Preliminary report of the Survey on

Models and Mechanisms of Civil Society Participation in UNEP

7 December 2012 – 9 January 2013

Working Document
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This report presents the results of the survey that was conducted by United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS) on the Models and Mechanisms of Civil Society Participation in UNEP between 7 December 2012 and 9 January 2013. The report does not claim to be representative of the views of all parts of civil society, and does not attempt to do so. It represents the views of the respondents to the survey. The opinions, figures and estimates set forth in this report are not the responsibility of the authors, and should not be considered as reflecting the views and policies or carrying the endorsement of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS).

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Executive Summary

Chapters 1 and 2: Institutional arrangements for MGS participation

Directions for improved MGS representation at both policy and programmatic level

The majority of survey respondents were of the opinion that MGS participation within UNEP's work at both policy and programmatic level is especially vital for influencing decision-making through advocacy; facilitating the voices of MGS on the environment at national, regional and global levels; and providing expert input into decision-making processes. To fulfill these and other objectives, most of the respondents would welcome the establishment of a permanent body that allows for more effective MGS engagement. This body should, according to a majority of survey participants, have both representative and advisory functions.

The survey results do not specifically bring forward one particular UN or multilateral institution/body that could serve as a best practice example for effective MGS participation to be adopted by UNEP. However, respondents did list requirements that they consider essential for the effective functioning of such a body. They recommended that the body needs to include grassroots organizations and other constituencies beyond the conventional nine MGs and have links to the regional level or regional representation. In terms of legitimacy and transparency, the body should feature MGS representatives (members) that have strong links with their constituencies and that are transparently elected/endorsed by MGS. Moreover, the body should have clearly defined rules and procedures and have an impact on decision-making processes within UNEP.

Evaluation of current engagement mechanisms at UNEP

Participants were requested to rate the legitimacy and effectiveness of MGS representation within existing UNEP mechanisms, such as the Major Groups Facilitating Committee, the Regional Consultative Meetings and Regional Representatives and the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum. The majority of respondents rated the effectiveness of such mechanisms as fair, good or even excellent. However, despite what seems to be overall satisfaction, various weaknesses were identified and therefore recommendations were made to improve these mechanisms. The latter mainly related to the elements listed above (transparency, legitimacy, inclusiveness, effectiveness, etc.).

In terms of weaknesses, respondents highlighted that various engagement mechanisms were too focused on a particular event or meeting (e.g. the Governing Council), thereby neglecting opportunities for engagement throughout the year. They were also of the opinion that UNEP is not taking sufficient advantage of information technology (IT) and providing funds for enhancing MGS participation opportunities and capacity-building activities. Moreover, they perceived the communication processes within the MGs system as inefficient, affecting the system's overall transparency.

Chapter 3: Rules and procedures for MGS participation in UNEP's work

The status, the accreditation system and the selection process of MGS

The survey clearly shows that MGS would like to have more influence in UNEP's decision-making processes. The overall majority of survey participants called for MGS to receive full participation and engagement rights, including voting rights, in all relevant UNEP bodies and committees. To a much lesser extent, participants were inclined to welcome full participation *without* voting rights.

Currently, to participate in UNEP's governing bodies, Major Groups need to be accredited with UNEP. To improve the accreditation system, participants were requested to indicate what they would consider necessary criteria for future accreditation of MGS. The majority of respondents were of the opinion that one of the main criteria should be that MGS actively work in the field of sustainable development. In order of frequency, other criteria mentioned by a majority of respondents were: each organization applying for accreditation should have at least two years of existence; work mainly in the environment field; and have demonstrated interest in supporting UNEP's objectives.

Concerning the process for selecting MGS representatives (e.g. for a permanent body), respondents were split between having a formal, transparent election by all UNEP accredited organizations within each Major Group, or having a selection process within each Major Group, with modalities transparently defined by the respective Major Group.

Regional representation

A vast majority of respondents would welcome the establishment of regional MGS bodies tasked with advising and working closely with UNEP's Regional Offices. As some respondents explained, this could improve UNEP's outreach to MGS; better reflect local realities; and improve the preparation of Regional Consultative Meetings (RCMs). Opponents of such bodies fear that they would bring additional costs or an overrepresentation of the bigger groups (see Chapter 2).

Concerning regional representation at the global level, a majority of the respondents suggested having nine regional representatives (one per Major Group) for each region (adding up to 54 regional representatives for the six UNEP regions). A smaller number of respondents preferred the option of having two regional representatives representing all accredited MGS organizations of a particular region (adding up to 12 regional representatives for the six UNEP regions).

Chapter 4: Access to information and information disclosure policies in UNEP

Access to information

In terms of access to information, the survey shows the imperativeness of providing easily accessible, relevant, accurate and timely information. The majority of survey participants rate their current access to and the timeliness of UNEP information as fair to good, and especially show an interest in written information, such as draft Governing Council documents. Despite overall satisfaction, recommendations were made to enhance MGS access to information, including: creating practical guidebooks on how UNEP's sectoral/thematic reports are elaborated; using adequate information channels more frequently; customizing and extending information to and beyond target audiences; and providing better access to regional office

documentation. It was also suggested that UNEP should make all information publically available, except for information that involves personal matters, high security risks or third party privacy.

Appeals process and disclosure policies

For the sake of accountability, transparency, fairness, inclusiveness, and for upholding the right to information and the freedom of expression, a large majority of survey respondents support the establishment of an appeals process that would make it possible to request information that UNEP has committed to publish, but has not yet made publically available. Prior to such a process, however, some respondents recommended the elaboration of a transparency policy to institutionalize the principle within UNEP's work. It was also recommended that a civil society representative should be sitting within such a body. Some voiced caution concerning unnecessary bureaucracy and the time-consuming nature of such an appeals process.

With a few exceptions, the majority of respondents could not identify any satisfactory public information/disclosure policies within other institutions. Some identified processes that they appreciated most, but cautioned that even those processes could be improved. Although UNEP can learn from other processes, it was emphasized that UNEP is expected to not only adopt best practices already in use in other processes, but also to set a new benchmark as an inclusive process.

Respondents further acknowledged that access to information is only half the challenge, as they perceived it as next to worthless without adequate and equal participation.

Chapter 5: The Nine Major Groups Concept

Evaluation of the Major Groups concept

The majority of survey respondents was satisfied with the Nine Major Groups concept. In their view, it supports fair and inclusive decision-making and representation; channels very diverse civil society views; and acknowledges the indispensable role and valuable ideas of MGS in deliberations, analysis, policy formation and implementation, advocacy, and in operational activities. However, some argue that many stakeholders do not feel represented or feel underrepresented. They feel that the concept has brought some level of rigidity and/or not enough relevant participation opportunities. There is a clear call for more regional and thematic expertise and voices; as well as for more transparency within each Group, especially in terms of membership, the diffusion of information, mobilization, decision-making (including on funding), and in the selection and operations of facilitation committees. Other concerns are overlap (some organizations fit various MGs); insufficient assistance to civil society from developing countries; insufficient respect for diversity; and a weak link with the local level.

Finally, some respondents would like to exclude MG organizations that do not adequately support the principles of the UN Charter; as well as separate the private sector (business and industry) from broader civil society, especially those that do not adhere to environmental (inter)national legislation.

Approaches that best facilitate participation

The Government-Private Sector-NGOs approach was perceived by many as the best option to facilitate participation of civil society and the private sector in UN institutions. The particular approach was considered to foster public and private partnerships. However, some respondents expressed concern over giving the private sector the same voice as civil society organizations.

Many respondents considered the Nine Major Groups approach (the second most selected answer category) to be a more inclusive approach that provides space for more perspectives and acknowledges the different roles that civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders play. It has the potential to enhance the scope and scale of UNEP's work and increase civil society representation. However, respondents warned that in order for the approach to evolve, mechanisms to prevent a few groups from monopolizing the process should be established.

According to respondents, one option to involve and facilitate interaction with organizations and groups that do not fit under the Nine MGs classification in UNEP's work is to establish additional Major Groups categories, provided there is evidence of their long-term and sustained input.

Other options include common themes among these groups or organizing these groups around thematic issues; involving thematic experts as consultants and independent experts for specific tasks; creating (web-supported) multi-stakeholder dialogue platforms or fora; and adopting a more open approach that differentiates between granting opportunities the MGs and to individual organizations.

Chapter 6: Participation of Major Groups and Stakeholders in UNEP's work

Evaluation of the participation opportunities and experience in UNEP's work

The majority of respondents rated current opportunities for MGS participation in UNEP's work – both at programmatic and at the regional level – as fair or better. Those who rated it as bad considered that they were hardly informed and consulted by UNEP and have no real opportunities to provide input.

Concerning the experience of respondents in engaging in project implementation and partnerships with UNEP, a majority of survey respondents either did not respond to this question, or stated that they had no or hardly any experience in terms of project implementation or partnerships. However, many did indicate their willingness to collaborate more with UNEP in the future. Among those survey respondents that have some experience in engaging with UNEP, the extent of engagement and the type of partnerships established varied. Various organizations indicated that their experience with UNEP has been good, but some cautioned that they have experienced different results in collaboration, depending on the project and division they collaborated with within UNEP.

Chapter 7: Major Groups involvement in UNEP through modern information technologies

Online participation versus physical presence

On the question whether participation through modern ICT can replace the physical presence of MGS in relevant meetings or formal processes within UNEP, the respondents were mainly divided in two corners. Many respondents underscored the need to have a combination of both forms of participation. Arguments in favour of replacement by ICT included the fact that online participation would increase work effectiveness, save time, reduce financial and environmental costs, while guaranteeing sufficient participation and engagement. Arguments against emphasized that face-to-face meetings are more effective in facilitating the exchange of a diversity of views, discussions and decision-making; give more confidence to participants; and allow for better accountability in terms of participants' implementation commitments. Various respondents also emphasized that replacing physical participation by online participation would exclude and marginalize many groups and individuals that do not have proper access to modern ICT.

Best practices in the use of modern ICT

Respondents identified specific tools to facilitate public participation and information sharing which include the use of e-mail and listservs, newsletters, Internet/websites, (mobile) telephones, tele- and videoconferencing, fax, cloud and supercomputing, social media and also e-learning, online platforms, online consultations and surveys, webinars, etc. For concrete examples of best practices in the use of modern ICT, see Chapter 7 of the report.

Introduction

From 7 December 2012 to 9 January 2013, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in collaboration with the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS), undertook an online survey with Major Groups and Stakeholders (MGS) to collect feedback on UNEP's current engagement system and inputs on new models of participation that can respond to the needs of all stakeholders.

The objectives of the survey were threefold:
- Map out the gaps in UNEP's current engagement systems;
- Document cases of best/good practices within other multilateral organizations;
- Identify potential avenues for engagement and new models of participation.

The main areas of focus included: Institutional arrangements for MGS participation in multilateral organizations and/or processes; Institutional arrangements for MGS participation in UNEP's work at policy and programmatic level; Rules and procedures for MGS participation in UNEP's work; Access to information in UNEP; The Nine Major Groups Concept; Participation of Major Groups and Stakeholders in UNEP's work at programmatic level; and Major Groups involvement in UNEP through modern information technologies.

The outcomes of the survey are to inform UNEP's response to the implementation of the Rio+20 Outcome Document and the related General Assembly decision to "strengthen and upgrade" UNEP. Both documents recommend UNEP to work more closely with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), youth, women, indigenous peoples, local governments, business, and other interest groups and to formalize their participation at the UNEP Governing Council and in global environmental decision-making overall.

The survey provided a number of multiple choice and open-ended questions related to stakeholder engagement.[1] The survey took approximately 25 minutes to fill out, and was online from 7 December 2012 to 9 January 2013. It was provided in three languages on the following links:
English: http://obsurvey.com/S2.aspx?id=1709BF46-57AF-41C0-A894-5F6DF3EAAFEA
French: http://obsurvey.com/S2.aspx?id=c3819dc6-d80d-4ae9-bdc3-b7c76db3ad84
Spanish: http://obsurvey.com/S2.aspx?id=0f877a74-15eb-4930-9643-64c270a8c5c8

Response rate

The survey announcement was shared with organizations and networks accredited to UNEP (280 organizations and networks), NGLS networks (database of almost 20,000 entries) and other UN entities mailing lists.

A total of 117 responses were collected as follows:
- English: 86 responses with 84 responses online and 1 response by email;
- French: 21 responses; and
- Spanish: 10 responses.

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[1] See Annex 1 for the questionnaire in English.

Profile of respondents

A total of 117 responses were received from 115 organizations. On two occasions, two individuals from the same organization responded to the survey.

The table below provides an overview of the distribution by type of MGS and by UNEP region.

Region	Africa	Asia Pacific	Europe	Latin America – Caribbean	North America	West Asia	Other	Total per MGS
Type of MGS								
Business and Industry	1	0	3	1	0	0	0	5
Children and Youth	2	2	1	0	1	0	0	6
Indigenous Peoples and their Communities	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
Local Authorities	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
NGOs	14	7	10	3	6	4	0	44
Science and Technology	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
Women	2	2	2	3	2	0	0	11
Farmers	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	3
Workers and Trade Unions	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Other	15	7	4	4	7	0	3	38
Total per region	**37**	**17**	**24**	**12**	**18**	**4**	**3**	**115**

The category "Other" under "Type of MGS" includes those respondents who do not fall under any of the nine types of MGS, as well as those who selected more than one category of MGS. This explains the relatively high portion of the organizations (33%) that are marked under this category.

The category "Other" under "Region" includes one anonymous response and one UN organization. The anonymous response completed most parts of the survey and provided extensive answers to some questions, but chose to remain anonymous by leaving the last section blank. There are a number of organizations that have global networks with activities taking place across the globe. In this case, the location of their headquarters was counted.

The pie charts below show that the largest number of respondents came from the African region (32%), followed by Europe (21%). North-America and the Asia Pacific region shared a third place (16% respectively). Furthermore, the charts show that NGOs represented the largest portion of the respondents (38%), followed by the category "Other" (33%) and "Women" (10%).

Respondents by region
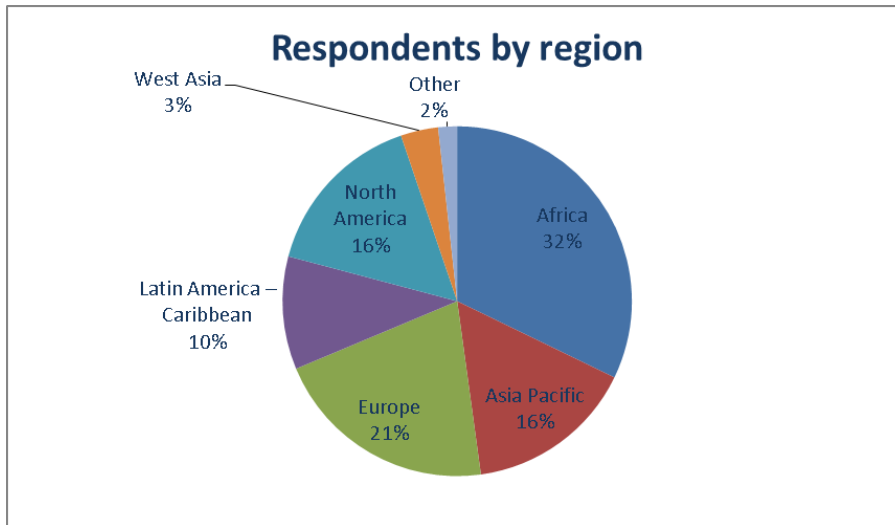
Respondents by type of MGS
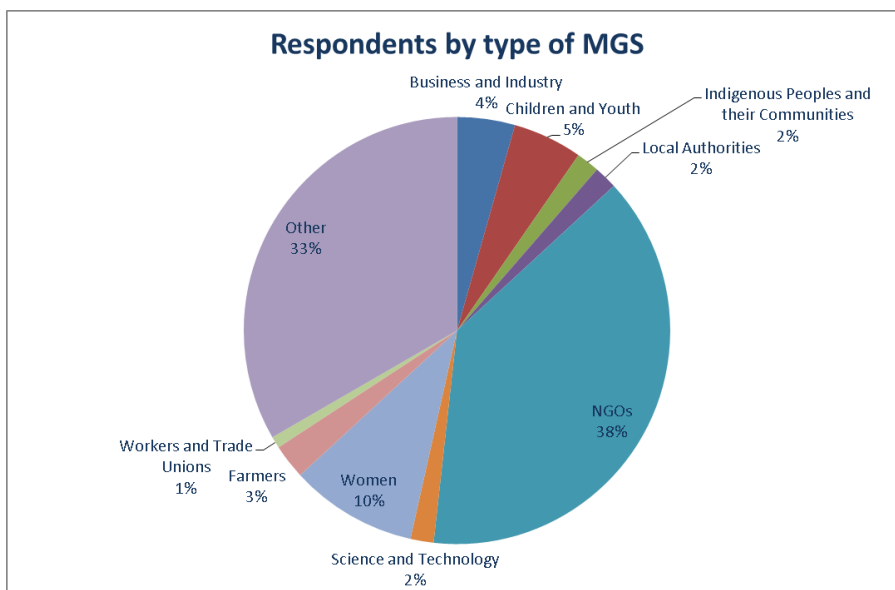
1. Institutional arrangements for MGS participation in multilateral organizations and/or processes

1.1. Effective multilateral organizations and/or processes in terms of MGS participation

Survey respondents list a very broad range of UN institutions as examples for effective MGS participation, but caution that participation modalities can still be improved in these institutions. The organizations most frequently mentioned are: the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP, mentioned by 18% of the respondents); the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 10%); and the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD, 8%). The latter includes participation modalities in the context of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). Other institutions that were seen as best practice examples in terms of MGS participation include the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Committee on World Food Security (CFS); the Aarhus Convention within the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE); the Rio Conventions, including the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); and the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Ranking of multilateral organizations perceived as effective in terms of MGS participation
1. United Nations Environment Programme
2. United Nations Development Programme
3. United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, including Rio+20
4. Food and Agriculture Organization, including the Civil Society Mechanism of the Committee on World Food Security
5. The Aarhus Convention of the United Nations Economic commission for Europe

A large number of survey participants did not explain why they considered the above-mentioned organizations as being the most effective in terms of MGS participation. However, those that did provided the following arguments:

- CBD: The CBD is appreciated for inviting CSOs to take part in "friends of the chair" meetings with self-organized MGS groupings that engage substantively in deliberations and negotiations.
- Aarhus Convention: The Aarhus Convention is seen as a good practice as it has allowed NGO observers to "speak, request the inclusion of specific agenda items, make proposals and raise and appeal points of order, in the same manner as governmental participants".
- Rio+20 process: A number of participants welcomed its transparency and consultation process, as well as its open call to submit input for consideration in the zero draft of the outcome document.
- UNEP: UNEP is valued for bringing together MGS in regional meetings and global fora.
- International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM): The ICCM allows MGS to participate on equal terms as governments in the discussions of drafting groups.

- CSD: The CSD is appreciated for its multi-stakeholder dialogues between MGS, governments and the UN.
- International Labour Organization (ILO): ILO's tripartite governance system in which representatives from employers' and workers' organizations participate on equal terms with government representatives was emphasized.
- UN Framework Convention on Climate Change: This Convention was mentioned for allowing UN security approved protests and visual actions/media stunts during its meetings and annual Conference.
- World Bank: The information disclosure policy of the World Bank could serve as an example for others, according to one organization.
- Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and its Civil Society Mechanism (CSM): The CFS is valued for adopting a Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) that provides political space for civil society to interact directly and engage in deliberations on an equal footing (minus the voting rights) as representatives of States in the context of the CFS. The CSM allows civil society to organize itself independently (autonomously), while being adequately supported by the CFS as the intergovernmental body. As a result, civil society organizations participating in the CSM were able to optimize engagement modalities guided by mutually agreed principles with the CFS.
- GPEDC (Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation): The GPEDC gives civil society a formal voting position, allowing it to engage beyond delivering statements. Within the GPEDC, civil society is organized in a Global Council which has managed to incorporate both regional and thematic/constituency representation. The latter enhances sub-regional and national implementation and monitoring.

1.2. Types of representative bodies and expected characteristics of such institutions[2]

When asked about types of representative bodies that work well, 21% of the respondents seemed to favour a MGS committee, while 13% preferred advisory boards. Some respondents indicated that both options can work well, depending on the concrete task to be undertaken (e.g. technical advice on specific themes versus facilitation of civil society inputs). Others explained that they do not endorse advisory bodies, as they consider them to limit participation.

Many respondents, however, identified key requirements or criteria that should be respected by a representative body:

Representativity, legitimacy and accountability: According to some respondents, members of an MGS committee or any other representative body need to have a strong link with and represent or reflect the voices of their constituencies and networks, as well as be accountable to and regularly consult with their constituencies. Other respondents emphasized the need for these committees to act strictly as facilitators of and support for MGS engagement. One respondent suggested that representation should be based on entitlement, legitimacy, inclusivity and accountability.

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[2] A representative body is defined as a body that regroups people or organizations standing or acting for another, especially through delegated authority.

Election of members: In the view of many, a transparent, open and clearly defined selection process of the members of a representative body is required to ensure its proper functioning. Several agreed that election processes should be determined by the respective Major Groups and that elected individuals should be able to demonstrate that they have the required qualifications. Appointment of members by an individual or by the hosting organization(s) without transparent and accepted criteria and/or without a fair election process is a key concern for many organizations. According to one respondent, selection criteria should be based on regional representation and constituencies and require field experience ("work on the ground"). Another respondent suggested that the bodies should not become too big or lack technical expertise.

> "If there [are] no clear criteria for which groups are engaged in decision-making, then the decisions are not likely to be representative of a larger body of stakeholders. Moreover, advisory bodies where the main criteria for participation are other than current expertise degenerate into a reporting rather than advising structure, comprised of the usual suspects".
>
> — *Red River College*

A council of sorts: The Access Initiative of the World Resource Institute pointed out that the current system of having two representatives elected per MG cannot perform the multifarious functions required when MG groupings are very large. Therefore, the Initiative advocates for a council of sorts for each MG that is more representative of the views within each grouping. According to this respondent, issue-based or sector-based groups could be much more representative than the current system.

Independence: One respondent emphasized the importance of having independent bodies, noting that "bodies that are designed and established to be controlled by and serve the interest of the intergovernmental agency that have set…them up, are doomed to fail."

Inclusiveness: Various respondents voiced concern that many existing or future representative bodies would not be inclusive enough, e.g. by insufficiently supporting upcoming and/or smaller organizations, by neglecting regional perspectives, or by turning into a hierarchical body in which participation of a wider group of stakeholders is likely to be limited. For example, one respondent perceived the Major Group structure of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) as an elitist and bureaucratic model. To enhance inclusiveness, some survey participants emphasized the need to strongly link representative bodies to regional and grassroots organizations. One organization, however, considered that it is mainly the responsibility of civil society and MGS to reach out to their constituencies in different regions and sub-regions.

Impact and effectiveness: A number of survey participants were of the opinion that some existing representative bodies insufficiently acknowledge contributions and inputs received from civil society and/or lack clearly defined spaces for civil society to address the international community. They emphasized that having an impact on decision-making at the UN is what really counts. Establishing clear criteria that would define how they can make such an impact is therefore seen as vital.

Clear rules, procedures and mandate: Various respondents emphasized the importance of having clearly defined procedures, rules, criteria, responsibilities and duties to guide the functioning and decision-making processes of representative bodies. Without such criteria, decisions taken will most likely not be representative of the views of a larger number of stakeholders, one respondent explained. Clear rules and procedures should avoid that bodies will seek "to ensure consensus among a very diverse group of stakeholders (from youth and indigenous peoples to businesses and industry)". The latter only tends to deliver [the] "lowest common denominator" cautioned one survey participant.

Resources: Adequate resources (travel funding, capacity-building, etc.) need to be provided by the UN institutions to support MGS engagement in order to function well.

Support from the hosting institution: One organization emphasized that visible support from the main organization's management is important.

Facilitation of meetings: One organization suggests that meetings of the representative body should be professionally facilitated, adopt democratic meeting methods, and ensure that the body has a productive and inclusive work climate.

Providing expertise: This seems to be the main role participants expect from an advisory body.

Other survey respondents noted that it is key is to develop a system that is flexible and allows for the selection of MGS representatives on the basis of themes, (economic) sectors, and/or regions. It should allow MGS to participate fully – ranging from agenda-setting to actual meeting participation. For example, one organization noted that providing observer status to MGS when the agenda of a meeting is being developed is perhaps as important as allowing them to participate in the meeting itself. Another respondent believes that truly participatory processes work better than representation. This person recommended using the Internet and conference calls for fully engaging all stakeholders in the process and to guarantee true representation of the MGS positions.

2. Institutional arrangements for MGS participation in UNEP's work at policy and programmatic level

2.1. The goal of MGS participation in UNEP's work

Survey respondents were requested to indicate what they viewed as the key purposes of MGS participation in UNEP's work at both policy and programmatic level. Multiple responses were allowed. More than 80% of the respondents were of the opinion that MGS participation should influence decision-making in UNEP through MGS advocacy – as well as facilitate the voices of MGS at national, regional and global level.

Purposes of MGS participation in UNEP's work	
1. Influence decision-making through advocacy	83%
2. Facilitate the voices of MGS on the environment at national, regional and global levels	81%
3. Provide expert input into decision-making processes	78%
4. Monitor and evaluate UNEP's work	68%
5. Add legitimacy to decisions taken at UNEP	67%

Approximately 15% of the respondents also identified additional purposes, among them:
- linking UNEP with communities at the grassroots level (as they are the ones that deal directly with environmental resources);
- supporting the implementation of policies, programmes and projects;
- sharing information and best practices;
- encouraging partnerships/collaboration among MGS;
- collaborating on research and data management (in order to strengthen the foundation on which decisions are made);
- holding UNEP accountable to its mandate;
- creating awareness about UNEP and about global environmental challenges;
- increasing opportunities for participation and interaction on environmental issues at national/local level;
- participating actively in decision-making processes (not only through advocacy); and
- ensuring fair management of UNEP's resources.

2.2. Effectiveness and legitimacy of mechanisms for MGS participation in UNEP's work

The Major Groups Facilitating Committee

Participants were requested to rate the legitimacy of MGS representation as facilitated through the Major Groups Facilitating Committee (MGFC). The chart that follows shows that 38% of the respondents were positive and gave it a score of either good or excellent. Those that explained their rating were of the opinion that the MGFC is a legitimate platform that allows participation of a broad range of stakeholders; makes good use of limited resources to facilitate such

participation as well as other tasks, e.g. information sharing and the exchange of views; and ensures that matters related to MGS participation are discussed with representatives of MGS before a decision is taken. One participant explained that the MGFC has gone through a learning process: it now provides more substantive (and not only process-related) inputs; has improved its outreach and communication activities; better involves its constituencies; and has enhanced its governance. Each election process has become increasingly transparent and inclusive.

Current MGS representation facilitated through the Major Groups Facilitating Committee
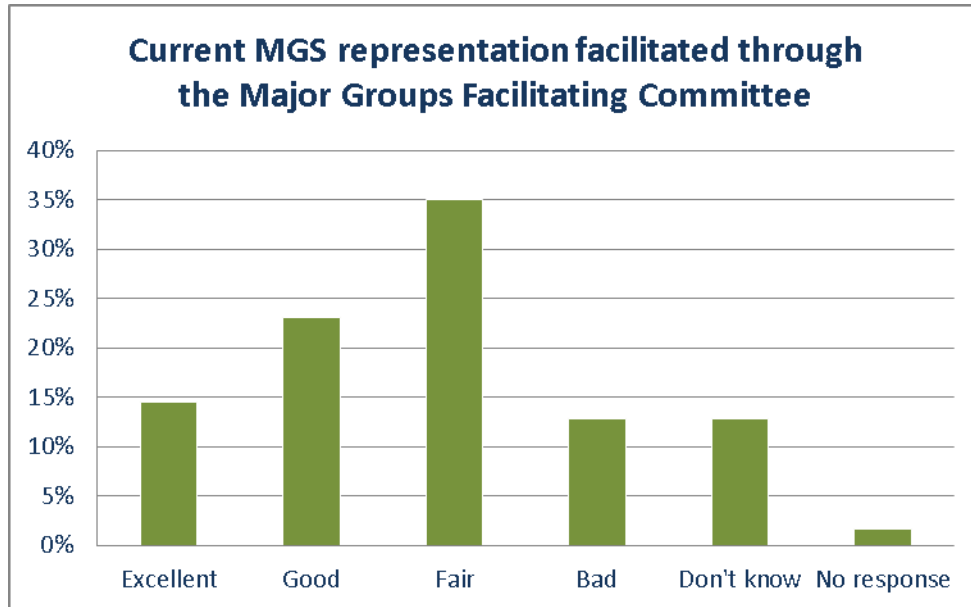
However, about 35% of the respondents rated the legitimacy of the MGS system and the MGFC only as fair and 13% as bad. Explanations provided include:

- The lack of inclusiveness and representativity of the MGS system, which is seen as excluding "marginalized groups" or smaller organizations, particularly from developing countries. Some groups perceived a strong "Northern" dominance of the system.
- The absence of particular constituencies within the MG system, e.g. people with disabilities.
- The lack of accountability or evaluation of the work of elected members.
- The lack of rotation of MGFC members.
- The "non-transparent" election process of the MGFC.
- The focus on the annual meeting of the MGFC, while neglecting activities throughout the year.
- The lack of coordination with, or insufficient role of, the regional representatives and the weak link to local organizations.
- The lack of funding to allow for broader MGS participation.
- The lack of information about the organizations that are part of a MG.
- The perceived inefficient communication processes within the MGS system.

Some organizations provided suggestions to improve the MGFC, recommending the Committee to create a newsletter or Internet platform where the MGFC can regularly update the members on on-going activities for discussion; put stronger "emphasis" on the regional meetings; spend less time in decision-making processes; and increase the use of IT tools to enhance participation opportunities of MGS, particularly of smaller MGS.

Effectiveness of participation through Regional Consultative Meetings and Regional Representatives

Respondents evaluated how effective they consider participation at the regional level, through Regional Consultative Meetings (RCMs) and Regional Representatives (RR) in terms of their self-assessed impact on decision-making. They mostly evaluated the effectiveness of participation through RCMs and RRs as positive (39% of the respondents said it was excellent or good) or as fair (36%).
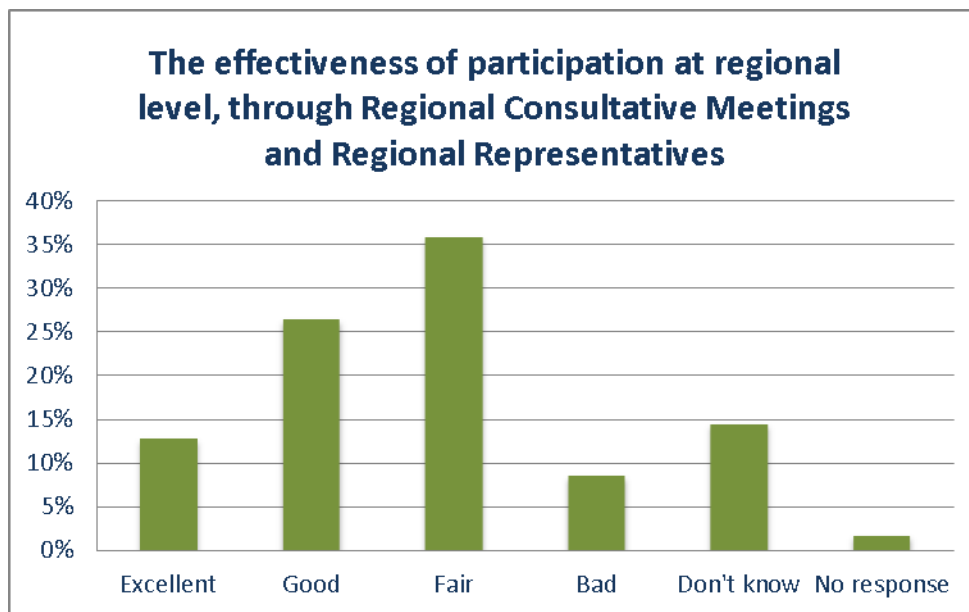
Those respondents that were positive about the effectiveness of their participation through RCMs and RRs were of the opinion that not only has the representativity of regional meetings improved, but also opportunities for regional constituencies to participate in UNEP's work. They further mentioned that the selection process of regional representatives has become more transparent and democratic; and that the quality of substantive discussions during regional meetings has improved and regional statements have become more policy relevant.

Various respondents, however, were less positive about the effectiveness of MGS participation at the regional level. In their view:

- RCMs do not allow for year-round participation/collaboration between UNEP and MGS. One respondent voiced this concern by noting that MGS participation at the regional level is based on events, not processes. Another viewed having only one annual RCM as insufficient and called for the development of an ongoing communication and consultative process. The latter could also address a concern raised by another respondent, who noted that currently RCMs do not provide timely contributions to the GC/GMEF because they take place when draft decisions are not yet known.

- The inclusiveness and representativity of regional meetings and participation could be improved. Respondents referred to insufficient participation and involvement of grassroots organizations; the habit to invite the "usual suspects", the lack of human and

financial resources (within RCMs) to support MGS participation; and the fact that RCMs make insufficient use of technology. In the view of one respondent, strengthened online participation could increase inclusiveness and participation and limit the dependency of the outcomes on the persons physically attending the meetings. Another respondent noted that RCMs would also be more effective with a mechanism for "staggered terms" in place that could guarantee both continuity and regeneration of participation.

- The lack of awareness of the "modus operandi" of RCMs – combined with the lack of (human and financial) resources and the tendency to be too operational – also hinders MGS capacity to provide input into policy discourse. For example, it is not clear how regional MGS inputs and statements impact decision-making and follow-up actions, particularly at the global level.

> "Statements are published but there is no effective follow up of the outcomes".
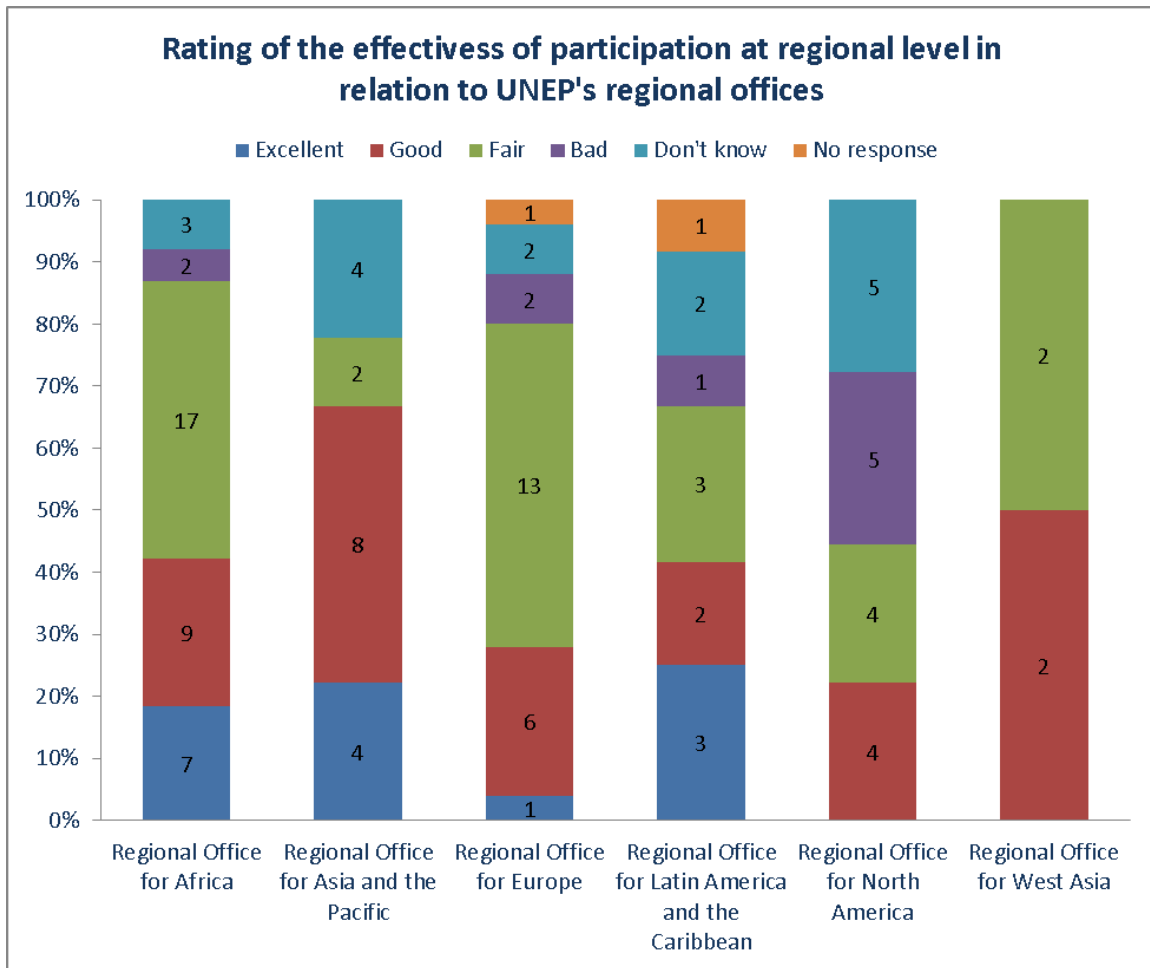> — *Bahrain Women Association for Human Development*

- The role of Regional Representatives is unclear, especially at the global level and during the GC/GMEF. There seems to be a lack of coordination and accountability with regard to Regional Representatives. Similarly as with the RCMs, it was noted that Regional Representatives should be operational throughout the year and not only around the time of the GC/GMEG and following RCM. One organization suggested that Regional Representatives should have equal rights in the MGFC to represent the positions agreed at the RCMs.

Furthermore, there seem to be different perceptions related to the selection process of regional representatives. Some respondents viewed the process as transparent and democratic, whereas others did not; this could result from different modalities being used in the various regions.

One survey participant also mentioned that the RCM could support regional policy-making processes and the development of regional and national strategies. Another respondent raised concern about the lack of sufficient preparation of some RCMs and the lack of clarity in terms of the purpose of such meetings.

Comparing how people perceived the effectiveness of participation at regional level, through RCMs and Regional Representatives, with the geographical distribution of the participants in terms of UNEP regions (the following chart) shows that the majority of respondents per region rated the effectiveness of MGS participation at the regional level as fair, good or excellent. The only exception is the Regional Office for North-America. For this region, the majority is less positive or felt they could not rate the effectiveness of participation. One respondent said "Not seeing these meetings being held in North America", whereas another respondent contributed, "If North America is a region, we should receive reports". A similar remark was also made for the Latin American region, for which one respondent voiced, "We do not have Regional Representation in Latin America or the Caribbean".

It should be noted that the number of respondents per region in this survey are too small to withdraw fully valid conclusions.

Rating of the effectivess of participation at regional level in relation to UNEP's regional offices

Legend: ■ Excellent ■ Good ■ Fair ■ Bad ■ Don't know ■ No response

Regional Office	Excellent	Good	Fair	Bad	Don't know	No response
Regional Office for Africa	7	9	17	2	3	
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific	4	8	2		4	
Regional Office for Europe	1	6	13	2	2	1
Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean	3	2	3	1	2	1
Regional Office for North America		4	4	5	5	
Regional Office for West Asia		2	2			

The Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum

When asked about how MGS assessed the effectiveness of their participation (in terms of decision-making) through the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum (GMGSF), respondents gave the answers presented in the following chart. Positive responses welcomed the usefulness of the GMGSF for the formulation of joint positions between/within MGS and for bringing newcomers on board.

Those that were less positive referred to the uncertainty around the follow-up of adopted statements and decisions at the GMGSF by the GC. Some respondents do not seem to be fully aware of how the two processes (GMGSF and GC) are effectively linked to each other. One survey participant therefore suggested establishing a bench-mark that would allow comparison between the requests made by each Major Group at the GC/GMEF with the different GC decisions.

> "The GMGSF has great potential. It could be improved further if most MGS arrive better prepared with ready positions from their Major Groups. Draft decisions could be debated on a deeper level and lobbying strategies could be prepared by identifying cross-MG messages. The GMGSF could become more policy-relevant and get more impact if more governments would choose to participate, to listen to, and interact with MGS".
>
> — *Youth and Environment Europe*

Effectiveness of participation through the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum
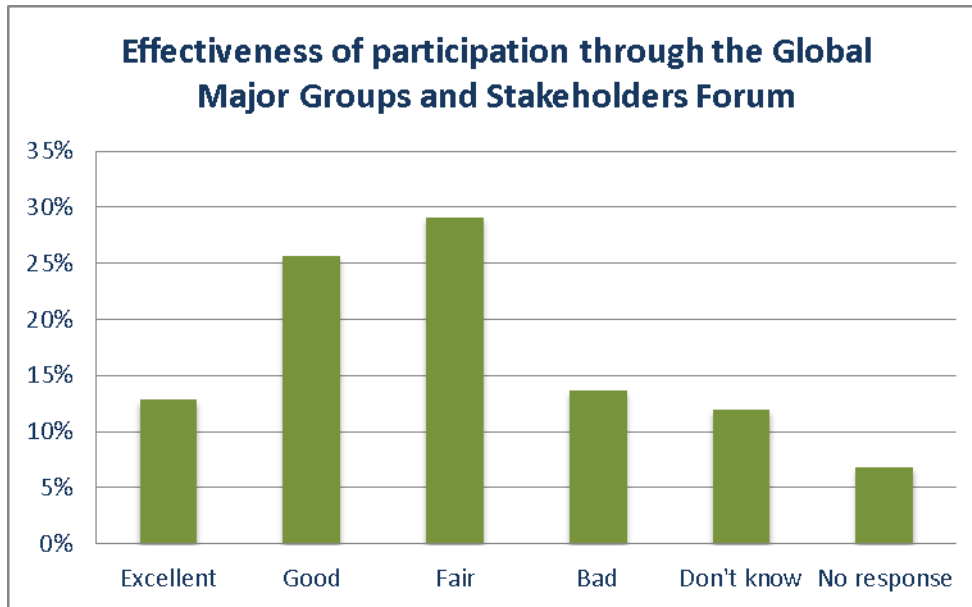
The lack of inclusiveness was a recurring issue. Arguments included i) some big NGOs dominate the debates, ii) some regions are underrepresented, and iii) some representatives do not bring in the necessary expertise from the ground. One survey participant raised the issue of the lack of needed funding to support participation. One respondent questioned the whole MG system.

Some suggestions made by single respondents on how to improve the effectiveness of the GMGSF include:

- More governments should participate at the GMGSF to make it more policy relevant.
- The preparation of MGS's draft positions should be prepared in a more efficient and effective manner and prior to the meeting in order to allow for more strategic debates and to enhance lobbying strategies. Another organization, therefore, suggested organizing an online meeting prior to the GMGSF that would be supported by task forces.
- Introductory capacity-building sessions and training should be offered to those new to the process (GC, etc.) and who request it.
- The GMGSF could continue to exist with its current purpose, but must be complemented by another global multi-stakeholder forum to be held right after the GC/GMEF. The purpose of that forum would be to analyze the results of the GC/GMEF; decide how MGS should hold governments accountable for their decisions; scrutinize what decisions are missing; and decide how MGS should take the lead to fill the gaps for achieving environmental sustainability.

2.3. A permanent body at UNEP that represents MGS

When asked whether they would welcome the establishment of a permanent body that represents MGS in decision-making processes at UNEP, 80% of the 116 respondents answered yes (9% would not welcome it, while 8% did not know). For some respondents this would depend on the concrete mandate or structure of the body.

Welcoming the establishment of a permanent body that represents MGS in decision-making processes at UNEP?
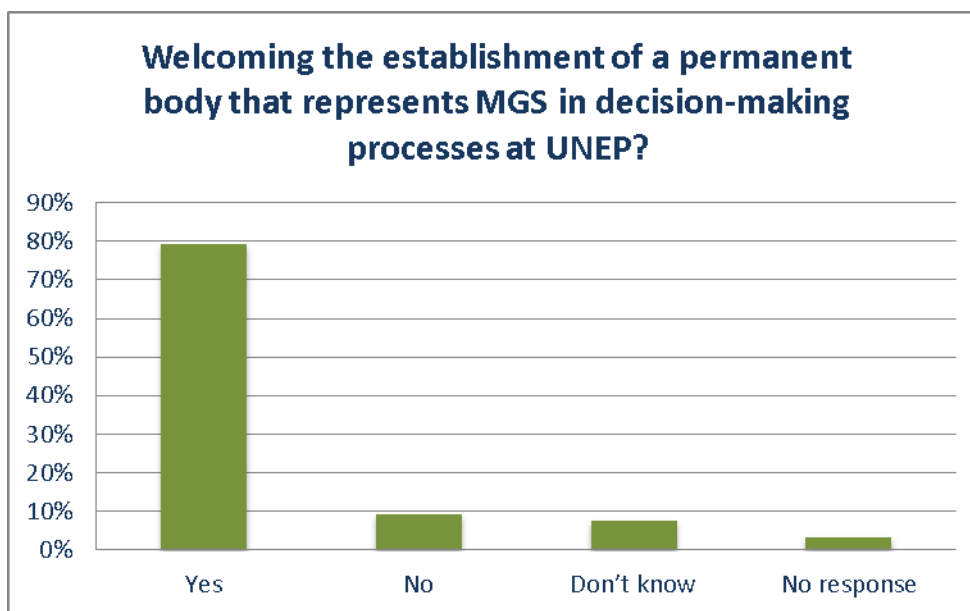
Elements of a permanent body

Survey participants were also asked about what they consider important elements for such a hypothetical body.

 In terms of representation, respondents suggested that the body should have:
- regional and thematic representation, gender balance and technical expertise;
- "democratically elected" (elected by the MGS) representatives of the MGs[3] and other stakeholders, including marginalized groups, grassroots organizations and "new communities of practice"; and
- a rotation system with members being elected for only one term or a specific time period (e.g. max. 2-3 years).

The body should also be supported by a secretariat and (ad hoc or standing) thematic expert advisory sub-committees.

Proposed principles or procedures that the body should embrace include:
- having clearly defined mandate and Terms of Reference;
- having clearly defined terms of engagement for the elected members as well as clearly defined consultation mechanisms between the elected members and their constituencies (e.g. through an Internet platform, virtual meetings, etc.);
- being inclusive;
- following transparency and accountability standards;
- being independent (autonomous) and remaining critical to the work of UNEP.

Proposed tasks that the body should perform:
- monitor and evaluate the implementation of policies adopted by the Committee of the Whole / UNEP (suggested by a few respondents);

[3] One organization suggested excluding corporate industry.

- advocate for specific thematic and scientific issues;
- provide technical expertise;
- support the involvement of groups with little resources (suggested by a few respondents);
- influence decision-making at UNEP / the GC (one respondent proposed having "voting rights," without specifying what he/she meant exactly);
- organize "Mayoral-Ministerial Roundtables before or during GC Meetings" (based on an ICLEI proposal); and
- produce quarterly reports on on-going UNEP activities and emerging environmental issues that seek the input of the members of the hypothetical body (suggested by one respondent).

Some respondents asked how the body will be funded, while others mentioned that it should be adequately resourced.

Opponents of the establishment of such a body voiced concern around its effectiveness. They seem to fear that a permanent body in Nairobi would not necessarily help improve participation or properly represent and reach out to a wider group of constituencies, such as grassroots organizations. Another concern was that the bigger groups/NGOs would dominate this body.

A hypothetical body with both representative and advisory functions

The majority of respondents was of the opinion that the permanent body should be a combination of a representative body for all MGS and an expert body with experts from MGS, focusing on thematic issues. To support its choice, one respondent referred to the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), which the respondent considered a good example of a hybrid body. Another survey participant explained that an expert group could provide expertise to MGS representatives.

Should such a permanent body be a representative body, an expert body or both?
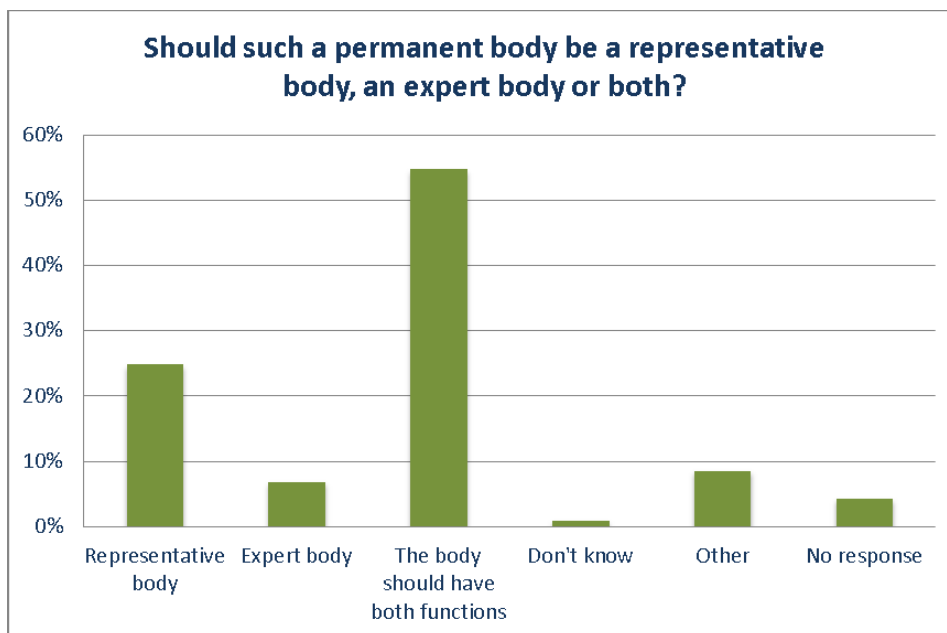
2.4. Regional MGS bodies at UNEP

The establishment of regional MGS bodies that advise and work closely with UNEP's Regional Offices would be welcomed by a vast majority of respondents.
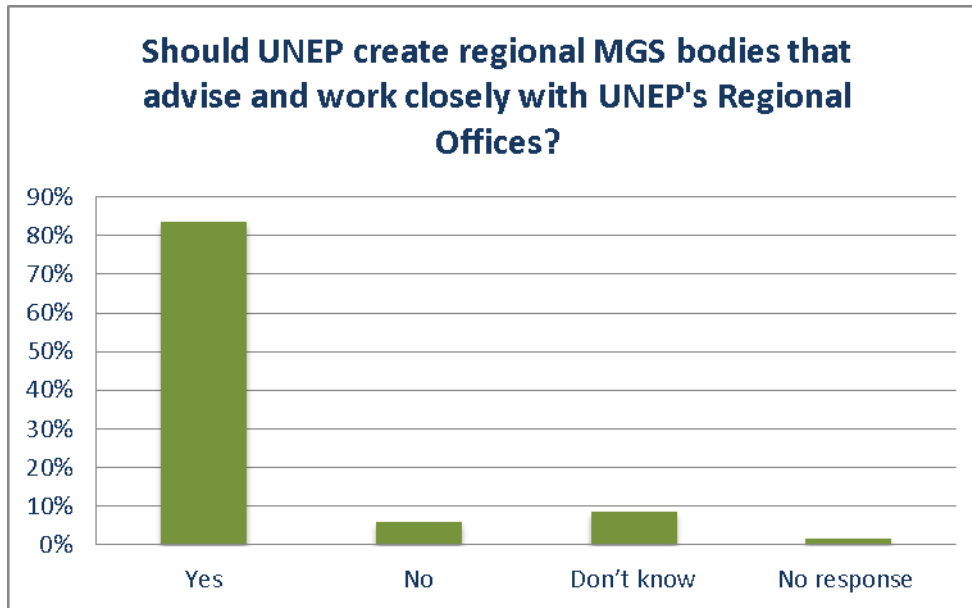
Some respondents that support the establishment of regional bodies believe that such bodies would improve UNEP's outreach to and collaboration with MGS. According to respondents, regional bodies would better reflect local realities; strengthen coherence within UNEP's work; and improve the preparation of RCMs. They could also feed into or link to the work of the global GMGSF or support inter-regional dialogue. Regional bodies could further monitor the implementation of UNEP's policies at regional level and support regional networking among MGS.

Opponents of such bodies fear that they would bring additional costs or an overrepresentation of bigger groups. One respondent indicated that the need to establish regional MGS bodies will vary from region to region, depending on other structures that are already put in place.

3. Rules and procedures for MGS participation in UNEP's work

3.1. Status for MGS in decision-making processes at UNEP

The overall majority of survey participants (41%) indicated that they would like to see that MGS receive full participation and engagement rights, including voting rights, in all relevant UNEP bodies and committees. The table below provides the results in each answer category (only one answer was possible):

Preferred status for MGS in decision-making processes at UNEP	
1. Full participation in all relevant bodies and committees with voting rights	41%
2. Full participation in all relevant bodies and committees without voting rights	20%
3. Observers status in *selected* bodies and committees	17%
4. Full participation in Consensus Decision-Making in selected bodies and committees	10%
5. Observer status in *all relevant* bodies and committees	4%

Around 6% of the respondents could not indicate their preferred status or favoured other options. One organization was of the opinion that the status of MGS in decision-making processes at UNEP should depend on the particular processes at hand, whereas another one expressed interest in exploring the possibility of having a process in which civil society shares decision-making responsibility for certain decisions. In the latter case, the respondent referred to the ILO model, where decision-making is shared between governments, workers, and employers. In the view of the respondent, it is however imperative that – when this option is indeed being explored – a differentiated approach to Major Groups is put in place[4]. Some participants emphasized the need of giving more power to and upgrading the status of civil society in order to effectively influence decision-making, whereas others cautioned that this could lead to giving too much influence to CSOs with little legitimacy (e.g. CSOs that are not democratically organized or do not represent constituencies).

3.2. Criteria for future accreditation

Currently, in order to participate in UNEP's governing bodies, Major Groups need to be accredited with UNEP. Asked about the necessary criteria that UNEP should apply for future accreditation of MGS, respondents identified the criteria as shown in the table below (in order of importance; multiple answers were possible).

Approximately 21% of the respondents were in favour of not having any accreditation criteria. As one respondent explained "having no criteria reflects the idea that anyone who is interested has an interest". The same respondent added that experience under the Aarhus Convention has

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[4] The respondent noted that while they fully respect and support the right of the regulated community (private sector) to have its views heard and taken into account, they would not be in favour of it having a vote or veto in such a process as, in the respondents view, this would run counter to fundamental governance principles.

demonstrated that having no criteria, or only very broad criteria, without any specific accreditation process had worked well.

Criteria that should apply to future accreditation of MGS	
1. Work related to sustainable development	71%
2. At least two years of existence	54%
3. Work in the environment field mainly	50%
4. Demonstrated interest in supporting UNEP's objectives	50%
5. Legal registration as non-governmental organization	44%
6. Legal registration as not-for-profit organization	44%
7. National scope of work	39%
8. Local scope of work	38%
9. Regional scope of work	37%
10. International scope of work	32%
11. Member of one of the Nine Major Groups	31%
12. ECOSOC accreditation	28%
13. There should be no criteria. Every organization that wishes to cooperate with UNEP should be granted accreditation.	21%

Whether in favour of accreditation criteria or not, respondents were of the opinion that accreditation should not become a barrier to participation of certain actors, including smaller civil society organizations or organizations that do legitimate work but have no legal status. In this regard, some participants called for some kind of accountability mechanisms that do not necessarily mean "accreditation", but do involve some criteria setting (e.g. providing quadrennial reports on a regular basis) or a form of registration that would legitimize their engagement with UNEP. One respondent identified the criteria applied at the UNFCCC as a good practice.

3.3. Selection of MGS representatives to UNEP

Concerning the process for selecting MGS representatives to UNEP (e.g. for a permanent body), 47% of the respondents proposed having a formal, transparent election by all UNEP accredited organizations within each Major Group, while 41% would prefer to have a selection process within each Major Group, with modalities transparently defined by the respective Major Group.

Preferred process for selecting MGS representatives to UNEP
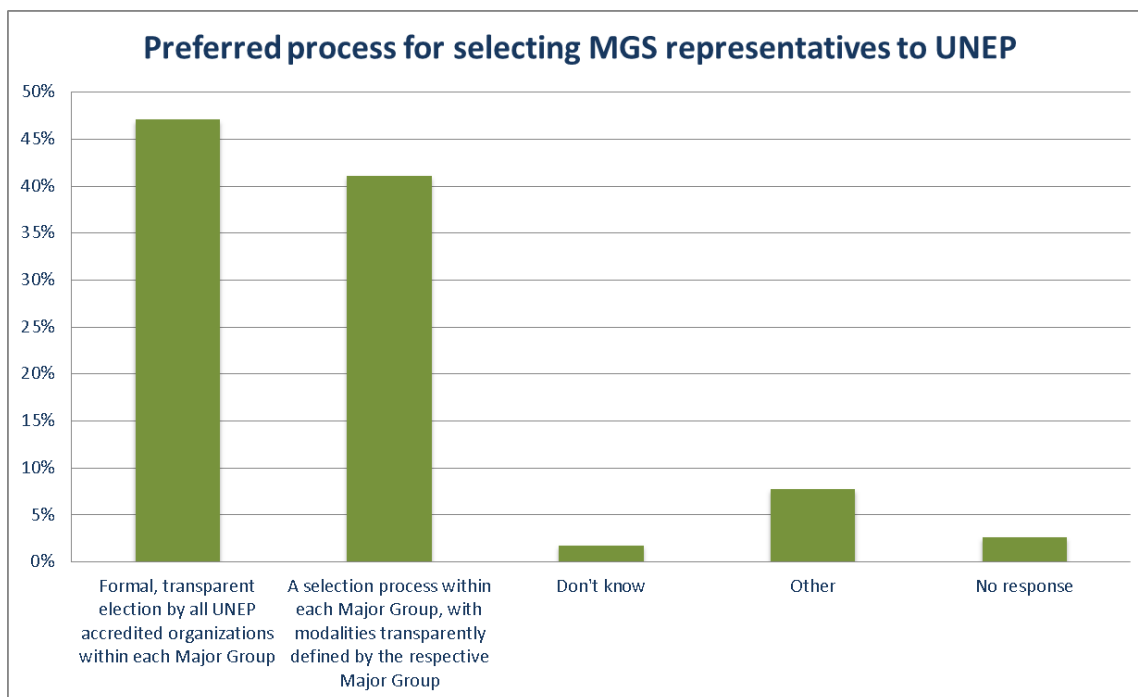
Among the 8% of the respondents that would prefer other options, some mentioned the need for including regional and even national MGS representatives. They feared that election processes would otherwise not be transparent or fair enough, as not all actors within a "global" MG would know each other, meaning that some smaller or less well-known organizations might be excluded. One respondent suggested a mix: a selection within each Major Group with criteria defined by the group itself; and some participants selected by UNEP staff, as the latter may know country or regional INGO/NGOs that are not well known by other organizations in the region.

Another proposal was to have representatives jointly elected by all UNEP accredited organizations and representatives elected within MGS. Having a "formal, transparent election by all UNEP accredited organizations within each MG with possibilities for non-accredited organizations to take part in the election" was also suggested by one respondent. Finally, another respondent proposed to narrow selection to only representatives of organizations that are accredited to ECOSOC.

3.4. Regional representation of MGS

About 54% of the respondents were in favour of having nine regional representatives (one per Major Group) for each region (adding up to 54 regional representatives for the six UNEP regions). On the other hand, 24% preferred the option of having two regional representatives representing all accredited MGS organizations of a particular region (adding up to 12 regional representatives in total for the six UNEP regions).

Approximately 12% of the respondents favoured other options:

- Two respondents advocated for more than nine representatives to include other groups that are not represented in the current MGS system (e.g. people with disabilities, victims of racism).
- One respondent proposed that each regional MG body would elect two or three representatives to the global body.
- Another respondent called for the election of more than two representatives per region, making the number depend on the required skills and expertise.
- One survey participant noted that the number of representatives should depend on the characteristics of each region.
- Another proposal was to have "a system of thematic, sectoral and regional representation ought to be developed where the most appropriate representatives get chosen for different tasks".
- Some respondents noted that the decision may depend on available resources (funding for travel, etc).
- One respondent commented that the Rio+20 Outcome does not speak about *nine Major Groups*, but about "*major groups*" in general.
- Finally, one respondent considered that environmental NGOs have a key role to play which is not reflected in the current MGS structure. The respondent proposes to have two regional representatives, one of whom represents environmental NGOs, the other representing other MGS. "An alternative would be to have a single body for MG representatives (an expanded Major Groups Facilitating Committee), with some seats earmarked for representatives of each MG as now (though not according to the current structure) without any geographical stipulations and some spare seats that would be used to redress any regional imbalances following the filling of the other seats", the respondent added.

Preferred regional representation of MGS in UNEP
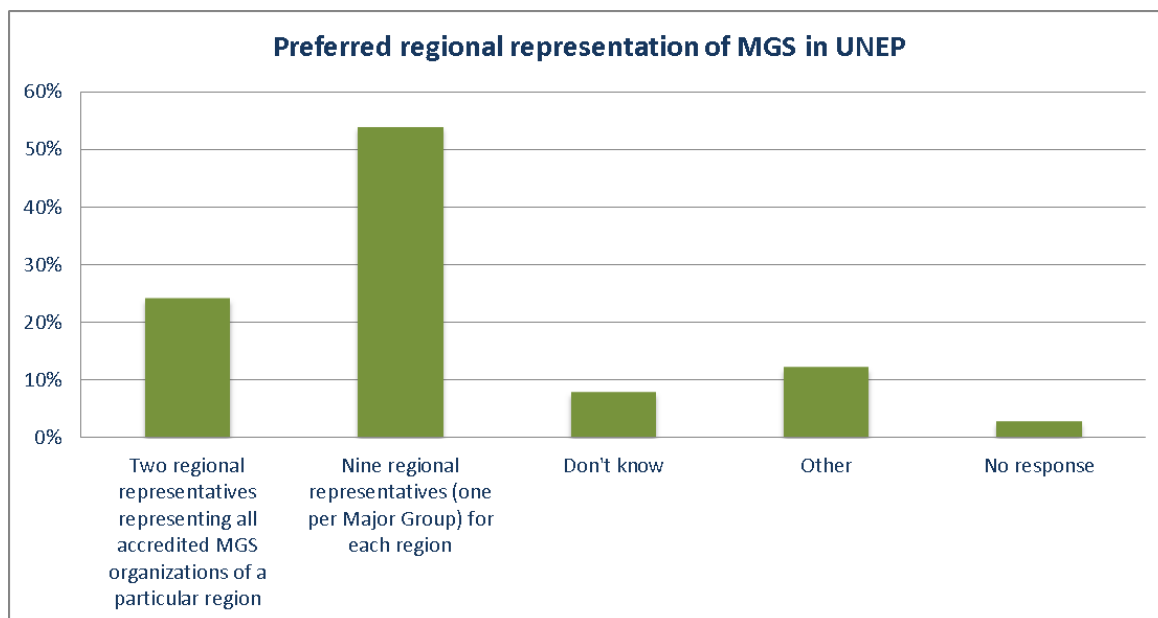
4. Access to information in UNEP

4.1. Current access to information produced by UNEP

Current access to information produced by UNEP is assessed as fair to good by a majority of respondents. Sample answers provided quote that stakeholders have access to most of the information that is relevant to their work. However about a fourth of the respondents found it bad or did not know. Only a small number of respondents found it excellent.
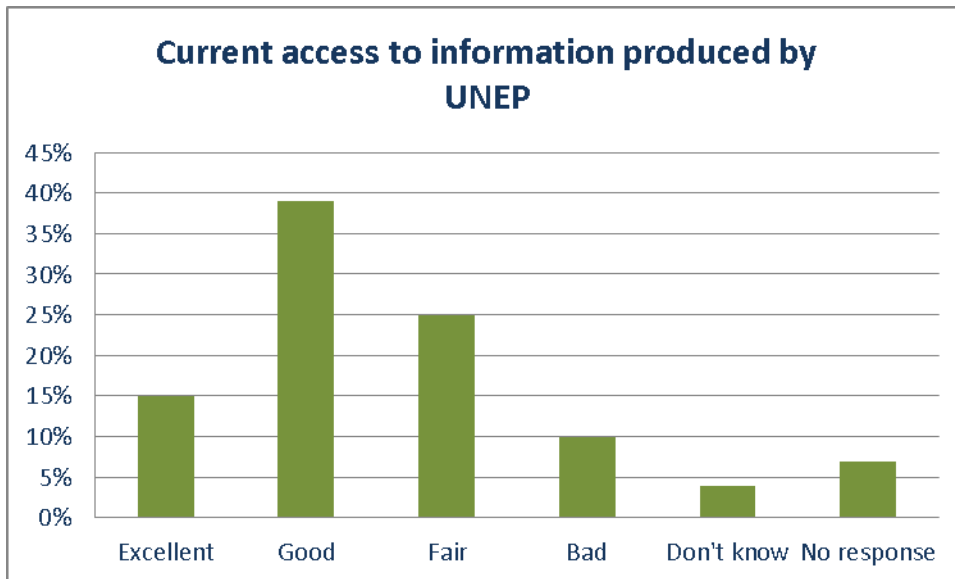
4.2. Timeliness of access to information produced by UNEP

The majority of respondents found that timeliness of access to information produced by UNEP is fair to good, while 18 respondents found it bad. Access to most information produced by UNEP is timely, allowing for commenting and the provision of inputs most of the time.
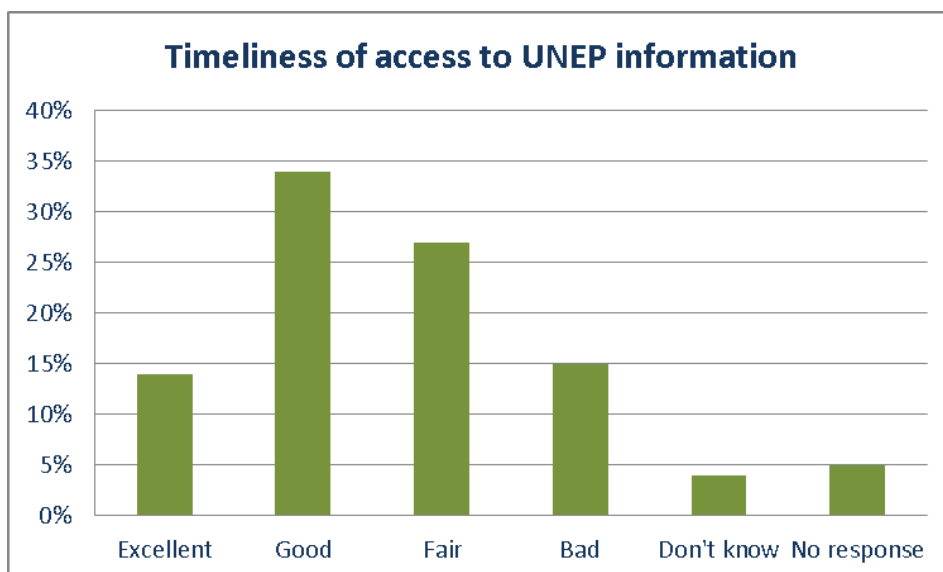
4.3. Types of information produced by UNEP

Reports and documents are identified by the MGS as being the most important type of information to have access to. The second most important types of information are draft Governing Council documents, including draft decisions. The following chart provides an overview of the types of information from UNEP which MGS would like to have access to.

Types of information from UNEP which MGS would like to have access to

Category	Number of times mentioned by respondents
Reports and documents	92
Draft Governing Council documents, including draft decisions	71
Drafts of reports and documents	64
All written information that is produced by UNEP	64
Minutes of meetings, etc.	60
Media reports, press releases, etc.	54
Other	6
Don't know	2
No response	7

For some respondents, there is a need to share as much information as possible to allow stakeholders to act responsibly. Clear reference was mad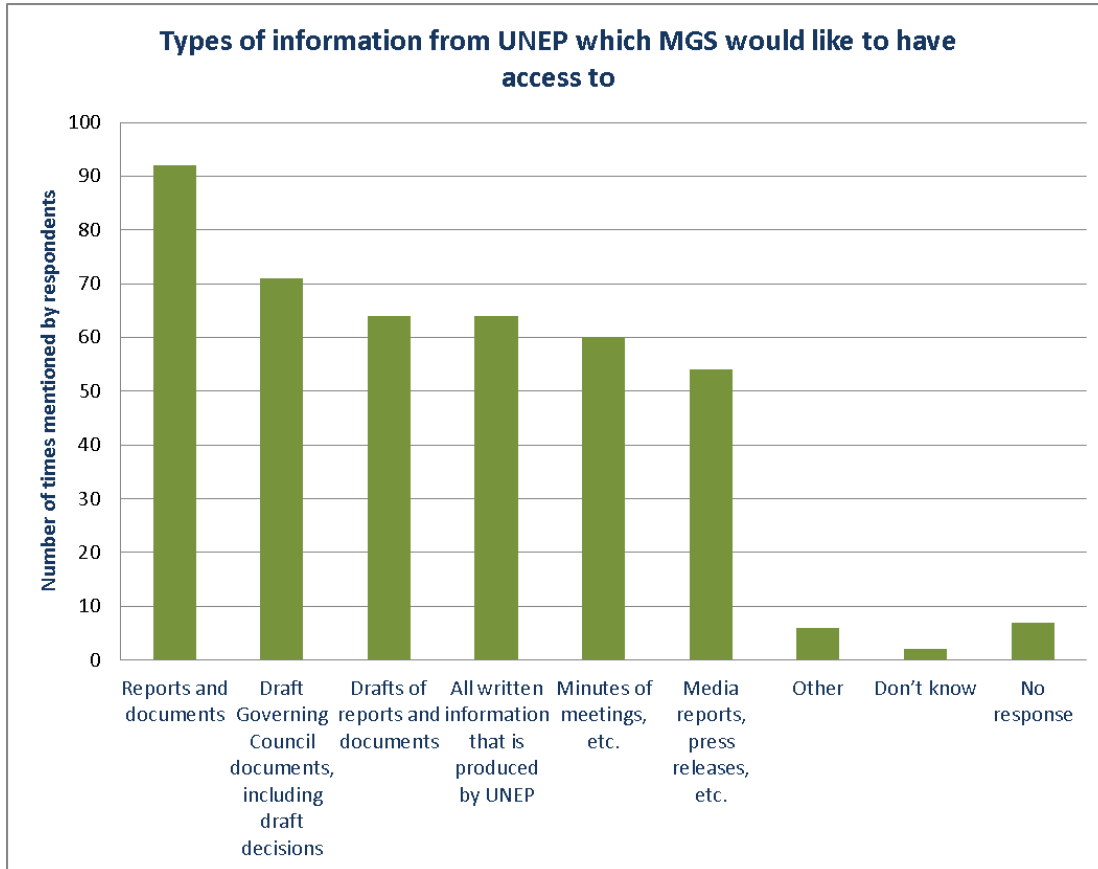e in this context to the availability of the information, its relevance, accuracy and timeliness. For respondents, there is a need for UNEP to consult MGS on the relevance of the information produced and whether it responds to the needs of MGS.

Other respondents highlighted the need to have practical guidebooks on how UNEP's sectoral or thematic reports are elaborated; and for UNEP to use adequate information channels for each need to optimize the information that is available – largely calling for the information to be "customized" to target audiences.

One major limitation identified was the lack of access to the regional office documents and reports – qualified by some respondents as lack of transparency at the regional level – which is deemed indispensable.

Some respondents argued that "in an ideal world, one could be able to find all of this by using a well-organized website", but they also acknowledged that not everybody needs to get everything. It was also argued that the timelines for consultation and providing comments can be improved significantly.

> "ALL documentation at UNEP including internal emails and correspondence and other reports should be public with narrowly defined exceptions to exclude such items as (a) personnel matters (b) issues of high security risks (c) third party privacy (trade secrets and copyright, etc.)".
>
> — *The Access Initiative of the World Resources Institute*

For those respondents who negatively assessed UNEP's access to information, UNEP should enhance its information-sharing system, and make its work more visible by distributing widely the results of its work.

4.4. Establishing an appeals process for access to information

A large majority of respondents called for the establishment of an appeals process that would make it possible to request information that UNEP has committed to publish but has not yet made publicly available. The appeals process would increase accountability and be of value to both UNEP and the accredited organizations. One respondent noted that an appeals process would be "consistent with the freedom of expression that is a human right under international law that UNEP must respect as a UN body bound by the Charter of the United Nations". Another respondent noted "An appeals process is an integral component of genuine access to information. It would also set a historic precedence at the intergovernmental level, paving the way for a meaningful implementation of Principle 10".
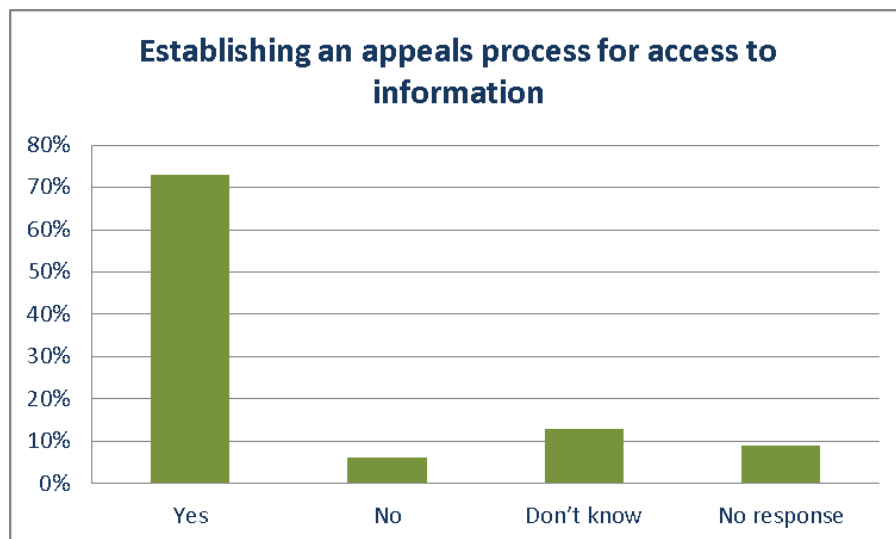
For many respondents, key principles that underpin such an appeals process should include:
- Transparency, which will contribute to the legitimacy of multilateral decisions;
- The "Right to know", to enable objective decision-making;
- Fairness and inclusiveness.

Further comments by respondents suggest:

- Prior to the establishment of such an appeals process, there should be a transparency policy in order to clearly establish the principle of transparency in the work of UNEP. The appeals body would be seen as furthering implementation of Principle 10 and the Aarhus Convention (and Almaty Guidelines). It should include CSO representatives sitting within the body.
- There is a widespread sense that UNEP collaborates with multinational corporations behind closed doors, affecting the power balance in a very negative way. An appeals process could bring some fairness in this regard.
- UNEP should not mix up a standard appeals process for challenging the withholding of environmental information in UNEP's possession (an achievable goal) with a process to challenge UNEP's failure to generate certain information.

However, some respondents find that it is not necessary to have an appeals process because of the bureaucratic burden it might create, the time it will require to be properly managed, and it might even be considered a distraction from important work. Some respondents already estimate that UNEP's information sharing is fairly good and does not need an additional timely and costly process that will be dominated by a few players, with little benefit to the rest. For one respondent, UNEP should put in place broad information-sharing mechanisms, without exceptions, as it seems that UNEP only shares information with a limited number of organizations, and needs to extend beyond the environmental groups, to include education groups, etc. Those mechanisms should facilitate systematic access to information at the local level.

4.5. Public information/disclosure policies that satisfy the needs of Major Groups

When requested to indicate which multilateral organizations or processes have public information/disclosure policies that satisfy the needs of Major Groups, respondents gave a very broad range of responses, making generalizations difficult. Many respondents pointed out that there are actually no satisfactory processes, explaining that even though they indicated some processes that they appreciated most, these processes still need to be improved. The following statements made by respondents exemplify this point:

- "There is no such satisfactory process and the expectation is that UNEP not only adopts best practices already in use in other processes, but also sets a new benchmark as an inclusive process";
- "Not one single organization is satisfying the needs of civil society; civil society requires support and resources for participation".

The lack of satisfaction might also explain that 51 out of the 117 respondents decided not to provide an answer to this question.

Among those organizations that were mentioned, UNEP ranked the top with respondents referring to the Programme on 13 occasions. Other organizations that were mentioned on at least two occasions were the Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), in particular the Aarhus Convention; the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA),

including the NGO Branch/CSO Net; the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) of the FAO; the World Bank, including the Climate Investment Funds (CIF) process; the Global Environment Facility (GEF); the United Nations Department for Public Information (UNDPI), including DPI/NGO relations; the UN Convention on Biodiversity (CBD); the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), including its Global Mechanism; the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the European Environment Agency (EEA), and the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS).

Some respondents raised the concern that MGS have never been included adequately as partners in the actual multilateral processes and negotiations. Access to information is only half of the challenge and is next to worthless without adequate and equal participation.

Several other organizations were also acknowledged for their public information/disclosure policies, however many of them are not part of the multilateral system. They are mainly non-governmental organizations, civil society networks, governmental organizations and processes (e.g. Swedish Society for Nature Conservation; Consumers International; International Centre for Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE); Mountain Forum; DOCIP; REFADD; WWF; Plan international; MGs in the Rio+20 process; etc.).

5. The Nine Major Groups Concept

5.1. Nine Major Groups Concept

The majority of respondents rated the Nine Major Groups concept followed by UNEP and other UN institutions as good.

Rating of Nine Major Groups Concept

A bar chart titled "Rating of Nine Major Groups Concept" showing the following approximate values:
- Excellent: 16%
- Good: 36%
- Fair: 25%
- Bad: 9%
- Don't know: 10%
- No reponse: 4%
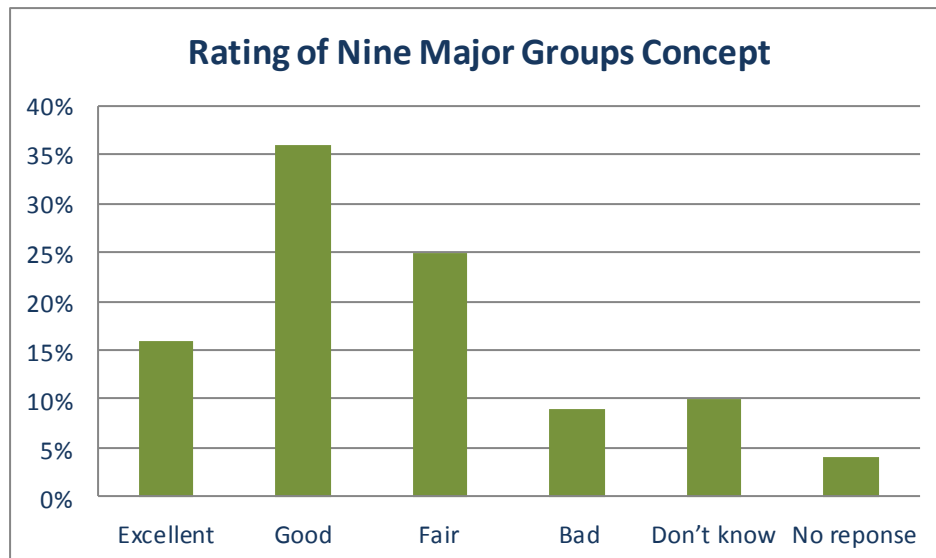
They highlighted that the concept was good and fair for the following reasons:

Fostering active participation: Various respondents noted that the Nine Major Groups Concept fosters active participation. In the view of one respondent, Major Groups contribute valuable information and ideas, advocate effectively for positive change, provide essential operational capacity in emergencies and development efforts, and generally increase the accountability and legitimacy of the global governance process. "NGOs are indispensable partners in the process of deliberation, analysis and policy formation and implementation", the respondent added.

Inclusiveness and comprehensiveness: Other respondents highlighted that inclusive and comprehensive nature of the concept, ensuring fair representation. "The concept incorporates nearly all of civil society, which is the general aim to be inclusive. In addition each Major Group has its own role, needs, aims and objectives in day-to-day activities. Sometimes these clash and sometimes they complement each other. It's important to keep the Groups distinct to recognize the different needs of society as a whole", voiced one respondent. The approach is widely accepted "because it covers almost the full domain of work of civil society organizations", contributed another respondent.

Good results: Various survey participants were of the opinion that the approach is yielding good results. It helps generate and identify the best opinions for fair decision-making; enables participation of important segments of society; and makes discussions more focused.

Despite these good results in the view of many respondents, some **criticism** was also directed at the approach. For example, one respondent argued that the approach should be more focused on (regional and thematic) expertise and knowledge; another noted that the approach does not necessarily ensure that all relevant sectoral issues are covered for UNEP policy processes. There is also very limited knowledge of the role of the Major Groups at the local level.

However, most criticism was related to the **lack of representation and inclusiveness**. Although (as seen above) many respondents were positive about the concept in this regard, a comparable amount of respondents was not. They felt the concept is excluding people or insufficiently reaching and engaging people on the ground. One respondent, for example, argued that the approach should be used to make sure that all Groups are represented in order to broaden participation, but not to limit that of others. The respondent also explained that the quantity of representatives of some Groups puts in place longstanding representatives, simply by default. In his/her view, this is incorrect as this results in some Groups – that are very numerous – have only two representatives, which does not suffice to satisfy all needs of the Group. Some felt the concept does not include regional voices and is dominated by Northern NGOs. Another respondent acknowledged that the Nine Major Groups system is becoming more useful over time, but confirmed that many important stakeholder groups do not feel represented.

> "[The Nine Major Groups approach] is an attempt to capture and systematize the wide interest groups in civil society, but its formalization has also led to some level of rigidity, vanguardism and gate-keeping".
> — *Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration (ETC Group)*

Some respondents highlighted that the **choice of groups is rather ambiguous**. For example, as one respondent explained, several MGs (youth, women, farmers) are in fact NGOs but are not formally part of the NGO Major Group. Moreover, "one type of commercial activity (agriculture) is separated from others (business and industry), while others (fishing) are missing. Local authorities stand out from the other MGs as they are an extension of government albeit often on the implementing end rather than decision-makers", the respondent continued.

As a result, there are **fundamental ideological differences** among the Groups that not only create confusion and lead to lowest common denominator positions, but also create **tensions between the different MGs** on who is legitimate to participate and who is not. For example, one respondent was not pleased that the concept allows participation by MGS that do not adequately support the objectives, principles, and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. Another expressed concern that the current classification seems to give more strength to business entities that oppose environmental international and national legislation. One respondent even denounced that "business and industry invade our space". "The principle of difference and respect for diversity is not respected", voiced another respondent.

To address this situation, UNEP is recommended by various respondents to clearly separate Private Sector from the Civil Society Major Groups, as well as clarify within Major Groups where there is a mix including commercial interests, e.g. in Famers MG. Others called for the inclusion of new communities of practice. One respondent noted that Nine Major Groups is better than a three chamber system, but argued that self-identification is most important.

The criticism that was voices not only addressed the concept itself, but also the **internal organization within each Major Group** – whether in the form of facilitation committees (as in UNEP) or in the form of organizing partners (as in CSD), where experiences have been mixed. In the CSD context, for example, one respondent noted that the organizing partners are not doing "a very good job of keeping the MGS informed or consulting with us during the times between meetings. It is difficult to find out what is going on or how things are organized or handled in other MGs. There is no transparency and little participation by CS in the selection of our organizing partners. Small- and medium-sized communities are not included or represented in the Local Authorities MG." In the context of UNEP, similar arguments were raised: "Our experience with the Women's Major Group has been excellent for transparency, openness, and mobilization capacity and the diffusion of information. This was however not the case for the NGO Major Group where there is little clarity on how it is operated."

To improve the system, several respondents called for reforms, including through clear policies in all aspects, from membership to the selection of facilitation committees to decisions on funding. They also called to for a more flexible approach, one that can be opened up to include more stakeholders and improve their relevance, integration and efficiency in the process. Regional bodies should be able to include Major Groups that are more relevant for the region (i.e. migrants), and more should be done to assist civil society from developing countries.

> "[The Nine Major Groups appraoch] ensures basic access to the negotiation to a wide range of stakeholders which are attributed means to work, working rooms and a certain space to be heard. But MGs still have a reduced capacity of intervention in the negotiations: limited time and moments to intervene not along the dialogues but at the beginning or end of the plenaries. Restricted access to meeting rooms and sometimes to documents".
> — *United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)*

5.2. Approaches that best facilitate participation of civil society and the private sector in UN institutions

Survey participants were requested to indicate which approach they believed would best facilitate the participation of civil society and the private sector in UN institutions: the Nine Major Groups approach, the Government-Private Sector-NGOs approach, or another approach.

Approximately 40% of the respondents were of the opinion that the Government-Private Sector-NGOs approach was the best approach, while 34% preferred the Nine Major Groups. Regarding the Nine Major Groups approach, some respondents acknowledged that it provides space for more perspectives. "The three-fold path only leads to less participation than the nine", voiced one respondent.

Among those respondents that selected "other", various explained that neither approach was satisfactory in their view. "The 9 MGs are not necessarily covering all the existing voices of civil society. 'Governments-Private Sector-NGOs' is not covering all stakeholders either", voiced one respondent.

The best approach to facilitate the participation of civil society and the private sector in UN institutions

The 9 Major Groups approach	34%
The Government-Private Sector-NGOs approach	40%
Other	11%
Don't know	9%
No response	6%
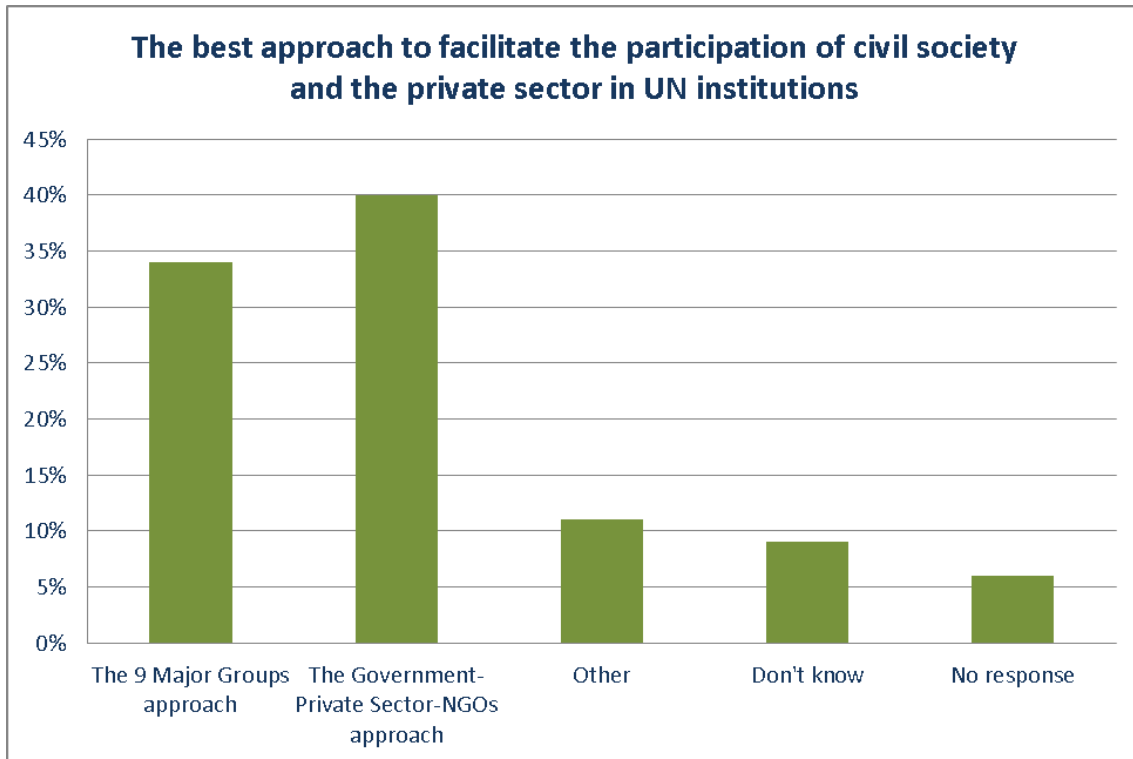
According to another respondent, reliance on a Government-Private Sector-NGOs approach is likely to create a feeling that contributions by the third group might be valued less than the other two. In the view of another participant, however, "the number of groups is not decisive; it depends on the specific body/process and needs. In all the settings key is that the persons represented are well connected to the respective constituency, are transparent and reach out".

Some respondents called for revisiting both approaches and the civil society concept as a whole. "Civil society is much more than just NGOs. The most vulnerable sections of the population, and social movements representing them, should have a wider and stronger representation", explained another survey participant. Some respondents suggested a combination of both approaches and/or having an approach organized around issues, themes and regions.

"There are new concepts and approaches emerging: the concept of Governmental Stakeholders was adopted at COP16 of the UNFCCC in Cancun in 2010 (para.7 of Dec.1/CP16). The concept refers to local and subnational governments," noticed one contributing organization. The latter also referred to paragraph 42 of the Rio+20 Outcome Document which reflects a similar approach that also includes parliamentarians and judicial institutions. "We believe this should be put in practice in global environmental governance", the organization concluded.

Various respondents highlighted the need to recognize the differences between civil society and the private sector, whose interests are very different compared to all other MGs. "The private sector has very different interests from those of local communities and indigenous peoples, pastoralists, forest dwellers, etc; for them to participate on equal terms immediately disadvantages the other groups", voiced one participant. Another respondent recognized that the tripartite system of the ILO was a good approach in which employers are part of the standard setting agenda, but warned that the private sector should not be included in a

sustainable development policy setting environment where their purpose could be contrary to the objectives of the mandate.

On the other hand, one respondent called for a weighted voting system in decision-making. According to this respondent, government decisions should derive from broad consensus on the environment, while the management of decisions transferred to public policies should involve direct action of the private sector.

Finally, one respondent argued that "Only civil society organizations that have agreed to uphold the objectives, principles, and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and thus meet the basic criteria for ECOSOC accreditation should be allowed to participate direct in the work of UNEP. Others can be given limited participation rights of specific purposes but this should be on a case-by-case basis and very limited unless the entity expressly agrees to uphold the objectives, principles, and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations".

5.3. Best suited approaches to maximize public participation

Participating organizations suggested a number of approaches that, in their view, are best suited to maximize public participation in UNEP's work, and provided details of how this could happen:

The Nine Major Groups approach

Those respondents in favour of the Nine Major Groups approach once more underlined its potential to enhance the scope and scale of UNEP's work and increase civil society representation. The approach allows UNEP to focus on multiple approaches to reach out to and mobilize different groups, which can help ensure transparency. For example, one respondent explained that via social media and web-based approaches, UNEP has the opportunity to diffuse many of the tensions that can arise when not all of the nine MGs can be represented in one body. To strengthen the approach beyond the regional level, another respondent proposed a sub-regional approach within the MGs as this may reconcile the complexities that result from divergent interests and representation in different fora. Finally, in order for the approach to evolve even further, one survey participant argued that mechanisms should be put in place to prevent a few groups and/or personalities from monopolizing the process and even acting as gate-keepers. Modalities have to be developed to encourage as many Groups as possible, beyond the few big environmental organizations, to participate.

The Government-Private Sector-NGOs approach

A number of respondents noted that this approach could facilitate the participation of members of public and private institutions, with special procedures for integration. It could include activities with governments for the establishment of liaison services, with focus in specific regions. The approach is in particular suited for establishing type two partnerships: cooperation or collaboration between governments, non-profits and for-profit businesses through public and private partnerships. It was noted that this fits well with the Triple Bottom Line approach for Social Enterprises. One respondent argued "We could be happy with a move to a tripartite approach provided it is a differentiated approach which does not increase the already considerable influence of the major group (read: business and industry) that historically bears much of the responsibility for the unsustainability of today's world".

Other approaches

A wide range of additional approaches were proposed by respondents, including:
- a people-to-people approach;
- a civil society approach;
- a tripartite approach;
- a Human Rights Council approach;
- a UNAIDS approach (Programme Coordinating Board);
- a global approach for the understanding of problems; and a local approach for action to solve these problems and for the integration of decision-making.

> "We prefer the concept of civil society, which honestly is the one that is being used by the largest part the world in other governance levels, especially at national level. The Major Group approach can almost exclusively be found in UNEP and CSD, and we understand it has not demonstrated to be better than using a civil society approach (except for the inclusion of local governments and enterprises that decidedly do not belong to traditionally marginalized sectors)".
>
> — *Asociación Civil Red Ambiental*

Many respondents however pointed to elements that could enhance public participation and make UNEP more transparent (including for outsiders), such as holding regular meetings[5]; providing access to information, education and capacity-building; involving CSO/NGOs more directly in policy consultations, decision-making, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation; identifying and involving new civil society actors; keeping a roster of experts working with NGOs; and using modern communication technology, while also providing for an interface with technologically challenged communities. Strengthening the participation of local actors and grassroots organizations was mentioned, including through regional distribution or a permanent local presence. Special references were also made to providing more opportunities for NGOs and scientific groups from developing countries. Furthermore, it was argued that UNEP should reflect in all the dimensions of it work that social and cultural considerations cannot be excluded from the environment debate. "I believe that it needs to be open to all those who are interested in collaborating with the action of UNEP", said one respondent.

Several respondents further referred to the need to increase the mobilization of resources for civil society participation and project support, especially of those organizations with direct links to the grassroots level. According to one respondent, UNEP should resource and possibly invite at least three organizations per Major Group per meeting.

Whatever approach is chosen, key requirements identified by respondents are that the approach should be inclusive, open, democratic and transparent, and guarantee "freedom of expression". The new approach needs to provide an opportunity for MGS to participate from inception to the end of negotiations, to counter the limited impact of MGs participation in international or multilateral negotiations.

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[5] One respondent proposed Global Compact-style meetings.

> "Public participation and information is important but we first of all need to find a model to maximize the participation of those groups having a real interest and wishing to participate on a continuous basis in the work of UNEP. To some extent, one needs to distinguish between the UNEP level and implementation at national/regional level, where public participation has a different quality".
>
> — *International Council of Chemicals Association (ICCA)*

5.4. Involving stakeholders beyond the Nine Major Groups

Various respondents argued that the MG approach should be used to ensure a minimum of participation, but it should not be used for limiting participation or in a static way "if actors wish to engage with UNEP but cannot identify with any of the existing MGs, the system should adapt and provide opportunities for them to still be heard", said one respondent. In the view of one respondent, the UNFCCC was a good example, as it differentiates between opportunities granted to the MGs as such and opportunities (written submissions, accreditation, and organization of side events) granted to individual organizations. As such, the classic Nine MGs structure is maintained, but also provides for the participation of those that do not fit under it. Another respondent referred to the Conference on Biological Diversity (CBD), where the Nine MG approach was never "nine" in the sense that not all Nine MGs are represented. But those that are represented are the main constituencies involved in biodiversity issues. "I do not see any reason why UNEP cannot add 'fisherfolks' or 'media' in the MG categories since these are key constituencies and stakeholders in UNEP's agenda. UNEP should create a mechanism that legitimates the participation of those groups", the respondent concluded. In this regard, some respondents called for extending the observer status to organizations that do not belong to the Major Groups classification; to establish additional Major Groups categories or a cross-cutting sector group – provided there is evidence of their long-term and sustained input; and promoting new criteria for the selection of Major Groups' representatives in a spirit of transparency and accountability. A concrete example was to strengthen the concept of governmental stake-holders (para.7 of Dec.1/CP16 of UNFCCC and para.42 of Rio+20).

Some respondents went a step further and called for eliminating the MG structure and adopting a multi-stakeholder platform framework that will include all civil society organizations. "In a new structure there should be space for any group to join a thematic/issue or regional grouping of their choice", voiced one respondent. Identifying common themes or threads, was important according to another participant.

Some other suggestions included network-based representation, a three-sector approach, and a two-prong process based on a formal network of actors to engage with, and another informal network of secondary actors to work with on specific themes. There was also a proposal to involve thematic experts as consultants and independent experts for specific tasks.

Emphasis was also put online consultations and fora with MGS at national and/or regional level in order to open up the platform for inputs by all MG, etc. One survey participant proposed creating common consultative social dialogue platforms open to ordinary citizens, including small- and medium-sized enterprises organizations, by using social networks, virtual consultations or surveys, and networks of cooperatives and NGOs. Another respondent was of the opinion that UNEP should increase its outreach to those who are not yet involved in the work of UNEP, and engage in a consultation on the best ways to involve them.

Respondents further called for regional representation and for more support to under-represented people, including marginalized and poor groups/communities, from developing countries. One suggestion was to promote capacity-building programmes through which organizations can build their capacities and develop skills to be fully involved in consultations, negotiations and decision-making.

Another proposal put on the table was to allow for more representation through national, regional and international conferences that bring civil society together. One respondent even called for periodic "world conferences" on Women, the Environment, Social Development, Population and other topics at six to ten-year intervals for groups that do not fit into the MG structure.

Involving organizations and groups that do not fit under the Nine MGs classification in programmes of action was another proposal voiced by a few respondents. As suggested by one respondent, the latter will require coordination by local, national and regional bodies.

Finally, one respondent called for giving more prominence to ECOSOC accreditation, whereas another was of the opinion that all community organizations should adapt to the structure of Major Groups.

# 6. Participation of Major Groups and Stakeholders in UNEP's work at programmatic level

6.1. Opportunities to participate in UNEP's work at programmatic level

The majority of respondents rated current opportunities for MGS participation in UNEP's work at programmatic level as fair or better. They seemed to agree that MGS were informed, but their opinions differed in terms of opportunities to actually provide input. Those respondents who scored opportunities as fair (27.4%), were of the opinion that such opportunities were limited, whereas those who rated opportunities as good thought that MGS were consulted and able to contribute ideas. About 12% of the respondents valued opportunities as excellent. In their view MGS have sufficient possibilities to provide input in UNEP's programmatic work and contribute to the formulation of plans. Less positive responses came from almost 15% of the respondents who thought opportunities were poor with MGS hardly being informed and consulted. The rest of the survey participants felt they could not rate current opportunities (17.1%) or did not provide a response (4.3%).
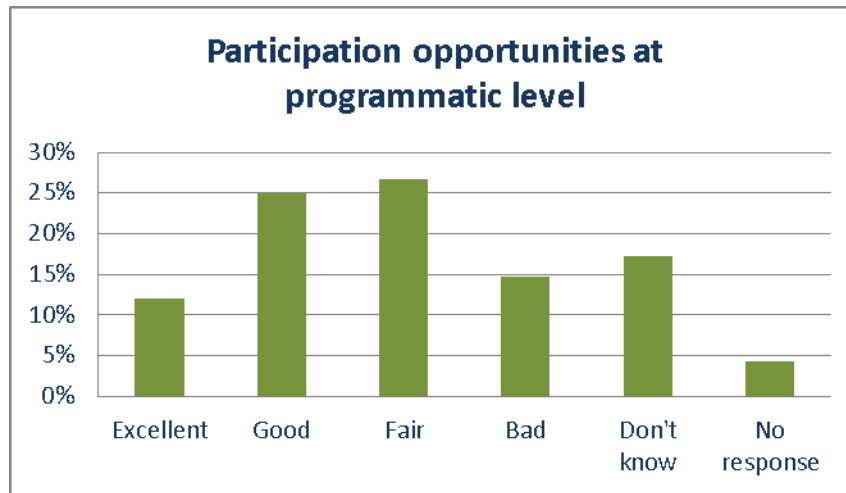
6.2. Opportunities to participate in UNEP's work at the regional level

Opportunities for participation in UNEP's work at the regional level through UNEP's regional/country offices were also valued as fair or better by the overall majority of the respondents (about 65%). To be exact, 12.8% rated opportunities as excellent, with MGS regularly being informed, consulted and given the opportunity to provide input. About 22.4% valued it as good, confirming that there are mechanisms in place to inform and consult MGS at the regional level on a regular basis. Almost 30% identified the opportunities as fair, noting that only sometimes MGS are informed, consulted and given an opportunity to provide input. Approximately 12% judged regional participation opportunities poorly, as in their view MGS are hardly informed and consulted and have no real opportunities to provide input. About 18% of the survey participants did not know the answer to this question, and 5.1% deferred from answering.

Participation opportunities at the regional level

Excellent	13%
Good	22%
Fair	30%
Bad	12%
Don't know	18%
No response	5%
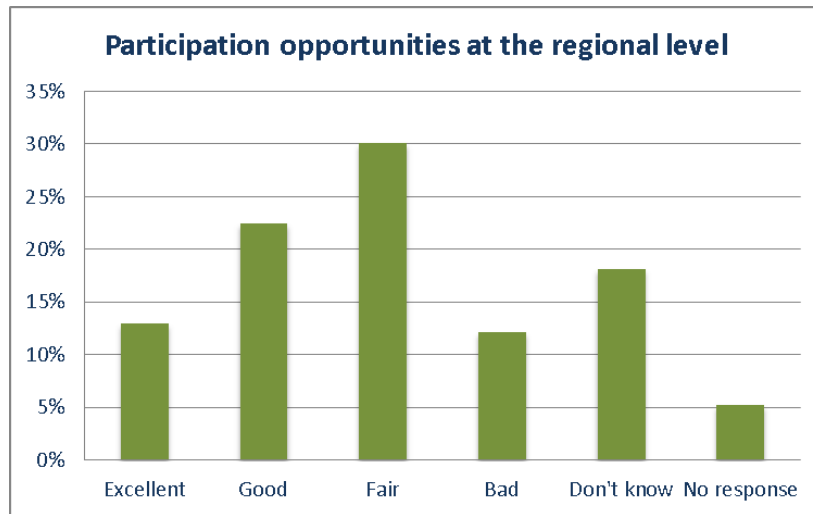
Comparing the rating of regional participation opportunities with the geographical distribution of the participants in terms of UNEP regions provides some insight in people's satisfaction with UNEP's various Regional Offices (see the following chart). For example, most respondents per region (more than 50%) rated opportunities at the regional level as fair or higher. The only exceptions to this outcome were the Regional Office for West Asia (ROWA) and the Regional Office for North-America (RONA). Moreover, the Regional Office for Europe (ROE) was the only office that was not once rated as "bad" by the 22 respondents that fall under its jurisdiction.

Even though the regionally split research population remains too small to draw valid conclusions, the figures could encourage the Regional Offices (particularly ROWA and RONA) to scale up their outreach capacity to MGS.

Participation opportunities in relation to UNEP regional offices

■ No response

■ Don't know.

■ Bad: MGS are hardly informed and consulted and there are no real opportunities to provide inputs.

■ Fair: Sometimes, MGS are informed, consulted and given an opportunity to provide inputs.

■ Good: There are mechanisms in place to inform and consult MGS and give them an opportunity to provide inputs on a regular basis.

■ Excellent: MGS are regularly informed, consulted and given the opportunity to provide inputs.

	Regional Office for Africa	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific	Regional Office for Europe	Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean	Regional Office for North America	Regional Office for West Asia
No response	4	2	2	1		
Don't know	3	2	5	1	7	
Bad	4	2		3	3	2
Fair	9	4	13		7	2
Good	12	5	4	4		
Excellent	6	5	1	3	1	

6.3. Experience in engaging in Project implementation and Partnerships with UNEP

Approximately 37% of the survey respondents did not provide information on whether they had experience in engaging with UNEP. Among those that did reply, approximately 41% of the respondents (26% of the total research population) indicated that they had no or hardly any experience in terms of project implementation or partnerships. Some noted that they have tried to collaborate with UNEP, but have never had an actual opportunity for collaboration. One respondent noted "I often feel like a second class citizen and would like to be much better informed as to what opportunities exist".

> "I feel that UNEP could involve stakeholders more genuinely through its work in relation to decision-making and planning. Many I talked to mentioned the feeling that stakeholders are often most welcome as partners but rather late in the process. UNEP is more inclusive than many other institutions, but still could improve a lot the way it works with CSOs on an everyday basis".
>
> — *Rio+twenties*

Many of the respondents that have not yet (or hardly) engaged with UNEP indicated their willingness to collaborate more with UNEP in the future.

Among those survey respondents that have some experience in engaging with UNEP, the extent of engagement and partnerships varied from just promoting UNEP's vision and objectives, to more direct formal and informal forms of participation in meetings, conferences, and project implementation. One organization indicated that it is closely collaborating with UNEP in terms of developing tools, publications, capacity-building programmes and initiatives to enhance sustainability at the local level.

Various organizations indicated that their experience of engagement with UNEP has been good, but some caution that they have experienced different results in collaboration, depending on the project and division within UNEP. For example, whereas one organization has had good experience in implementing Principle 10 with UNEP, partners from the same organization have complained that the regional offices have been non-responsive to input and feedback. This was echoed by a few other respondents. One respondent cautioned that "to date the regional meetings haven't provided an opportunity to provide input to the work plan, objectives, etc. of UNEP", and highlighted that it is not adequate enough to bring civil society together and ask them to present and develop a statement.

> "Effective participation means that the work plan should be collectively developed and a clear process established that allows fully informed participation at all levels".
>
> — *The Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Land and Development*

One respondent added that there was not enough coordination between regional and national levels. Another, however, recognized that UNEP staff, as in all UN agencies, was hampered by unnecessary bureaucracy and procedure.

Finally, one respondent noted that regional representatives are limited to participation in the Ministerial Council. The respondent recommends that UNEP searches for other forms of engagement.

## 6.4. Engagement experience versus rating of participation opportunities within UNEP

Comparing the responses given under the rating of participation opportunities within UNEP at programmatic and regional level (see charts below) shows that the majority of those who have experience with UNEP in project implementation and partnerships valued the opportunities as fair, both at programmatic and regional level. However, at programmatic level, the number of respondents rating participation opportunities as good was similar to the number of respondents rating these opportunities as bad. Opportunities at regional level scored slightly better.

As expected, the majority of those that have no or limited experience in engaging with UNEP in project implementation and partnerships indicated that they could not rate the participation opportunities at programmatic and regional level. However, in both cases, almost two-thirds of the respondents did provide a rating, based on their perception. Those that indicated opportunities as bad had often tried to engage with UNEP, but did not succeed.

Engagement experience with UNEP versus rating of participation opportunities at programmatic level
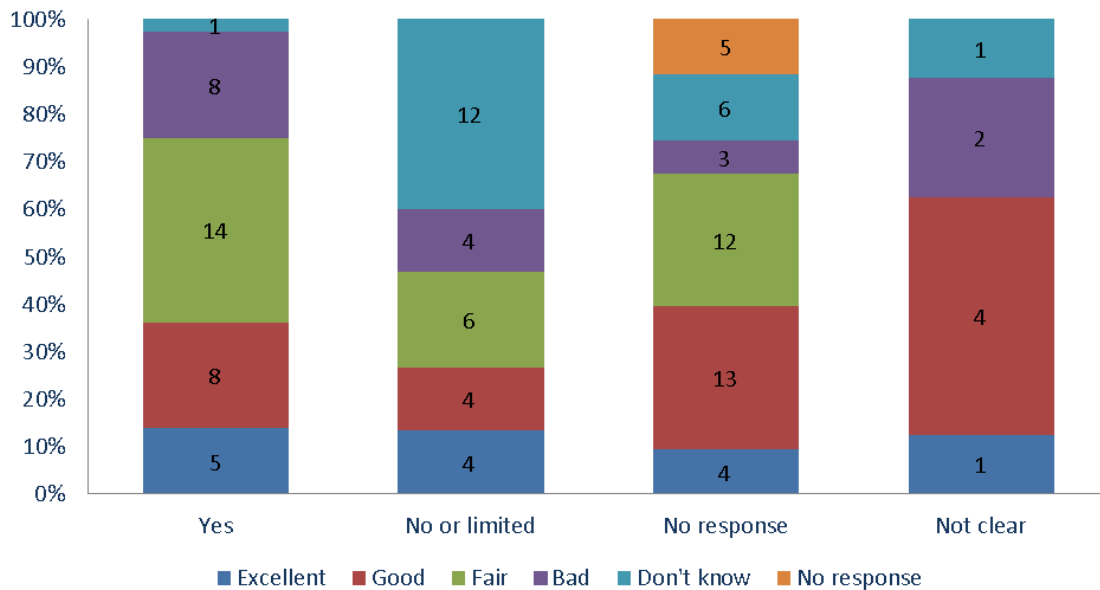
**Engagement experience versus rating of participation opportunities at regional level**

Excellent | Good | Fair | Bad | Don't know | No response
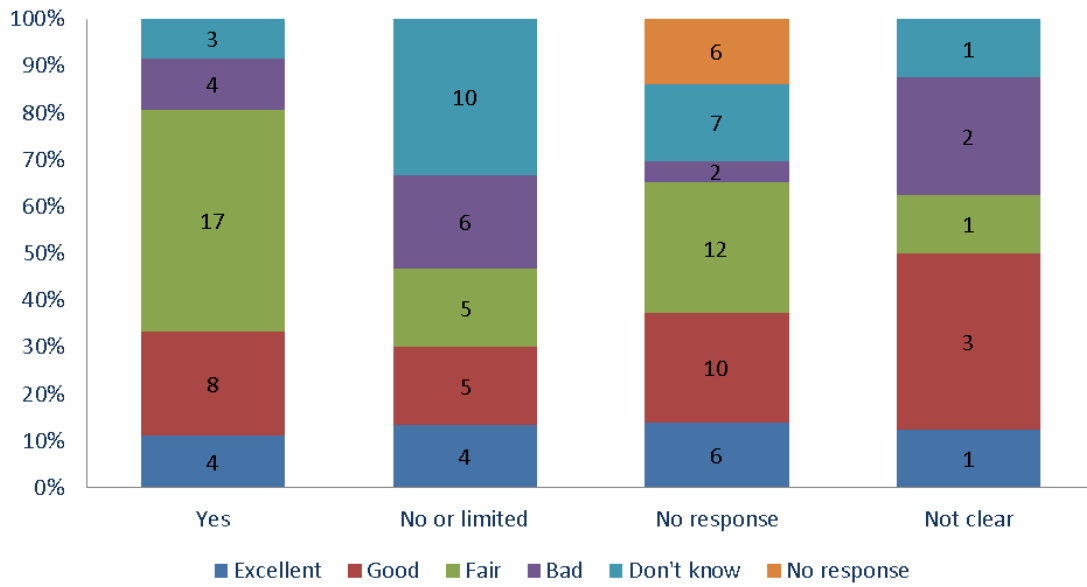
7. Major Groups involvement in UNEP through modern information technologies

7.1. Online participation versus physical presence

On the question whether participation through modern ICT can replace the physical presence of MGS in relevant meetings or formal processes within UNEP, respondents were largely polarized into two positions: about 42% of the respondents agreed that ICT could indeed replace physical presence, whereas 47% disagreed with this statement. Other survey participants did not know the answer to this question or did not respond.

Participation through modern ICT can replace physical presence
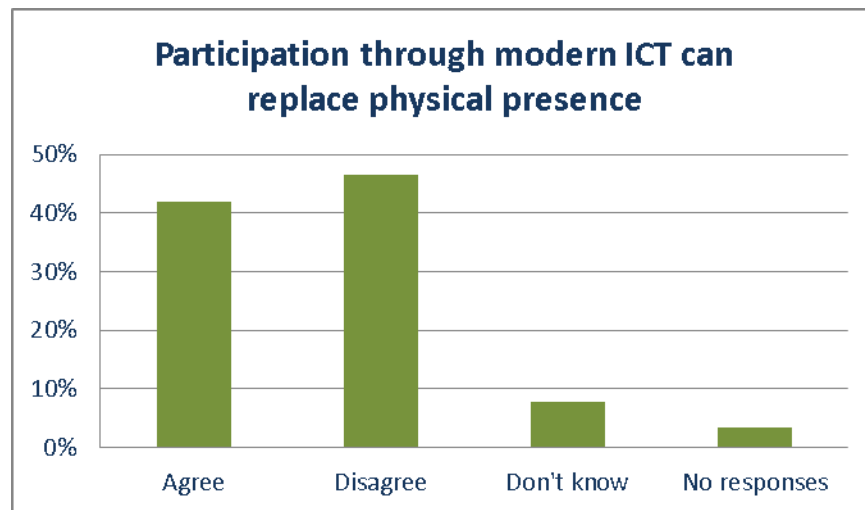
Arguments in favour of replacement by ICT, which according to one participant was already becoming a reality, included the fact that online participation would increase work effectiveness, save time, reduce financial and environmental costs, but still guarantee sufficient participation and engagement. The use of high-speed Internet to enable virtual face-to-face meetings was seen as a good example. One participant, however, cautioned that online conferences should not be organized all the time and that if they are being organized, it should be clearly stated at what time they will take place (e.g. GMT favoured over ET). Another mentioned "good coordination" and a "user-friendly system" as key requirements for virtual dialogues.

Many respondents (23.1%) – whether agreeing, disagreeing or having doubts – underscored the need to have a combination of both forms of participation. They mainly argued that ICT can be a useful complement and enhance participation, but never replace face-to-face meetings, especially not in very important (decision-making) processes. According to the opponents, face-to-face meetings support different objectives, possibilities and results. Compared to online meetings, face-to-face meetings are more effective in facilitating the exchange of a diversity of views, discussions and decision-making; giving more confidence to participants; and allowing for better accountability in terms of participants' implementation commitments. Physical participation also enhances networking among different stakeholders. Furthermore, one respondent noted that it is difficult to have a video conference that lasts more than one hour.

Moreover, eight respondents cautioned that in some parts of the world, such as on the African continent, many people are not yet connected to the Internet or have insufficient access to modern ICT for various reasons (including discrimination). Replacing physical participation by online participation would thus exclude and marginalize many groups and individuals.

> "UNEP should not forget the digital gap that exists between the top and the base of pyramid countries. We haven't reached the point where the modern ICT can replace the formal process. At this point, such a decision will be a digital apartheid participation system".
>
> — *The African Foundation*

7.2. Best practices in the use of modern ICT

On the question whether people could identify best practices related to the use of modern information and communication technologies for public participation and information in multilateral organizations and/or processes, responses were mixed and generally did not focus specifically on multilateral organizations or processes. Among those respondents that provided a response (56%), about 12% could not be used for this analysis as the answers provided were not clear or substantive. One respondent commented that the question itself was too general, making it difficult for respondents to provide reasonable answers.

About 12% of the survey participants identified specific tools to facilitate public participation and information sharing, including the use of e-mail and listservs, newsletters, Internet/websites, (mobile) telephones, tele- and videoconferencing, fax, cloud and supercomputing, and social media such as Twitter, Facebook, Skype, Yahoo, Youtube, Google. Almost 20% of the respondents went a step further and identified ways and/or best practices in which various of the above-mentioned tools were being used to enhance public participation and information sharing: e-learning, online platforms, online consultations and surveys, webinars, etc.

Some concrete examples identified by respondents include:
- The carbon*n* Cities Climate Registry[6] – an online platform to demonstrate progress of cities on their commitments, performance and actions on local climate action; cCCR is the world's largest global database of local climate action and enhances transparency, accountability and comparability of local climate action. It also strengthens partnership, including with local governments.
- Internet Seminars, such as the "Towards Rio+10 and Beyond: Progress in Land and Agriculture", coordinated by UNEP and FAO in 2001, and the Internet Seminar "Biodiversity Conservation and Use", held in June/July 2000. The latter was sponsored by the Environment and Natural Resources Division of the World Bank Institute.
- The Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC), which videocasts its steering committee meetings (with passwords provided to stakeholders). Civil society can send messages to their representatives and ensure appropriate representation and accountability.

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[6] www.citiesclimateregistry.org

- Commons Action for the UN[7]: according to one respondent, it has developed "some great consultative processes".
- Three participants identified Rio+20 as a best practice. One respondent hailed the CSD original consultation on Rio+20 and the way submissions were made available via key words; while another explained that Rio+20 was a good first step in enhancing the use of new technologies and communication tools in the recent negotiation processes. In the view of this respondent, it ensured a better flow of the information in short delay and among a greater number of stakeholders, which allowed for people to react faster and more accurately in a meeting, a slot in plenary or in preparing a document. A representative from the Women's Major Group explained that use of ICT had been very helpful for the development of the Women's Major Group Statement for Rio+20 Conference, as it allowed for online discussions and meetings.
- Another example cited numerous times is the UNFCCC. Two respondents identified UNFCCC's extensive use of webcasts as good practice, as well as the opportunity to provide input online and sometimes through Twitter. Another respondent welcomed UNFCCC's use of e-mail for all its communications on applications for admission into the process, accreditation, registration, nomination of representatives, confirmation, nomination letters, visa processing, etc. Finally, one respondent highlighted the fact that the UNFCCC makes all information accessible online, including submissions by Parties, a list of participating organizations.
- The Aarhus Convention was mentioned for the opportunities it created for civil society to provide input and comments during the various stages of the process to update the Convention's Implementation Guide.
- One respondent referred to the UN Human Rights Council as it webcasts most of its meetings and allows speakers (physically) to address the Council.
- One respondent recommended looking at the many examples cited in the "Discussion Paper: Improving Public Participation in International Environmental Governance" by Jacob Werksman and Joseph Foti, UNEP Perspectives Series[8].
- WiGiT (the Wireless Grid Innovation Testbed) at Syrcuse University in New York State, USA: a wireless testbed, funded by the National Science Foundation, that "investigates all aspects of human interaction with the multitude of devices and information technologies that exist and those which are emerging. It also develops and shares insights that will enhance our relationship with technology and realize our human potential".
- One respondent identified 350.org and Bill McKibben as best practice examples. "The range and value of the interactions is very impressive, from local even organization to identifying sources and information, to mobilizing groups, all of this has been very interesting to watch and experience", the respondent explained.
- Other examples cited by respondents include: (1) Maestro[9] – identified as a decent vehicle for conference calls with many good features; (2) MOOCs – interactive teaching beyond just "access"; (3) the Mountain Forum – sharing information and best practice across multiple regions, sectors, and types of individuals/organizations; (4) an e-consultation to draft food security law (Dominican Republic, CARICOM); and (5) the websites of UNICEF and the World Bank for being accessible.

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[7] http://globalcommonstrust.org/?page_id=29
[8] www.unep.org/environmentalgovernance/Portals/8/IEGpublicparticipation.pdf
[9] http://maestroconference.com

- One respondent identified the following associations for working along the lines of UNEP's vision and for distributing/sharing the information produced by UNEP and other specialized organizations, including in those places where people do not have access to new technologies or the Internet: the Association Congolaise pour le Développement Agricole (ACDA); Action pour l'Environnement et la Solidarité Internationale (AESI); the Association pour le Développement de Moungoundou-Sud et ses Environs (MGDS); the Association Couleurs Congolaises (ACC).
- Furthermore, various respondents highlighted their own organizations or initiatives as best practices, such as Project GROWNET[10] for the global dissemination of best practices in ground water management; the Asociación Regional de Mujeres Ingenieras in Peru for its interaction with its local, national and international surroundings on environmental issues and biodiversity conservation; Aube Nouvelle pour la Femme et le Développement (ANFD)[11] for making information available to grassroots communities, encouraging the use and organization of campaigns, conferences, seminars, and of technology; and the Corporación Red Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas y Campesinas de Colombia[12] for making ICT a priority.

The online conversations/consultations called for by the UN and its various agencies on the post-2015 development agenda were also identified as a best practice example. However, the respondent noted that these processes are still very complicated, making it difficult to access and be part of the consultation. "There must be a way to simplify these [processes] to make it more effective", the respondent concluded.

A few respondents emphasized that all tools or processes for enhancing public participation and information sharing should be easy to access, understand and be used by a broad public. One respondent suggested providing a user guide with each tool to help increase accessibility and prevent people who have difficulties using new technologies from being excluded.

Other examples of best practices provided were: UNDP; the WASH team at UNICEF; UNESCO, IMF, WTO; Anjuman Foundation; the UN's Division for Social Policy and Development; the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN), the Women Earth and Climate Caucus (WECC), and the Technical University of Panama. However, no explanation was given on why these examples are indeed best practices.

7.3. Access to modern ICT at location

In terms of access to modern ICT, 84.6% of all survey participants indicated that they had such access at their location which enabled them to access information and communicate online with UNEP. About 9.4% of the respondents indicated that they had no access at their location, which included: Pennsylvania (US), Puerto Rico, Togo, South Caucasus, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, New Delhi in India, Argentina, Cameroon, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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[10] www.igcp-grownet.org

[11] This organization also identified two other non-profit NGOs, namely AJED-IK and FAFE, as best practice examples for the same reasons.

[12] This organization also identified two other initiatives as best practice examples (also for similar reasons): the Corporación Ambientalista Hojas de Hierba; and the Red de Comunidades Locales de América Latina, El Caribe y Territorios Insulares para el Convenio de Diversidad Biológica.

It should be noted that the overall positive result in terms of access to modern ICT may be explained by the fact that this research involved an online survey, which means that most participants should have at least some access to ICT in order to receive notification of the survey and to be able to participate.

Access to modern ICT at location
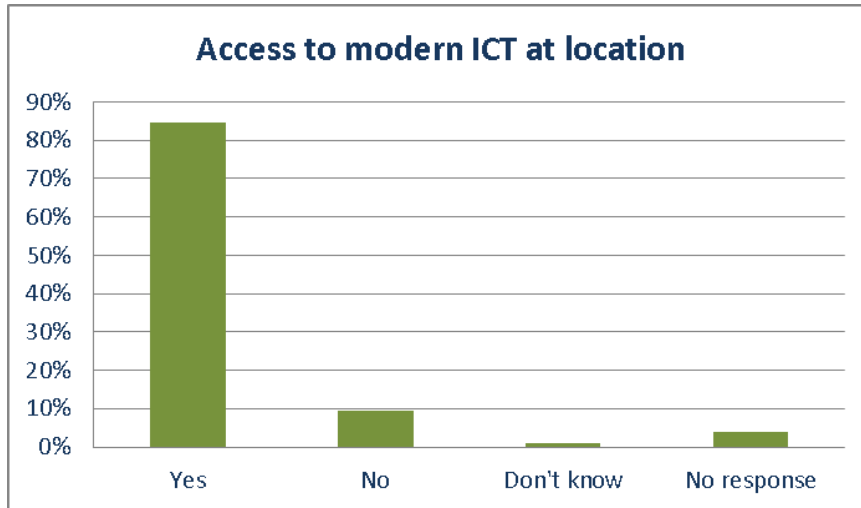
Annex 1. Questionnaire

Models and Mechanisms of Civil Society Participation in UNEP

Models of Participation and New Mechanisms for Civil Society Engagement with UNEP

Background
The Rio+20 outcome document "The Future We Want" invites UNEP to reconsider its mechanisms for Major Groups and Stakeholders (MGS) participation. More precisely, paragraph 88h of the outcome document states:

"We are committed to strengthening the role of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda…In this regard we invite the General Assembly, at its sixty-seventh session, to adopt a resolution strengthening and upgrading UNEP in the following manner: (a-g) (h) Ensure the active participation of all relevant stakeholders drawing on best practices and models from relevant multilateral institutions and exploring new mechanisms to promote transparency and the effective engagement of civil society."

This paragraph calls for a revision mechanisms for Stakeholder Engagement and Civil Society Participation in UNEP's work – especially in light of the application of Universal Membership of the Governing Council and along the lines of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration. UNEP is encouraged to go beyond the current best practices and become a model organization of public participation and access to information within the UN family.

In this context, UNEP has initiated a participatory process to collect feedback on the current engagement system and inputs on new models of participation that can respond to the needs of all stakeholders.

Objectives
The objectives of the survey are:
(i) to map out the gaps in UNEP's current engagement systems;
(ii) to document cases of best/good practices within other multilateral organizations, and
(iii) to identify potential avenues for engagement and new models of participation.

The outcomes of the survey will inform UNEP's response to the implementation of the Rio+20 Outcome Document and the related GA Decision.

Scope of the survey
The focus of this questionnaire is on mechanisms for stakeholder engagement with UNEP, as these are considered by the UNEP secretariat to be of the greatest relevance to paragraph 88h of the Rio+20 outcome document. This is not however intended to rule out the possibility of addressing other processes within the framework of paragraph 88h.

Expected outcomes
The consultation outcomes will be compiled by UNEP, together with NGLS and other partners and presented to the Expert Group Meeting for review for further development of the options proposed.

Issues to be addressed
The survey will address the following areas:

(i) Institutional Arrangements for Major Groups and other stakeholders' participation in UNEP's work at policy and programmatic level

(ii) Rules and Procedures for Major Groups and other stakeholders' participation in UNEP's work

(iii) Access to Information in UNEP

(iv) The Nine Major Groups Concept

(v) Major Groups and other stakeholders' participation at programmatic level in UNEP's work

(vi) The potential of modern information and communication technology to improve public participation in UNEP

Target Groups and outreach methodology
The questionnaire will be widely distributed through UN listservs as well as Major Groups and other stakeholders' lists, to reach out to a wide audience, going beyond environment organizations to development organizations.

MGS worldwide are invited to contribute to the survey.

Time Schedule
The consultation will run from 7 to 31 December 2012.

The 9 Major Groups approach
The Major Groups approach was defined in Agenda 21.

The nine Major Groups are: Business and Industry, Children and Youth, Farmers, Indigenous People and their Communities, Local Authorities, Non-governmental organizations, Women, Workers and Trade Unions and the Scientific and Technological Community.

Where UNEP mentions Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGS) in the questionnaire, it also refers to those stakeholders/civil society organizations that do not yet fall under the Major Groups structure.

Those who do not yet engage with UNEP are invited to participate!

Questionnaire

"Models of Participation and New Mechanisms to Promote Transparency and Effective Engagement of Civil Society"

The Major Groups approach was defined in the Agenda 21, a non-binding and voluntarily implemented action plan of the United Nations related to sustainable development. The nine Major Groups are: Business and Industry, Children and Youth, Farmers, Indigenous People and their Communities, Local Authorities, Non-governmental organizations, Women, Workers and Trade Unions and the Scientific and Technological Community. Where UNEP mentions Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGS) in the questionnaire, it also refers to those stakeholders/civil society organizations that do not yet fall under the Major Groups structure.

1. **Institutional Arrangements for Major Groups and other stakeholders (MGS) participation in multilateral organizations**

    1.1 In your experience, which multilateral organizations and/or processes are most effective in terms of MGS participation? Please rank the three organizations you like best in order of preference (starting with 1 for the organization whose institutional setting for MGS participation you like best).

    1. _____
    2. _____
    3. _____

    1.2 In your experience, which types of representative bodies[13] work well (e.g. advisory body, MGS committee)? Please justify:

    o _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

    1.3 In your experience, which types of bodies do not work well? Please justify:

    o _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

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[13] Definition: A representative body is a body that regroup people or organisations standing or acting for another especially through delegated authority. It represents a constituency as a member of a legislative or facilitating body; one that represents another as agent, deputy, substitute, or delegate usually being invested with the authority of the principal (Adapted from: www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/representative).

2. **Institutional Arrangements for Major Groups and other stakeholders(MGS) participation in UNEP's work at policy and programmatic level**

2.1 In your view, what is the purpose of MGS participation in UNEP's work? Please choose all answers that apply.
- o Facilitate the voicing of Major Groups and other stakeholders influenced by UNEP programmes and policies
- o Influencing decision-making through advocacy
- o Provide expert input into decision-making processes
- o Add legitimacy to decisions taken at UNEP
- o Monitor and evaluate UNEP's work
- o Facilitate the voices of MGS on the environment at national, regional and global levels
- o Other, please specify: _____
- o Don't know.

2.2 How do you rate current mechanisms for MGS participation in UNEP's work? Please choose only one answer for each question.

MGS representation (related to the question of legitimacy), facilitated through the Major Groups Facilitating Committee:
- o Excellent.
- o Good.
- o Fair.
- o Bad.
- o Don't know.

Briefly explain your choice:

_____
_____

Effectiveness of participation (related to the self-assessed impact on decision-making of MGS) at the regional level, through Regional Consultative Meetings and Regional Representatives:
- o Excellent.
- o Good.
- o Fair.
- o Bad.
- o Don't know.

Briefly explain your choice:

_____
_____

Effectiveness of participation (related to the self-assessed impact on decision-making of MGS) through the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum:
o   Excellent
o   Good
o   Fair
o   Bad
o   Don't know
Briefly explain your choice:

_____
_____

2.3 Would you welcome the establishment of a permanent body that represents MGS in decision-making processes at UNEP?
o   Yes
o   No
o   Don't know
Briefly explain your choice:

_____
_____

2.4 What in your view would be important elements of such a body?
o   _____
_____
_____
_____

2.5 Should such a body be a representative body, including all MGS or an expert body with experts from MGS, focusing on thematic issues?
o   Representative Body.
o   Expert Body.
o   The body should have both functions.
o   Other, please specify: _____
o   Don't know.

2.6 Should UNEP create regional MGS bodies that advise and work closely with UNEP's Regional Offices?
o   Yes.
o   No.
o   Other. please specify: _____
o   Don't know.

3. **Rules and Procedures for Major Groups and other Stakeholders Participation in UNEP's work**

3.1 What is your preferred status for MGS in decision-making processes at UNEP? Please rank the following answers in order of preference (starting with 1 for the answer you like best).

___ Observers Status in selected bodies and committees
___ Observers Status in all relevant bodies and committees
___ Full participation in Consensus Decision-Making in selected bodies and committees with voting rights
___ Full participation in all relevant bodies and committees without voting rights
___ Full participation in all relevant bodies and committees with voting rights
___ Other, please specify_____
___ Don't know.

3.2 Currently, to participate in UNEP governing bodies, MGS need to be accredited with UNEP. Which of the necessary criteria below should be applied to future accreditation of MGS? Please choose all answers that apply.

o Work in the environmental field mainly

o Work related to sustainable development

o International scope of work

o Regional scope of work

o National scope of work

o Local scope of work

o Member of one of the nine Major Groups

o At least two years of existence

o Legal registration as non-governmental organization

o Legal registration as not-for-profit organization

o Demonstrated interest in supporting UNEP's objectives

o ECOSOC accreditation

o There should be no criteria. Every organization that desires to cooperate with UNEP should be granted accreditation.

o Other, please specify: _____

o Don't know.

3.3 Which process would you suggest for selecting MGS representatives to UNEP (e.g. for a permanent Body). Please choose only one answer.

o Formal, transparent election by all UNEP accredited organizations within each Major Group

o A selection process within each Major Group, with modalities transparently defined by the respective Major Group

o Other, please specify: _____

o Don't know.

3.4 According to you, which kind of regional representation of MGS in UNEP should be applied? Please choose only one answer.

- o Two regional representatives representing all accredited MGS organizations of a particular region.
- o Nine regional representatives (one per Major Group) for each region.
- o Other: please specify: _____
- o Don't know.

4. **Access to Information in UNEP**

   4.1 How do you rate the current access to information that is produced in UNEP? Please choose only one answer.
   - o   Excellent: I have access to all information that is relevant to my work.
   - o   Good: I have access to most of the information that is relevant to my work.
   - o   Fair: I have access to some of the information that is relevant to my work.
   - o   Bad: There is only limited access to information that is relevant to my work.
   - o   Don't know.

   4.2 How do your rate the timeliness of access to information at UNEP? Please choose only one answer.
   - o   Excellent: All information relevant to my work, including Governing Council documents, is provided in a timely manner and accessible for my organization, **always** allowing me to comment and to give input in time.
   - o   Good: Most information is provided in a timely manner, allowing me to comment and provide input **most of the time**.
   - o   Fair: Sometimes information relevant to my work is accessible in a timely manner, allowing me to **sometimes** comment and provide input in time.
   - o   Bad: Information relevant to my work is mostly provided **too late** to provide comments and input.
   - o   Don't know.

   4.3 What types of information from UNEP would you like access to? Please choose all answers that apply.
   - o   Reports and documents
   - o   Draft Governing Council documents, including draft decisions
   - o   Drafts of reports and documents
   - o   Media reports, press releases, etc.
   - o   Minutes of meetings, etc.
   - o   All written information that is produced by UNEP
   - o   Other:_____
   - o   Don't know.

4.4 In your opinion, should UNEP establish an appeals process making it possible for you to request information that UNEP has committed itself to publish but that is not publicly available?

- o Yes
- o No
- o Don't know.

Briefly explain your choice:

_____
_____

Best practices from other multilateral organizations and/or processes

4.5 In your view and experience, which multilateral organizations and/or processes have public information/disclosure policies that satisfy the needs of civil society? Please rank the three organizations (or less) that satisfy best the needs of Major Groups in order of preference (starting with 1 for the organization whose public information policy you favour) and briefly explain.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

5. The Nine Major Groups Concept

5.1 How do you rate the current Nine Major Groups concept, followed by UNEP and other UN institutions? Please choose only one answer.
- o Excellent.
- o Good.
- o Fair.
- o Bad.
- o Don't know.

5.2 Please explain why: (please explain your choice above)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5.3 Some multilateral organizations use the threefold *Government-Private Sector-NGOs*-approach to organize civil society participation in their work. According to you, which approach best facilitates participation of civil society and the private sector in UN institutions?
- o The 9 Major Groups approach
- o The Government-Private Sector-NGOs approach
- o Other, please specify: _____
- o Don't know

5.4 Which approach is best suited to maximize public participation in UNEP's work? Please describe.
- o _____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5.5 In your opinion, how should those organizations and movements that do not fit under the nine Major Groups structure be involved into UNEP's work? Please explain:
- o _____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6. **Participation of Major Groups and other stakeholders in UNEP's work at programmatic level**

6.1 How would you rate the current opportunities for MGS to participate in UNEP's work at programmatic level (e.g. development of Medium Term Strategy, Program of Work)? Please choose only one answer.
- o Excellent: MGS have sufficient possibilities to provide input into UNEP's programmatic work and contribute to the formulation of the plans.
- o Good: MGS are consulted and can give input.
- o Fair: MGS are informed, but have limited possibilities to provide input.
- o Bad: MGS have only very little possibility for input, and no timely access to relevant documents.
- o Don't know.

6.2 How would you rate the current opportunities for Major Groups and other stakeholders to participate in UNEP's work at the regional level, through UNEP regional/country offices? Please choose only one answer.
- o Excellent: MGS are regularly informed, consulted and given the opportunity to provide inputs.
- o Good: There are mechanisms in place to inform and consult MGS and give them an opportunity to provide inputs on a regular basis.
- o Fair: Sometimes MGS are informed, consulted and given an opportunity to provide inputs.
- o Bad: MGS are hardly informed and consulted and there are no real opportunities to provide inputs.
- o Don't know.

6.3 What is your experience in engaging in Project implementation and Partnerships with UNEP? Please explain
- o _____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

7. **Major Groups and other stakeholders involvement in UNEP through Modern Information Technologies**

   7.1 Would you agree or disagree with the following statements? Please choose only one answer.

   UNEP makes full use of the potential of modern information and communication technologies for the dissemination of information.
   - o Agree.
   - o Disagree.
   - o Don't know.

   Briefly explain your choice:

   _____

   _____

   Modern Information and communication technologies (e.g. internet and social media like facebook or twitter) provide an opportunity for MGS to participate more effectively in UNEP's work at the policy level.
   - o Agree.
   - o Disagree.
   - o Don't know.

   Briefly explain your choice:

   _____

   _____

   Modern Information and communication technologies provide an opportunity for MGS to participate more effectively in UNEP's work at the programmatic level.
   - o Agree.
   - o Disagree.
   - o Don't know.

   Briefly explain your choice:

   _____

   _____

   UNEP makes full use of the potential of modern information and communication technologies to involve MGS in its work at the policy level.
   - o Agree.
   - o Disagree.
   - o Don't know.

   Briefly explain your choice:

   _____

   _____

UNEP makes full use of the potential of modern information and communication technologies to involve MGS in its work at the programmatic level.

- o Agree.
- o Disagree.
- o Don't know.

Briefly explain your choice:

_____
_____

Participation through modern information and communication technologies can replace a formal process in which MGS participate in relevant meetings through physical presence.

- o Agree.
- o Disagree.
- o Don't know.

Briefly explain your choice:

_____
_____

7.2 At your location, do you have access to modern information and communication technologies that enables you to access information and communicate online with UNEP?

- o Yes
- o No

Please name your location:_____

7.3 Can you identify best practices related to the use of modern information and communication technologies for public participation and information in multilateral organizations and/or processes? (Please list the name of the institution and/or process you refer to and briefly explain how information and communication technologies are used in the selected context.)

- o _____
  _____
  _____
  _____