A Vision of Business Engagement: Informing and Implementing the Paris Outcomes

A joint declaration
by the United States Council for International Business
and the American Chamber of Commerce in France
Paris, December 5, 2015

Now more than ever, the global community and the private sector share a common interest in addressing climate change, and in doing so together. COP21 gives us an opportunity to develop workable solutions that reflect the UN 2030 Development Agenda and SDGs, and that are ambitious, durable, inclusive and transparent.

The private sector, including American business, is committed to advancing the Paris outcomes – both those that are settled during COP21 and those requiring further discussion and elaboration. To better do so, we seek a recognized channel for substantive consultative engagement by business in the UNFCCC process.

Until now, business groups have been viewed as “observers” at these vital UN deliberations. Yet in view of all that business does and offers, that is a misnomer. We see COP21 as a pivotal opportunity to pursue institutional innovation. New challenges require new ways of working together, which can be achieved through the recognition and expansion of partnerships, dialogue and consultation between governments and the private sector.

This new approach to business engagement can provide both short-term and long-term benefits. Just as governments seek a longer-term objective to guide overall policy decisions, business seeks clarity to facilitate long-term investment decisions, which can best be accomplished through a system of established dialogue and partnership. Business can also contribute meaningfully to near-term priorities, such as those captured under “Work Stream 2” and the Lima Paris Action Agenda.

This new model of business engagement is also multifaceted. Business can provide policy and technical advice to governments and the UNFCCC going forward in multiple areas, including:

- building on specific and distinct business interfaces to “satellite” UNFCCC bodies, such as the Technology Mechanism and Green Climate Fund;
- serving as a resource for governments, regional groups and the Secretariat between sessions, when governments must determine details of implementation and work with business to put commitments into action;
- providing input in updating, assessing and improving Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) at the national and international levels; and
- building awareness and capacity among national and local business communities, through our links with local chambers of commerce and related bodies, and through our global supply and value chains.

Engagement with the private sector will allow the UNFCCC to benefit from business experience and expertise concerning, inter alia, R&D, deployment and management of efficient and low carbon technologies, investment, trade, finance, MRV, adaptation and risk management.

It is time for the UN to provide a recognized interface for business engagement so that, working together, we can build solutions to energy security, lower-carbon development and sustainable economic growth.

American business is ready to demonstrate what it can bring to this global effort, and we look forward to working with the U.S. government, other governments and the UNFCCC going forward from Paris.