Major Groups and Stakeholders Engagement at UNEP

Orientation Session for New Members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives
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About Major Groups and Stakeholders Mechanism

What Are Major Groups?

- Introduced at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, the Major Groups Mechanism recognizes nine civil society constituencies, identified in ***Agenda 21***, as essential partners in sustainable development.
- Designed to broaden participation, it ensures that diverse stakeholders—especially those closest to implementation—have a meaningful voice in shaping UN environmental governance.

Major Groups in UNEP Processes

- Major Groups are central to UNEP's Stakeholder Engagement Framework, with their participation enabled under '**Rule 70 of UNEA Rules of Procedure**' and guided by the **UNEP Stakeholder Engagement Handbook**.
- MGS expertise enriches decision-making processes while fully respecting the intergovernmental nature of UNEP.
- This mechanism enhances transparency and legitimacy in UNEP's work, and gives those potentially affected by decisions an opportunity to raise concerns and offer constructive input.



The Nine Major Groups and Six Regions

Accredited organizations select their Major Group category based on the nature of their work and identity. Their regional constituency is determined by the country of registration or where most activities take place.

Major Groups:

- Business and Industry
- Children and Youth
- Farmers
- Indigenous Peoples
- Local Authorities
- Non-Governmental Organizations
- Scientific and Technological Community
- Women
- Workers and Trade Unions

Regional Constituencies:

- Africa
- Asia-Pacific
- Europe
- Latin America and the Caribbean
- North America
- West Asia

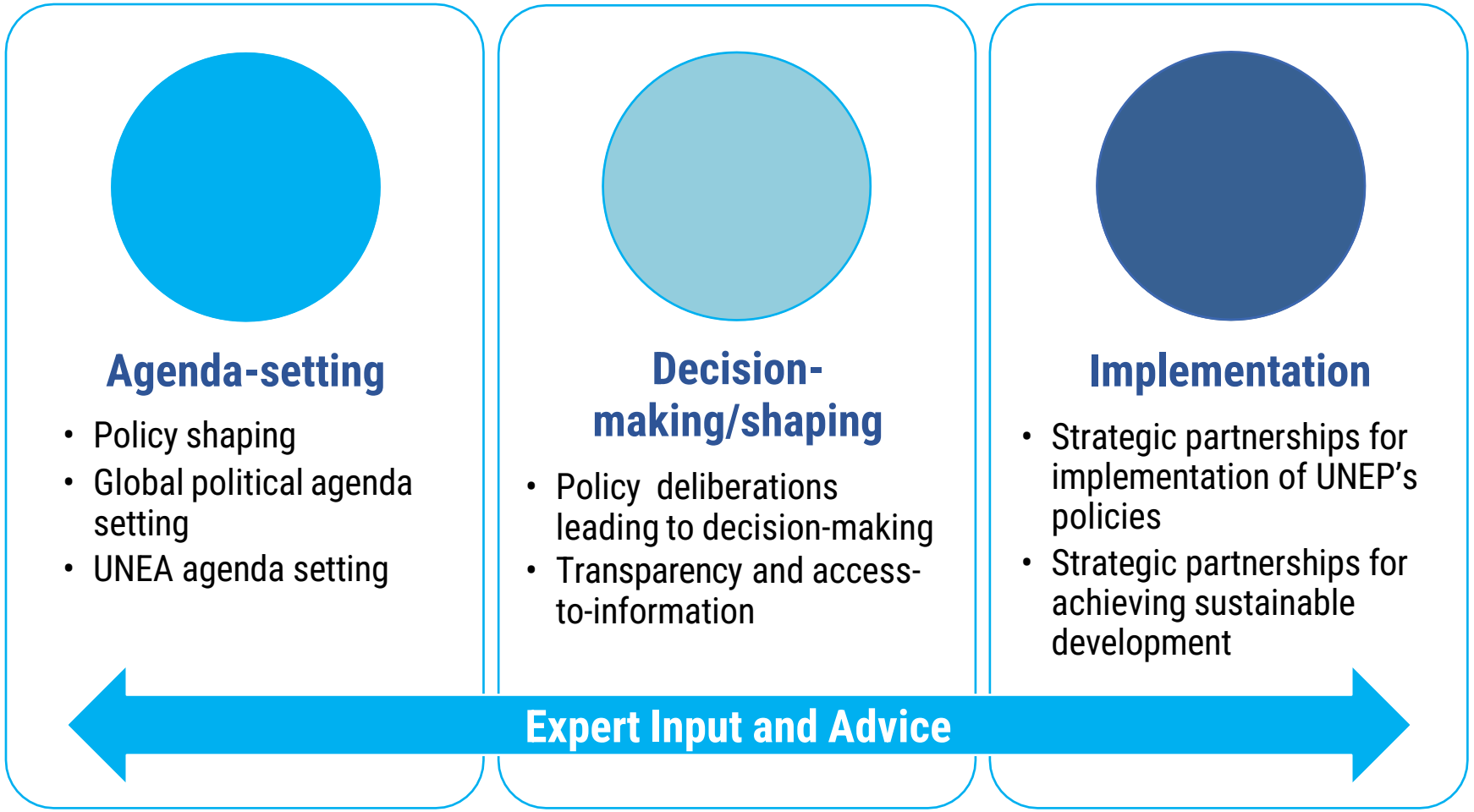
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Engagement Modalities and Avenues

- Formal accreditation under a Major Group category grants organizations observer status to UNEP, enabling participation in UNEA, its subsidiary bodies, and relevant meetings
- Access to CPR portal, including unedited working documents and written submissions
- Participate, as observers, in UNEP agenda-setting, and decision-making processes
- Provide written contributions and oral statements, mostly through their respective Major Groups
- Elect or serve as the members of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee (MGFC)
- Join preparatory stakeholder meetings such as Regional Consultative Meetings, Youth Environment Assembly, and the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum
- May apply to host official side events and/or green room events at UNEA

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Three Levels of Engagement



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Events and Key Participation Spaces

MGS-led Events

- Regional Consultative Meetings (RCMs) – often back-to-back with Regional Forum of Environment Ministers
- Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum (GMGSF): 2-day event prior to UNEA-7 with preceding online Global Consultations
- Global Youth Environment Assembly (YEA) ahead of OECPR and UNEA
- Indigenous Peoples' Special Dialogue (inaugurated at UNEA-7)
- Green Room: dedicated space for MGS during OECPR & UNEA to organize meetings, bilaterals, side events, etc.

Processes Where MGS Actively Participate

- UNEA, Conference of the Whole and OECPR proceedings
- Other CPR meetings, including Annual Subcommittee
- Multistakeholder Dialogue during UNEA High-Level Segment
- UNEA MEA day sessions
- Various Consultations (Ministerial Declaration, MTS & PoW, etc.)
- Other Processes UNEP mandated (UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, GEO, World Environment Day, etc.)

Accreditation of Non-Governmental Observers

Accreditation criteria (Apply from 1 Jan - 30 June):

- Registered with a Government for at least 2 years
- Non-governmental, non-profit
- With international environmental activities

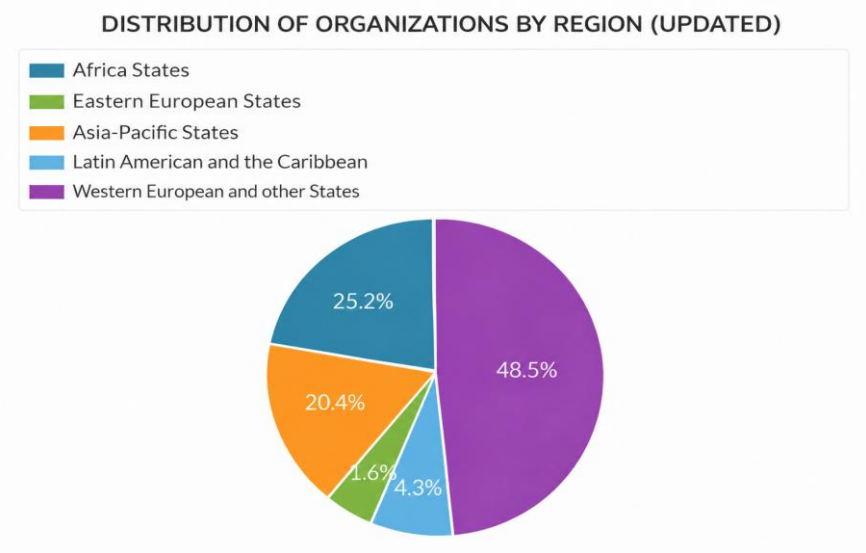
Number of accredited organizations: 1391 as of 30 September 2026. List can be found here

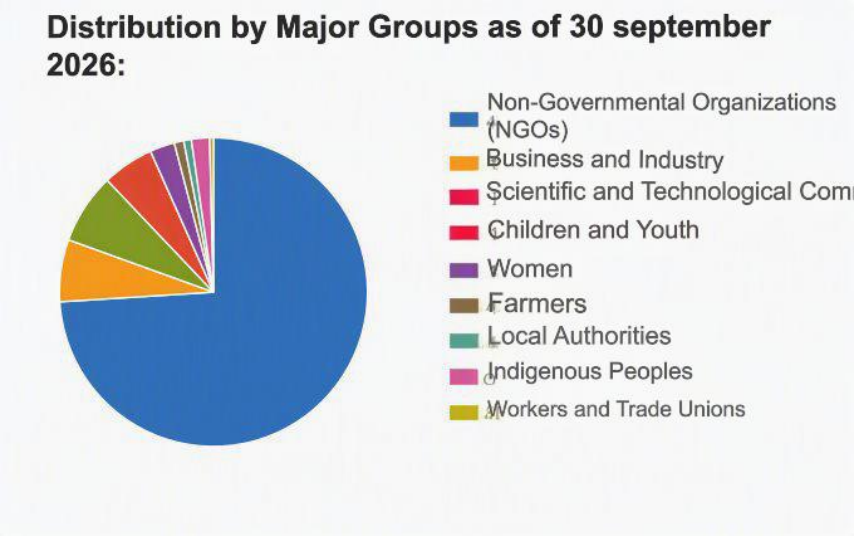
Regional distribution as of 30 September 2026:

- Africa States: 25.2%
- Asia-Pacific States: 20.4%
- Eastern European States: 1.6%
- Latin American and the Caribbean States: 4.3%
- Western European and other States: 48.5%

Distribution by Major Groups as of 30 September 2026:

- Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs): 74%
- Business and Industry: 6.5%
- Scientific and Technological Community:7.4%
- Children and Youth: 5.4%
- Women: 2.6%
- Farmers: 1% | Local Authorities: 0.8%
- Indigenous Peoples: 1.9% | Workers and Trade Unions: 0.4%





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Group of Friends

for enhanced civil society participation in UNEP-led events

- **Aim**: Platform for dialogue, knowledge-sharing and informal exchange of views on issues pertinent to the environmental agenda
- **Meets every other month** to exchange views between Major Groups and Stakeholders and interested Member States in an informal way
- **Co-chaired** currently by Netherlands (on behalf of Member States) and the Children and Youth Major Group (on behalf of MGS)
- **Composition**: All stakeholder constituencies to nominated 2-3 representatives to engage with the group. 49 Member States have participated in at least 1 meeting
- Member States interested in joining may nominate a focal point at unep-civilsociety@un.org with a copy to zuhair.kowshik@un.org

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Role of the Civil Society Unit in the Governance Affairs Office

- Serves as the bridge between civil society stakeholders and UNEP processes
- Administers accreditation of non-governmental observers to UNEA/CPR
- Maintains the UNEP Civil Society Engagement Website
- Facilitates and organizes meetings, consultations, training, outreach, etc.
- Maintains the Stakeholder Engagement Handbook as a guiding tool
- Supports the Major Groups Facilitating Committee
- Provides support for Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum, Global Youth Environment Assembly, Regional Consultative Meetings, Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue, and other MGS-led events, as appropriate
- Coordinates UNEP's contributions to UN system-wide reporting and commitments related to public participation, access to information, youth engagement, Indigenous Peoples and stakeholder engagement
- Supports stakeholder engagement in the implementation and follow-up of UNEA resolutions and decisions, as appropriate

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Delivering on UNEA Resolution 7/6 on Youth Participation

Resolution 7/6 entitled "Enhancing the meaningful participation of youth in environmental processes, and enhancing environmental education"

Dimension	Requests for UNEP ED to
Participation	• Facilitate youth participation in UNEP's work & mandated activities, subject to availability of resources (OP3) • Support Member States, upon request & subject to availability of resources, in promoting youth participation in environmental processes (OP6)
Education	• Invitation to support Member States, upon their request, for the integration of environmental education, literacy, etc. into national education systems (OP4)
YEA	• Continue providing support for the organization of Youth Environment Assembly in partnership with CYMG (OP5)
Hiring	• Encouragement to promote applications from youth candidates within UNEP (OP7)

Key milestones (in 2026)

- Secretariat's **implementation workplan** developed
- Virtual youth consultation convened **to inform implementation priorities**
- Continued engagement with the Children and Youth Major Group (CYMG)

Challenges and further actions

- **No dedicated funding mechanism** for implementation
- **No dedicated professional capacity** for coordination within the Secretariat
- **Extrabudgetary resources required** to support the effective implementation and to sustain youth engagement activities

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Thanks for Your Attention!



Civil Society Unit, Governance Affairs Office, UNEP
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