

Meeting of the Bureau of the Ad hoc open-ended working group on a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution

Monday, 26 June 2023

16:00 – 18:00 (EAT; GMT + 3)

Online meeting

Agenda item 5: Engagement of stakeholders in the OEWG meetings and process

Established practices for the participation of accredited representatives of Major Groups and Stakeholders in meetings of UNEA and its subsidiary bodies.

A. Background

1. Stakeholder participation in the process to establish a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution is regulated by the [UNEA rules of procedure](#)¹ and in paragraph 7 of [UNEA resolution 5/8](#), which reads as follows: “*Decides that the ad hoc open-ended working group should include Governments and regional economic integration organizations and be open to observers from United Nations entities, relevant multilateral agreements, other international instruments and intergovernmental bodies, including those that are members of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals, and stakeholder representatives*”.

2. At its [meeting on 25 April 2023](#), under agenda item 4: Engagement of civil society and academia in the OEWG meetings and process, the OEWG SPP Bureau underlined the need to ensure inclusive participation of all relevant stakeholders in the meetings, including with regard to plenary interventions, and questions were raised whether the Major Groups and Stakeholder approach as applied in UNEA and its subsidiary bodies will allow for that. The Secretariat explained that the Major Groups and Stakeholders approach is sufficiently broad and flexible to allow for all accredited Stakeholders to participate actively, that large Major Groups (such as the NGO Major Group) may choose to be divided into subgroups such as thematic groups on certain issues of interest and priority, and that jointly prepared statements from the Major Groups may be complemented by additional statements in plenary as well as during informal negotiations, subject to the agreement of the Chair of the meeting.

3. Following the discussion, the Chair requested the Secretariat to prepare an additional document outlining the concrete practices applied by Major Groups and Stakeholders when participating in meetings of UNEA and its subsidiary bodies, for further consideration at a future Bureau meeting. This document responds to this request.

4. This paper does not address issues linked to stakeholder accreditation – which has been extensively described in the Secretariat background document for the OEWG Bureau meeting referred to above, available [here](#).

B. Established practices for the participation of accredited representatives of Major Groups and Stakeholders in meetings of UNEA and its subsidiary bodies

5. UNEA and its subsidiary bodies apply the so-called Major Groups and Stakeholders (MGS) approach to stakeholder participation, which was established at the UN Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio in 1992. The nine Major Groups are as follows: 1) Farmers; 2) Women; 3) The Scientific and Technological Community, 4) Children and Youth; 5) Indigenous Peoples and

¹ Rule 70 regulates the participation of observers of international non-governmental organizations.

their Communities; 6) Workers, and Trade Unions; 7) Business and Industry; 8) Non-Governmental Organizations; and 9) Local Authorities.

6. As a general practice, [UNEA-accredited MGS](#) are invited to participate in all meetings of UNEA and its subsidiary bodies and any processes that apply the [UNEA rules of procedure](#). Some processes, such as UNEA itself, also provide for a dedicated informal dialogue with MGS under the so-called Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue, which is organized during the high-level segment of UNEA with active participation of both stakeholder representatives and high-level Member States representatives (including ministers of the environment). The theme of the dialogue is usually defined by MGS themselves, in consultation with the Secretariat and the UNEA Presidency. MGS representatives also contribute actively to the UNEA high level dialogues organized during the high-level segment.

7. The work of accredited MGS is largely self-organized, often coordinated and facilitated by a Major Groups Facilitating Committee (MGFC), which consists of two elected facilitators per Major Group and Region, through an online voting process that can be supported by the Secretariat upon request.

8. Accredited MGS often meet in advance of intergovernmental meetings to coordinate and agree on joint statements to the meeting. For example, a 2-day [Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum \(GMGSF\)](#) meeting is organized in advance of UNEA.

9. In addition, accredited MGS also organize [Regional Consultative Meetings \(RCMs\)](#) in collaboration with the UNEP Regional Offices, which are usually organized back-to-back with regional environment ministerial fora or other regional intergovernmental meetings which are part of the intergovernmental preparatory process for UNEA.

10. Based on UN rules and best practice, MGS participation in UNEA and its subsidiary bodies can be summarized as follows:

- *While all decision-making in intergovernmental meetings remains the prerogative of Member States, accredited MGS have the right to participate in-person or online in the meetings – provided that they fully respect the relevant rules of procedure;*
- *Designated seats are reserved for Major Groups and Stakeholders in all public meetings of UNEA and its subsidiary organs;*
 - Usually, seats with designated nameplates for each major group and MGS region regional are allocated at the meetings.
 - Provided that additional seating is available, other MGS name plates may also be allocated. In some cases, the number of in-person participants per MGS organization may be limited due to space constraints.
- *Accredited MGS representatives have full access to all information relevant for the meetings, including online access to all meeting documents, at the same time as Member States;*
 - All documentation is made available online on open meeting portals.
- *Accredited MGS representatives may submit written contributions to the meeting through the Secretariat, which will be posted online on request through the Secretariat;*
 - Subject to the agreement of the chair, MGS representatives may present positions or text proposals during intergovernmental informal consultations and negotiations.

- *Accredited MGS may make oral statements at meetings, often in the form of prepared statements per Major Group, and usually delivered at the end after Member States' interventions;*
 - Accredited MGS representatives may speak on any topic of interest in these meetings.
 - MGS representatives may also be invited to formal or informal dialogues and events, for example as keynote speakers, panelists, moderators or experts.
- *Accredited MGS often also have the opportunity to organize specific side events on issues relevant to the meeting, or to contribute to other events organized by Member States or the Secretariat.*

11. Specific modalities for the participation of MGS representatives – including for oral statements and textual proposals – are determined by the chair of an intergovernmental meeting. It is common practice that the chair of the meeting will allow for a limited number of statements from Major Groups and Stakeholders at each meeting, usually to be delivered after the statements from Member States unless decided otherwise by the chair. MGS are also usually free to make texts and documents available to all delegations, but they may not present and argue for them in negotiations.

12. The role of the Secretariat is to facilitate the participation of accredited MGS representatives in the meetings, including through providing guidance, training and limited funding for travel and accommodation through daily subsistence allowance, subject to the provision of extrabudgetary resources by Member States. Travel support is usually limited to the elected MGFS representatives. Additional information on how this support is provided is available on the [UNEP civil society engagement portal](#).

13. MGS are encouraged to respect a diversity of views between and within Major Groups, to ensure as far as possible that all voices are heard. This includes accredited non-governmental representatives who do not necessarily subscribe to any of the nine Major Groups.

14. Recognizing that the stakeholder landscape has become more diverse since the Rio conference in 1992, and in line with Paragraph 43 of the Rio + 20 outcome document "[The Future We Want](#)", the Secretariat also cooperates with non-governmental organizations that do not consider themselves to be associated under the nine Major Groups, including for example foundations, faith groups, informal workers associations, health organizations or academic institutions. For accreditation purposes, these organizations are nevertheless requested to be accredited and registered under one of the nine Major Groups.

15. In an informal document shared with the OEWG SPP Bureau by the Chair in advance of the Bureau meeting on 25 April 2023, the Chair outlined her proposal for the speaking arrangements and text submissions as follows:

"Whereas in plenary Member State representatives will be given the floor on any specific agenda item before Stakeholder representatives, stakeholder representatives attending in contact groups and in informal consultations, may be given the floor during the discussion, at the discretion of the co-facilitator. Stakeholders will be allowed to make text proposals in the contact groups provided that they are supported by a Member State, in line with the practice in the meetings of some Multilateral Environmental Agreements."

16. The Secretariat considers that this approach outlined by the OEWG Chair is fully aligned with the standard practice applied for UNEA and its subsidiary bodies.

C. Participation of representatives from the academic institutions and health-focused stakeholders in the OEWG SPP process

17. Specifically with regard to the participation of representatives from the academic institutions and health-focused stakeholders in the OEWG SPP process, several challenges have been identified:

- *Representation*: how to ensure that individual participants from academic institutions are representative for the scientific community in general?
- *Cooperation*: how to encourage individual academic experts to work through the established MGS approach and channels?
- *Breaking the silos*: how to promote the participation of representatives from academia that are interdisciplinary?

18. To address these challenges, the following proposals may be considered:

- Providing specific additional seats with designated name plates for academic institutions and/or health NGOs.
- Reaching out to the elected major group facilitators for the science and technology major group as well as to established associations and networks within the scientific community (e.g., International Science Council, Royal Society of Chemistry, Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry, International Panel on Chemical Pollution, etc.), to jointly promote a coordinated approach for academic representatives to contribute to the OEWG process.
- Reaching out to relevant health-focused stakeholders, including NGOs engaged under the auspices of the World Health Organization, to encourage active participation in the OEWG SPP process, also building on recent resolutions from adopted by World Health Assembly.
- Offering dedicated online briefings on how to engage meaningfully in the OEWG SPP process to interested stakeholders not familiar with the MGS system, focusing on rules of engagement, established practices and the UNEA accreditation process.