

The U.S. government obviously isn't going to be taking a global leadership role regarding climate change, not for the next four years. At one time, that would have been the end of the story: the only way to accomplish anything internationally was through national governments. But we live in a different world today and there are other channels for international action against climate change. Today, transnational networks of state and local governments, private firms, and NGOs are actively addressing climate change and other environmental problems, with or without the help of their national governments.

The Under2 MOU is a great example outside of the formal framework of international law. Here are the key facts:

The Under2 Coalition is a diverse group of governments around the world who set ambitious targets to combat climate change. Central to the Under2 MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) is an agreement from all signatories to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions 80 to 95 percent below 1990 levels, or limit to 2 annual metric tons of CO₂-equivalent per capita, by 2050. A total of 167 jurisdictions spanning 33 countries and six continents have signed or endorsed the Under2 MOU. Together, the Under2 Coalition represents 1.09 billion people and \$25.9 trillion in GDP, equivalent to over a third of the global economy.

Here's a list of the U.S. signatories: Austin, California, Connecticut, Los Angeles, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New York City, New York, Oakland, Oregon, Portland, Rhode Island, Sacramento, San Francisco, Vermont, and Washington. The other signatories span the globe. There are also a dozen U.S. cities in another transnational network, the C40 network of global cities.

There are networks in the private sector, too. For example, there's ICNR, which is mostly but not entirely U.S.-based:

The Investor Network on Climate Risk (INCR) is a network of more than 120 institutional investors representing more than \$15 trillion in assets committed to addressing climate change and other key sustainability risks, while building low-carbon investment opportunities.

INCR includes the largest institutional investors in North America as well as leading religious and labor funds, asset managers and socially responsible

investment funds.

The membership is diverse. In a quick look at the list, I spotted the AFL-CIO, Amherst College, BlackRock, CalPERS, Deutsche Asset Management, the Teamsters, and Sumitomo Mitsui Trust Bank.

Another network is the Climate Group, an organization of multinational corporations who are committed to 100% renewable energy. The group include Coca-Cola, BMW, GM, Google, Nestlé, and Tata Motors. As multinationals, their policies inevitably have impact across national boundaries.

Environmental groups also reach out beyond national borders. The Sierra Club has its International Beyond Coal Project, while the NRDC does work in Canada, China, India, and Latin America. EDF is “working directly with China’s government to help the nation launch market-based solutions to trim emissions, while leveraging our business networks to lower pollution in China’s vast manufacturing sector.”

In short, the U.S. government might have withdrawn from the international climate effort, but American firms, state and local governments, universities, and others are still very much part of the effort. The absence of federal leadership is a grievous blow, but international efforts go on.