America stands on the cusp of a global climate reckoning. After decades of inadequate action by the international community, climate change now poses a clear and imminent threat to our prosperity, security, and well-being. Only a focused and ambitious global response can avert the worst impacts. And as the last four years have demonstrated, American global leadership is indispensable to mobilize action at the required scale and pace. **To rise to this unprecedented challenge, the next president and administration must elevate climate change to the first rank of America’s international priorities and make addressing the climate crisis a central organizing principle of U.S. foreign policy.**

Like curbing nuclear proliferation or impeding the spread of authoritarianism, avoiding runaway climate change is now among our most vital national interests. We should address it just as we address these other urgent threats to our core interests: by strategically using our economic and diplomatic leverage and soft power to encourage and pressure both friends and rivals to align efforts to alleviate the danger. To do this effectively, the next administration cannot subordinate climate change to more traditional foreign policy concerns. Nor can it treat climate change as a stand-alone area of engagement. Because climate change will threaten nearly every U.S. interest and equity in the world, it must be prioritized in decision-making across all key areas of our diplomacy: security, trade, bilateral and multilateral relations, development, and global economic policymaking. As a result, all key foreign policy decisions should be taken with full consideration of their climate implications. And it means the next administration must be willing to offer positive incentives for countries to enhance their actions, and, where necessary, to exert pressure and impose consequences on countries that refuse to do their part – even where doing so may come at some diplomatic cost.

Starting from the position that addressing climate change should be a central organizing principle that informs all key areas of U.S. foreign policy, we propose an ambitious yet achievable agenda with priority recommendations the next administration should pursue to chart a course towards greater climate stability. The agenda includes priority recommendations across four key issue areas:

1. **organize for effective global leadership;**
2. **deploy diplomacy and other tools bilaterally and multilaterally to pressure and incentivize countries to take stronger action;**
3. **shift investments and key economic sectors decisively toward net-zero emissions;** and
4. **promote national security and resilience in the face of a changing climate.**

Importantly, all of these recommendations are firmly rooted in advancing U.S. interests.

Of course, global climate leadership starts at home. Our credibility as a global leader depends on our willingness to substantially reduce our own emissions. Given that U.S. emissions reductions...
efforts have vacillated over succeeding administrations, other countries are understandably skeptical of America’s commitment to substantially reduce our emissions. This record will be difficult to overcome, but an ambitious 2030 target codified in a new U.S. nationally determined contribution (NDC), an unambiguous commitment to reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions no later than 2050, and a strong policy framework to meet those targets will be essential. By making concrete commitments to ambitious action and backing up those commitments with new legislation and administrative actions, the next president can begin to establish both the credibility and leverage he will need to lead effectively, while laying the groundwork for reciprocal ambition on the part of other major emitters. This will also send critical signals to the private sector that will help shape markets, influence investment patterns, spur market innovation, enhance American competitiveness, and create domestic jobs in high-growth industries.

Perhaps the most important near-term opportunity for the next administration to advance global progress on climate change will be in shaping the global response to COVID-19. The historic financial flows being marshalled to ameliorate the economic impacts of the pandemic provide a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to avoid locking in high-carbon investments and instead “build back better” through climate action that also reinvigorates the economy and protects public health. Indeed, this enormous inflow of liquidity may present our last, best chance to rapidly scale-up the investments in low-carbon technologies and infrastructure that are urgently needed to reduce emissions in line with the demands of science.

The Paris Agreement provides an indispensable foundation and venue for cooperation and coordination on global climate action. The agreement sets out key global objectives: limiting global temperature increase; enhancing climate resilience; and aligning financial flows with those objectives. The U.S. must rejoin the Paris Agreement immediately to take full advantage of the robust framework and process it provides for engagement, transparency, and accountability. At the same time, the U.S. needs to supplement the agreement with strengthened engagement in bilateral, plurilateral, and other multilateral fora – especially global economic fora – using a combination of incentives and pressure for greater action. Leveraging the Paris Agreement and additional forums, supported by the full power of American global leadership, is necessary to rally the international community at the speed and scale needed to meet the gravity of the climate challenge.

The agenda was developed by a diverse group of over 60 leading experts who have worked to advance international climate policy across various government agencies, environmental and development non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and think-tanks, business, and national security groups, as well as other priority foreign policy venues. This document provides a summary of a more detailed set of recommendations.
The next U.S. administration must lead the global effort to combat climate change while simultaneously managing other crises and strategic interests including from COVID-19. Our climate, economy, and health are inextricably connected. Concurrently addressing the climate crisis and the health and economic crises stemming from COVID-19 must be a core element of U.S. foreign policy. COVID-19 has clearly demonstrated: 1) the U.S. is not immune to crises seemingly “on the other side of the world”; 2) protecting our national security and the middle class requires the U.S. to not only reengage internationally but to lead on tackling global threats like climate change; and 3) international cooperation is indispensable in addressing and building resilience to climate risks that know no borders. The economic and social response to COVID-19 presents a once-in-a-lifetime window to “build back better” – with a foreign policy and economic strategy that prioritizes low- and zero-carbon investments and technologies, and promotes health, welfare, and resilience – especially of historically marginalized and vulnerable communities and workers – both at home and abroad.

The climate crisis is of such magnitude and urgency that it must be a central organizing principle of American foreign policy for at least five key reasons:

1) Absent aggressive global action, climate change will kill more Americans, damage the U.S. economy, diminish Americans’ livelihoods, aggravate inequalities, and exacerbate national security threats such as conflict and displacement;
2) American global leadership is not only indispensable to drive the unprecedented scale and speed of required actions, our role as a leader also protects U.S. diplomatic, economic, and security interests by setting the agenda for global action;
3) Climate change is an established or emerging priority for many key U.S. allies and other relationships, and will only continue to grow in importance as climate impacts intensify;
4) As a matter of both climate policy and foreign policy, the next administration will want to reverse the retrenchment of the current administration and re-establish the U.S. as a positive global force; and
5) Prioritizing innovation in low- and zero-carbon technologies, manufacturing, and exports will spur American competitiveness in global markets and create good quality domestic jobs in the high-growth industries of the 21st century.

Rising to the climate challenge requires the U.S. to mobilize and deliver stronger action both at home and abroad. The heart of the U.S. climate agenda must be a focused domestic effort to expand deployment of low-carbon policies, technologies, and investments to rapidly and equitably drive down emissions and get our domestic house in order. States, cities, and businesses who have led the charge on climate action will be core partners and can continue to play a constructive role internationally. Investing in climate change measures will enhance our national security and our economic and social resilience to extreme weather and disaster events. The U.S. can leverage invigorated domestic action into stronger international efforts to drive global emissions cuts, shape markets, influence finance, spur market innovation, and create jobs.

Rejoining the Paris Agreement on day one is the **absolute minimum** the next U.S. administration
must deliver to put the world on a safer climate trajectory. That step is necessary – and a foundational first move – but not sufficient. Under the Paris Agreement, the next administration will need to announce an ambitious 2030 emissions target early in its first year, while also developing and implementing a robust international climate agenda that delivers significantly more aggressive global action immediately and through this decisive decade. Ultimately, the next administration must animate the emissions, resilience, and finance objectives of the Paris Agreement using its unparalleled leverage to catalyze an international agenda that drives toward net-zero global emissions no later than 2050.

I. ORGANIZE TO LEAD INTERNATIONALLY

**Structure and people matter.** A new U.S. administration will need to organize itself to effectively drive action and accountability on its international climate objectives and signal the central importance it attaches to the climate issue. This includes establishing a National Climate Council (NCC) in the White House modeled after and with strong linkages to the National Security Council (NSC) and the National Economic Council (NEC). Importantly, the next administration should install personnel conversant in the policy priorities around climate change, and fluent in the domestic and international politics around it, in traditionally non-climate posts. Given its historical lead role on international climate policy for the White House, it is critical to elevate the role of climate in the National Security Council by creating a Deputy National Security Advisor for International Climate and Energy who also sits on the NCC to integrate foreign policy and culture with priority climate objectives and the domestic agenda.

The next administration will also need to strengthen the U.S.’s climate diplomacy overseas by rebuilding the capacity of the State Department, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and U.S. diplomatic missions to carry out a vigorous climate engagement strategy with governments, civil society, business, and academia around the world. This will require increases in the number of dedicated staff, and training and resources for Embassies to implement climate diplomacy strategies in addition to traditional development assistance activities. America’s public face overseas are the Ambassadors and diplomats that serve as on-the-ground implementers of U.S. climate strategies in key countries and with non-state partners.

**Row in the same direction at a faster pace.** Effectively delivering the U.S.’s international climate objectives cannot be conducted with disjointed or siloed efforts across the government. The next administration must marshal a “whole-of-government approach on steroids” to international climate action, with deep integration of the domestic climate agenda. Toward this end, early in his tenure the president should direct departments and agencies to convene a working group and report to the White House on how they plan to embed climate change into their objectives, leadership structure, operations, and accountability mechanisms to advance the administration’s overall climate goals.

**Mobilize toward targeted international goals.** Just as the U.S. domestic agenda will be driven around time-bound goals both economy-wide and for key sectors, the international agenda should be focused to achieve specific goals. The first expectation from the international community for the U.S. to rejoin the global fight against climate change is to put forward a new U.S. nationally determined contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement for 2030. This is a necessary requirement of all parties to the Agreement. If the U.S. wants to use its leverage to
get other countries to strengthen their current Paris targets then its own commitment must be both ambitious and clearly articulate a pathway to achieving it. Some may argue that it would be better for the U.S. Paris commitment to focus on a later target year such as 2035 because an additional five years may allow for a bigger initial U.S. commitment. However, adopting a different time frame than others are committed to under the Paris Agreement may well undermine our ability to exert pressure on other countries to enhance their commitments. Further, the U.S. can’t articulate the urgency of needed transformations and drive near-term action and accountability if it only signals a 2035 target timeframe.

Additionally, the U.S. could articulate (not negotiate) broader international goals that align global action beyond what the U.S. domestic agenda can accomplish alone, potentially in partnership with other key countries. These goals should be framed in accordance with the latest scientific guidance from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – including benchmarking backwards from net-zero emissions globally by 2050 – and set forth specific substantive global objectives in 2030 around which the American people and U.S. allies can rally (e.g., a specific number of electric vehicles on the road, a phase out of coal power plants, an end to deforestation, and resources mobilized for research and development as well as adaptation and resilience). These targets can also focus U.S. efforts to drive additional emissions reductions in developing countries through diplomacy, investments, financial mobilization, technical assistance, and other tools.

II. DEPLOY DIPLOMACY ASSERTIVELY

The next U.S. administration should use all the tools in its diplomatic toolkit to press other countries to drive action aligned with – and not counter to – the Paris Agreement and the latest scientific findings from the IPCC. This includes pressing or resuscitating climate action in key bilateral relationships (e.g., China, India, the European Union, Brazil, Indonesia, Canada, and Mexico), and multilateral fora including the G7, G20, Paris Agreement, Montreal Protocol, and the U.S.-led Major Economies Forum.

A. MOBILIZE GREATER ACTION FROM CHINA

As the world’s largest greenhouse gas emitter, China has an outsized impact on America’s core interest in climate stability. As a result, clean energy, climate change, and global green recovery should be at the top of the next administration’s China agenda, alongside other difficult issues including trade, human rights, regional security, and overcoming the deepest levels of mistrust since normalization. Substantive engagement on climate change, clean energy, and global green recovery could help begin to rebuild a relationship currently characterized by geopolitical, economic and technological tension and competition. While repairing the critical strategic U.S.-China relationship will take time and investment, the countries’ positions as the world’s two largest greenhouse gas emitters, and the urgent imperative for the world to reduce global carbon emissions to net-zero by 2050, require re-engagement on this existential challenge – and may also present opportunities for the undoubtedly difficult process of recalibrating the overall U.S.-China relationship. An affirmative decision by the world’s two largest economies to pursue recovery strategies centered on rapid regrowth of climate- and health-friendly economies could serve as a positive step in the early stages of the relationship and demonstrate a viable sustainable recovery path for other countries.
While the U.S. interest in climate stability should initially be pursued through bilateral engagement within a broader strategic reset, more robust approaches may also be needed. The next administration should be prepared to work with the E.U. and other allies to create diplomatic and economic incentives for China to move forward on an ambitious climate agenda. This may include developing common “carrots and sticks” to advance the most critical issues. The next administration can seek to:

**Strengthen the ambition of China’s 2030 Paris Agreement targets.** The joint announcement of climate targets by the U.S. and China in 2014 helped spur commitments from other nations in advance of the Paris Agreement. The U.S. should lead by example with more ambitious climate targets and leverage other tools to take a proactive role in encouraging China to announce the enhanced ambition of its 2030 nationally determined contribution (NDC) to the Paris Agreement before the UK-hosted 26th Conference of the Parties (COP 26) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in November 2021.

**Undertake parallel initiatives that advance U.S. interests.** Resetting U.S.-China engagement on climate change is in the U.S. interest and will require incremental confidence-building measures at the outset. It will also require careful work and creative thinking about bold initiatives that can generate excitement and interest. This could include efforts to: demonstrate ambition in our respective green stimulus measures, exchange information on how to create employment opportunities related to our respective energy transitions, engage on Zero-Emission Vehicle (ZEV) policies, demonstrate ambitious power sector transformations, adopt gas and coal phase-out schedules, and support U.S.-China subnational efforts by states/provinces and cities.

**Green overseas investments including the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).** The next administration can engage China in early dialogues about establishing greener requirements for investment, including for the BRI. The administration should engage China to eliminate coal projects under BRI. Both governments, which claim to support increased sustainable energy development in developing country markets, could commit to increase and harmonize their respective capacity-building programs and overseas sustainable investment criteria, in areas such as integrated energy planning, power sector reform, distributed generation, procurement, transparency, and standards to support low-carbon growth in developing countries. At the same time, the U.S. should work with other countries to encourage China to implement its stated objective to green the BRI, and to offer those countries that are considering BRI-funded high-carbon projects better options for green and low-carbon alternatives.

**B. Deepen the Climate and Clean Energy Partnership with India**

The world cannot effectively address climate change without India’s active participation, and the U.S.-India climate and clean energy relationship is critical to achieving that aim. Despite very low per capita emissions (138th in the world), India is the third largest single-country emitter of greenhouse gases and energy demand and emissions under business-as-usual are projected to double if not triple by 2050. India is a leader in clean energy deployment, especially solar and wind energy, and represents an enormous market for U.S. clean energy technologies and investment opportunities. India is also the largest democracy in the world and often positioned as a major counterbalance to China in Asia. The next administration can:
Convene a high-level U.S.-India bilateral summit in the first 100 days, at least at the ministerial level and possibly at the leader level and make climate change and resilience a central agenda issue. To prepare for the bilateral, the administration should undertake a bilateral climate policy review, evaluating the 15 Obama-era bilateral climate and clean energy programs and considering new directions of engagement, including shifting the current cooperation focus from natural gas to renewables and applying a filter to examine COVID-19 implications for partnership. Engaging India early on may also be critical to getting other difficult large emerging economies to move forward with stronger climate action.

Revive the U.S.-India Joint Working Group for Combating Climate Change through the State Department. This would include reviewing its prior existing programs – climate resilience, air quality, and diplomatic cooperation – and potentially proposing new ones, including possible new tracks under PACE-R (Partnership to Advance Clean Energy Research) programs through the Department of Energy (DOE), transitioning cooperation on natural gas to renewables including through the U.S. Export-Import Bank (Ex-Im) and the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), ratifying and accelerating hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) reductions under the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol, accelerating electric mobility cooperation, pursuing new means to accelerate sustainable finance flows including through environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards, building air pollution and climate resilience cooperation, and scaling-up support for the International Solar Alliance launched by India and France at COP 21 in 2015. Such support could include initiating a process to join the International Solar Alliance and, if congressional support is not forthcoming, seeking accommodation to support the alliance through affiliate status.

Support India in announcing a strengthened nationally determined contribution (NDC). India is in a strong position to announce a more ambitious NDC, though politically this will require enhanced support to ensure it reflects the highest possible ambition. The next administration should draw out comparable ambition with its own ambitious 2030 NDC, including possibly through some form of joint topline announcement ahead of COP 26 in November 2021. The administration should also seek to mobilize finance and technologies to deliver India’s strengthened ambitions.

C. Forge a Strengthened Climate Alliance with Europe

The European Union (EU) has been an ambitious trailblazer on climate action, seeking to become the first climate neutral continent. Seeking to become the first climate neutral continent by 2050 is at the heart of the European Green Deal – the EU’s strategy for growth and competitiveness in the 21st century. Both the European Parliament and Commission have endorsed climate neutrality by 2050 and legislation to make the goal binding across the EU – including with intermediate milestones – is expected to be finalized by the end of 2020. Germany, as current presidency of the EU Council, is working to secure agreement by national leaders before the end of 2020 to increase the ambition of the EU’s 2030 NDC from its current target of a 40 percent reduction below 1990 levels to a 50 or 55 percent reduction. The EU also seeks to strengthen its “green deal diplomacy” through trade policy, standard setting, and development cooperation to advance climate action. The EU is more likely to secure and deliver ambitious new targets in Parliament and with the Member States if the EU is not seen as acting alone. Strong U.S. action and partnership will support EU progress and can bolster U.S. engagement multilaterally, including to:
**Advance strong global climate leadership by acting in concert.** This includes U.S.-EU coordination on green stimulus measures, sustainable finance principles, just transition initiatives, and trade. Invigorating the U.S.-EU climate relationship can also provide incentives and exert significant pressure on other major emitters, including through the UNFCCC, the International Maritime Organization (IMO), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), a revived Major Economies Forum, the High Ambition Coalition, and other key venues. This also includes coordination to maximize the effectiveness of international climate finance – including through the Green Climate Fund – as the EU provides more than 40 percent of the world’s public climate finance.

**Proactively harmonize border duties to prevent outsourcing of climate pollution.** The EU has proposed a border carbon adjustment mechanism for selected sectors with legislation expected to be proposed in 2021 and implementation from 2023. The next administration should seek to proactively harmonize its own border duties (see trade section) with the EU to ensure a coherent approach that prevents carbon leakage to other countries with lower climate standards, including but not limited to China.

**Harmonize action with the EU on standards for major emitting sectors** – such as the automotive industry and global commodity supply chains – and consider how this can be used as a template to coordinate global action, including through the UNFCCC.

**Encourage the EU to utilize its position as the largest importer of traded gas** in the world to implement a methane emission performance standard that would have significant knock-on effects in other jurisdictions. Leveraging that standard, the next administration should work in concert with the EU to pressure China, Japan, and South Korea as the world’s largest importers of gas, to ensure that all imports meet high methane emissions performance standards.

**D. Catalyze Low-Carbon Development with Brazil**

Brazil’s environmental policy and enforcement have steadily weakened in the most critical areas for climate change. The 2019 Amazonian fires drew worldwide attention to the implications of President Jair Bolsonaro’s dismantling of environmental enforcement agencies and scaling back of environmental and Indigenous peoples protections in favor of unhindered agricultural, timber, and mining development. Progressive engagement from the next U.S. administration would encompass a mix of support for Brazil’s sustainable economic development of the Amazon, including to advance natural climate solutions, reduce the climate impacts of agriculture, and preserve and elevate protections for Indigenous peoples and their territories. It must also factor in Brazil’s status as a major biofuels producer, its large and contentious investments in hydropower, and its active deep-water oil exploration industry. Top priorities include keeping Brazil committed to the Paris Agreement, encouraging improved forest conservation and restoration, as well as strengthening environmental protection enforcement efforts throughout the country. Recommended measures include to:

**Collaborate with Brazil by offering increased support for enforcement and monitoring to bolster regional afforestation efforts.** President Bolsonaro and Brazilian officials generally react poorly to outside and public criticism and pressure. In the early stages of building a relationship, we recommend pursuing a positive agenda that is framed around equal partnership. Such an
approach would pair U.S. objectives to encourage Brazilian climate action through enforcement of legal protections for forests and the rights of Indigenous communities, with engagement from Brazil on U.S. conservation and stakeholder engagement efforts. The Leticia Pact for the Amazon, signed after the 2019 fires to expand regional cooperation on afforestation and exchange monitoring data, could benefit from U.S. support for technical cooperation and enforcement mechanisms.

**Lay the groundwork simultaneously for a pressure strategy.** President Bolsonaro’s approach on climate, the Amazon, and Indigenous rights is at odds with a progressive climate agenda, and a new U.S. administration should simultaneously prepare a pressure strategy if a positive engagement agenda does not produce results. Trade is one of the more promising levers to influence Brazil’s public policy, as the U.S. is its second largest export market with significant trade in beef and soybeans. U.S. trade-related actions to address the deforestation crisis, particularly leveraging environmental, social and governance (ESG) concerns through Brazil’s trade supply chains, could push the policy needle. And if the potential remains on the table, the next administration should also condition any free trade agreement negotiations on appropriate environmental- and human rights-related actions and safeguards. The next administration should also encourage state and local authorities to consider legislative actions similar to those of Los Angeles where the city council unanimously approved a motion to eliminate the purchase of any product derived from Amazon deforestation. Brazil, like the U.S., has a coalition of subnational actors committed to climate action that could be valuable allies in providing internal pressure.

**Coordinate with Europe on both positive and pressure strategies.** European donors – primarily Norway and Germany – halted their long-standing support for the Amazon Fund in 2019 due to disagreements with the Bolsonaro administration. Separately, the EU and Mercosur have reached preliminary consensus on a free trade agreement that includes effective domestic implementation of the Paris Agreement. The next U.S. administration should work with EU partners to ensure that member states’ (especially France and Ireland) environmental and human rights concerns are robustly addressed as the free trade agreement is implemented.

E. **Rejuvenate Mexico’s Low-carbon Shift**

The next administration should engage early and robustly with the Mexican administration under President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) to encourage a reversal of its backsliding on climate and clean energy commitments. As one of Latin America’s top two emitters and a historically progressive voice on international climate issues, Mexico has previously been a key player in the fight against global climate change. However, expert assessments conclude the country’s target is not in line with even a well below 2 degree Celsius global pathway and the government is not doing enough to meet even its current insufficient target. U.S. and Mexican markets, transportation systems, energy sectors, ecosystems, natural resources, and people are intricately linked. The U.S. government is in a strong position to encourage AMLO to reverse course on his climate, energy, and environmental policies by presenting opportunities to collaborate on efforts that would benefit both countries. These efforts could be mobilized bilaterally with Mexico or could be addressed in the framework of relaunching trilateral energy and climate initiatives, such as the North American Leaders Summit. Mexico, like the U.S., has a coalition of subnational actors focused on climate that could be valuable allies in providing internal pressure. Recommended measures include to:
Encourage Mexico to meet its climate commitments by, at the very least, adding the Paris Agreement to the list of multilateral environmental agreements in the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). One way the next administration could help Mexico reverse course is to reopen the USMCA and better incorporate climate change. The next administration could request that the Paris Agreement is added to the list of multilateral environmental agreements covered in the USMCA. To be more thorough, the U.S. could also request that climate change be incorporated in other areas of the agreement.

Harmonize and enforce environmental regulations, including for air, water and fuels. The next administration should prioritize harmonizing key environmental regulations and implementation efforts in Mexico with those of the United States. These include standards for air quality, water quality, and fuel quality, which all currently fall far short. Environmental authorities could work together to harmonize standards, share enforcement experiences, and add relevant language to the USMCA trade agreement. Similarly, regulations for transportation fuel quality – and their implementation – lag significantly behind those of the United States.

Seek to reverse the Mexican government’s actions that block renewable energy projects in favor of fossil fuel plants. The current Mexican administration has not tried to hide its efforts to stop the development of renewable energy projects and instead champion the fossil fuel sector. The next U.S. administration could take a collaborative approach to demonstrate to AMLO and his top advisors the benefits of renewable energy and how those technologies are the best way to achieve energy independence and create jobs in the 21st century, and codify commitments through a North American Leaders’ Summit in conjunction with Canada. The administration could also take a more pressure-oriented approach by addressing the fact that U.S. investments and companies are being threatened by the Mexican government’s actions.

F. INCENTIVIZE AND ACTIVATE INDONESIA’S CLIMATE REFORMS IX

The next administration can make major climate gains and revive critical strategic alliance structures in Southeast Asia by engaging robustly with Indonesia. As the world’s fourth most populous nation and a country with fast growing emissions, Indonesia is an often overlooked but vital member of the G20 to engage on climate. U.S. climate diplomacy should support Indonesia in modernizing and growing its energy sector by phasing out coal for renewables, and balance incentives with pressure to slow the currently rapid pace of deforestation and land and ocean degradation. The next administration should also be attuned to the considerable political challenges of reform in Indonesia, including close political and familial ties with key industries such as coal and palm oil, and a heavy emphasis on growth requiring a strong articulation of the economic benefits of climate action – particularly with the Ministry of Development Planning who are receptive to such arguments. Recommended actions include to:

Support an energy transition and coal phase out. Indonesia is the world’s fifth largest producer of coal and largest exporter of thermal coal, with significant coal-fired power in its domestic project pipeline. The next U.S. administration should encourage Indonesia to announce a moratorium on new planned coal plants that would build excess capacity and waste billions of dollars, accelerate the replacement of older coal plants with renewables, end subsidies for coal, and help line up financing through public funds (like the Green Climate Fund or Millennium Challenge Corporation) or private investment to develop Indonesia’s significant renewable and
geothermal resources. The U.S. can mobilize technical and financial assistance to develop decentralized solar and wind projects to alleviate the pressure for new coal expansion, in line with President Widodo’s goal to expand energy access to the country’s remote islands.

**Provide incentives and support to stop illegal deforestation and enforce restrictions on expansion of oil palm plantations.** Deforestation, peatland drainage, and land degradation are major sources of Indonesia’s emissions – primarily driven recently by expansion of palm oil plantations for export markets. Indonesia has had a moratorium on forest clearing for new palm oil plantation since 2011 which was recently renewed, but enforcement is uneven. The U.S. can help shift the calculus on enforcement of the moratorium through a combination of improved monitoring, review of concession licenses, recognition of Indigenous territories, provision of markets for certified legal and sustainable forest products, and performance-based finance for forest protection. The next administration can also support forums such as the Tropical Forest Alliance that facilitate corporate engagement in supplier jurisdictions to fulfill deforestation-free commodity supply chain commitments.

**Develop guardrails on the use of biomass energy.** Indonesia currently has aggressive targets in place for palm oil-based biodiesel blending for transport fuels, and discussions about the potential of biomass as a feedstock for electricity generation are picking up steam. The U.S. can encourage Indonesia to take into account the opportunity costs of land-based carbon storage and sequestration that result from such energy strategies and discourage the use of subsidies for biomass energy production.

**Encourage Indonesia to enhance its Paris commitment.** Indonesia’s current commitment is rated “highly insufficient” by analysts as meeting even its more stringent threshold would result in a doubling of current emissions. The next U.S. administration should use its diplomatic leverage to encourage Indonesia to revise its 2030 Paris Agreement target to a minimum 43 percent reduction – in line with the ambitious scenario from a 2019 Ministry of Development Planning report – and offer enhanced support from the international community. Specific sectoral targets can also be incorporated into the NDC, building on its 2025 renewable energy target as well as technological advances in renewable energy that upend Indonesia’s outdated assumption that coal is the cheapest form of energy.

**Enhance technical assistance and financing to improve disaster preparedness and climate resilience measures.** Indonesia is one of the most vulnerable nations to sea level rise and climate-driven extreme weather. Its vast coastlines, enormous coastal urban and population centers, and sensitivity to fluctuations in precipitation patterns mean that a critical area for diplomacy with Indonesia will be on disaster preparedness and climate resilience assistance. Packaging finance for adaptation measures with stronger climate mitigation – which include many overlapping measures such as conservation of forests, peatlands, and mangroves – may make it more palatable for Indonesia to simultaneously rein in unsustainable land use practices and build climate resilience.

G. **Encourage Canada to Strengthen Its Climate Actions**

Strengthening climate action from Canada should be a key part of the next administration’s international strategy. Under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Canada has talked a big game on climate leadership, but rarely met that rhetoric with commensurate action. This includes
nationalizing a $4.5 billion tar sands pipeline and failing to regulate the logging industry’s climate impact or uphold Indigenous Peoples right to free, prior, and informed consent to industrial logging on their territories. These and other actions are leading to rising emissions across nearly all sectors of the Canadian economy, widening the gap in achieving its already highly inadequate 2030 Paris Agreement target. A new U.S. administration is in a strong position to encourage Canada to strengthen its resolve to decarbonize and protect its natural carbon sinks, coupled with enforcing Indigenous rights, given the strong economic and trade ties between the two countries and Canada’s susceptibility to U.S. and international pressure. The next U.S. administration could:

Seek transparency and promote protection of the Canadian boreal forest. The Canadian boreal forest stores nearly twice as much carbon as the world’s recoverable oil reserves put together. Yet Canada is losing its intact forest faster than any country other than Russia or Brazil, primarily because of industrial logging. The climate impact of Canada’s forestry industry is not adequately accounted in its greenhouse gas inventories or regulated under its carbon pricing regime. To address degradation of the boreal forest from industrial activities, the next administration should pressure Canada to provide robust and transparent land use accounting in its national inventory reporting to the UNFCCC and to bring the logging industry under its Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act. Improved accounting could also include cooperative research efforts to monitor logging’s impacts on soil carbon and how forests recover following logging activities. The next administration should couple efforts to address the Canadian logging industry’s climate impact with pressure to integrate Indigenous rights, including the right to free, prior and informed consent, into provincial and national forestry policy. In addition, the U.S. and Canada should set ambitious targets to protect and connect their countries’ remaining primary intact forest landscapes, particularly through Indigenous-led protection and stewardship. As the G7 country with the lowest percentage of its land and inland waters protected, Canada needs pressure to enhance implementation of its conservation goals and, through these measures, advance its commitment to Indigenous reconciliation and Nation-to-Nation engagement. In particular, Canada should prioritize protecting forest landscapes where there are rich carbon stores and threatened species habitat and increasing its investment in Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas and Indigenous Guardians programs.

Foster a just decarbonization in the tar sands industry. As the largest and fastest-growing source of emissions in the country, Canada’s exploitation of its tar sands is fundamentally in conflict with its already weak international climate commitments. Tar sands oil is among the world’s most carbon intensive sources of oil and the United States is one of the only countries with refineries capable of processing it. The next administration should reject proposed tar sands pipelines like Keystone XL and seek harmonized regulations to prevent the expansion of oil and gas development that is inconsistent with international climate goals. This could include enforceable sectoral emissions targets with 5-year accountability mechanisms. It could also include a partnership and policy exchange with the U.S. on fostering a just transition for workers and communities to succeed in a decarbonizing economy.

Harmonize key cross-border standards. The two countries’ tightly integrated economies mean that stronger climate standards are more readily implemented through a harmonized approach. Building on the joint commitments announced at the 2016 North American Leaders’ Summit, the next administration should seek to achieve a 75 percent methane reduction by 2030 – in line with what the International Energy Agency (IEA) says can be achieved by industry with
commercially available technology. Both countries should also set an ambitious new 2030 goal for clean power generation, harmonize fuel economy standards for light- and heavy-duty vehicles, advance zero emissions vehicle standards and regionally integrated charging infrastructure, and align energy efficiency standards.

H. **Spur greater action through the Montreal Protocol**

Phasing down hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) presents a significant climate and manufacturing opportunity for the next administration. HFCs are the fastest-growing greenhouse gases in the U.S. and are emitted annually at a rate exceeding about 40 coal-fired power plants. There are several specific policy approaches the next administration should take to mitigate HFC emissions quickly and effectively:

- **Move to join the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol early.** The administration should quickly announce its intent to ratify the Kigali Amendment that the U.S. championed in 2016. At least 13 Republican Senators are in favor, and industry has been lobbying for ratification for years. The administration should then work with other major economies that have yet to ratify the amendment, particularly China, India, and Brazil, to incentivize and pressure them to do so swiftly.

- **Phasedown HFCs in alignment with the Kigali Amendment.** The administration should roll out an EPA-led domestic HFC phasedown program in lockstep with formally completing the ratification process. In addition to limiting new HFCs, the program should include appropriate disposal of existing HFCs.

- **Invest in HFC mitigation abroad to bolster manufacturing at home.** Investing in HFC mitigation globally is an important piece of the administration’s contribution to the Kigali Amendment and the ongoing phaseout of ozone-depleting substances. It also helps to create overseas markets for U.S. manufacturers that are strongly positioned to export innovative technologies. Such investments should be over $37 million per year, based upon a three-year replenishment level that will be negotiated in late 2020. The administration should also rejoin and fund the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, a group of nations and organizations working to reduce short-lived climate pollutants including HFCs.

I. **Leverage Concrete Action through Multilateral Fora**

The next administration must mobilize concerted action through multilateral fora to advance its international climate objectives. The Paris Agreement and its overarching objectives should serve as the foundation to build out a robust strategy for multilateral engagement. The three objectives of the Paris Agreement in line with the most recent scientific guidance from the IPCC are to: 1) pursue efforts to limit global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius and achieve net-zero global emissions by 2050; 2) foster resilience to the adverse impacts of climate change; and 3) align financial flows with the preceding objectives. Climate action should be embedded in the COVID-19 recovery agenda across multilateral fora, leveraging the historic window for structural decarbonization of economies. Priority recommendations include to:

- **Solidify and strengthen the Paris Agreement as the modus operandi for multilateral climate action.** As a first step, the next administration should move to re-join the Agreement on day one. Second, it should develop an ambitious yet credible nationally determined contribution (NDC) to the Paris Agreement with a 2030 time frame and with much of the analytical basis
frontloaded during the transition period. The NDC should be communicated well ahead of COP 26, ideally by summer 2021 as part of a broader climate action plan, in order to provide sufficient time to diplomatically leverage enhanced ambition from other major emitters. Third, the next administration should revise its Mid-Century Strategy for Deep Decarbonization in line with global net-zero emissions by 2050. The next administration should simultaneously establish an effective division of labor with the UK and Italy as co-hosts of COP 26 and presidencies of the G7 and G20, respectively, as well as the UN Secretary-General and the High Ambition Coalition to drive an ambitious climate strategy embedded across other priority multilateral agendas including economic revitalization, debt restructuring, and trade reform.

**Reconstitute the Major Economies Forum (MEF) on Energy and Climate as the primary venue for leader level engagement on global decarbonization.** The next administration should reconvene the MEF at the leader level biennially with regular Sherpa and ministerial preparation meetings. The forum should seek to foster alignment on the net-zero global emissions by 2050 and accelerate joint action, including on clean technology development and standards linked to investments in economic revitalization. The next administration should convene a leader-level MEF meeting in the second half of 2021 once it has put forward a 2030 NDC and domestic climate action plan in order to leverage stronger ambition from the world’s major emitters ahead of COP 26 in November 2021.

**Drive a targeted climate and energy reform agenda through the G7 and G20.** The next administration should conduct a review of the climate and energy initiatives under the G7 and G20 to determine which should be prioritized – especially where U.S. objectives cannot be readily advanced through bilateral or other means – in an effort to move from aspirational statements to concrete action plans. This includes quickly synchronizing with the UK and Italy, as presidencies of the 2021 G7 and G20, respectively. Given that G20 countries account for some 80% of global emissions, the administration should evaluate where it can advance key objectives, including: 1) prioritizing green and resilient economic recovery strategies domestically and through Multilateral Development Banks and export credit agencies; 2) repurposing fossil fuel subsidies to support just transition and clean energy investments; 3) seeking mandatory adoption and enforcement of the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosure (TCFD) protocols through financial regulators; and 4) phasing out investments, trade, and export credit practices that drive deforestation and ecosystem loss.

**Protect the integrity of climate science.** The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the premier international scientific body on climate change and provides the standard against which political ambition and international policy response are measured. The IPCC is conducting its 6th Assessment Report cycle which will be released in three reports over the course of 2021. The next U.S. administration should play a constructive role in defending the integrity of this science and preventing its policy implications from being watered down in key multilateral fora, such as UNFCCC and at COP 26 in particular. The next administration can also build international goodwill by returning to the practice of endorsing the reports, strongly supporting their scientific findings, and declaring its intent to incorporate the report findings into its policy making process.

**Spearhead a Global Resilience Alliance.** Resilience is likely to emerge as a new guiding principle in multilateral engagement as the world recovers from COVID-19. The U.S. should marshal its considerable development, humanitarian, peacekeeping, conservation, food security, and global
health assets to lead a global alliance with resilience to climate and related systemic shocks at its core. Bundling existing and new programs and catalyzing aligned efforts from allied countries can remove structural barriers to building resilience in developing countries and engender goodwill that can be leveraged across multilateral forums including on climate change. The alliance’s agenda could also include reform of credit rating agencies and development of new metrics such as a National Resilience Index to reinforce that investing in resilience and preparedness to future shocks is an economic priority alongside growth.

J. “BUILD BACK BETTER” INTERNATIONALLY

The next president has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to accelerate the transition to net-zero emissions globally by 2050 and strengthen the resilience of the global economy to future shocks. The decisions made and trillions invested over the next two years will shape the energy and climate trajectory for the next two decades. The next U.S. administration should be in the vanguard of global recovery efforts, building and shaping the global clean energy economy to lead the industries of the 21st century. Such global leadership can “build back better” by delivering a safer, cleaner, healthier, and fairer economy for all.

In responding to the urgent health and economic crises from COVID-19, we cannot worsen the climate crisis by locking-in dirty energy that disproportionately impacts the poorest and most vulnerable. Analysis by the International Energy Agency shows that a sustainable global recovery can make 2019 the definitive peak of global emissions and reduce greenhouse gas emissions 4.5 billion tonnes by 2023 – putting the world on a path to net-zero emissions by midcentury. Such a recovery would also boost global economic growth by an average of 1.1 percentage points per year and save or create 9 million jobs per year. Conversely, if global recovery strategies and investments reinforce existing dirty energy systems – as they largely did following the Great Recession – it could put the temperature goal of the Paris Agreement out of reach in the next several years.

Enabling policies and direct investments have a strong multiplier effect for the global economy and climate, but governments must create the right conditions to mobilize the approximately $1 trillion per year needed over the next several years for a sustainable recovery. A clean and resilient U.S. recovery at home should be extended internationally through trade, investment, development, and diplomacy to spur a global green recovery and associated economic opportunities. Advanced economies need clear policy direction to mobilize ample available capital investments. And developing economies require access to cheap capital, which provides the next administration a significant opportunity to build solidarity with vulnerable countries by supporting swap lines and debt restructuring to provide liquidity for climate investments.

The next administration should lead the global “build back better” effort. This agenda can be marshalled through the G7, G20, the United Nations including the Financing for Development and UN Secretary-General’s agendas, by joining and providing leadership in the Coalition of Finance Ministers for Climate Action as well as through multilateral development banks, development finance institutions, and bilateral engagement. As discussed above, these efforts should apply “build back better” principles to support low-carbon and climate resilient infrastructure and policies in line with the Paris Agreement, including to phase out fossil fuel subsidies and financing – particularly for new coal investments that would derail efforts to build back better and only exacerbate the climate, economic, health, and inequality crises.
III. SHIFT INVESTMENTS AND KEY SECTORS TOWARD NET-ZERO EMISSIONS

To effectively address climate change, the next decade will require concerted policy, investment, and action across all sectors toward net-zero emissions. Strong action across sectors must also be combined with ambitious efforts to protect nature – particularly forests and oceans – so they can continue significant absorption of emissions. Public financial resources from government institutions and private institutions must adopt restrictions on lending for fossil fuels and massively ramp up clean investments. Redirecting financial flows using public policy, regulation, market signals, and normative pressure will help phase out coal, fund forest and ocean protection efforts, and decarbonize key sectors like aviation and shipping.

A. ESTABLISH A “CLEAN GROWTH FIRST” POLICY FOR OVERSEAS PUBLIC INVESTMENTS

The United States, as one of the world’s largest fossil fuel exporters and financiers, plays an outsized role in determining the global trajectory of greenhouse gas emissions. The next administration should institute a “clean growth first” approach to public investments. Such an approach would prioritize clean energy projects and phase-out U.S. government support for fossil fuel exports and overseas fossil fuels projects as soon as possible. Support for the entire fossil fuel value chain would be prohibited, including for exploration, development, extraction, transport, processing, storage, distribution, consumption, and commercial promotion. (While the prospect is highly unlikely, very rare exceptions for fossil fuel projects intended solely for domestic energy consumption only in Least Developed Countries would be considered, but only after thorough scenario analysis of all viable alternatives for meeting energy access is completed, and would require taking into account price competitiveness over the full lifetime of the project, costs of externalities, safety, and adherence to international best practices and environmental and social due diligence) The next administration should direct all U.S. government institutions to implement the “clean growth first” policy, including to:

Establish specific targets and policies for U.S. overseas investments and support at: Ex-Im, DFC, U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA), Department of Energy, State Department, USAID, Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), and the Treasury Department. This should include specific targets to phase-out fossil fuel financing as soon as possible and increase zero-emissions technology financing including distributed renewables for energy access in appropriations bills to operationalize these changes.

Leverage its voice, vote, and replenishment influence within multilateral institutions such as the World Bank Group (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, International Finance Corporation, Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), regional development institutions (Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Inter-American Development Bank, and potentially the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank if the U.S. joins), to restrict support for fossil fuels – building on policies adopted by the World Bank and European Investment Bank – and substantially increase funding for low-carbon resilient development and to phase out coal through an equitable transition to a low-carbon economy. This could include instructing the Secretary of the Treasury to seek adoption of policies and procedures within all institutions to restrict financing for fossil fuels, following the model of the 1989 Pelosi amendment.
Set quantitative goals to increase support for renewable energy, energy efficiency, electric transportation, and storage projects overseas, including requisite technical assistance, project preparation, and project finance, with prioritized support for countries seeking BRI funding for high-carbon projects.

Create clean energy and energy finance positions at embassies in key countries to work on energy transition issues and hire in-country experts to assist in these efforts.

Engage bilaterally at senior levels to advance the “clean growth first” policy, including with China on BRI and Japan and Korea on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Export Credit Arrangement Coal Sector Understanding and its review scheduled for 2021.

Work with Congress to mobilize finance that supports multilateral and bilateral action. As the U.S. reenters the Paris Agreement, it will also be essential to mobilize climate finance to spur emissions reductions and build resilience around the world, especially in the most vulnerable developing countries. This is critical not only to enable countries to pursue clean energy, reduced deforestation, and greater resilience, but also to maintain support for a collaborative global effort to address climate change. The next administration should work with Congress to ramp up climate finance to support developing countries’ transition to resilient and low-carbon economies, including to:

- Incorporate the “clean growth first” approach to remove prohibitive riders and increase oversight and approval of funds disbursed;
- Seek to at least double the U.S. contribution to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) – in line with contributions from other G20 members including Germany, UK, and France – to $6 billion and fulfill its $2 billion in arrears pledged during the initial resource mobilization. The GCF is the anchor for finance under the Paris Agreement and is an independent (non-UN) fund that leverages public investment to stimulate private finance and open markets for additional mitigation and adaptation investments;
- Maintain funding for the Global Environment Facility’s (GEF) work to conserve ecosystems at $140 million per year and increase the pledge during the next replenishment in 2022;
- Provide a new contribution to the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) that is dedicated to assisting the most vulnerable countries in developing and implementing national adaptation plans to reduce the risks of climate change;
- Contribute to the Adaptation Fund that supports the Paris Agreement by investing in climate resilience in low-income countries – particularly Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries; and
- Provide full funding to bilateral accounts for climate change, including on adaptation, renewable energy, and sustainable landscapes.

B. “CLIMATE ALIGN” THE FINANCIAL SECTOR*

The next administration can help bridge the historic divide between climate policymaking and private finance. The financial sector – commercial banks, investment banks, insurers, and institutional investors – is a powerful choke point or enabler for driving decarbonization if properly incentivized through a combination of financial regulation, market signals, climate-
related investment capacity, and normative pressure. Recommendations to align private finance with climate action include to:

**Seek “climate alignment” of all lending and investments with net-zero emissions.** Climate alignment is a holistic approach that seeks to align all lending and investments with net-zero decarbonization pathways, and covering all financial institutions up and down the investment chain – commercial banks, investment banks, insurers, asset managers, asset owners, local financial institutions, community development financial institutions, community banks, consumer lenders. If implemented effectively, climate alignment makes the financial sector a choke point for driving sectoral decarbonization.

**Conduct deep sectoral work to establish pathways and benchmarks to net-zero emissions.** For example, the Poseidon Principles are an agreement among banks representing over 30% of shipping finance committing them to ratchet down the carbon intensity of their shipping loan books in line with the International Maritime Organization’s decarbonization trajectory through 2050. The inherent challenge of controlling the emissions of 50,000 ships on the open sea is made easier when considering that a small number of banks finance the dominant share of those ships.

**Create a “virtuous triangle” in sectors** among industry (e.g. steel companies or utilities), their customers (e.g. auto manufacturers or large electricity purchasers), and banks (e.g. lenders to steel companies / utilities or their institutional shareholders), supported by civil society expert organizations. Once the finance sector in particular moves, it can move very quickly, making finance a linchpin of any rapid global decarbonization strategy in the 2020s.

**Require financial regulators to mandate disclosure policies and stress testing** for private financial institutions and require “climate alignment” with clear timelines for implementation. The next administration should coordinate internationally through various forums so that mandated disclosures and stress tests for climate risks are incorporated into regulations and policies worldwide, including at the central level, at the subnational level through state/provincial or local level regulations, for state pension funds, and other regulated and non-regulated financial institutions.

**Coordinate with financial regulators and central banks internationally** to drive toward net-zero emissions no later than 2050 through leadership in the G20, Financial Stability Board, Network for Greening the Financial System, and other forums. The U.S. should also engage with other countries (or blocs like the EU) to develop green and/or dirty taxonomies to promote harmonized standards and speed up adoption of green, clean, and climate resilience standards.

**C. LEVERAGE TRADE POLICY TO INCENTIVIZE DECARBONIZATION**

Trade tools are an essential component of a U.S. strategy to drive rapid and deep emissions reductions. Trade agreements define the market access rules and can be utilized to disincentive actors or actions that diverge from our climate objectives. Trade tools can also be used to incentivize or eliminate barriers to accelerate climate-positive actions. The next administration must fully utilize the significant influence of its trade tools to expand opportunities for low-carbon American enterprise and influence priority climate outcomes, including to:
Direct U.S. trade agencies to drive climate action. Provide clear direction and capacity to the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), Commerce Department, Trade and Development Agency, State Department, and other U.S. agencies to use trade tools to drive climate action and create a new, environmentally friendly model of trade. This climate revamp of the trade model would be paired with other changes including on labor, health, and other vital protections. This realignment of objectives would create opportunities for American firms to compete in the global clean energy market, disincentivize bad climate actors, and incentivize climate-positive actors.

Revolutionize existing and new trade agreements. Recognizing the need to robustly address the climate crisis, as reflected in the objectives of the Paris Agreement and elsewhere, as well as the linkages between trade and climate change, the next administration should ensure trade agreements include binding provisions to address core climate challenges through a major revamp that includes: 1) eliminating the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanism and exemption of public interest measures such as climate policy from challenges; 2) including meaningful climate-related commitments; 3) setting binding obligations against illegal logging to reduce deforestation and protect nature 4) adopting a new, independent, and binding enforcement system for trade agreements, including to make enforcement of climate provisions more automatic and provide tools to citizens to challenge lack of compliance; 5) forming and renegotiating trade agreements only with countries that meet minimum climate performance thresholds; and 6) ensuring trade agreements promote rather than undermine the domestic climate regulatory progress.

Proactively establish border duties to prevent outsourcing of climate pollution. The next administration should pursue measures that level the playing field for low-carbon enterprise and prevent polluting operations that undercut domestic standards from being outsourced. This can be achieved through border duties or border carbon adjustment measures which are highly effective given they are self-enforcing. Border duties should be imposed on goods originating in a trade partner country where production exceeds the average greenhouse gas emissions of production in the U.S. and established in close coordination with key partners including the EU.

D. POWER A GLOBAL COAL PHASE-OUT

The continued operation of the global coal fleet will lead to catastrophic levels of global warming if unabated. The collapsing economics of coal plants and concerns with their adverse and inequitable public health and environmental impacts has dramatically shrunk the pipeline of proposed new plants in many regions of the world, including the U.S. Yet new plants are still being built elsewhere, and existing plants are not closing nearly fast enough to keep the goals of the Paris Agreement within reach. Building on the U.S. domestic progress in shifting away from coal, the next administration should make the global phase-out of coal a top-tier foreign policy priority, and an essential issue in bilateral relations with all key coal financing and consuming countries. The strategy should: 1) provide incentives for moving away from coal; 2) link cooperation in other areas of importance to concerted action on coal; and 3) where necessary, be willing to impose consequences on those countries that continue to finance and develop new plants. A concerted global coal phase-out strategy would:

Ensure COVID-19 economic recovery measures help countries transition away from coal rather than locking-in high-carbon infrastructure.
Engage China on domestic coal use and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The administration should make climate change a key focus of its initial engagement with China, with a goal of announcing a common vision for a rapid and orderly global coal phase-out. Working with our allies, the administration should create diplomatic and economic incentives for China to move forward on this coal phase-out agenda and should challenge China to implement its stated objective to green the Belt and Road Initiative by eliminating coal plants from eligibility.

Engage other leading coal countries to curtail the pipeline of new coal projects and accelerate the phase-out of existing projects. The next administration should: 1) use diplomatic carrots and sticks to pressure OECD countries that have not yet agreed to the 2030 coal phase-out horizon; 2) develop strategies to engage and pressure non-OECD high-coal consuming countries; 3) engage high-coal consuming sub-national governments directly; 4) integrate coal phase-out benchmarks into trade negotiations and use leverage from trade agreements and trade sanction authorities to limit export financing and construction; 5) introduce tariffs on carbon content of goods; and 6) support legislation that would allow the president to impose sanctions on foreign officials who approve or implement highly inefficient coal projects. Seeking to phase out overseas coal financing should be a cornerstone of the diplomatic and economic agendas with Japan and South Korea in particular.

Provide finance and technical assistance to accelerate the closure of existing plants. This includes measures to: 1) end support for new coal plants by prioritizing funding for plant closures and support for worker and community economic transitions as part of climate and development assistance and encouraging international financial institutions to do the same; 2) end all public finance for coal plants, mines, and related infrastructure; 3) lead efforts to strengthen the OECD coal sector understanding to eliminate all export credit agency funding for coal plants; 4) exclude companies that equip, build, own, or operate overseas coal plants from eligibility for U.S. Ex-Im or DFC assistance; 5) prioritize development assistance for countries that have stopped building new coal plants and/or have strong coal retirement plans; and 6) prioritize the implications of air pollution from coal plants in U.S. public health assistance.

Use existing executive authority to advance coal retirements including to: 1) adopt a “Buy Clean” procurement policy for the federal government; 2) address the problem of corruption driving decisions to build new coal plants by instructing the Department of Justice to prioritize Foreign Corrupt Practices Act enforcement for energy-related transactions, and instructing the State Department to similarly focus on corrupt energy deals through bilateral engagement; 3) adopt export controls on technologies used in the coal value chain; 4) encourage the federal employee pension plan (Thrift Savings Plan) to divest from coal companies and coal-heavy utilities investments; and 5) use existing Dodd-Frank authority to reduce macroprudential risks of coal and other high-carbon assets held by systemically important financial institutions.

E. Nature as a solution: Harnessing the Forest Opportunity\textsuperscript{\textit{XIX}}

Protection and restoration of forests and other vital land areas should be a central pillar of the next administration’s international climate strategy. The world’s essential forests hold the potential to build resilience and draw down global emissions by more than one-third, and their integrity is fundamental to have any chance of holding global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Consistent with a goal to mobilize $20 billion together with partners to protect...
Amazon forests, the next administration should lead global efforts to incentivize major deforestation countries to pivot away from deforestation-based development through a mix of tools – including diplomacy, partnerships, science, and innovative finance. Priority ambitious and impactful recommendations include to:

**Strengthen the U.S. 2030 NDC through quantified forest mitigation abroad.** Even the most ambitious domestic emissions reductions in the U.S.’s 2030 NDC will not be sufficiently aligned with its fair share of a global effort to hold temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Therefore, the next administration should seek opportunities to support mitigation and conservation efforts in tropical forest countries to augment its overall NDC offer. This could include a quantified target to reduce approximately 500 megatonnes of CO₂-equivalent annually or an additional 5-10 percent of domestic mitigation annually through 2030 from forest-based mitigation abroad.

**Support legislation to prohibit the import of commodities sourced from illegally deforested land.** Demand for commodities is driving tropical deforestation globally, nearly half of which is illegal. The next administration should support legislation making it illegal to import commodities sourced from illegal forest conversion or land clearing. Such legislation promotes the rule of law in developing countries and would dramatically curb the most egregious forms of deforestation.

**Announce green economic stimulus measures that generate finance for international forests.** The next administration should announce a green stimulus package that loans Treasury bonds to a facility that invests in the revitalization of U.S. businesses and uses the proceeds for tropical forest protection abroad.

**Revitalize and publicize satellite observation data on natural ecosystems.** The next administration should leverage the U.S.’s pioneering technologies to assist other countries in accessing high-resolution satellite data on real-time forest activities. Missions like NASA’s Global Ecosystem Dynamics Investigation (GEDI) program should be expanded and integrated with other countries’ satellite observation systems and made publicly available through open-access platforms and open-source software.

**F. ADVANCE OCEAN-CLIMATE ACTION**

The ocean and climate are inextricably linked. Climate change is devastating ocean ecosystems through effects such as ocean warming, acidification, and deoxygenation, making rapid decarbonization the single most important thing for the ocean and the communities and economies that rely on its health. At the same time, the ocean is a source of climate mitigation and resilience solutions, from reducing shipping emissions and scaling up offshore renewable energy to establishing marine-protected areas and investing in green infrastructure to protect against sea-level rise. The next administration should undertake efforts to advance ocean-climate solutions across several fronts. Priority recommendations include:

**“Blue-ing” climate diplomacy.** Until recently, countries had not robustly addressed the ocean in the context of international climate agreements. There is now greater attention to the importance of the ocean-climate nexus, and near-term opportunities for the next administration to further the ocean-climate agenda including to:
• **Advance ocean-climate issues action in the UNFCCC** to promote understanding and metrics and identify opportunities to include ocean-climate solutions in countries’ NDCs and adaptation plans. At COP 26, the next administration should seek to establish ongoing arrangements in the UNFCCC to promote ocean-climate ambition and action.

• **Set a global example by making ocean-climate commitments** included in or supplementing its next NDC. For example, the next administration could make commitments related to ocean-based mitigation sectors such as protecting and restoring near-shore blue carbon ecosystems (e.g., mangroves, seagrasses, and saltmarshes); reducing emissions from ports and shipping (domestic measures discussed in the shipping section below); and increasing offshore renewable energy to support U.S. jobs and manufacturing and supply clean electricity.

• **Take a leadership role in ocean-climate ambition coalitions** such as the Pacific Rim Ocean-Climate Action Partnership (PROCAP).

**Build resilience through marine protected areas.** Many marine scientists have concluded that the most important thing we can do for the ocean, aside from cutting CO₂ emissions, is to reduce other stressors – such as overfishing, habitat destruction, and pollution – through the creation of fully protected marine protected areas (MPAs) and stronger management of human activities outside MPAs. Just as a healthy person is better able to withstand injury than a sick one, a healthy and resilient ocean will be better able to cope with climate-related challenges than one already over-stressed by overfishing, pollution, mining, dead zones, habitat destruction, and other ills. To deliver on this potential, the next administration should:

• **Advance the goal to highly protect at least 30 percent of the global ocean (30x30).** The science is converging around the need to highly protect at least 30 percent of the global ocean to give the ocean a fighting chance in the face of profound climate-related changes. Achieving this target can significantly bolster the ocean’s climate resilience, enhance food security for the billions of people who rely on fish for protein and livelihoods, and provide safe havens for whales, seabirds, sharks, turtles, and other endangered marine life. Despite not being a party to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, the U.S. can set a strong domestic example and encourage adoption of the 30x30 target for the ocean and land at COP 15 to be hosted in 2021 by China.

• **Support an ambitious new High Seas Treaty.** Highly protecting at least 30 percent of the ocean by 2030 – and strengthening the management of human activities in the remaining 70 percent – represent ambitious but achievable goals that will help maximize resilience of the ocean in the face of unavoidable climate-related changes. However, neither can be accomplished without a strong new international treaty governing human activities on the high seas, which constitute nearly two-thirds of the world’s ocean and cover nearly half the surface of the planet. The high seas currently lack basic modern management tools, and there is no legal mechanism to create fully protected MPAs. Adopting an ambitious high seas treaty presents the next administration with a once-in-a-generation opportunity to use its influence to strengthen conservation of the global ocean.

**G. PROPEL AVIATION INTO THE FUTURE**

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) is the UN forum that drives international aviation policy and also has the potential to catalyze action on domestic flights. While COVID-19 has hit the aviation industry hard, its need for further financial support opens a leverage
opportunity that additional support should be conditioned not only on helping the workers who have been hit hard, but also on strong climate protections. Through ICAO, the U.S. has acceded to an international standard that limits CO₂ emissions from aircraft – but this standard is wholly inadequate. The U.S. has also acceded to a standard that caps the net emissions of international flights at a baseline average of 2019-2020 emissions levels through 2035 and sets standards for sustainable fuels and offsets. Due to COVID-19, ICAO changed the baseline to 2019-only emissions for the first three years, likely meaning that while aviation emissions are down in the COVID-19 period, airlines won’t need to offset emissions during those three years. The next administration has a crucial opportunity to build on what has already been adopted in ICAO and to strengthen its targets to require a trajectory consistent with achieving net-zero aviation emissions by 2050 and at least a 30 percent reduction from 2019 levels by 2035. A critical component will be domestic legislation that incorporates and builds on the ICAO standards. Achieving these aviation emissions goals should be mandatory and enforced by strong compliance measures. To advance these goals, the next administration should:

- **Set aircraft standards under existing authority** by requiring a 2.5 percent per annum fleetwide improvement in CO₂ emissions.
- **Use existing Clean Air Act authority** to establish an aviation low-carbon fuels standard (LCFS), building on the ICAO standards for sustainable aviation fuels.
- **Direct existing Federal Aviation Administration and DOT research programs** to reduce the climate impact of aviation.
- **Reverse efforts to speed approval for supersonic aircraft** which are both highly inefficient and inordinately expensive.
- **Examine existing policies that inadvertently encourage high emissions and discourage efficiency** (e.g., “use or lose” rules for slot-constrained airports resulting in “ghost flights” being flown simply to maintain a competitive hold on slots; and antitrust policies that bar different carriers from consolidating nearly empty flights).
- **Work with Congress to establish a declining cap on emissions** for domestic and international flights.
- **Incentivize airlines to cut their own emissions** by 1) making fleets more efficient; 2) improving operations, including modernizing air traffic control; and 3) using sustainable aviation fuels. Limited amounts of offsets can be used as a gap-filler.
- **Make ICAO’s emissions cap for international flights binding on airlines** under the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA); oppose further efforts to recast the baseline to 2019-only emissions (slated to be decided by ICAO’s Assembly in 2022); and require EPA to conduct scientific and technical reviews with notice and comment to determine when and how to strengthen the cap and trajectory.

**H. Shipping Towards Zero Emissions**

Shipping accounted for approximately 2.6 percent of global CO₂ emissions in 2015. If advances in technology and low- or zero-carbon fuels are not adopted, emissions from shipping could continue to grow up to 250 percent from 2012 levels by 2050. Maritime shipping also accounts for a significant and growing portion of black carbon, increasing the climate impact of shipping emissions. The next administration possesses multiple tools to drive reductions in shipping emissions, through both administrative and legislative action, including to:
**Push strong action through the International Maritime Organization (IMO).** The administration should immediately direct the U.S. Coast Guard, as lead agency to IMO, and other coordinating agencies including the Department of State, EPA, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), to introduce, support, and promote high ambition proposals within the IMO to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from all ships (new and existing) in the short term. The administration should support policies that reduce emissions by slowing ships down, using wind-assisted propulsion, and using low- and zero-life-cycle emission fuels, in addition to setting increasingly stringent carbon intensity standards for new ships through the IMO Energy Efficiency Design Index. Furthermore, the next administration could champion or support stronger IMO 2030 and 2050 emissions targets, including at least a 60 percent reduction in the carbon intensity of international shipping by 2030 from 2008 levels and zero emissions from international shipping by 2050.

**Announce international and domestic commitments on decarbonizing ports and shipping.** For example, the administration should explore enacting measures for vessels entering the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Additionally, the administration should invest in zero-emission ports. This could be supported with a new grants program to finance green infrastructure for ports to support onshore power, develop and supply zero-life-cycle-emission fuels, and to decarbonize harbor craft and cargo handling equipment.

### I. Assert Leadership to Drive Down Methane Emissions

Methane is a powerful “super-pollutant” due to its high greenhouse gas impact despite its relatively short lifetime. It has a warming impact 86 times more potent than CO₂ over 20 years. Methane accounts for roughly one-fifth of global greenhouse gas emissions and is emitted during the production and transport of coal, gas, and oil, as well as from livestock and municipal solid waste. The next administration should drive global reductions in methane emissions, including to:

**Expand support for the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) on Short Lived Climate Pollutants created by the United States and five other countries to reduce methane and other potent pollutants.** The next administration should join and take a leadership role in the UN Environment’s Global Methane Alliance (GMA), launched in 2019, and which brings together international organizations, non-governmental organizations, financing institutions, and oil and gas companies to support countries in setting ambitious methane reduction targets for the oil and gas industry. This could include co-leading a diplomatic effort with the UK as host of COP 26 to have the largest gas producing and consuming countries sign on to — and greatly expand participation in — the Global Methane Alliance, and/or to engage all coal producing countries to sharply reduce methane escaping from existing and abandoned mines. The administration should also invest in development of technology and implementation efforts to reduce emissions from livestock and manure through these forums.

**Encourage Europe to utilize its position as the largest importer of traded gas** in the world to implement a world-leading methane emission performance standard. Leveraging that standard, the next administration should work in concert with the EU to pressure China, Japan, and South Korea, as the world’s largest importers of gas, to ensure their imports meet high methane emissions performance standards. The next administration should also partner with the
European Commission to fund the Mineral Methane Institute, which is being launched to serve as a global coordinating institution for oil and gas methane science and data.

**Address methane pollution in North America through harmonized action.** In 2016, the U.S. along with Canada and Mexico established a goal to reduce methane emissions from the oil and gas sector 40-45 percent by 2025. The next administration should move expeditiously to better harmonize methane protections with Canada and Mexico, and work with the AMLO administration in Mexico to ensure its regulations are implemented and enforced. The next administration should convene another North American Leaders Summit as a platform for the three countries to commit to achieve a 75 percent methane reduction by 2030, in line with what the International Energy Agency (IEA) says can be achieved by industry with commercially available technology.

### IV. PROMOTE SECURITY AND RESILIENCE IN A CHANGING CLIMATE

The world is woefully unprepared to cope with the climate-driven changes already underway and is not yet acting to prevent the adverse security implications of these shocks and build commensurate resilience. Reducing global emissions must go hand-in-hand with a much more concerted effort to make systems fundamentally more resilient, adaptable, and secure to the changes that cannot be prevented. Vulnerability in infrastructure, institutions, food and water systems, population settlements and migration, health, and trade will all be exacerbated by the effects of climate change and must be bolstered before worse damages occur. To do so, climate and environmental risks must be properly prioritized within decision-making, and resilience considerations must be elevated in government planning processes. Within the overall context of promoting American and global security, it is also important to acknowledge that impacts from global climate changes play out locally, and many of the risks our communities are facing do not recognize traditional borders and affect the most vulnerable communities first and hardest.

#### A. **Embed Climate Change as a Core National Security Priority**

Climate and other adverse environmental changes represent core threats to U.S. national security and must be prioritized as such. This will require renewed leadership on the issue from the top, as well as a whole-of-government approach to confronting the problem worldwide. As the next administration takes stock of the wide-reaching security implications of climate change, it is critical to establish the issue as a presidential priority, and to set up effective interagency processes for working on the issue from the perspectives of defense, diplomacy, intelligence/foresight, and resilience interests. This includes to:

**Elevate climate security issues in White House and interagency processes.** To lead on this issue, the proposed Deputy National Security Advisor for Energy and Climate Change should work to integrate climate threats into security decision-making at the highest levels. Within the National Security Council, dedicated-expert positions should oversee the specific portfolios pertaining to these matters, and help facilitate interagency coordination processes among the diplomatic, defense, and scientific communities. Through a proposed Interagency Policy Committee (IPC) on climate and security issues, and associated sub-IPCs, matters around
developing early warning systems for threats, and building response and resilience strategies across agencies, can be centrally coordinated.

**Create dedicated intelligence structures to track climate and environmental risks.** The structure and staffing of critical elements of the intelligence community (IC) must also be rethought in order to better serve policymakers’ prioritization of environmental security issues, including climate change. This includes the creation of a National Intelligence Officer (NIO) for Environmental Security, with three Deputy National Intelligence Officers having an analytical focus on climate change, water security, and ecological issues. The new NIO should be double-hatted as the National Intelligence Manager (NIM), similar to the arrangements of NIO Cyber and NIO Science and Technology, to better drive intelligence collection towards robust analysis. The NIO should chair the Office of the Director of National Intelligence’s (ODNI) newly established and congressionally-mandated Climate Security Advisory Council and represent the IC in NSC processes.

**Synergize climate security needs with diplomatic priorities.** Finally, the next administration should lead on climate issues abroad in regard to both mitigation and adaptation ambition. On the latter, resilience to climate shocks should be thoroughly integrated into our traditional alliance and security partner cooperation relationships and integrated into joint agreements and exercises. The White House or Department of Defense could also look to convene a high-level gathering of global defense leaders on climate security issues, akin to the Clean Energy Ministerial format. Climate and environmental considerations should also be thoroughly integrated into the next administration’s National Security Strategy and the Pentagon’s National Defense Strategy, to ensure its operationalization across security activities.

### B. STRENGTHEN RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE AND OTHER SHOCKS

A next administration has a significant window in the COVID-19 period to lead the world in a resilient recovery and “build back better.” Resilience-oriented international engagement can knit together the health, economic, development, food, nature, and climate agendas in an additive manner and demonstrate solidarity and build significant goodwill with developing countries. Specific recommendations to strengthen resilience include to:

- **Build on the Climate-Resilient International Development executive order** (EO 13677) to mainstream resilience and adaptation into development strategies and programs including through: 1) improved climate information services; 2) capacity to plan and make decisions in the face of uncertainties; 3) support to financial risk and vulnerability assessments; 4) requirement for economic benefit-cost analyses to include resilience criteria; and 5) investment in climate science and intelligence.

- **Provide funding for international resilience efforts** including through the Green Climate Fund, Least Developed Countries Fund, and bilateral assistance.

- **Measure resilience contributions in development assistance**, including through programs in the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR).

- **Incentivize catalytic private sector investments in adaptation and resilience**, including insurance and risk-finance mechanisms.

- **Include climate resilience as a principle for international public and private finance.** This approach would establish a resilience screen for investments for considering criteria on whether it increases or decreases resilience in the face of climate change.

- **Support country leadership on adaptation and resilience**, including priority investments
in urban areas, land use planning, health, transformative adaptation, innovative finance, agriculture, and food security and productivity.

The next administration must oversee new efforts to prepare for and prevent climate change impacts wherever they harm our citizens and interests by building U.S. resilience to climate risks and reducing their scale and scope. Towards this end, the next administration should launch a major Climate Security Infrastructure Initiative aimed at bolstering civilian-military cooperation to improve the climate resilience of our critical civilian and military infrastructure; plan and train for climate events; and strengthen U.S. disaster response efforts. This should be overseen by the Department of Defense and including high-level stakeholders from the services and National Guard, Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), combatant command (COCOM) leadership, Department of State, USAID, NOAA, and other relevant agencies.

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1 The views reflected in this document are not intended to be consensus perspectives and do not reflect the views of the individuals’ organizations.

2 This document was developed by Jake Schmidt (Natural Resources Defense Council)*; Brendan Guy (Natural Resources Defense Council)*; Sue Biniaz (United Nations Foundation); Paul Bodnar; Han Chen (Natural Resources Defense Council); John Coequyt (Sierra Club); Allison Fajans-Turner (Climate Nexus); Carla Frisch; Steve Herz (Sierra Club); Ryan Hobert (United Nations Foundation); Kelley Kizzier (Environmental Defense Fund); Andrew Light (World Resources Institute); Alden Meyer (Union of Concerned Scientists); Pete Ogden (United Nations Foundation); David Waskow (World Resources Institute); Jesse Young (Oxfam America); and Alan Yu (Center for American Progress). The recommendations in this document were developed by individuals with deep expertise in international climate policy and aims to provide the next U.S. administration with an agenda that would help put the world on a safer climate trajectory. The views reflected in this document are not intended to be consensus perspectives and do not reflect the views of the individuals’ organizations. For all sections, the section leads are noted with an asterisk with additional contributors listed in alphabetical order.

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