

Cool Leaders Initiative

Terms of Reference

1. Background

1.1 UNEP Cool Coalition

The Cool Coalition was launched by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) at the First Global Conference on Synergies between the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement. It is a multi-stakeholder network of more than 250 governments, businesses, cities, investors, and civil-society groups, all working together to meet the cooling needs of both developed and developing countries through the “reduce-shift-improve-protect” holistic and cross-sectoral approach. By doing so, the Coalition supports the delivery of the Paris Agreement, the Montreal Protocol, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

1.2 Global Cooling Watch

The Global Cooling Watch is UNEP’s biennial flagship report, first issued in 2023, which provides the first science-based roadmap for achieving near-zero-emissions cooling through combined action on passive design, high-efficiency equipment and climate-friendly refrigerants.

1.3 Global Cooling Pledge

The Global Cooling Pledge (GCP) is a collective commitment launched at the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28). With over 70 country Signatories and 80 non-state supporters, the Pledge represents the world’s first collective commitment to reducing cooling-related emissions by over 60 per cent by 2050, while also expanding equitable access to cooling. Anchored in the science of the Global Cooling Watch, the Pledge outlines 14 national targets across areas, thereby providing a clear roadmap for coordinated, cross-sectoral action.

2. Rationale

The Cool Leaders initiative has been developed in direct response to requests from GCP signatories for a mechanism that elevates visible leadership, accelerates peer-to-peer learning, and further galvanizes collective action under the Pledge.

Delivering on the GCP requires the rapid replication and adaptation of effective policies, technologies, and solutions across countries, cities, and communities. The Cool Leaders initiative will:

- Showcase role models by recognizing exemplary leadership and innovation in sustainable cooling.
- Foster accelerated knowledge transfer and peer learning.
- Visibly demonstrate the collective impact and momentum achieved under the Pledge.

By fulfilling these functions, the initiative supports collective progress toward the Pledge targets, reinforces obligations under the Montreal Protocol and the Paris Agreement, and advances the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG2 (Zero Hunger), SDG3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), SDG11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG13 (Climate Action).

These Terms of Reference (ToR) set out the parameters of the initiative.

3. Purpose and Objectives

The Cool Leaders initiative is to recognize and elevate exemplary leadership in sustainable cooling among GCP signatories and leading individuals, converting their experience into structured peer learning, capacity-building, and targeted advocacy.

The initiative aims to advance sustainable cooling and accelerate the collective delivery of the GCP by:

- Conferring recognition on those demonstrating outstanding progress in sustainable cooling, including through delivering on GCP targets.
- Strengthening capacity through knowledge exchange, technical cooperation, and dissemination of practical expertise.
- Mobilizing resources for scalable cooling solutions.
- Promoting the harmonization of effective policies and best practices across regions.
- Elevating the visibility of sustainable cooling on international, regional, and national agendas.
- Ensuring balanced representation and inclusive participation across all regions and development contexts.
- Generating actionable evidence and insights to inform ongoing GCP implementation and policy development.

4. Scope, Eligibility, and Term

4.1 Scope

Each year, the Cool Leaders initiative designates three (3) Cool Leaders:

- One (1) from a developed/developing national GCP signatory¹.
- One (1) from a developed/developing subnational GCP signatory.
- Three (3) individuals not formally affiliated with the GCP, recognized for demonstrable leadership and impact in advancing sustainable cooling.

4.2 Eligibility

GCP signatories (national and subnational) may submit nominations in relevant categories, designating one minister-level representative.

The individual category is open to public nomination.

Self-nomination is permitted in all categories. UNEP staff are not eligible.

¹ The classification of “developed” and “developing” follows the United Nations M49 standard.

4.3 Term and Rotation

Each designation is valid for twelve (12) months.

To foster inclusivity, recipients are ineligible for re-nomination in the same category the following term. This provision will be referred to as the “cool-down rule.”

5. Selection and Designation Process

5.1 Nomination Procedure

The Cool Coalition Secretariat will open the nomination period in the beginning of each calendar year for the duration of no less than sixty (60) calendar days.

Each signatory may submit up to three nominations per category, including self-nominations. Public nominations for the individual category will be invited via an online call.

5.2 Evaluation Committee

A seven-member Evaluation Committee will assess nominations against pre-established criteria (Annex B), including the “cool-down” rule. The Committee will comprise:

- Two (2) representatives from the broader development sector.
- Two (2) representatives from UN entities, other than the UNEP Cool Coalition.
- One (1) representative from academia.
- One (1) representative from civil society.
- One (1) representative from the Cool Coalition Secretariat.

At least two (2) members shall be drawn from the Cool Coalition Working Groups, ensuring that the Committee benefits from the network’s expertise and remains aligned with priority work streams. The Committee’s composition will reflect, to the extent possible, regional and gender balance. To ensure diversity and shared ownership, the composition of the Evaluation Committee will rotate every two (2) years.

To ensure a fair and effective selection process, members of the Evaluation Committee should meet the following criteria:

- Professional experience in sustainable cooling, clean energy, climate policy, or related areas.
- Institutional affiliation with a reputable organization in government, private sector, civil society, academia, or international institutions.
- Familiarity with the Global Cooling Pledge and key issues in sustainable cooling.
- Availability to review and score nominations over April-May annually.
- No conflicts of interest with any nominees, including (i) having a direct supervisory or financial relationship with a nominee (past or present); and (ii) being personally involved in preparing or submitting the nomination.

Past professional association (e.g., working in the same sector or institution at different times) does not automatically constitute a conflict, but any perceived bias should be disclosed and will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Members are expected to apply objective judgment and uphold the values of transparency, inclusion, and fairness throughout the evaluation process.

The Committee will apply regional and gender diversity criteria in its selection process to ensure that appointed Cool Leaders reflect a broad and inclusive representation of contexts and perspectives. Final selections will be made by a minimum five to two consensus and concluded no later than thirty (30) calendar days prior to the Annual GCP Focal Points Meeting.

For individual candidates, appointment is contingent on a satisfactory reputational due diligence review (see Annex C).

5.3 Appointment and Public Announcement

Formal offers of designation will be made by no later than fifteen (15) calendar days prior to the Annual GCP Focal Points Meeting. In the event that a selected nominee declines or withdraws, the Committee may confer designation upon the next most highly ranked candidate.

Designations are formally announced at the Annual GCP Focal Points Meeting of the year, and take effect on the first of the following month. Mid-term progress shall be presented at the subsequent Cooling Ministerial Dialogue, where Cool Leaders' contributions and achievements will be highlighted.

5.4 Transparency and Recordkeeping

A summary of nominations received, and decisions rendered by the Evaluation Committee will be circulated to all GCP signatories within thirty (30) calendar days of the public announcement. All nomination dossiers will be retained by the Cool Coalition Secretariat and made available for review upon formal written request.

6. Functions of Cool Leaders

During their one-year term:

- every GCP Leader must deliver two (2) of their four (4) listed functions;
- the individual Leaders must deliver one (1) of their three (3) listed functions.

In addition, all Leaders contribute to joint outreach outputs coordinated by the Cool Coalition Secretariat.

6.1 Joint Functions

With the organizational support of the Cool Coalition Secretariat, all Leaders:

- contribute to one cross-cutting infographic and one short promotional video highlighting aggregate progress;
- participate in media features (press, broadcast, digital) that elevate leadership stories and drive momentum.

6.2 Functions of National and Subnational GCP Signatory Leaders

Each GCP signatory Cool Leader is required to undertake two (2) out of the following four (4) functions during their term:

- i. Host a ministerial-level political event at a recognised global forum (e.g. COP, UNGA, or G20), aimed at securing new or enhanced Global Cooling Pledge endorsements.

- ii. Lead high-level bilateral or plurilateral engagements with peer governments to formalise Pledge-related targets, and mobilise technical or financial partnerships that accelerate implementation.
- iii. Convene a regional or multilateral dialogue at ministerial or senior-official level to align standards, share best practices, and promote region-specific solutions.
- iv. Host a high-visibility peer-learning visit for policymakers and senior representatives from other signatories, showcasing successful cooling solutions and implementation strategies.

6.3 Functions of Individual Leaders

Each individual Cool Leader is required to undertake one (1) out of the following three (3) functions during their term:

- i. Spearhead a global advocacy campaign (earned media, social media, speaking circuit) that underscores sustainable cooling benefits and urging wider uptake.
- ii. Front a multimedia campaign (advertisement, short film, PSA) advancing public understanding of sustainable cooling and resilience.
- iii. Deliver mentorship masterclasses with youth, practitioners, and other stakeholders to amplify knowledge transfer and inspiration.

6.4 Reporting Obligations

All Leaders submit one progress note before the six-month mark of their tenure, and one end-of-term report before the end of their tenure, using templates provided by the Cool Coalition Secretariat (see Annex D). These reports inform the Leader's joint outputs (infographic and video), contribute to the GCP Annual Progress Report, and support the selection process for the next cohort of Cool Leaders.

7. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

The Cool Coalition Secretariat maintains a results framework aligned with the objectives outlined in Section 3.

Monitoring draws on data provided by Leaders, Secretariat records, and inputs collected through peer-learning processes. Indicators are defined in Annex B.

Lessons learned and good practices are shared at the Annual GCP Focal Points Meeting.

8. Entry into Force, Review, and Amendment

These ToR enter into force upon adoption by the 2025 UN Climate Change Conference (COP30), and remain in effect until amended or replaced by consensus of the signatories.

Annex A. Nomination Form Template

Nomination for Cool Leader Designation

Please complete the form below and attach all required documentation. Incomplete nominations will not be considered.

1. Nominee information

For national and subnational nominations, this section refers to the designated representative who will serve as the public face of the Leader.

Full name; Professional title or role; Email address; Telephone number

2. Cool Leader category

National GCP signatory; subnational GCP signatory; individual (non-GCP-affiliated)

3. Executive summary (≤ 500 words)

Please provide a concise overview of the nominee's recent contributions to sustainable cooling and a rationale for their nomination.

4. Supporting material

Please attach a completed indicator data matrix (required for GCP signatories), and/or relevant documentation, such as case studies, reports, media coverage.

5. Formal endorsement

National and subnational nominations, please include an official letter of endorsement signed by the nominating authority, with date and official seal.

Individual nominations, please include at least one letter of reference from a recognized entity.

Annex B. Indicator Matrix

National and subnational Cool Leaders evaluation indicators

Please complete all applicable fields. Indicate "N/A" where data is not available or not relevant.

1. Access to cooling

- Population lacking access to affordable, sustainable cooling solutions (% of total population)
- Cooling support programs for vulnerable communities implemented (Yes/No)

2. Cold chain and thermal storage

- Vaccine and medical cold chain reliability (% of health facilities meeting standards)
- Food cold chain infrastructure capacity (e.g., refrigerated storage volume per capita)
- Thermal energy storage deployed for cooling (MWh)

3. Cooling energy efficiency

- Average energy efficiency of cooling appliances
- Market share of high-efficiency cooling equipment (% of annual sales)
- Cooling energy intensity of buildings (kWh per m² annually)

4. Finance and investment

- Annual investment in sustainable cooling solutions (% of total investment in sustainable cooling)
- Financial incentive programs for efficient or passive cooling technologies (Yes/No)
- International climate finance mobilised for cooling projects

5. Governance and planning

- National Cooling Action Plan (NCAP) implemented (Yes/No)
- Number or percentage of cities with adopted local cooling or heat action strategies
- Cooling strategies integrated into national climate policies or NDCs (Yes/No)
- Building codes include cooling efficiency and passive design measures (Yes/No)
- Sustainable cooling public procurement policy adopted (Yes/No)

6. HFC phase-down and refrigerant management

- Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol ratified (Yes/No)
- HFC consumption relative to baseline level (% of baseline, per Kigali schedule)
- Refrigerant recovery and recycling systems in operation (Yes/No)
- Number of certified technicians for low-GWP refrigerant handling and servicing (number per 100,000 population or per 10,000 installed RAC units)
- New cooling equipment using low-GWP refrigerants (% of market)

7. Innovation and technology

- Public R&D spending on sustainable cooling
- Number of pilot or demonstration projects for innovative cooling solutions
- Deployment of novel cooling technologies (% of total cooling systems and installed capacity)

8. Passive cooling and building design

- Percentage of new buildings incorporating passive cooling design features
- Percentage of buildings with adequate thermal insulation and weatherization
- Surface area of cool roofs and green roofs installed (m² and/or % of total roof surface area)

9. Renewable energy integration

- Share of cooling energy supplied by renewable sources
- Number of solar-powered or other renewable-based cooling systems installed (% of total cooling systems)

10. Standards and labelling

- Minimum energy performance standards (MEPS) for cooling appliances implemented (Yes/No)
- Energy efficiency labelling program for cooling devices (Yes/No)
- GWP-based refrigerant limits or bans for new cooling equipment (Yes/No)

11. Urban heat resilience

- Urban tree canopy cover (% of city land area)
- Cool pavements and reflective surface coverage (% of paved or roof area)
- Public cooling centres or heat-relief shelters available

- Number of district cooling or community cooling networks in operation

Individual Cool Leader evaluation indicators

Please complete all applicable fields. Indicate “N/A” where data is not available or not relevant.

1. Leadership and vision

Demonstrates strong personal leadership in advancing sustainable cooling, including a clear strategic vision, initiative, and the ability to mobilise stakeholders, partners, or communities toward measurable action.

2. Tangible impact and results

Has delivered concrete outcomes in sustainable cooling, such as implemented projects, deployed technologies, influenced policies, expanded access to cooling, improved efficiency, or reduced emissions, with evidence of real-world change.

3. Innovation and problem-solving

Introduced innovative approaches, solutions, business models, or methodologies that effectively address cooling challenges across sectors or contexts.

4. Scalability and replicability

The individual’s work shows clear potential to be scaled up or replicated in other regions, sectors, or communities, contributing to broader systemic impact.

5. Alignment with sustainable cooling principles

Advances key elements of sustainable cooling, including energy efficiency, low-GWP refrigerants, passive or nature-based cooling, climate resilience, and equitable access.

6. Influence and outreach

Effectively raises awareness, builds partnerships, and influences policy, finance, or public discourse to accelerate uptake of sustainable cooling solutions.

7. Overall contribution to the sustainable cooling agenda

Demonstrates a sustained and meaningful contribution to advancing sustainable cooling at local, national, or global levels.

Annex C. Due Diligence Form

Cool Leader Individual Category Due Diligence Questionnaire

To be completed by shortlisted candidates. Information treated as strictly confidential.

1. **Personal details** (full legal name, nationality, date of birth)
2. **Affiliations** (current roles, board memberships, advisory positions)
3. **Sources of income** (principal employment and any substantial external income)
4. **Legal history** (any convictions, pending litigation, or regulatory actions in the past 10 years)
5. **Political exposure** (elected or senior governmental positions held by the candidate or close family)

6. Conflict-of-interest declaration (any relationships that could present real or perceived conflicts with UN's mandate)

7. Social-media review consent (authorising UNEP Cool Coalition to screen public profiles for reputational risk)

Candidates sign a declaration that the information provided is accurate and complete.

Annex D. Progress and End-of-Term Report Templates

Progress Report

To be completed and shared with the Cool Coalition Secretariat by 30 May.

1. General information

Cool Leader name

Cool Leader category (National GCP signatory/Subnational GCP signatory /individual)

Country or city (if applicable)

Submitted by (name, role, and contact details)

2. Activities delivered

Individual Cool Leader to complete only one.

Activity 1 (title/brief description)

Date completed

Key outputs/results

Activity 2 (title/brief description)

Date completed

Key outputs/results

3. Lessons learned and reflections

Success factors or enablers (≤ 350 words)

Challenges encountered (≤ 350 words)

Recommendations (≤ 350 words)

4. Supporting materials

Event documentation, media clippings, photos/videos, testimonials

End-of-Term Report

To be completed and shared with the Cool Coalition Secretariat.

1. General information

Cool Leader name

Cool Leader category (National GCP signatory/Subnational GCP signatory /Individuals)

Country or city (if applicable)

Submitted by (name, role, and contact details)

2. Activities delivered

Individual Cool Leaders to complete only one.

Activity 1 (title/brief description)

Date completed

Key outputs/results

Activity 2 (title/brief description)

Date completed

Key outputs/results

3. Lessons learned and reflections

Success factors or enablers (≤ 350 words)

Challenges encountered (≤ 350 words)

Recommendations (≤ 350 words)

4. Supporting materials

Event documentation, media clippings, photos/videos, testimonials