



# Designing inclusive climate partnerships

Recommendations for Policy Makers  
and Practitioners developed during the  
22nd Foreign Policy Conference

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**"We are NOW laying the foundations for sustainable and lasting partnerships between governments, businesses and civil society that can be game changers in the race to net zero."**

## Introduction

*The Heinrich Boell Foundation brought together a wide range of perspectives on climate partnerships in the 2022 Foreign Policy Conference. The ideas and inputs leading to the recommendations come from:*

- Participants of the expert session
- The Global Diplomacy Lab
- Sabrina Schulz, GDL member and Executive Director of SDSN Germany
- Four case studies from offices highlighting West Balkan, Ukraine, Turkey and Morocco
- Marieke de Wal, PrC Erasmus University Rotterdam

## Climate Partnerships - Hype or Hope?

- There is currently almost inflationary use of the term “Climate Partnerships”. This is a positive development because the world has understood that “we are in this together” if we want to tackle the climate crisis and transition to a carbon neutral economy. However, a real partnership comes with mutual expectations, mutual duties, the need to talk openly, and the need to compromise. The following guidelines were developed by practitioners in order to make the emerging ecosystem of Climate Partnerships a success for all partners and stakeholders.

## Climate Partnerships - Shaping the Narrative

- There needs to be a distinct shared narrative around a Climate Partnership:
  - It has to be associated with something **positive** that people want;
  - it has to be **concrete** and relate to something people understand,
  - It has to be about **real, local, tangible problems**. The starting point needs to be a **common, jointly formulated objective**.

## Clarity About Everyone's Interests and Offers

- If you want to cooperate, **be clear about what you are willing to offer** from the start to avoid disappointment or misunderstandings.
- Both countries/all partners need to be clear about their **own interests and preferences**, including for energy sector reform, climate policy, etc., and make them transparent.
- Create appropriate spaces where host country stakeholders can formulate their interests and make themselves heard.

*Quote: "If, in the spaces we have, not all partners are represented, we just have to create ad-hoc platforms."*

## Ideas, Norms and Values Matter

- Make your normative expectations and values transparent. This will create trust even if not everyone agrees and it will avoid misunderstandings.

## Politics Matter - Take Them into Account

- **Geopolitical dynamics** and tensions that have an impact on the energy sector (China, Russia,...) and hence on Climate Partnerships.
- What's happening in other policy areas (e.g. trade and requirements for “clean” supply chains) impacts on the Climate Partnership.
- **Domestic challenges** when incumbents in the energy sector risk losing their power and proceeds: How to include them? How to make sure the green transformation doesn't get hijacked by fossil incumbents.

**Distributional aspects: Who benefits from the partnership? Who loses out?**

*Example: hydrogen production in Morocco is water intensive: only few benefit; most people face negative effects as water is scarce*



## Process Matters

- In order to build solid, resilient, sustainable and legitimate Climate Partnerships **trust-building** processes are essential.
- An **enabling environment** is part of the “conditions of possibility”:
  - All participants need to be equipped for their job: this might require training programmes, addressing administrative/bureaucratic challenges, etc.
  - Participatory processes create legitimacy and ownership, but in order for them to work, all stakeholders (incl. civil society) need to be included from the very beginning.

*Quote: “Trust is the currency most difficult to get.”*

## The Rules of the Game: Not One Size Fits All

- Every partnership is specific and has its own **opportunities** and **challenges**: outside support will always be about the specific needs of a country and requires concrete instruments/reforms etc.
- A **clear, transparent and binding (legal) framework** needs to set the “rules of the game” at all levels so everyone (including government and private sector representatives) is clear about their roles and tasks.

*Quote: “Each context needs a tailor-made solution. What works with Indonesia probably would not work with India.”*

## Make It a Just Transition

- Ensure that the interests and concerns of the people and communities losing out from a phase-out of fossil fuels and related business models are taken into account: “Leave no one behind”.
- Ensure sufficient funding for a Just Transition and compensate workers and communities adequately (retraining for workers, investment in local infrastructure to attract new employers, social services...).

## Make It About the People

- Popular support is a prerequisite for success. But careful: the interests of the local population might differ from those of the central government.
- Abstract high-level policy language will not get people excited: Make the partnership about people's concerns, desires, local realities,...
- Work in an intersectoral and inclusive way to reach all stakeholders.
- Think beyond the state government and tap the potential of cities with their unique human and social resources for the green transformation (key word: city diplomacy).

## Commitment

- In a multiyear or permanent partnership, mutual trust and understanding will grow; this is not about a short-cut to fulfilling the national or commercial interests of one party or a small number of actors.
- Think about long term commitments that allow progress and mutual learning.