNFCCC Secretariat in contemporary global climate governance. Based on the previous analysis, we put forward the argument that the secretariat has lately adopted a novel strategy to exert influence on the outcome level of climate policymaking by orchestrating the various climate initiatives undertaken by subnational and nonstate actors.

We particularly recognize (i) awareness-raising, (ii) norm-building, and (iii) mobilization as forms of influence that the UNFCCC Secretariat exerts in the global response to climate change. In the Momentum for Change initiative, the secretariat has used nonstate actors to raise awareness on the issue of climate change and push national governments to take a more ambitious stance on climate change. In the LPAA, the secretariat acquired new forms of influence by involving the parties as well as all sorts of subnational and nonstate actors to build a norm that a new climate treaty should be adopted in Paris. Finally, the secretariat put considerable efforts into the launch and maintenance of the NAZCA platform to accelerate and mobilize the global mitigation and adaptation ambition. These findings suggest that the UNFCCC Secretariat has found new ways to exert influence on the intergovernmental process by interacting with sub- and nonstate actors with the overall aim of inducing national governments to adopt more progressive climate targets.

In addition, the UNFCCC Secretariat used the different initiatives for a new communication strategy reaching out to the media and certain celebrities. This is in line with what Jörgens et al. (2017) recently termed an “attention-seeking bureaucracy.” In other words, the UNFCCC Secretariat essentially operated according to the principle *Do Good and Make It Known*. Policywise, the overall objective of these initiatives is to reinvigorate the global endeavor to address climate change by emphasizing pioneering climate initiatives of cities and their networks, civil society groups, nonprofit entities, and private companies as well as business associations. In this way, momentum shall be built up for an increased level of ambition to address climate change. The analysis hence suggests that the UNFCCC Secretariat can no longer be adequately described as a purely technocratic international environmental bureaucracy (Hickmann and Elsässer 2020; Hickmann et al. 2021). Instead, in this chapter we put forward the argument that the secretariat influences not only the output but also the outcome level in the field of global climate politics.

The UNFCCC Secretariat took a certain window of opportunity and involved subnational and nonstate actors as a novel strategy, influencing them to raise the global level of ambition to address climate change. Through its outreach strategy and policy dialogue with actors other than national governments, the secretariat provided impetus for a variety of climate-related projects in all parts of the world carried out by subnational governments, nonprofit entities, and private businesses.

These findings suggest that the UNFCCC Secretariat could loosen its straitjacket and in recent years considerably expand its political influence in the global response to climate change.

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