

UNEP Guidelines for Major Groups and Stakeholders Engagement at Ministerial Fora on the Environment and Other Intergovernmental Meetings at the Regional Level



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Produced and written by

Civil Society Unit

Governance Affairs Office

United Nations Environment Programme, Nairobi, Kenya

E-mail: unep-civilsociety@un.org

Web: www.unenvironment.org/civil-society-engagement

Design and Layout

Isaiah Otieno from UNEP's Civil Society Unit.

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INTRODUCTION

For more than 50 years, civil society stakeholders have been key contributors to implementing the mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), including at the regional and sub-regional level. The United Nations (UN) General Assembly, through Section IV, paragraph 5, of General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII)¹ invited other intergovernmental and those non-governmental organizations that have an interest in the field of the environment to lend their full support and collaboration to the UN with a view to achieving the largest possible degree of co-operation and co-ordination. At the regional level, Member States have obligated themselves to provide opportunities for public participation in environmental decision making including by signing and ratifying international agreements such as the Aarhus Convention (with the Almaty Guidelines providing guidance on how to engage the public in international processes) or the Escazu Convention.

UNEP strives to ensure effective, broad, and balanced participation of Major Groups and Stakeholders as they play a central role in providing expertise and relevant knowledge. They also channel the voices of those most likely to be directly affected by environmental problems and related policies, and call needed attention to emerging issues as they reach out to their respective communities and the public at large.

Engagement of Major Groups and Stakeholders in the work of UNEP governing bodies is based on Rule 70 of the rules of procedure of UNEA which states:

XIII. Observers of International Non-Governmental Organizations

Rule 70 of the Rules of Procedure of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme

International non-governmental organizations having an interest in the field of the environment, referred to in section IV, paragraph 5, of General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) [of 15 December 1972], may designate representatives to sit as observers at public meetings of the United Nations Environment Assembly and its subsidiary organs, if any. The United Nations Environment Assembly shall from time to time adopt and revise, when necessary, a list of such organizations. Upon the invitation of the President or Chairperson, as the case may be, and subject to the approval of the United Nations Environment Assembly or of the subsidiary organ concerned, international non-governmental organizations may make oral statements on matters within the scope of their activities.

Written statements provided by international non-governmental organizations referred to in paragraph 1 above, related to items on the agenda of the United Nations Environment Assembly or of

¹ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2997 (XXVII) on Institutional and financial arrangements for international environmental cooperation, 15th December 1972 (UN Doc A/RES/2997(XXVII)), <http://www.un-documents.net/a27r2997.htm>

its subsidiary organs, shall be circulated by the Secretariat to members of the United Nations Environment Assembly or of the subsidiary organ concerned in the quantities and in the languages in which the statements were made available to the Secretariat for distribution.

Furthermore, the Rio+20 Outcome Document, “The Future We Want,” adopted in June 2012, agreed to act on a number of far-reaching decisions towards a more equitable and sustainable world. In paragraph 88, Member States committed to strengthening the role of UNEP as “(...) *the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment,*” while paragraph 88(h) requests UNEP to “*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.*”

Mechanisms for the engagement of Major Groups and Stakeholders with UNEA and UNEP are described in UNEP’s Stakeholder Engagement Handbook².

It is in this context that UNEP engages with Member States and Major Groups and Stakeholders **at the regional level** by organising, facilitating, and supporting Regional Ministerial Forums and other regional intergovernmental meetings that serve inter alia as preparatory and follow up meetings to the UNEA and its subsidiary and inter-sessional bodies, or that are otherwise connected to the work of the UNEP.

To ensure a unified and meaningful approach to engaging Major Groups and Stakeholders in the intergovernmental decision-making process at the regional level and to maintain high standards for such engagement, UNEP has developed these guidelines that present how **MGS engagement may be organized at the regional level and sub-regional level in line with applicable UNEP or UN rules and regulations. Furthermore, these guidelines present recommendations for organising Major Groups and Stakeholder engagement for activities that are not covered by these rules and regulations.** These guidelines also help ensure that - in line with “The Future We Want” - *best practices* for stakeholder engagement are applied.

² <https://www.unep.org/resources/publication/stakeholder-engagement-handbook>

In this context, UNEP fully respects the right of member states to develop their own mechanisms for stakeholder engagement in events that are not governed by UNEP or UNEA rules of procedure.

REGIONAL MINISTERIAL FORUMS AND OTHER INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETINGS IN PREPARATION FOR THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY

The UNEA at its 2nd session (UNEA-2) in May 2016 adopted resolution 2/2 'Role and functions of the regional forums of ministers of environment and environment authorities' in which it requested the Executive Director, within the mandate of UNEP to support and to facilitate convening and/or strengthening the existing regional forums of ministers of environment and environment authorities.

Currently, there are the following Regional Ministerial Forums, which are usually convened to discuss matters scheduled for tabling at UNEA, with the aim of forming common negotiating positions of the relevant regional group at UNEA:

Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean

The Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean was established in 1982 and is the oldest and most relevant cooperation body for environmental authorities in the region. The UNEP Office for Latin America and the Caribbean hosts the Secretary of this forum.

In 2022, the Forum celebrated its 40th anniversary, in liaison with the commemorations of the 50th anniversary of UNEP.

The Forum serves as a platform for the Member States and other stakeholders to contribute regional perspectives to the United Nations Environment Assembly.

UNEP Regional Consultative Meetings of MGS for Latin America and the Caribbean usually take place in conjunction with the Forum.

The Forum at its 22nd meeting from 1 to 2 February 2021 adopted the Rules of Procedure of the United Nations Environment Assembly, mutatis mutandis, to govern the proceedings of the

Meeting.³ The Forum therefore applies the rules regarding participation of NGOs as observers at the Forum, at a standard like that governing their participation at UNEA.

African Ministerial Conference on the Environment

The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) was established in December 1985, following a conference of African ministers of environment held in Cairo, Egypt. Its mandate is to provide advocacy for environmental protection in Africa; to ensure that basic human needs are met adequately and in a sustainable manner; to ensure that social and economic development is realized at all levels; and to ensure that agricultural activities and practices meet the food security needs of the region. It also serves as an African preparatory meeting to UNEA.

AMCEN's role includes, among others:

- Providing continent-wide leadership by promoting awareness and consensus on global and regional environmental issues;
- Developing common positions to guide African representatives in negotiations for legally binding international environmental agreements;
- Promoting African participation in international dialogue on global issues of importance to Africa;
- Reviewing and monitoring environmental programmes at the regional, sub-regional and national levels;
- Providing regional strategic and policy guidance to promote sound environmental management for sustainable development
- Promoting the ratification by African countries of multilateral environmental agreements relevant to the region;
- Building African capacity in the field of environmental management.

During its meetings, AMCEN provides opportunities for Major Groups and Stakeholders to engage with the intergovernmental process. UNEP Regional Consultative Meetings for MGS from Africa usually take place in conjunction with AMCEN meetings.

Article 15 of the Constitution of AMCEN on observers, provides as follows:

³ UNEP/LAC-IG.XXII/7, XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, Bridgetown, Barbados, 1 – 2 February 2021, Agenda Item II: Organization of work <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1n1PGgQohFJ7BJ0xSQuYdRQBrRuasfulg/edit> ; also available here: <https://www.unep.org/events/unep-event/xxii-forum-ministers-environment-latin-america-and-caribbean>

Article 15

1. The Conference may invite observers to its' meetings. Observers may include the following:
 - (a) national or sub-regional institutions and organisations involved in business, trade, industry and investment promotion, private sector, intergovernmental, non-governmental or civil society organisation whose activities relate to environment management or sustainable development.
 - (b) development partners, and international or multilateral organizations involved in providing assistance to environment and sustainable development of Africa.
2. The specialized United Nations organs may participate as observers at the Conference.
3. The conditions for admission and participation of observers shall be as prescribed in the Rules of Procedure of the Conference.

The AMCEN rules are similar to the UNEA rules with respect to participation of NGOs as observers in the Conference. Rule 64 of the AMCEN rules of procedure on observers of non-governmental organizations provides as follows:

Rule 64

1. International non-governmental organizations and other observer institutions referred to in [Article 15]⁴ of the Constitution recommended by the Bureau and approved by the Conference may designate representatives to sit as observers at meetings of the Conference or its subsidiary organs, as decided by the Conference. The Conference shall from time to time adopt and revise when necessary, a list of such organizations. Upon the invitation of the President or Chairman, as the case maybe, and subject to the approval of the Conference or of the subsidiary organ concerned such observers' organizations may make oral statements on matters within the scope of their activities.

With respect to conditions for admission of observers at AMCEN therefore, the list of representatives of NGO observers is recommended by the Bureau and approved by the Conference, thus enabling their participation and delivery of statements at the Conference.

⁴ AMCEN Rules of procedure (Jan 1997) refer to Article 13 of the Constitution. See:

https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/40462/AMCEN_RoP.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Following amendment of the Constitution, the Feb 2004 version of the Constitution has the relevant article on observers of AMCEN as Article 15. See

<https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/20704/RevisedDraftConstitutionEng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific

The Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific had its first session in in May 2015 and since then it convened every two years.

The Forum serves as a platform for the Member States and other stakeholders to contribute regional perspectives to the United Nations Environment Assembly. Themes of the forums usually mirror the theme of the upcoming UNEA.

Since its inception the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific has seen an increased participation of Major Groups and Stakeholders, including parallel events such as the Asia-Pacific Youth Environment Assembly, the Asia Pacific Major Group and Stakeholders Forum and the Asia-Pacific Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment.

The Forum at its second session considered the report on the senior official's segment which included the text of the senior officials report under Agenda item 9 on institutional arrangements. As proposed in the note, the future meetings of the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities would be invited to adopt UNEA rules of procedure to apply *mutatis mutandis* and as appropriate to its meetings.⁵ As such, the UNEA rules regarding participation of NGOs as observers would apply to future meetings of the Forum.

Other regions

In other regions, Ministerial Forum are organised on an ad-hoc basis, and without a special focus on discussions at UNEA.

Ministers of Environment from Arab Countries regularly convene in the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment (CAMRE). Ministers of Environment from Europe regularly meet within the Environment for Europe Process (EfE)⁶, while there are no regular meetings of Ministers of the Environment from North America.

These forums have their own mechanisms for engaging Major Groups and Stakeholders.

⁵ UNEP/APEnvForum(2)/7 Second Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific Bangkok, 5-8 September 2017, Chair's summary of the second United Nations Environment Programme Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific,

<https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/35952/ChairAP.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y> ; see also UNEP/APEnvForum(2)/6 Report of the senior officials of the second United Nations Environment Programme Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific para 30

<https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/35946/AP2.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>

⁶ The "Environment for Europe" process is a unique partnership of member States within the UNECE region, organizations of the United Nations system represented in the region, other intergovernmental organizations, regional environmental centres, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and other major groups. The process and its Ministerial Conferences provide a high-level platform for stakeholders to discuss, decide and join efforts in addressing environmental priorities across the 56 countries of the UNECE region, and is a regional pillar of sustainable development

Other regional intergovernmental meetings

In all regions, other intergovernmental meetings may be organised with the involvement of UNEP or with UNEP providing secretariat functions. Such meetings can for instance be held in the context of implementation of UNEA resolutions.

In organising such meetings, UNEP supports and recommends the meaningful engagement of Major Groups and Stakeholders, applying standards in line with those at meetings of UNEA and its subsidiary bodies.

MAJOR GROUPS AND STAKEHOLDERS' ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

UNEP strives to ensure effective, broad, and balanced participation of Major Groups and Stakeholders at the global, regional, sub-regional, national, and local level, as they play a central role in providing expertise and scientific knowledge, informing governments of local needs and opinions, as well as identifying the “on the ground” realities of policy decisions.

Based upon guiding principles, UNEP recognizes and engages with at least nine categories of stakeholders represented by not-for-profit and non-governmental organizations, namely: Farmers; Women; Scientific and technological community; Children and Youth; Indigenous Peoples and their Communities; Workers and Trade Unions; Business and industry; Non-governmental Organizations; and Local Authorities.

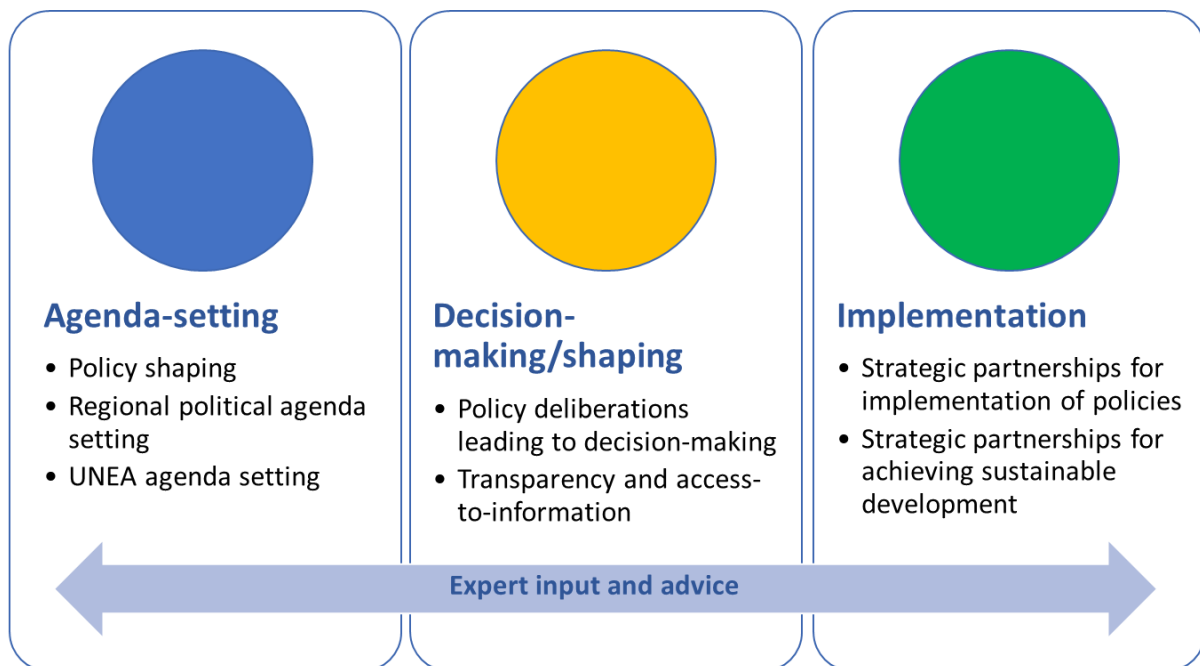
Recognizing that since Agenda 21, the stakeholder landscape has become more diverse and in line with Paragraph 43 of “The Future We Want”, UNEP recommends the cooperation with non-governmental organizations that are not covered under the nine Major Groups, including foundations not covered under the Business and Industry Major Group.

For regional intergovernmental meetings on the environment -including those at ministerial level- UNEP applies and recommends the following guiding principles with respect to stakeholder engagement:

- *Acknowledgement of the intergovernmental nature of intergovernmental processes:* political decision-making remains the prerogative of Member States;
- *Participation as observers in decision-making processes:* Participation and access privileges to be given to all UNEP accredited stakeholders. In addition, regional forums might develop their own accreditation process;

- *Access to information*: acknowledging the critical importance of disseminating and making accessible information publicly accessible;
- *Transparency and accountability for mutual benefit*: engagement with Major Groups and Stakeholders is based on the premise of mutual trust and benefit, transparency, responsibility and accountability;
- *Respect for diversity of views and self-organization*: Acknowledgment of the diversity of views among its stakeholders and, in striving for greater openness and with a view to embracing the full spectrum of civil society actors, will ensure that those differing voices are heard, including those outside the nine Major Groups;
- *Improvements to current engagement practices*: UNEP stakeholder engagement mechanisms should be looked at as the baseline for the development of new and more progressive mechanism, in line with the “The Future We Want”.

Levels of engagement with Major Groups:



Engaging with the Private Sector

UNEP recommends that the private sector engages with intergovernmental processes through the Business and Industry Major Group, that may include individual companies as members. Given the

importance of the private sector with respect to the implementation of environmental solutions and the reduction of pollution, UNEP recommends mechanisms such as Science-Policy-Business Forums to allow interaction between member states, the business community and others outside of political forums.

Overview: mandatory⁷ and recommended engagement of Major Groups

Event/Activity	Engagement Approach	Participation of Major Groups	Right for written and oral intervention	Participation of Private Sector	MGS Preparatory Meeting	Access to Information
UNEA and subsidiary bodies meeting	Nine Major Groups	Only UNEP accredited organizations	Yes	Through the Business and Industry Major Group	Global Major Groups and Stakeholder Forum (mandatory)	Full access to all relevant working documents
Regional Ministerial Meetings with UNEP as the Secretariat	-Nine Major Groups -If decided by Member States additional Major Groups may participate	-UNEP accredited organizations (mandatory) -Organizations accredited with other UN bodies, e.g. those in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) (to be decided by Member States) (recommended) -Others in addition and if own accreditation mechanisms is in place (recommended)	Yes	Through the Business and Industry Major Group	Regional Consultative Meeting or other form of MGS preparatory meeting	Full access to all relevant working documents
Intergovernmental Meetings to implement UNEA resolutions, with UNEP as the Secretariat, at global and regional level	-Nine Major Groups -If decided by member states additional Major Groups	-UNEP accredited organizations (mandatory) -Others in addition and if own accreditation mechanism is in place (recommended)	Yes	-Through the Business and Industry Major Group -Through other mechanisms decided by Member States	Recommended	Full access to all relevant working documents
Other regional environmental inter-governmental meetings without UNEP as the Secretariat	-Nine Major Groups (recommended) -Additional Major Groups (recommended)	-UNEP accredited organizations (recommended) -Organizations accredited with other UN bodies, e.g. ECOSOC (recommended) -Others in addition and if own accreditation mechanisms in place (recommended)	Recommended	-Through the Business and Industry Major Group (recommended) -Through other mechanisms decided by Member States	Recommended	Full access to all relevant working documents recommended

⁷ In line with applicable UNEP and UNEA rules and regulations.

UNEP ACCREDITATION AND RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF ACCREDITED ORGANIZATIONS

The purpose of accreditation is to provide non-governmental organizations with observer status to the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA).

To be granted accreditation, an organization needs to:

- Be a not-for-profit non-governmental organization with an international scope of work;
- Be registered as a legal entity in at least one Member State;
- Have an interest in the field of environment and/or sustainable development;
- Be in existence for at least two years at the time of the application.

UNEP accredited organizations are allowed to participate as observers in all meetings of UNEA and its subsidiary bodies, including those resulting from UNEA resolutions such as the International Negotiation Committee towards a treaty on plastic pollution.

UNEP recommends that inter-governmental environmental meetings at the regional level welcome registration and participation of UNEP accredited organizations, as well as NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC. Other specific processes or forums may be encouraged to consider alternative accreditation mechanisms, in line with an aim at widening and not limiting the access for Major Groups.

Responsibilities and obligations of UNEP accredited stakeholders

All UNEP accredited stakeholders must fulfill the following obligations:

- Act in accordance with the relevant rules of procedure for any meeting or session which they attend,
- Comply with registration requirements and seating arrangements for any meeting or session which they attend. Meeting and session organizers are encouraged to ensure that enough seating is made available for all nine Major Groups and Stakeholders during public sessions to facilitate their participation. In situations where seating is limited, stakeholders may be asked to designate representatives to occupy the available seats;

Accreditation does not imply that the activities of the organization are formally supported or in any way endorsed by the accrediting authority. The name and emblem of UNEP, the United Nations or the regional forum, or any abbreviation thereof may not be used in connection with the organization or otherwise without the written permission of UNEP, the UN or the Secretariat of the Forum.

Rights of UNEP accredited organizations

UNEP accredited organizations are afforded the following to facilitate their participation at UNEA. It is recommended that all organizations accredited to a specific regional process or otherwise allowed to participate are afforded:

- Access to all public sessions and meetings, physical, online or hybrid, including plenaries, opening sessions, ministerial dialogues (when convened), leadership dialogues, multi-stakeholder dialogue, and other sessions, in accordance with the respective rules of procedure. Should participation in a particular meeting be restricted, an advance notification shall be issued. Dates, venues and agenda of the meetings are to be provided in a timely manner by the Secretariat. The Secretariat may have to limit the number of participating individuals per organization, due to space constraints.
- Designated seats reserved for Major Groups and Stakeholders in all public meetings. Major Groups and Stakeholders will self-organize to designate their representatives according to criteria they establish.
- Access to documents publicly available on websites and portals, including draft working documents, official documents, and reports. Access to documents should be provided in a timely manner, with accredited stakeholders granted access to relevant information portals. Input received from Major Groups and Stakeholders should be made available on the relevant web portals.
- Opportunity to circulate written submissions to the regional forum or meeting, which can include contributions and recommendations for agenda items of sessions of UNEA and its subsidiary organs as well as recommendations on draft decisions for consideration by Member States. Major Groups and Stakeholders' contributions and recommendations should be submitted to the Secretariat for distribution to Member States allowing sufficient time for consideration by the relevant body.
- Opportunity to deliver statements during public meetings of the regional forum or meeting, in accordance with the relevant rules of procedure. Session Presidents or Chairs can provide opportunities for accredited stakeholders to speak on topics of interest in these meetings, including as keynote speakers, panelists, facilitators, and moderators.
- Opportunity to organize side events on issues relevant to theme of the meeting.

MAJOR GROUPS AND STAKEHOLDERS BODIES – SPACES AND ROLES

In working with Major Groups and Stakeholders their right to self-organize is fully acknowledged and respected.

Major Groups and Stakeholders engage *with UNEP* through the **Major Groups Facilitating Committee (MGFC)** that provides guidance and facilitates the engagement of UNEP-accredited Major Groups in the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum and annual **Regional Consultative Meetings (RCMs)**, some of them held back-to-back with Regional Ministerial Forums, as well as participation in the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA).

At the regional level, Regional Facilitators play an important role as elected facilitators of UNEP accredited organizations from a given region. Along with two elected members of each Major Group, two Regional Facilitators per region are observers to the Major Groups Facilitating Committee.

Two Regional Facilitators per region are elected by accredited organizations, preferably by means of an electronic nomination and voting process self-organized by accredited organizations, or upon request by UNEP. The Regional Facilitators shall attend UNEA sessions and shall demonstrate expertise relevant to the theme of the session, if the theme is already known. Regional Facilitators must come from organizations accredited to UNEP and ideally be from different sub-regions to ensure balanced representation (Latin America and Caribbean for example or South and North Africa, or USA and Canada etc.). Regional Facilitators normally serve a minimum two-year term – or until the next election – and participate as observers on the MGFC.

Regional Facilitators are expected to adhere to the Code of Conduct presented in UNEP’s Stakeholder Engagement Handbook. They may use the title: **“Regional Facilitators of Major Groups and Stakeholders, Name of the Region.”**

Regional Facilitators play a facilitating and expert role and have no mandate to formally represent their region or Major Groups and Stakeholders from their region, unless there is a consulted and agreed position on a specific issue. They may present agreed positions emerging from UNEP Regional Consultative Meetings (RCMs) in the context of UNEP, as well as from other consultation mechanisms developed during their term. They are elected to present regional views of Major Groups and Stakeholders, to UNEA and its subsidiary organs, e. g. by contributing to the UNEA Inf doc that presents the outcomes of Regional Consultative Meetings, as well as in other meetings that may be convened.

In the absence of positions agreed among Major Groups from a specific region, Regional Facilitators are not entitled to make official statements on behalf of their region.

Regional Facilitators work closely with UNEP Regional Offices in organizing Regional Consultative Meetings, often back-to-back to Regional Ministerial Meetings, and any other meetings that involve Major Groups and Stakeholders from a given region. Furthermore, Regional Facilitators and regional

MGs will work with the UNEP Regional Offices in organizing Regional Ministerial Forum, helping to ensure and facilitate MGs participation and contributions.

An up-to-date list of Regional Facilitators and members of the MGFC can be found here: <https://www.unep.org/civil-society-engagement/major-groups-modalities/regional-facilitators>.

FUNDING FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

In order to enable representatives from Major Groups to participate in regional meetings, financial support is often required. Funding for some stakeholder participation, e.g., in UNEA or Regional Consultative Meetings is included in UNEP's programme of work and budget. UNEP makes it a priority to mobilize adequate funding, including through extra-budgetary resources, to support stakeholder participation, particularly for stakeholders from developing countries. However, UNEP is not able to *commit* itself to financial support to Major Groups and Stakeholders for participation in meetings or activities. **Thus, it is recommended that budgets for regional inter-governmental meetings include budget lines for funding the participation of Major Groups and Stakeholders and that related fundraising activities take place.**

CODE OF CONDUCT AT MEETINGS HOSTED BY THE UNITED NATIONS

The following code of conduct applies for the participation of Major Groups and Stakeholders at meetings *hosted by the United Nations*:

- Only representatives whose names have been communicated to the Secretariat through the designated contact are admitted to sessions of the Conference and shall be registered and receive a badge.
- Badges issued at registration shall always be worn visibly.
- Participants shall be prepared to have their identity verified upon the request of United Nations officials or security staff.
- Participants from accredited organizations shall normally be at least 18 years of age. Younger participants, e.g., from the Children and Youth Major Group, may be registered at the discretion of the Secretariat, if accompanied by a chaperone.
- Individuals from accredited civil society organizations admitted to sessions shall cooperate and comply with requests and instructions from United Nations officials and security staff regarding the use of facilities and access to and conduct within the venues.
- No participant shall harass or threaten any other participant.

- Interfering with the movement of participants at any time or location within the venues is not permitted.
- The flags and any officially recognized symbols of the United Nations and of its Member States shall not be treated with disrespect.
- Participants from accredited civil society organizations may only use assigned seats.
- Participants from accredited civil society organizations are not allowed to occupy seats behind Government signs unless they are part of official delegations or unless they are invited by the specific Member State to do so.
- To indicate a request to speak, participants from accredited civil society organizations, seated behind the nameplate for “major groups and stakeholders” should push the “speak” button on the console with the microphone in front of them. The request will go into a queue which is managed by the Chair/President. The right to speak is given by the Chair/President of the meeting, who will consider protocol requirements. Once the floor is given to a “Major group”, the red light on the microphone will light up and the speaker will be visible on the big screen, where applicable.
- Statements that are read in the sessions must be submitted to the UNEP Secretariat for documentation and recording purposes.
- Written statements that were not read out publicly can be submitted for online upload and sharing purposes.
- Demonstrations or any other assemblies are only permitted with prior approval of UNEP. Demonstrations that are held without such approval might result in eviction from the UN compound and lifetime loss of the right to enter any UN compound.

UN System Code of Conduct to prevent harassment, including sexual harassment

The United Nations has published the United Nations System Code of Conduct to prevent harassment, including sexual harassment, at UN system events: <https://www.un.org/en/content/codeofconduct/>.

The information can be found below:

Purpose

The organizations of the United Nations system are committed to enabling events at which everyone can participate in an inclusive, respectful, and safe environment.

UN system events are guided by the highest ethical and professional standards, and all participants are expected to behave with integrity and respect towards all participants attending or involved with any UN system event.

Applicability

The Code of Conduct applies to any UN system event, which shall include meetings, conferences and symposia, assemblies, receptions, scientific and technical events, expert meetings, workshops, exhibits, side events and any other forum organized, hosted or sponsored in whole or part by a UN system entity wherever it takes place, and any event or gathering that takes place on UN system premises whether or not a UN system entity is organizing, hosting or sponsoring.

The Code of Conduct applies to all participants at a UN system event, including all persons attending or involved in any capacity in a UN system event.

The UN system or other entity responsible for a UN system event commits to implementing the Code of Conduct.

The Code of Conduct is not legal or prescriptive in nature. It supplements, and does not affect, the application of other relevant policies, regulations, rules and laws, including laws regulating the premises in which the UN system event takes place and any applicable host country agreements.

Prohibited conduct

Harassment is any improper or unwelcome conduct that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another person. Harassment in any form because of gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, physical ability, physical appearance, ethnicity, race, national origin, political affiliation, age, religion or any other reason is prohibited at UN system events.

Sexual harassment is a specific type of prohibited conduct. Sexual harassment is any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offense or humiliation. Sexual harassment may involve any conduct of a verbal, nonverbal or physical nature, including written and electronic communications and may occur between persons of the same or different genders.

Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- Making derogatory or demeaning comments about someone's sexual orientation or gender identity
- Name-calling or using slurs with a gender/sexual connotation
- Making sexual comments about appearance, clothing or body parts
- Rating a person's sexuality
- Repeatedly asking a person for dates or asking for sex
- Staring in a sexually suggestive manner
- Unwelcome touching, including pinching, patting, rubbing or purposefully brushing up against a person
- Making inappropriate sexual gestures, such as pelvic thrusts
- Sharing sexual or lewd anecdotes or jokes
- Sending sexually suggestive communications in any format
- Sharing or displaying sexually inappropriate images or videos in any format
- Attempted or actual sexual assault, including rape

Complaint process

A participant who feels that they have been harassed at a UN system event may report the matter to the organizer of the UN system event or relevant security authority, and a participant who witnesses such harassment should make such a report. Such reporting shall have no effect on any applicable rules and procedures that may apply in the UN system or to other personnel. The organizer of the UN system event will be expected to take appropriate action in accordance with its applicable policies, regulations and rules.

Examples of appropriate action may include, but are not limited to:

- undertaking a fact-finding exercise
- requesting the perpetrator to immediately stop the offending behavior
- suspending or terminating the perpetrator's access to the UN system event or refusing registration at future UN system events, or both
- conveying the complaint to any investigative or disciplinary authority with jurisdiction over the person accused of harassment
- conveying a report to the employer or entity with jurisdiction over the person accused of harassment for appropriate follow-up action

The victim of alleged harassment may also seek help from other relevant authorities, such as the police, bearing in mind the applicable legal framework.

A participant should never knowingly make a false or misleading claim about prohibited conduct.

Prohibition of retaliation

Threats, intimidation, or any other form of retaliation against a participant who has made a complaint or provided information in support of a complaint are prohibited. The UN system or other entity responsible for a UN system event will take any reasonable appropriate action needed to prevent and respond to retaliation, in accordance with its applicable policy, regulations and rules.

USEFUL RESOURCES

UNEP Stakeholder Engagement Handbook: <https://www.unep.org/resources/publication/stakeholder-engagement-handbook>

UNEP Civil Society Website: <https://www.unep.org/civil-society-engagement>