



UN  NGLS 
Non-Governmental Liaison Service

HANDBOOK

FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Acronyms

COW	Committee of the Whole
CPR	Committee of Permanent Representatives
CRP	Conference Room Paper
DCPI	Division of Communications and Public Information
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
ENB	Earth Negotiations Bulletin
GC	Governing Council
HLPF	High-level Political Forum
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
MG	Major Group
MGFC	Major Groups Facilitating Committee
MGS	Major Groups and Stakeholders
MGSB	Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch
MTS	Medium-Term Strategy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECPR	Open-Ended Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives
POW	Programme of Work
RCM	Regional Consultative Meeting
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGSB	Secretariat of Governing Bodies and Stakeholders
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly

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Introduction

For over 40 years, civil society stakeholders have been key contributors to implementing the mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). 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. Increased demand for civil society engagement is a direct outcome of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

The Rio+20 Outcome Document, *“The Future We Want,”* adopted in June 2012, agreed to take action 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.”*

Rule 70 of the **Rules of Procedure of the United Nations Environment Assembly** (see below) refers to “International Non-Governmental Organizations,” reflecting the current practice in UNEP, and, for the purposes of this Handbook, the term “Major Groups and Stakeholders” (MGS) is used to address broader civil society. This practice is based on Governing Council (GC) decision SSVII.5 of 2002, which takes note of the following in its preamble: *“for the purpose of this decision, civil society encompasses Major Groups, that are farmers, women, scientific and technological community, children and youth, indigenous people and their communities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, non-governmental organizations.”* The term “Major Group” is based on the definition provided in **Agenda 21**, which identified a set of non-state actors relevant to sustainable development (detailed in Section 2).

Purpose and Scope of the Handbook

This Handbook aims to inform and guide Major Groups and Stakeholders by presenting in detail the **currently applied** rules, mechanisms and practices for MGS engagement in UNEP's work. It is based on the Rules of Procedure of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) of the United Nations Environment Programme:

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

- 1. 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) from 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.*
- 2. 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 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.*

The Handbook complements the *Guidelines for Participation of Major Groups and Stakeholders in Policy Design at UNEP* and other related documents.

The Handbook contains ten sections:

- **Section 1:** The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and Its Subsidiary Organs;
- **Section 2:** Engagement Approach;
- **Section 3:** Accreditation;
- **Section 4:** Participation in Agenda-Setting and Decision-Making Processes;
- **Section 5:** Access to Information;
- **Section 6:** Major Groups and Stakeholders Body – Spaces and Roles;
- **Section 7:** Expert Input and Advice, and Partnerships for Implementation;
- **Section 8:** Funding for Stakeholder Engagement at UNEP;
- **Section 9:** Code of Conduct at Meetings Hosted by the UN; and
- **Section 10:** UNEP's Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch/Secretariat for Governing Bodies.

Currently, Member States are negotiating a new UNEP Policy on Stakeholder Engagement and it is anticipated that this new Policy will be in place by the time of the second session of UNEA, in 2016. After that, the Handbook will be amended accordingly.

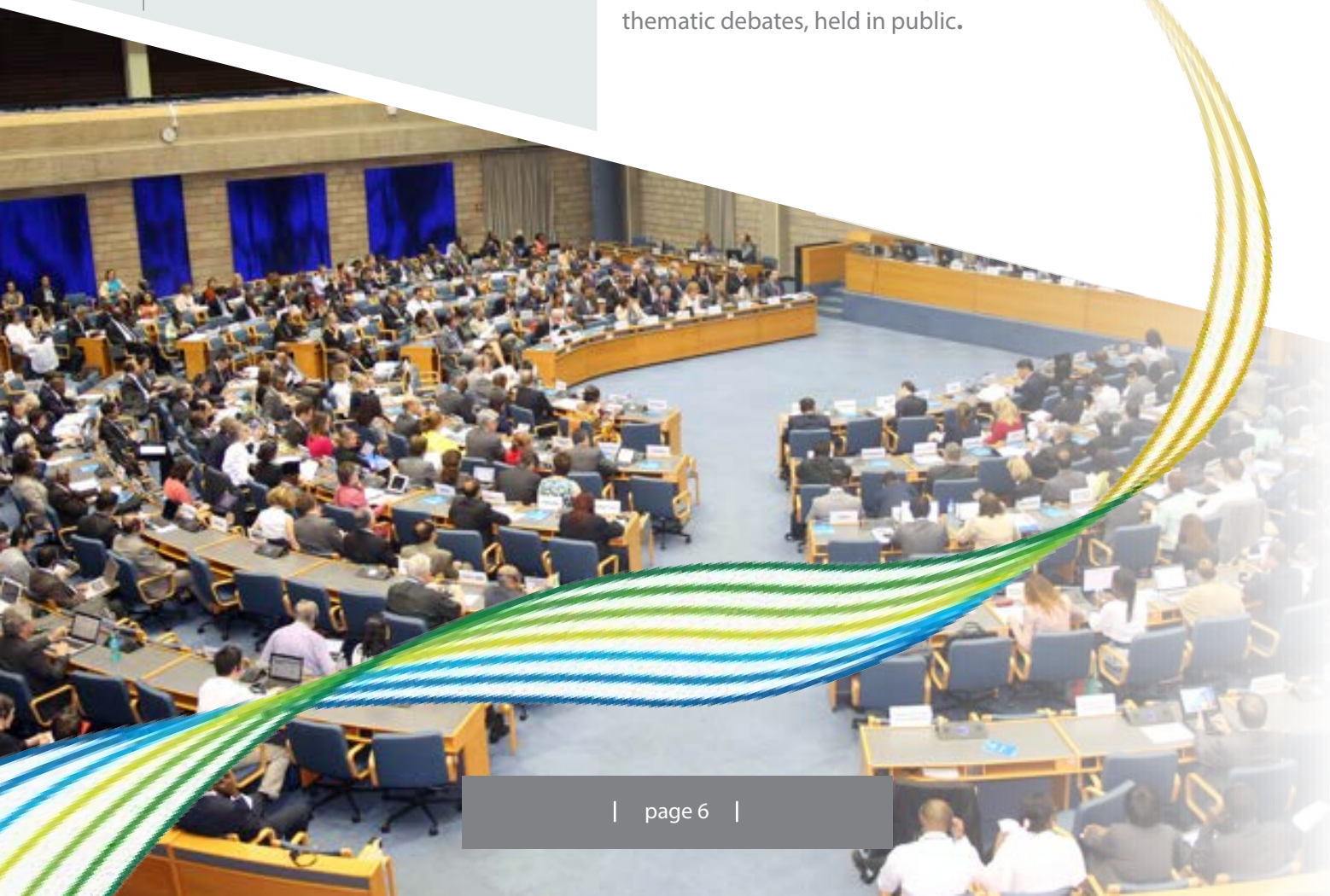
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SECTION 1: The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and Its Subsidiary Organs

Overview

Designated on 13 March 2013 by the resolution [A/67/PV.67](#), the [United Nations Environment Assembly \(UNEA\)](#) is the governing body of UNEP. UNEA sets the global environmental agenda and is mandated to take strategic decisions on environmental sustainability issues, particularly in terms of addressing emerging environmental challenges; provide political guidance in the work of UNEP; and promote a strong science-policy interface. UNEA contributes substantively to intergovernmental processes and negotiations of the United Nations, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the post-2015 development agenda. UNEA has a subsidiary inter-sessional body, the [Committee of Permanent Representatives \(CPR\)](#), which discusses UNEP’s latest activities and organizes Open-Ended Meetings (OECPR), annual subcommittees and subcommittees meetings, as well as briefings and thematic debates, held in public.





SECTION 1: The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and Its Subsidiary Organs

Background

The first [universal session](#) of UNEP's Governing Council was held in February 2013, representing an early step in implementing commitments made at Rio+20. The session also adopted a resolution endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on [13 March 2013 \(A/67/PV.67\)](#) to change the designation of UNEP's Governing Council to the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEA).

UNEP's governing structure

United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme

The United Nations Environment Assembly ([UNEA](#)), with universal membership of 193 members, replaces the Governing Council (with 58 members) as the governing body of UNEP. UNEA sets the global environmental agenda and is mandated to take strategic decisions on environmental sustainability issues, particularly in terms of addressing emerging environmental challenges; provide political guidance in the work of UNEP; and promote a strong science-policy interface. Supported by a 10-member Bureau, it meets biennially in Nairobi and concludes with a two-day high-level segment. The first UNEA session, held in June 2014, [adopted](#) 16 decisions and resolutions that encourage international action on major environmental issues.

UNEA has formal links to the UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and also has an interface with the wider institutional framework for sustainable development, including interlinkages with the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and UNGA through the Second Committee. The outcomes of UNEA are compiled into a report presenting proceedings, submitted to ECOSOC, and the UNEA President reports on the outcome of UNEA to sessions of the HLPF. UNEA can recommend draft resolutions for adoption at the UN General Assembly for UN system-wide implementation, and contributes substantively to intergovernmental processes and negotiations of the United Nations, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the post-2015 development agenda.

Preparation of the UNEA sessions is overseen by the **UNEA Bureau**. In line with the relevant Rule of Procedure, it has ten members, aiming at equal representation of all regions. Members serve for two years and are elected during the first day of UNEA.

Committee of Permanent Representatives

The [Committee of Permanent Representatives](#) (CPR) is a subsidiary inter-sessional body of UNEA, composed of all accredited Permanent Representatives to UNEP. It meets on a quarterly basis to discuss UNEP's latest activities and organizes briefings and thematic debates as necessary to consider particular issues in depth. It is overseen by the **five-member CPR Bureau**,¹ which has representatives of all regions and is elected biennially by the Committee.

It performs the following functions:

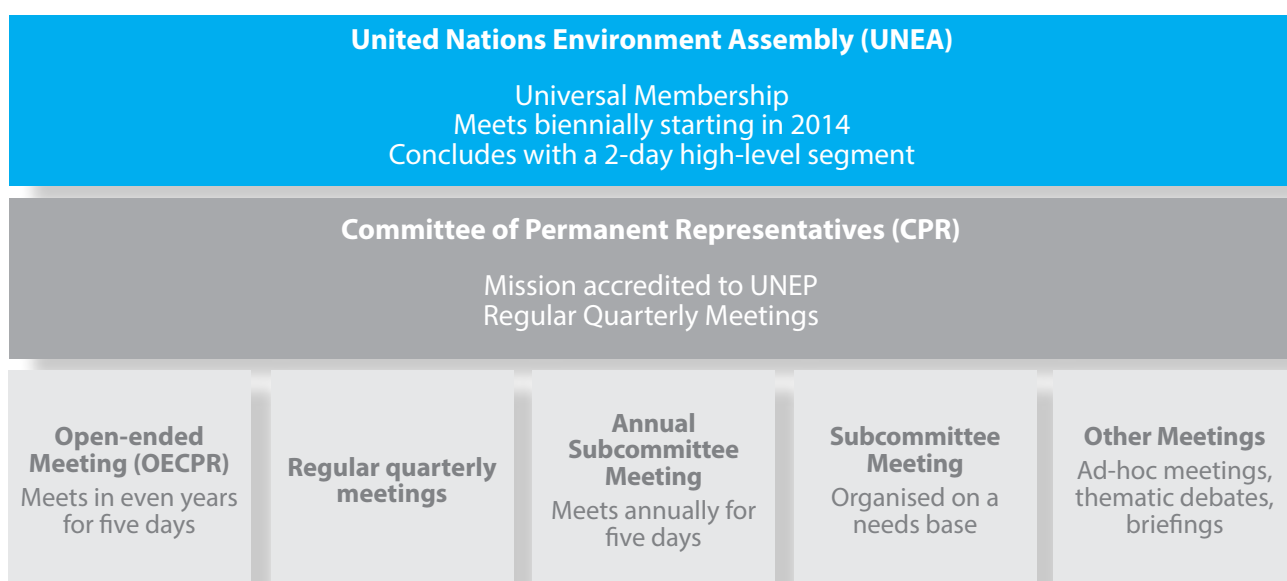
- Contributes to the preparation of the agenda of its governing body;
- Provides advice to its governing body on policy matters;
- Prepares decisions for adoption by its governing body and oversee their implementation;
- Convenes thematic and/or programmatic debates;
- Promotes effective ways and means to facilitate participation of the non-resident² members of the Committee; and
- Performs any other functions delegated to it by its governing body.

Open-ended Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

The Open-Ended Meeting of the [Committee of Permanent Representatives](#) (OECPR) functions as a preparatory meeting for UNEA, provides policy advice, contributes to the preparation of the agenda and decisions to be adopted by UNEA, and oversees their implementation. The OECPR meets for a period of five days in Nairobi, in even years and in the same year as the UNEA session. Capital-based³ delegates also participate in the OECPR.

Subcommittee of CPR

An annual subcommittee of CPR meets for a period of five days annually in Nairobi to review the medium-term strategy (MTS) and Programme of Work (POW) and Budget. Additional subcommittee meetings are organized on an as needed basis throughout the year and deal with specific issues, as announced in the CPR calendar that is made available to accredited Major Groups and Stakeholders, and through the [CPR website](#).



1 CPR Bureau members are elected every two years on July 1.

2 "Non-resident" refers to CPR members who are not stationed in Kenya.

3 "Capital based" refers to CPR members who are stationed in their home country.

CPR briefings

CPR briefings are organized as needed and in response to requests from Member States, with the goal of providing in-depth information on selected topics. They also provide an opportunity for participants to provide comments and share expertise.

Participation of MGS in the above-mentioned bodies

In line with Paragraph 67 of the Rules of Procedure (see below), meetings of UNEA and its subsidiary organs (the CPR, its subcommittees, as well as CPR briefings) are held in public, allowing for the participation of accredited MGS, unless decided otherwise by the CPR. MGS have the opportunity to provide written and oral input into these meetings. Through UNEP's Secretariat of the Governing Bodies, accredited organizations receive relevant information and documents – on par with Member States.

X. Public and Private Meetings *Rule 67 of the Rules of Procedure of UNEA*

The meetings of the United Nations Environment Assembly, its sessional committees and working parties and subsidiary organs, if any, shall be held in public unless the body concerned decides otherwise. If possible, such proceedings shall be broadcast to the wider public through electronic means.

CPR Bureau

The CPR Bureau, as well as the UNEA Bureau, may call for informal meetings with representatives of MGS. MGS can approach the Bureaus for such meetings through the CPR Chair or the UNEA President. More detailed information on the functioning of UNEA and its subsidiary organs, as well as opportunities for Major Groups and Stakeholders to participate in agenda-setting and decision-making processes of UNEA, is found in Section 4.



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SECTION 2: Engagement Approach

Overview

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) strives to ensure effective, broad and balanced participation of Major Groups and Stakeholders (MGS) 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 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.**





SECTION 2: Engagement Approach

Inclusive stakeholder engagement

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) strives to ensure effective, broad and balanced participation of Major Groups and Stakeholders (MGS) 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. Furthermore, stakeholder participation adds legitimacy to decisions taken at UNEP.

Guiding principles for engagement

Since its inception, UNEP has been guided by the following principles in terms of stakeholder engagement:

- a. *Acknowledgement of the intergovernmental nature of UNEP processes:* decision-making within UNEP remains the prerogative of Member States;
- b. *Participation in decision-making processes:* In line with the Rules of Procedures, UNEP will grant participation and access privileges to all accredited stakeholders;
- c. *Access to information:* acknowledging the critical importance of disseminating and making accessible information concerning UNEP’s work or information generated through its programme as widely as possible;
- d. *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;
- e. *Respect for diversity of views and self-organization:* UNEP acknowledges 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, including the UNEP national committees, will ensure that those differing voices are heard, including those outside the nine Major Groups;
- f. *Improvements to current engagement practices:* UNEP will promote continuous improvement of its current practices.

The stakeholder categories

UNEP applies the nine Major Groups approach (as outlined in [Agenda 21](#), recognizing the following categories of stakeholders, represented by not-for-profit, non-governmental organizations:

The nine Major Groups

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SECTION 3: Accreditation

Overview

In order for stakeholders to participate in the work and governance of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), they must be accredited to UNEP. Non-governmental organizations must successfully meet the requirements of the accreditation process before being granted with observer status to the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and its subsidiary organs.

All accredited stakeholders must fulfill obligations toward UNEA and its subsidiary organs and the Secretariat, otherwise accreditation to UNEA can be suspended for up to three years or withdrawn. On an exceptional basis, UNEP may grant temporary accreditation for special guests for specific events.

SECTION 3: Accreditation

Observer status to UNEA

In order for stakeholders to participate in the work and governance of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), they must be accredited. The purpose of accreditation is to provide non-governmental organizations with observer status to the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), including its subsidiary organs, in line with Rule 70 of the Rules of Procedure of UNEA. Organizations that are accredited to other UN Bodies, such as ECOSOC, will still need UNEP accreditation.

The process of accreditation

The **process of accreditation** includes:

- **Submission of an application:** An interested international NGO needs to submit a set of required documents to the Secretariat of the Governing Bodies and Stakeholders through the Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch (MGSB), electronically to Accreditation.CivilSociety@unep.org.

These documents include:

- Letter requesting accreditation and signed by head of office.
- Copy of certified constitution, charter, statutes, or by-laws with all certified amendments and a list of affiliated organizations and members.
- Copy of certificate of registration. The organization needs to have been in place, registered and operational for at least 2 years.
- Proof of interest in the environment (annual reports, articles, work programmes, project reports, press releases, etc.).
- Detailed account of the organization's international scope (location of headquarters, regional and other national offices, programmes, international activities, etc.).
- Proof of not-for-profit status.

- **Review of the application:** The Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch (MGSB) within the Secretariat of Governing Bodies and Stakeholders (SGBS) reviews the submission and determines if any additional documents are required. If so, it notifies the applying organization.
- **Recommendation by the Secretariat Secretary:** After the review – including a legal review – is completed, the Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch will send the documentation and its recommendation to the office of the Secretary of Governing Bodies.
- **Approval and notification of the accreditation request:** The Secretary for Governing Bodies reviews and notifies the organization of its decision in case of approval of the accreditation request.
- **The Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch updates its database** with the new organization's information, sending a confirmation e-mail to the organization. The database is publically accessible at www.unep.org/civil-society.

The process takes approximately three months.

Enquiries can be sent to:

accreditation.civilsociety@unep.org

Accreditation is not a requirement for participation in the implementation of projects, programmes or partnerships with UNEP. See Section 7 for further information on [UNEP's Partnership Policy](#).

Suspension or withdrawal of accreditation

Organizations that have not met the requirements for observer status as set forth in Rule 70 of the [Rules of Procedure](#) risk having their accreditation suspended for up to three years or withdrawn.

Accreditation to UNEA can be suspended for up to three years or withdrawn in the following circumstances:

- a. If an organization abuses its status by engaging in a pattern of acts that go against the purposes and principles of the [Charter of the United Nations](#), including aggressive or politically motivated acts against UN Member States;
- b. If there is clear evidence of funding/influence resulting from internationally recognized criminal activities;
- c. If, in the past three years, the organization has not made any meaningful contribution to the work of UNEP, the United Nations or major institutions or conferences in the environment field at the international level.

The observer status of organizations is suspended or withdrawn by decision of the Secretary of Governing Bodies, based on the recommendation of the Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch. An organization whose observer status is withdrawn may reapply for accreditation no sooner than three years after the effective date of such suspension or withdrawal.

Responsibilities and obligations of accredited stakeholders toward UNEA and its subsidiary organs and the Secretariat

All accredited stakeholders must fulfill the following obligations:

- a. act in accordance with the relevant rules of procedure for any meeting or session which they attend (see Section 9);
- b. comply with registration requirements and seating arrangements for any meeting or session which they attend, keeping in mind that meeting and session organizers will work to ensure sufficient seating available for all nine Major Groups and Stakeholders during public sessions to facilitate participation. In situations where seating is limited, stakeholders may be asked to designate representatives to occupy the available seats. Such procedures will be developed by the UNEP Secretariat in consultation with Major Groups and Stakeholders and their representatives/the Major Groups Facilitating Committee;
- c. provide the UNEP Secretariat every four years with a *Quadrennial Report* of their activities, using a template that is provided on www.unep.org/civil-society from the date of accreditation with UNEP.

Temporary accreditation for special guests for specific events

On an exceptional basis, UNEP may grant one-time accreditation to persons that fully comply with accreditation rules but have not yet applied for full accreditation and have shown interest to participate in a specific session of UNEA and its subsidiary organs.

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SECTION 4: Participation in Agenda- Setting and Decision-Making Processes

Overview

Decision-making within the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) remains the prerogative of Member States. However, during sessions of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and its subsidiary organs, accredited Major Groups and Stakeholders (MGS) have the opportunity to contribute to the governance of UNEP and to participate at two levels: on agenda-setting processes, and on policy making and decision-making processes. During the UNA opening and closing plenary, Ministerial Roundtables, UNEA parallel themes, Committee of the Whole (COW), informal side events, MGS representatives are able – under certain restrictions – to make written and oral interventions, access all public sessions and meetings of CPR, have designated seats, and access all public documents. Additionally, the Greenroom, a multi-purpose venue, is reserved primarily for MGS to organize side events.





SECTION 4: Participation in Agenda-Setting and Decision-Making Processes

Two levels of participation

Decision-making within the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) remains the prerogative of Member States. However, during sessions of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and its subsidiary organs, accredited Major Groups and Stakeholders (MGS) have the opportunity to contribute to the governance of UNEP and to participate at two levels: on agenda-setting processes, and on policy making and decision-making processes. At the regional level, Major Groups and Stakeholders are able to contribute to agenda-setting and decision-making processes during the Regional Consultative Meetings (see Section 6), as well as through their Regional Representatives.

The privileges listed below underpin Major Groups and Stakeholders' participation and contribution towards agenda-setting and decision-making processes.

All accredited stakeholders enjoy the same privileges:

- Access to all public sessions and meetings of the Assembly and its subsidiary organs, including UNEA plenaries, opening sessions, ministerial dialogues (when convened), Committee of the Whole, and other sessions, in accordance with the current rules of procedure. Should participation in a particular meeting be restricted, an advance notification will be issued. Dates, venues and agenda of the meetings will be provided in a timely manner by the UNEP Secretariat. UNEP 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 of UNEA and its subsidiary organs. Major Groups and Stakeholders will self-organize to designate their representatives according to criteria they establish.
- Access to documents publicly available on UNEP websites and portals; official documents and reports of UNEP; and documentation related to the work of the Assembly and its subsidiary organs, including pre-session and in-session documents made available in public meetings. Access to documents will be provided in a timely manner, with accredited stakeholders granted access to relevant information portals. Input received from Major Groups and Stakeholders will be made available on the relevant web portals.
- Ability to circulate written submissions to the Assembly and its subsidiary organs, which can include contributions and recommendations for agenda items of sessions of the Assembly and its subsidiary organs as well as recommendations on draft decisions for consideration by Member States. MGS contributions and recommendations should be submitted to the UNEP Secretariat for distribution to Member States allowing sufficient time for consideration by the relevant body.
- Ability to make statements during public meetings of the Assembly and its subsidiary organs,

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.

- Ability to organize side events on issues relevant to UNEA (see information on the Greenroom below, [page 21](#)).
- Accredited stakeholders may be invited to participate in relevant regional consultations conducted by UNEP.

The Major Groups Facilitating Committee (MGFC, see [Section 6](#)) facilitates the participation of Major Groups and Stakeholders in these activities/processes.

UNEA: Opportunities for Major Groups and Stakeholders to contribute to agenda-setting and decision-making

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) is the main governing body of UNEP with the following functions:

- Setting the global environmental agenda;
- Providing overarching policy guidance and defining policy responses to address emerging environmental challenges;
- Undertaking policy review, dialogue and exchange of experiences;
- Setting the strategic guidance on the future direction of UNEP;
- Organizing a multi-stakeholder dialogue;
- Fostering partnerships for achieving environmental goals and resource mobilization.

UNEA meets every two years and consists of a Plenary, a High-level Segment and the so called Committee of the Whole (COW). These meetings normally run in parallel. The **opening plenary** is held on the first morning of UNEA, attended and addressed by the Executive Director of UNEP, who delivers his Policy Statement to Member States. The President of UNEA also addresses the opening plenary. Other keynote speakers during this session may include members of Major Groups and Stakeholders, invited to speak by the UNEA President. Major Groups and Stakeholders are allocated two seats per each Major Group, making a total of 18 seats. Furthermore, seats for Regional Representatives (two per region) are provided. Often, UNEA is accompanied by Ministerial Roundtables. Symposia before or after UNEA give Major Groups and Stakeholders further space for discussion of relevant issues.

There are as many **Ministerial Roundtables** as UNEA themes, running in parallel. These are highly political sessions on complex issues held in the format of an open dialogue, where government delegations are represented at the ministerial level. High-level invitees – such as heads of United Nations agencies, ministers from other sectors, and Major Group and Stakeholder leaders – participate in these roundtables. Major Groups and Stakeholders can serve as keynote speakers, panelists and moderators in the ministerial plenaries. The roundtable process offers Major Groups and Stakeholders a unique way of interacting with global politicians at a high level. As such, Major Groups and Stakeholders are expected to bring participants with expert knowledge on the issues or topics into these roundtable discussions. The agendas are already set and appear in the provisional timetable of meetings and events.

Rapporteurs from plenary/panels and respective roundtables convene to synthesize messages coming from their discussions. The reports/messages from the plenary sessions and roundtables are consolidated and presented in the Synthesis Plenary Session on the second to last day of UNEA. The consolidated report/

messages result in a conference room paper (CRP), as developed by the Rapporteurs, and form the basis for the draft report of the President on the Ministerial Consultations. Major Group and Stakeholder may provide the Rapporteurs with written versions of their interventions, for consideration in the reports.

The **President's Summary** and other high-level segment outcomes are presented to the final plenary meeting on the last afternoon session of UNEA. They succinctly reflect the main points/messages made by delegations, including Major Groups and Stakeholders. They also contain the outcomes of the Ministerial Consultations. This is the closing session/plenary of UNEA where the report of the Committee of the Whole and UNEA resolutions/decisions are adopted. Similar to the opening plenary, Major Groups and Stakeholders have seats in a designated area of the closing plenary.

The **COW**, a sessional committee, is established by the opening plenary. It normally considers UNEP's Programme of Work and Budget and draft resolutions/decisions in accordance with the adopted agenda of UNEA. The COW will often form session committees, working groups or contact groups, each discussing a specific agenda item or issue prior to the meeting. They are formed as the need arises. A drafting group can also be created to consider draft resolutions/decisions, prepared initially by the Committee of Permanent Representatives, and those which may be submitted by members of the UNEA during the session. Working groups are open to observers – including Major Groups and Stakeholders – who may provide useful information relevant to the specific topics under discussion (unless otherwise decided and announced). The COW normally meets for the first time on the afternoon of the first day and decides on a schedule of work, as well as a schedule for the various working groups. This detailed calendar of the COW is printed and made immediately available as a Conference Room Paper.

The report of the COW and any draft resolutions/decisions are adopted by the plenary meeting on the last day of UNEA. Accredited Major Groups and Stakeholders have access to the COW, and Major Group representatives may give oral comments and statements at the discretion of the Chair.

Through **informal sessions**, regional groups formed by governments may select a number of key representatives from the Major Groups and Stakeholders (usually in coordination with the MGFC) and have meetings with them. It is also understood that the MGFC can approach the informal groups and countries, and request information meetings on par with practice from other UN meetings and conferences. Major Groups and Stakeholders may request to be invited to an informal meeting convened by the individual countries or groups of countries. Invitation to such meetings is a prerogative of the convener.

UNEP and Member States organize **side events/special events, exhibitions and excursions** in collaboration with partners on key topical issues related to the themes of UNEA. Access to these events is not restricted and details of these activities are available on the UNEA website and on the Provisional Timetable, as well as in the Daily Journal. Short announcements are also displayed on screens if available. Environmentally-focused exhibitions may be ongoing in the form of audio-visual materials and posters throughout the duration of UNEA. A field excursion demonstrating the themes of the current UNEA may be organized for interested delegates. There are numerous social events most evenings and attendance is usually by invitation only.

Daily **official press conferences** are held during the UNEA session, in general organized by UNEP during lunch hours and open to all. **UNEA documents**, including general information about the forthcoming UNEA, are distributed to Major Group and Stakeholder organizations accredited to UNEP six weeks in advance for their information. They are available on the official UNEA website. UNEA meetings are organized as **paper smart meetings**, meaning most documents are made available only in electronic format. All delegates and observers are encouraged to bring portable computers.

The UNEP Secretariat publishes the **Daily Journal** to provide updates on all meetings, agendas, documents, etc. It is advisable that participants check this publication every morning for any updates and/or changes.

All documents have symbols and are often referred to by their symbols such as UNEP/GCSS.XI/I etc. during the sessions.

The Earth Negotiations Bulletin (ENB) is an independent reporting service that provides daily information in print and electronic formats from multilateral negotiations on environment and development. It is published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and distributed daily. MGS may also provide them written versions of their interventions as they might be used as inputs for the ENB.

The **Greenroom**, a multi-purpose venue reserved primarily for participating Major Groups and Stakeholders, provides a dedicated MGS space during UNEA sessions for **morning debriefing sessions** for all participating MGS at UNEA led by the MGFC, as well as side events, briefings, orientations, dialogues, etc. It is available for morning and evening briefings, ad-hoc meetings, press events, special events and bilateral meetings, workshops and outreach use. It can also be used by Major Group and Stakeholder organizations for their own group meetings. Over the years, the Greenroom has become a favored and alternative meeting room used by MGS, UNEP, regional groups, and other partners alike to organize multi-stakeholder meetings, conferences and panel discussions. This has helped ensure outreach to the relevant MGS audience. In addition, MGS may also have the opportunity to partner with Member States for official side events during UNEA.

All reservations for the Greenroom have to be made 30 days prior to the commencement of UNEA. The Greenroom starts on the first day of UNEA and runs throughout the duration of the session. MGS are invited by a special communication from the Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch to apply for Greenroom spaces. UNEP reserves the right to reject requests.

Registration to participate in the Global Major Groups and Stakeholder Forum (GMGSF, see Section 6) and UNEA is opened on-line at <http://www.unep.org/civil-society> prior to these meetings. Only MGS accredited to UNEP will be registered for UNEA and/or GMGSF. Registration usually opens two months prior to the meeting at the time invitations are sent out, and it closes 15 days before the meeting. Participation in UNEA and GMGSF is only allowed *after* registration is formally confirmed by UNEP.

Participants' badges given to MGS are valid for the entire duration of UNEA, enabling them to access the meeting rooms and the main facilities of the conference center. There are a number of restricted areas for which a **special badge** is also needed. Such badges are usually distributed through the Major Groups Facilitating Committee. Participants that are selected to represent Major Groups and Stakeholders in the various sessions are provided with additional badges.

Committee of Permanent Representatives: Accredited MGS are allowed to participate in all public meeting of the CPR. This includes the Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECPR), annual CPR, CPR subcommittee and CPR briefings. If such meetings are to be privately held, advance notice will be given. A calendar of CPR meetings during a given year is distributed by the Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch to accredited organizations, and is also made available on the CPR portal. See also: <http://www.unep.org/about/sgb>.

During these meetings, MGS representatives have designated seats and are able to make written interventions at the discretion of the Chair. Written interventions can be submitted through the UNEP Secretariat. Accredited MGS wishing to participate in any of these meetings have to inform the UNEP Secretariat/Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch at least three days before a given meeting, so that security arrangements to grant entry to the UN compound in Gigiri can be made.

These meetings give Major Groups and Stakeholders the opportunity to contribute to agenda-setting and decision-making during the course of the year. In particular, this is a key opportunity for MGS to contribute to UNEA agenda-setting.

UNEP will make efforts to ensure webcasting of above mentioned meetings.

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SECTION 5: Access to Information

Overview

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) recognizes that it is critically important to disseminate and make accessible documentation concerning its work or information generated through its programme as widely as possible. Its new [Access-to-Information Policy](#), issued in June 2014, provides principles and procedures with reference to access to information. UNEP also recognizes that transparency, accountability, and openness can become a catalyst for achieving a greater impact.

To enhance the effective participation of stakeholders in a cost-effective manner, UNEP uses modern Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in some cases, including webcasting of CPR and UNEA meetings, e-participation, and access to information platforms.





SECTION 5: Access to Information

Access to Information Policy

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) recognizes that it is critically important to disseminate and make accessible documentation concerning its work or information generated through its programme as widely as possible. UNEP also recognizes that transparency, accountability, and openness can become a catalyst for achieving a greater impact. In the context of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, it is of fundamental importance to make available relevant information to stakeholders and the public in general.

At the same time, UNEP has an obligation to protect the confidentiality of certain information. In response to Governing Council Decision 27/2 [paragraph 17], UNEP issued a new [Access-to-Information Policy](#) in June 2014 that aims to strike an appropriate balance between the need to grant the public maximum access to information in UNEP's possession, and UNEP's obligation to respect the confidentiality of information regarding its Member States, partners, employees and other parties.

The Policy provides the principles and procedures governing access to information at UNEP. The review process is meant to generate commentary on how the UNEP Secretariat could further its efforts to make information on environmental matters accessible to a target community or the broader public with a view to making such information a catalyst for achieving environmental sustainability. The Policy contains six sections: Statement of the Policy; Public access to information; Exceptions; Request for information; Review and appeal process; and Access to information Panel.

Use of modern ICT to enhance stakeholder engagement

The use of modern information and communications technology (ICT) in some cases, including through the webcasting of CPR and UNEA meetings, e-participation, and access to information platforms can enhance the effective participation of stakeholders in a cost-effective manner. Online participation can increase work effectiveness, save time, reduce financial and environmental costs. Specific tools to facilitate public participation and information sharing include the use of e-mail and listservs, newsletters, Internet/websites, (mobile) telephones, tele-and videoconferencing, cloud and supercomputing, social media and

also e-learning, online platforms, online consultations and surveys, webinars, among others.

In this context, UNEP, in line with its Access-to-Information Policy:

- strives to webcast selected meetings of the UNEA and its subsidiary organs;
- organizes webinars;
- provides information through various websites (see for example [UNEP Live](#), a web-based platform that facilitates the exchange and sharing of data, information and knowledge);
- uses social media as a vehicle to engage a wider target audience, with a [Twitter](#) following of over 330,000 and a strong [Facebook](#) presence. UNEP uses social media tools to engage and empower diverse communities around environmental objectives. These tools allow for interactive two-way exchange, and the ability to raise awareness, share ideas, collaborate and connect people from all over the world.

It is recognized that the use of ICT cannot always replace the physical presence of stakeholders in meetings, which is deemed of crucial importance for building relations and trust, fostering consensus on specific issues while allowing a diversity of viewpoints to be expressed, providing in-person networking opportunities and build capacity. This is particularly important for some communities of practice where Internet connection may be limited or difficult to access, which would exclude and marginalize some groups and individuals. A combination of both forms of participation is therefore recommended to complement and enhance stakeholder engagement.

For concrete examples of best practices in the use of modern ICT



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SECTION 6: Major Groups and Stakeholders Body – Spaces and Roles

Overview

Civil society brings added value to UNEP's work in a number of ways, helping to make the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) agenda relevant. To do so, Major Groups and Stakeholders (MGS) must be empowered to participate effectively in UNEP's agenda-setting and decision-making processes, as well as implementation.

MGS engage with UNEP through a self-selected **Major Group Facilitating Committee (MGFC)** that provides guidance and facilitates the engagement of UNEP-accredited Major Groups in the **Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum (GMGSF)** and annual **Regional Consultative Meetings (RCMs)**, as well as participation in UNEA. Members of the MGFC are expected to adhere to the **MGS Code of Conduct**.



SECTION 6: Major Groups and Stakeholders Body – Spaces and Roles

Empowerment for effective participation

In order for the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) agenda to be relevant, Major Groups and Stakeholders (MGS) must be empowered to participate effectively in agenda-setting, decision-making and implementation. Civil society brings added value to UNEP's work in a number of ways: including through democratic dialogue and inclusion; the advocacy role it plays in raising awareness on issues of concern; the technical and contextual expertise it can provide that UNEP may not have; holding governments and international institutions to account; and their ability to bring a holistic perspective to discussions in terms of the global public interest and efforts to achieve environmental sustainability.

Major Groups and Stakeholders engage with the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), and more generally with UNEP through a self-selected Major Group Facilitating Committee that also coordinates with the group of Regional Representatives.

The Major Groups Facilitating Committee (MGFC)

The Major Groups Facilitating Committee (MGFC), established in 2007, is a self-organized group that facilitates Major Groups and Stakeholders engagement with UNEP.

How is it composed?

The MGFC is **composed** of Major Groups' representatives from MGS accredited to UNEP, supported by Regional Representatives from the six UNEP regions who have observer status (see below). Each of the nine Major Groups selects two representatives for a two-year period after consultation and a bidding process with their constituents. These 18 representatives from the MGFC and three co-chairs are elected from within the MGFC. The Committee is supported by two Regional Representatives from each region, 12 altogether, elected for a one-year term during the Regional Consultative Meetings (RCMs) taking place once a year in each of the regions. Members of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee and the Regional Representatives must come from accredited organizations.

The work of the MGFC falls under broad categories, including its ability to provide support on logistics and foster understanding of the process so that MGS can maximize their presence, operating within the rules of engagement and procedure that UNEP has set up; and providing guidance and finding expertise to develop policy positions representing the best contributions from the MGS constituencies relevant to the agenda points of UNEA. In doing so, the agendas of MGS meetings will reflect those of UNEA.

What is expected from MGFC members?

Members of the MGFC are expected to adhere to the obligations outlined in this Handbook and to be able to allocate sufficient time to their functions in the MGFC. It is expected that their interventions and actions are based on regular and intensive interaction with their constituency (their respective Major Group). UNEP is not able to provide any financial or other remuneration. Furthermore MGFC members are expected to:

- Maximize participation of representatives of its Major Group worldwide in UNEA and its related meetings;
- Promote good representation of the respective Major Group at the Regional Consultative Meeting (RCM, see below), and ensure that the participants have received the necessary information relating to the agenda beforehand;
- Facilitate the involvement of Major Groups members with specific issue knowledge in UNEP-related work, both in the local, national and regional contexts as well as at UNEA;
- Foster balanced representation on the basis of gender, focus and region;
- Mobilize knowledgeable representatives of the Major Groups to participate in UNEA and its subsidiary organs;
- Assist participating Major Group members in: having access to information related to the agenda for the UNEP meetings; participating fully in UNEA and its related meetings; and having free and unfettered access to delegates;
- Provide general information, training and capacity building on UNEP processes;
- Generate broad media-interest, as well as on-going educational programmes around the world;
- Maintain a web-based information hub, issues-based listservs, as well as general informational sites;
- Disseminate issue-based information from the Major Groups and Stakeholders focusing on these issues, to others not directly involved in those issue-networks; and
- Coordinate the preparation of the Major Groups policy papers.

The MGFC shall also be responsible for coordinating their activities with the regional level in cooperation with their regional networks, Regional Representatives and with UNEP's Secretariat and Regional Offices. In particular, each of the Major Groups' representatives is encouraged to support the UNEP Secretariat to:

- Foster the participation of their Major Group organizations during the RCMs;
- In regions where their Major Groups are underrepresented, help to identify and involve emerging or newly-established Major Groups in the regional meetings;
- Promote inter-regional exchange and coordination of inputs within their Major Group;
- Facilitate the integration of regional concerns into the Major Groups policy statements; and
- Actively participate in identification of skilled or specialized presenters or facilitators at meetings as appropriate.

The Chairs of the MGFC organize, with the support of the UNEP's Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch/Secretary of the Governing Bodies, regular teleconferences that bring together members of the MGFC, Regional Representatives as observers, UNEP's MGSB and others as deemed necessary. These teleconferences take place at least once every six weeks. The draft agenda and meeting minutes are

prepared by the Chairpersons of the MGFC. Minutes are distributed by the MGSB among accredited MGS.

During UNEA, the MGFC also organizes a daily morning briefing/debriefing and process meeting, chaired by MGFC members on a rotational basis, to:

- Provide an overview of the official agenda for that day;
- Appoint volunteers to follow critical issues on the agenda who then report back the next day;
- Promote consensus on Major Group representation during the plenaries and other relevant sessions;
- Report back to the morning meeting from the discussions held the preceding day, including sharing central and important observations and comments gathered from the UNEA discussions and possibly facilitate consensus building processes to plan for the day ahead in a strategic manner, including outreach to relevant delegations or other partners;
- Promote discussions on important messages or concerns raised from any of the Major Groups;
- Make announcements and address any other relevant business.

Members of the MGFC can also facilitate the organization of caucus groups meeting to discuss specific issues, and to caucus, regroup, or nominate people to attend the various sessions.

While the MGFC is not a decision-making body, it does provide guidance and facilitates the engagement of UNEP-accredited Major Groups in the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum (GMGSF, see below), serving as its steering committee. In addition, the MGFC often serves as the body facilitating MGS representation in meetings, such as with the UNEA President, for example.

Elections of the MGFC

Every two years the current members of the MGFC are responsible for organizing the selection process for identifying two new members of the MGFC, based on a system appropriate to the respective Major Group, taking into account geographical and gender balance. UNEP recommends that the new members are identified through a nomination and election process among accredited organizations. The selected candidates are endorsed by the UNEP Secretariat.

To begin the process, the current MGFC members representing each Major Group will reach out to the accredited organizations belonging to the respective Major Group with instructions for how organizations can nominate potential new MGFC members and how the election of candidates is undertaken. Only representatives of accredited organizations may be selected as members of the MGFC and vote for them.

MGS Code of Conduct

Members of the MGFC are expected to adhere to the following:

1. No member of the MGFC shall be considered, in any respect, as agents or staff members of UNEP. They are not entitled to introduce themselves, act, and/or speak on behalf of, or for UNEP. With regards to the MGFC, MGS representatives must ensure that they highlight their functions as Facilitators/Participants/Members of such bodies to UNEP in an appropriate manner that avoids misunderstandings. They are expected to always present their organizational affiliation, and clearly indicate that the respective person represents its constituents to UNEP, and not the other way around. Thus, formulations such as "Representative for UNEP...", "Representative of UNEP..." are

not legitimate. Members of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee, for example, should describe themselves as: **“Children and Youth Representative to UNEP’s Major Groups Facilitating Committee.”** Regional Representatives should describe themselves as: **“Regional Major Groups and Stakeholder Representative to UNEP, Name of the Region.”**

2. No organization or individual is authorized to use UNEP’s name for the promotion, advertisement or marketing of its personal interests, products, services, views or ideas, without prior written approval of UNEP. Major Group and Stakeholder representatives, such as members of the MGFC and/or Regional Representatives, shall only use the UNEP name, logo and emblem with prior express and written consent of UNEP, in line with UNEP’s policy on the use of its logo.

Under no circumstances will the UNEP name or emblem, or any abbreviation thereof, be granted for commercial purposes.

Specifically, the following uses are not permitted:

- any use of the logo suggesting or implying a certification or seal of approval for activities, services and/or products;
- any use of UNEP’s logo on business cards;
- any use of the logo as a component of an organization’s own logo, trademark or other branding elements, including their websites;
- any use of the logo for the promotion or advertising of products, services and other activities intended to solicit business;
- any use of the logo as a permanent graphical element of stationery, business cards, or other variably utilized print materials;
- the use of the UNEP brand in a way that might prejudice the UNEP brand and/or the reputation and credibility of UNEP.

In any case, for all proposed uses of the UNEP logo, permission must be sought in advance from the UNEP Secretariat.

3. Representatives of MGS should not expect to receive any funding or remuneration either in cash or kind from UNEP, nor should they represent to anyone that they receive any kind of funding or remuneration by virtue of their being a Major Group and Stakeholder representative.

In its cooperation with MGS, in particular in the context of UNEA, UNEP will strive to involve the MGFC. However, UNEP does not oblige itself to work exclusively through the Major Groups Facilitating Committee in involving MGS in its work on policy and programmatic matters. If deemed necessary, UNEP reserves the right to directly approach MGS. At the same time, MGS are not obliged to work exclusively through the MGFC or Regional Representatives.

MGS coordination meetings prior to the OECPR

The OECPR is preceded by a MGS coordination meeting that is self-organized by the Major Groups through the Major Groups Facilitating Committee and facilitated by the Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch. This meeting allows MGS to discuss their input and positions towards the OECPR. Dependent on available funding, the participation of members of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee, Regional Representatives, speakers and resource persons, and MGS from developing countries can be financially supported by UNEP.

The Global Major Groups and Stakeholder Forum (GMGSF)

The **Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum** takes place every two years prior to UNEA and is the main entry point for civil society participation at the highest level of UNEP and serves as a MGS preparatory meeting to UNEA. The Forum benefits from the outcomes of the Regional Consultative Meetings, which in turn provide Major Groups and Stakeholders inputs for UNEA. The GMGSF seeks to facilitate civil society participation in the Assembly and associated meetings, identifies important themes and decisions under consideration by UNEA, and provides a platform for an exchange of views and expertise on these themes between governments and civil society. Traditionally, the Forum also features an open dialogue between UNEP's Executive Director and Major Groups and Stakeholders ahead of UNEA.

How does the Forum enhance civil society's contribution to UNEA?

In order for civil society to influence the process, the Forum plays a coordinating role in presenting civil society speakers with relevant expertise to engage in discussions on the high-level themes, draft decisions/resolutions, and operational issues relevant to UNEP. It also convenes expert panel discussions and facilitates the drafting of common statements, including organizing MGS across thematic clusters – not based on constituencies but on expertise of those interested – in order to provide the most specialized expertise. Thematic clusters do not replace the Major Groups structure; instead they facilitate cross-sector discussions along the subject themes of UNEA. It is the role of the thematic cluster facilitator to facilitate development of MGS statements, track the discussions and report back to the larger group. There is no expectation for consensus within the clusters; they seek rather to preserve the diversity of views, while facilitating in-depth discussions along a theme.

Accredited MGS are automatically invited to the Forum. Representatives of governments and international organizations may participate in the Forum as observers.

Major Group and Stakeholder statements have to be cleared by the President via the Secretary to UNEA before they are submitted to all delegates as official UNEA documents and potentially read out in the relevant meetings, if given the floor by the respective Chair of the session.

Information on previous GMGSF is available at <http://www.unep.org/civil-society/GlobalFora/Pastsessions/tabid/104748/Default.aspx>.

Regional Consultative Meetings (RCMs) and Regional Representatives

The role of UNEP's six regional offices was enhanced by a decision of the Governing Council (GC22/14) that requested UNEP to establish and strengthen partnership at the regional and sub-regional level with other UN bodies, development banks and other institutions, including Major Groups and Stakeholders, with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of development and delivery of its programme of work in the regions.

The six UNEP regions include: **Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America** and **West Asia**.

Given their work at the national and regional level, Major Groups and Stakeholders are well placed to participate in the implementation of UNEP's work through co-operation with the regional offices. The Regional Representatives provide varied views from both the global North and South; these geographically diverse perspectives complement the Major Groups and Stakeholders model, allowing civil society to substantively contribute to UNEP processes.

The above-mentioned **Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum** is built around six annual **Regional Consultative Meetings (RCMs)**. Major Group and Stakeholder representatives are invited to one- to three-day consultation meetings in each region prior to **UNEA**. Each region engages in a substantive dialogue on environmental issues that will be discussed during the next UNEA and produces a regional statement or key messages.

The RCMs constitute the main platform for the Major Groups to engage with the Regional Offices of UNEP on an annual basis. While allowing MGS to prepare for UNEA, RCMs also serve as capacity-building and networking exercises for the Major Groups in the regions.

The RCMs are organized under the responsibility of the Regional Offices and held, whenever possible, prior to, or in conjunction with, relevant major regional meetings, events or fora. They are dedicated to discussing relevant programme issues and possible cooperative actions, and/or preparing of the Major Groups' inputs to UNEA, including UNEA's themes.

The choice of the date, the setting of the agenda and the selection of organizations to be invited to the RCMs is the responsibility of the Regional Offices. Invited organizations are not limited to accredited MGS. Major Groups and Stakeholders assist the Regional Offices in organizing the meetings. All organizations that are accredited to UNEP's UNEA are invited to the RCM of their respective region.

Role of Regional Representatives

Participants in each of the six Regional Consultative Meetings are asked to nominate and elect two Regional Representatives, with attention to gender balance, to attend UNEA, and who have the relevant expert knowledge of the thematic issues to be dealt with at the upcoming session. Regional Representatives must come from organizations accredited to UNEP. They normally serve a one-year term – or until the next Regional Meeting – and participate as observers on the MGFC.

Regional Representatives are expected to adhere to the Code of Conduct presented above in the section on the MGFC. They may use the title: “**Regional Major Groups and Stakeholder Representative to UNEP, Name of the Region.**”

In addition:

- Regional Representatives play a purely facilitating and expert role and have no mandate to represent their region or MGS from their region.
- They may present agreed positions emerging from RCMs as well as from other consultation mechanisms developed during their period.
- They are specifically selected to ensure MGS's regional views in UNEA and its subsidiary organs, as well as in other meetings that may be convened.

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SECTION 7: Expert Input and Advice, and Partnerships for Implementation

Overview

A principal mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is to monitor the world environmental situation to ensure that emerging environmental problems of wide international significance receive appropriate and adequate consideration by governments. In doing so, UNEP implements partnerships to catalyze and channel the vast knowledge and expertise of the scientific community, academia as well as traditional knowledge holders such as the Indigenous Peoples, through a number of processes, including the [International Resource Panel](#); the [Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity & Ecosystem Services](#) (IPBES), the [Foresight Process](#); and the [Global Environmental Outlook](#) (GEO) process. [UNEP's Partnership Policy](#) gives recognition to the important role played by various partners in addressing global, regional and subregional environmental challenges.





SECTION 7: Expert Input and Advice, and Partnerships for Implementation

Expert input and advice

A principal mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is to monitor the world environmental situation to ensure that emerging environmental problems of wide international significance receive appropriate and adequate consideration by governments. By tapping into the vast knowledge and expertise of the scientific community and academia as well as traditional knowledge holders, UNEP has managed to keep the world informed of emerging environmental issues.

UNEP receives and channels scientific and civil society input through a number of processes, including the [International Resource Panel](#); the [Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity & Ecosystem Services \(IPBES\)](#), the [Foresight Process](#); and the Global Environmental Outlook (GEO) [process](#), just to name a few. See also <http://www.unep.org/geo/>

UNEP's role in assessments consists of catalyzing the efforts of the scientific community and other knowledge holders around environmental topics.

Partnerships

Over the past decades, increased recognition has been given to the important role played by partnerships in addressing global, regional and subregional challenges, bringing together non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector, among others, to contribute to the realization of internationally agreed development goals. The majority of UNEP's activities at the programmatic level are implemented in partnerships with non-governmental organizations. Such partnerships for implementation are regulated through UNEP's Partnership Policy, available at: <http://www.unep.org/about/funding/portals/50199/documents/Partnership-Policy.pdf>.

In particular, Major Groups and Stakeholders have the opportunity to:

- provide input to the development of the medium-term strategy (MTS) and the programme of work (PoW), this is done usually through the MGSB, in close cooperation with the relevant Division or Department; and
- participate in project implementation as regulated by the partnership policy.

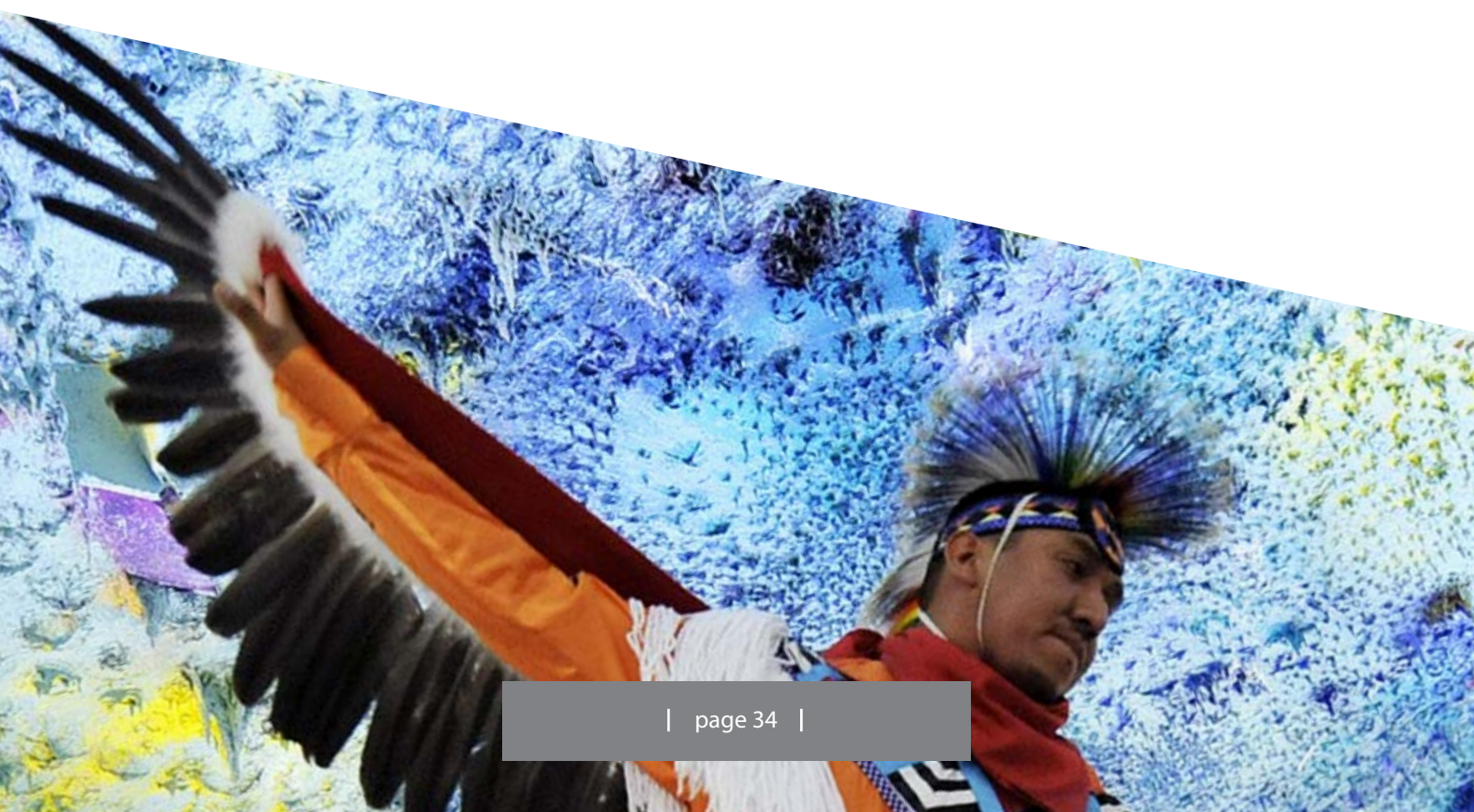
These opportunities are not limited to accredited organizations. See also Section 3.

UNEP and Indigenous Peoples: A Partnership in Caring for the Environment – Policy Guidance

Within its approach towards Major Groups and Stakeholders, UNEP considers Indigenous Peoples as an important partner at the strategic, political and programmatic level in order to achieve sustainable development in a holistic and integrated manner. Each community and group of Indigenous Peoples has developed over the millennia a unique relationship with its traditional land, territory, and related natural resources as well as with the ecosystems they inhabit. In this regard, UNEP has developed a Policy Guidance to enhance and reinforce its engagement with Indigenous Peoples. See: <http://www.unep.org/civil-society/MajorGroups/IndigenousPeoplesandtheirCommunities/tabid/52201/Default.aspx>

The purpose of the Guidance Document is to assist UNEP, its partners as well as Indigenous Peoples in facilitating:

1. Partnerships between UNEP and Indigenous Peoples that will strengthen Indigenous Peoples' participation in environmental development, policy-making and programme and project implementation;
2. A better understanding among UNEP's staff regarding the situation of Indigenous Peoples, with the aim of enhancing engagement of UNEP with Indigenous Peoples, drawing out their key concerns and priorities;
3. Strengthened institutional interaction between UNEP and Indigenous Peoples to tap into Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, expertise and experiences, for the benefit of environmental decision-making processes;
4. Increased Indigenous Peoples' participation in policy development and decision-making and implementation that could contribute to improved international and national environmental governance.



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SECTION 8: Funding for Stakeholder Engagement at UNEP

Funding for some stakeholder participation 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 stakeholders from developing countries. However UNEP is not in a position to commit itself to financial support to Major Groups and Stakeholders for participation in meetings or activities. If funding is available for travel support to OECPR and UNEA, financial support for meeting participation may be provided to members of the MGFC, Regional Representatives, speakers and resource persons, and representatives from developing countries.



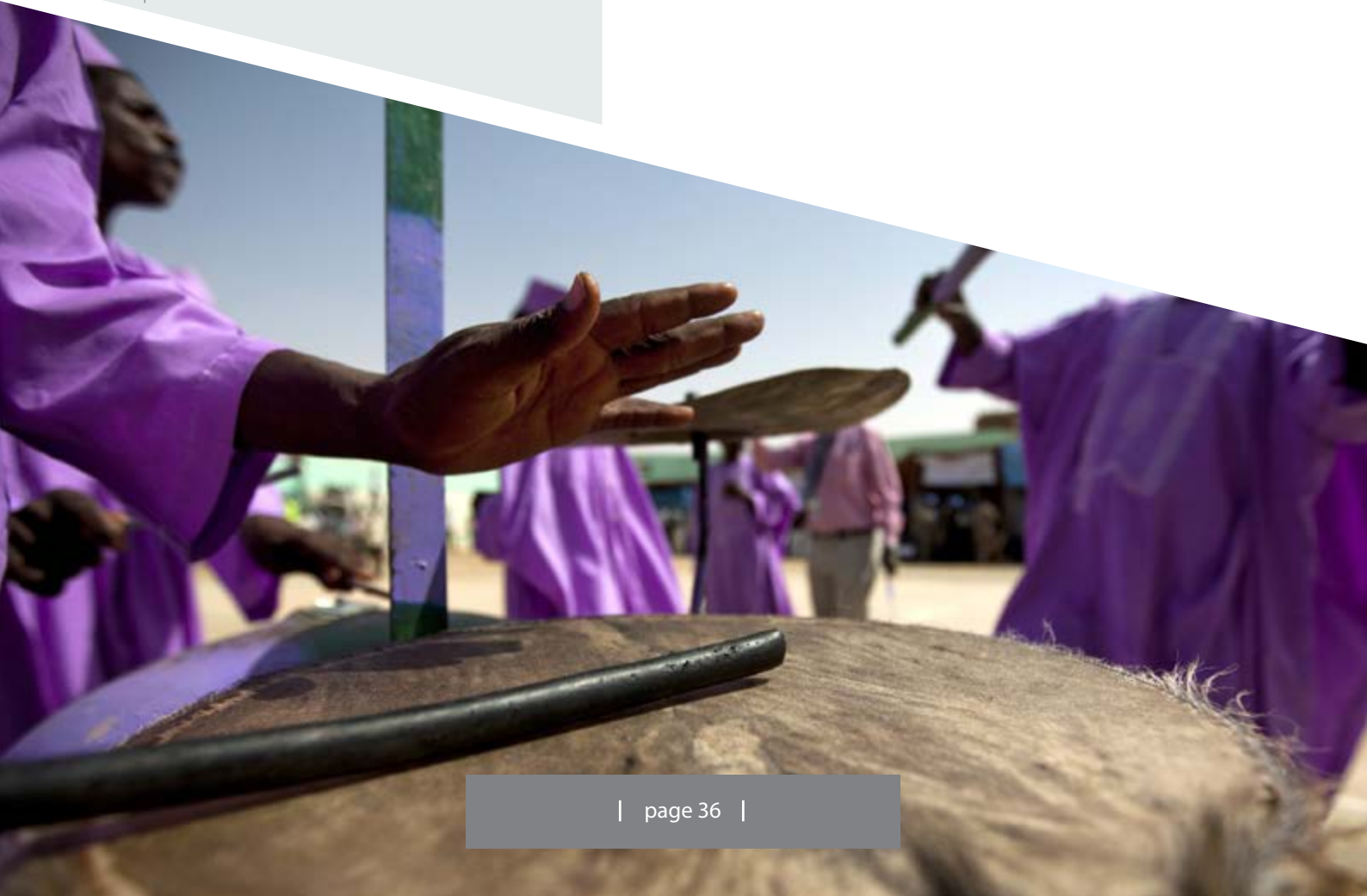
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SECTION 9: Code of Conduct at Meetings Hosted by the UN

Overview

When attending meetings at the United Nations, participants should comply with requirements regarding registration, badges, security instructions, behavior, use and access to facilities, occupation of seats, use of symbols, right to speak and make statements, etc.





SECTION 9: Code of Conduct at Meetings Hosted by the UN

- 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 be worn visibly at all times.
- Participants shall be prepared to verify their identity upon the request of United Nations officials or security staff.
- Observers from accredited organizations shall normally be at least 18 years of age. Younger representatives, e.g. from the Children and Youth Major Group, may be registered at the discretion of the Secretariat, if accompanied by a chaperone.
- Representatives of civil society 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.
- Observers may only use assigned seats.
- Observers 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, observers should push the “speak” button on the console with microphone in front of them. The request will go into a queue which is managed by the Chair/President and is visible on each console. The right to speak is given by the Chair/President of the meeting, who will take into account protocol requirements. When it is one’s turn to speak, the red light on the microphone will light and one is visible on the big screen.
- Statements that are read in the sessions must be submitted to the UNEP Secretariat for documentation and recording 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.

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SECTION 10: UNEP's Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch/ Secretariat for Governing Bodies

Overview

UNEP's Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch founded in 2004 and part of the **Secretariat of Governing Bodies** (SGB) since 2013, further improves the coordination of stakeholders' inputs into UNEP's work. The mandate of the Branch, which provides a range of services, is to cooperate with MGS and facilitate their fair representation and efficient engagement in UNEP/UN environmental policy-making and implementation, as well as engaging them at the intergovernmental level.

The Branch focuses its activities on the nine Major Groups but also works with a multitude of other relevant non-governmental stakeholders who share the same purpose, including through catalyzing action and through enhanced engagement and collaboration.

SECTION 10: UNEP's Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch/Secretariat for Governing Bodies

The mandate

UNEP's Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch was founded in 2004 in response to demands from Major Groups and Stakeholders and Governments to further improve coordination of stakeholder input into UNEP's work. The mandate of the Branch is to cooperate with Major Groups and Stakeholders and facilitate their fair representation and efficient engagement in UNEP/UN environmental policy-making and implementation, including through catalyzing action to protect the environment through enhanced engagement and collaboration with the multitude of Major Group actors who share the same purpose around the world; and engaging them at the policy level to take into account their expertise and views at the intergovernmental level and in the implementation of UNEP's work programme. In 2013 the Branch became part of the Secretariat of Governing Bodies (SGB).

The Branch provides the following range of services to MGS:

- promoting and facilitating the active participation of Major Groups and Stakeholders in the work of UNEP and its governing bodies, at policy level, thus implementing UNEP's Stakeholder Engagement Policy and strengthening decision-making processes at UNEP through the expertise of relevant MGS.
- organization of the Global Major Groups and Stakeholder Forum (GMGSF) prior to UNEA and coordinating and facilitating MGS participation and inputs in the work of the CPR, the CPR Bureau and the UNEA Bureau, including a MGS coordination meeting before the OECPR. In addition, the organization of the Greenroom during UNEA.
- convening of regional and international consultations that relate to UNEA themes and strategic objectives of UNEP; such consultations are also held to involve MGS organizations that are not accredited to UNEP.
- facilitation of the MGS participation in yearly Regional Consultative Meetings in all six UNEP regions.
- providing advice and services to UNEP Divisions, Regional and Out-posted Offices and partners with respect to engaging and partnering with MGS.
- promoting and facilitating the active participation and contributions of MGS in the work of UNEP at programmatic level.
- supporting the development of strategic partnerships and coalitions that involve MGS to support thematic work and/or sub-programmes.
- facilitating UNEP's communication with MGS, including through the Major Groups Facilitating Committee and elected Regional Representatives.

- servicing Major Groups and Stakeholders by:
 - providing concise information to MGS on latest developments in UNEP with regards to UNEA processes and deliberations, including through the Publication series “Perspectives” and a dedicated website;
 - answering individual information requests and inquiries;
 - providing advice on opportunities to engage with other UN processes and events;
 - organizing targeted meetings and consultations at global and regional levels;
 - accreditation of international non-governmental organizations;
 - enhancing the participation of MGS from developing countries.
- implementing specific projects under UNEP’s Programme of Work that relate to MGS engagement.
- overseeing the implementation of UNEP’s Indigenous Peoples Policy Guidance with respect to the participation and engagement of Indigenous Peoples representatives in UNEA and subsidiary organs and the programmatic work; as well as carrying out Inter-Agency related work of Indigenous Peoples, as led by the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.
- tracking the activities of UNEP National Committees.
- inter-agency coordination and contribution to strengthen multi-stakeholder dialogue and alliance-building on MGS and UN related issues, activities and reports.

The Branch also acts as an advocate for MGS participation and oversees UNEP’s engagement with them. The Branch focuses its activities on the nine Major Groups as defined in Agenda 21 but also works with all other relevant non-governmental stakeholders. Internally, the Branch cooperates closely with UNEP Divisions (e.g. Division of Communications and Public Information (DCPI) on information dissemination and youth related issues), UNEP Regional Offices, and relevant offices and units of similar nature in UN sister organizations.



Useful Resources

Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch website:

<http://www.unep.org/civil-society/>

UNEA stakeholder participation homepage:

[http://www.unep.org/civil-society/GlobalFora/2014OECPRandUNEA/
tabid/132030/Default.aspx](http://www.unep.org/civil-society/GlobalFora/2014OECPRandUNEA/tabid/132030/Default.aspx)

UNEA homepage:

<http://www.unep.org/unea/en/>

UNEP Homepage:

<http://www.unep.org/>

For accreditation:

[http://www.unep.org/civil-society/UNEAUNEPAccreditation/tabid/52182/
Default.aspx](http://www.unep.org/civil-society/UNEAUNEPAccreditation/tabid/52182/Default.aspx)

Regional Offices:

[http://www.unep.org/documents.multilingual/default.asp?DocumentID=296&A
rticleID=3302&l=en](http://www.unep.org/documents.multilingual/default.asp?DocumentID=296&ArticleID=3302&l=en)

Register for the mailing list:

http://unep.org/cso-new/register/Simple_Register.aspx

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This Handbook aims to inform and guide Major Groups and Stakeholders by presenting in detail the **currently applied** rules, mechanisms and practices for MGS engagement in UNEP's work. It is based on the Rules of Procedure of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) of the United Nations Environment Programme:

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

- 1. 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) from 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.*
- 2. 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 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.*

The Handbook complements the *Guidelines for Participation of Major Groups and Stakeholders in Policy Design at UNEP* and other related documents.

**UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch
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