



UN
environment
programme

UN NGLS
Non-Governmental Liaison Service

HANDBOOK

FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

United Nations Environment Programme



HANDBOOK FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AT THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP)

Acknowledgements

Copyright © 2026 United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

© Photos and illustrations as specified on page 64.

Reproduction

This publication may be reproduced in whole or in part and in any form for educational and non-profit purposes without special permission from the copyright holder, provided that acknowledgement of the source is made. UNEP would appreciate receiving a copy of any publication that uses this material as a source.

No use of this publication may be made for the resale or for any other commercial purposes whatsoever without the prior permission in writing of UNEP. Applications for such permission, with a statement of purpose of the reproduction, should be addressed to the Communication Division, UNEP, P.O. Box 30552, Nairobi 00100, Kenya.

Produced by

Civil Society Unit

Governance Affairs Office

United Nations Environment Programme, Nairobi, Kenya

E-mail: unep-civilsociety@un.org

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

Written by

The first edition of this handbook was prepared by Beth Peoc'h from the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS), in close cooperation with UNEP's Civil Society Unit. The updated version was prepared by UNEP's Civil Society Unit.

Design and Layout

David Vergari from the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS) and Isaiah Otieno from UNEP's Civil Society Unit..

HANDBOOK FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AT THE UNIT- ED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP)

Introduction.....	5
Purpose and Scope of the Handbook.....	6
Section 1: The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and Its Subsidiary Organs.....	8
Section 2: Engagement Approach.....	14
Section 3: Accreditation.....	19
Section 4: Participation in Agenda-Setting and Decision-Making Processes.....	25
Section 5: Access to Information.....	31
Section 6: Major Groups and Stakeholders Body – Spaces and Roles.....	35
Section 7: Expert Input and Advice, and Partnership for Implementation.....	50
Section 8: Funding for Stakeholder Engagement at UNEP.....	54
Section 9: Code of Conduct at Meetings Hosted by the UN.....	56
Section 10: UNEP’s Civil Society Unit.....	61
Useful Resources.....	64

Introduction

For almost 50 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 (UNEA) (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” is used to address broader civil society actors and Civil Society and Major Groups and Stakeholders are therefore being used interchangeably. This practice is based on Governing Council 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 peoples, workers and trade unions, business and industry, local authorities and 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). In line with Paragraph 43 of the Rio + 20 outcome document “The Future We Want,” “stakeholders” may include local communities, volunteer groups and foundations, migrants and families, older persons, persons with disabilities and others.

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 Major Groups and Stakeholders 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 (UNEP):

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 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 Civil Society Unit.

UNEP HANDBOOK FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

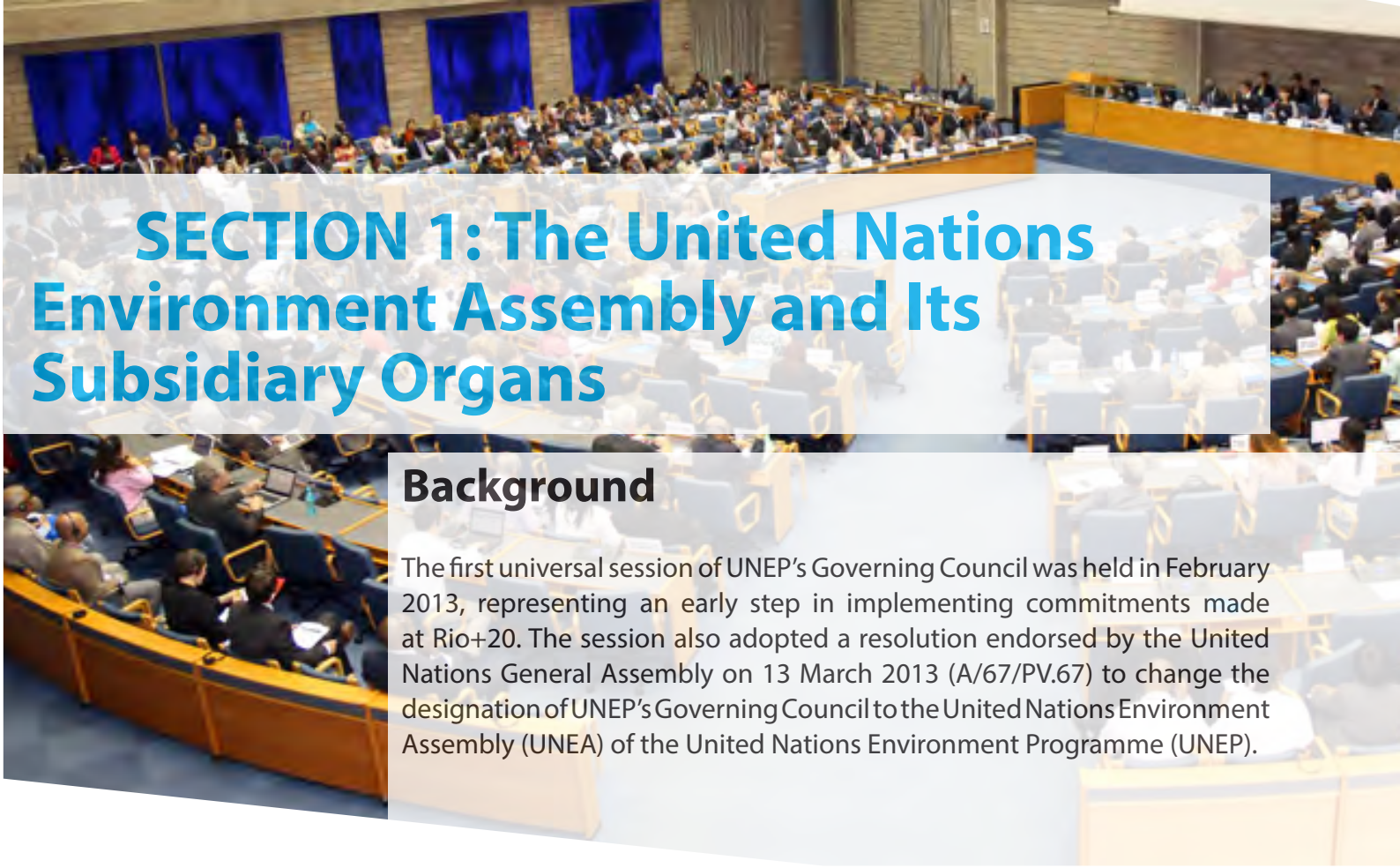
Section 1:	The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and Its Subsidiary Organs.....	8
Section 2:	Engagement Approach.....	14
Section 3:	Accreditation.....	19
Section 4:	Participation in Agenda-Setting and Decision-Making Processes.....	25
Section 5:	Access to Information.....	31
Section 6:	Major Groups and Stakeholders Body – Spaces and Roles.....	35
Section 7:	Expert Input and Advice, and Partnerships for Implementation	50
Section 8:	Funding for Stakeholder Engagement at UNEP.....	54
Section 9:	Code of Conduct at Meetings Hosted by the UN.....	56
Section 10:	UNEP's Civil Society Unit.....	61
	Useful Resources.....	64

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; to provide political guidance in the work of UNEP; and to promote a strong science-policy interface. UNEA contributes substantively to intergovernmental processes and negotiations of the United Nations, including the Sustainable Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda. The Assembly has a subsidiary inter-sessional body, the Committee of Permanent Representatives, which discusses UNEP's latest activities and organizes Open-Ended Meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, annual subcommittees and subcommittee meetings, as well as briefings and thematic debates, held in public.





SECTION 1: The United Nations Environment Assembly 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 on 13 March 2013 (A/67/PV.67) to change the designation of UNEP's Governing Council to the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

UNEP's Governing Structure

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), with universal membership of 193 members, replaced the Governing Council (with 58 members) as the governing body of UNEP. The Assembly 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 geographically balanced 10-member Bureau, it meets biennially in Nairobi, in uneven years, 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.

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

Preparation of the Assembly sessions is overseen by the **United Nations Environment Assembly**

(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 the Assembly.

Committee of Permanent Representatives

The Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) is a subsidiary inter-sessional body of the United Nations Environment Assembly (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 Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) Bureau**, which has representatives of all the UN regions and is elected biennially by the Committee.

It performs the following functions:

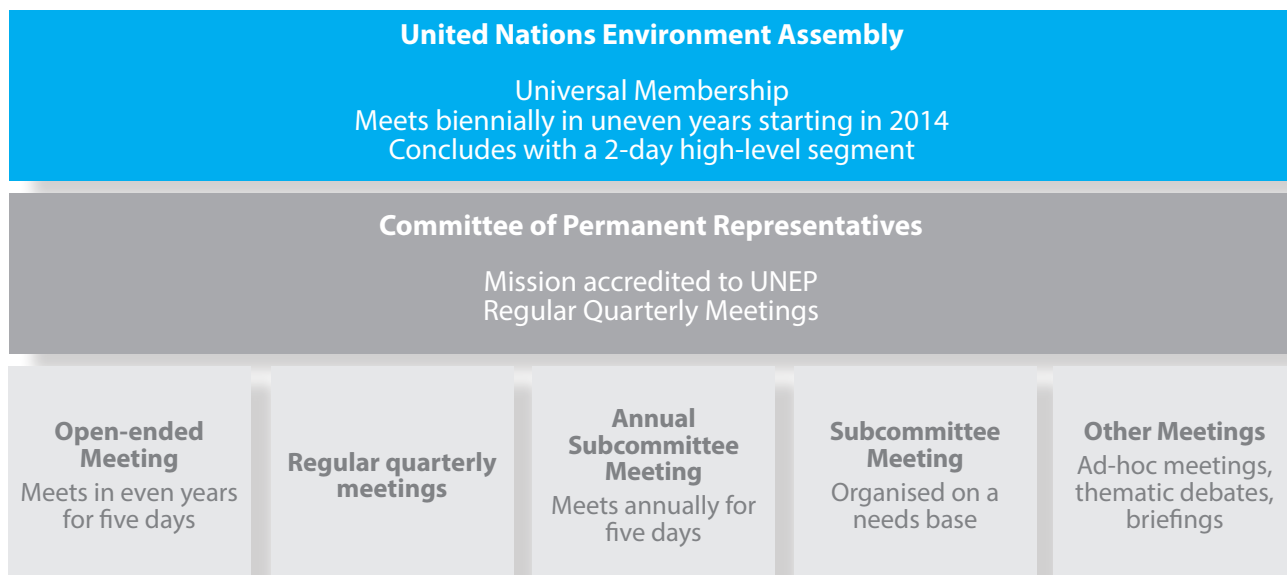
- Contributes to the preparation of the agenda of its governing body;
- Provides advice to its governing body on policy matters;
- Prepares decisions for adoption by its governing body and oversees their implementation;
- Convenes thematic and/or programmatic debates;
- Promotes effective ways and means to facilitate participation of the non-resident 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 (OECPR)

An annual subcommittee of Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) meets for a period of five days annually in Nairobi to review the medium-term strategy and Programme of Work as well as 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 Committee website.

Subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR)

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



Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) briefings

Committee of Permanent Representatives (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, including Major Groups and Stakeholders to provide comments and share expertise, including through an improved online communication platform which provides an enhanced exchange for all stakeholders and hence adds transparency through increased participation.

Participation of Major Groups and Stakeholders 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 Major Groups and Stakeholders, unless decided otherwise by the CPR. Major Groups and Stakeholders have the opportunity to provide written and oral input into these meetings. Through UNEP's Governance Affairs Office, accredited organizations receive relevant information and documents – on par with Member States.

Committee of Permanent Representatives Bureau and UNEP Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) Bureau and United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) Bureau

X. *Public and Private Meetings*

Rule 67 of the Rules of Procedure of United Nations Environment Assembly

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.

The Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) Bureau, as well as the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) Bureau, may call for informal meetings with representatives of Major Groups and Stakeholders. Major Groups and Stakeholders 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.



UNEP HANDBOOK FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Section 1:	The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and Its Subsidiary Organs.....	8
Section 2:	Engagement Approach.....	14
Section 3:	Accreditation.....	19
Section 4:	Participation in Agenda-Setting and Decision-Making Processes.....	25
Section 5:	Access to Information.....	31
Section 6:	Major Groups and Stakeholders Body – Spaces and Roles.....	35
Section 7:	Expert Input and Advice, and Partnerships for Implementation.....	50
Section 8:	Funding for Stakeholder Engagement at UNEP.....	54
Section 9:	Code of Conduct at Meetings Hosted by the UN.....	56
Section 10:	UNEP's Civil Society Unit.....	61
Useful Resources		64

SECTION 2: Engagement Approach

Overview

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) strives to ensure effective, broad and balanced participation of Major Groups and Stakeholders 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; 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 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, in line with its [Access to Information Policy](#) ;
- 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, 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

1

Farmers

including small-scale farmers, fisherfolk, pastoralists and foresters



2

Women



3

Scientific and technological community

including research and academia



4

Children and Youth



5

Indigenous Peoples and their Communities



6

Workers and Trade Unions



7

Business and industry



8

Non-governmental Organizations



9

Local Authorities



Other Stakeholders

Recognizing that since Agenda 21, the stakeholder landscape has become more diverse and in line with Paragraph 43 of “The Future We Want”, UNEP cooperates also with non-governmental organizations that are not covered under the nine Major Groups, including foundations. For accreditation purposes these are however requested to accredit themselves under the NGO Major Group or under another of the nine Major Groups that is closest to their area of activity.

Engaging with the Private Sector

While private sector associations that are registered as NGOs are covered under the Business and Industry Major Group, UNEP’s cooperation with individual companies is not covered under this Handbook. In 2017, UNEP has established a dedicated Private Sector Unit responsible of engaging private sector entities <https://www.unep.org/about-un-environment/private-sector-engagement> into the work of UNEP.

UNEP HANDBOOK FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Section 1:	The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and Its Subsidiary Organs.....	8
Section 2:	Engagement Approach.....	14
Section 3:	Accreditation.....	19
Section 4:	Participation in Agenda-Setting and Decision-Making Processes.....	25
Section 5:	Access to Information.....	31
Section 6:	Major Groups and Stakeholders Body – Spaces and Roles.....	35
Section 7:	Expert Input and Advice, and Partnerships for Implementation.....	50
Section 8:	Funding for Stakeholder Engagement at UNEP.....	54
Section 9:	Code of Conduct at Meetings Hosted by the UN.....	56
Section 10:	UNEP's Civil Society Unit.....	61
	Useful Resources.....	64

SECTION 3: Accreditation

Overview

For stakeholders to participate in the governance of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), they must be accredited to UNEP. For engaging with UNEP in project implementation or outside the governing bodies, accreditation is recommended but not mandatory. 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.

SECTION 3: Accreditation

Observer status to the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA)

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 the Assembly. Organizations that are accredited to other UN Bodies, such as the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), will still need UNEP accreditation.

The process of accreditation

The criteria for accreditation are derived from Rule 70 of the Rules of Procedure of UNEA. To be accredited to UNEP and its governing bodies, an organization needs to:

- **Be a legal entity registered in at least one country;**
- **Be in existence for at least two years at the time of the application;**
- **Be established as non-governmental and not-for-profit organization; and**
- **Demonstrate substantive activities undertaken within the past five years in the field of environment and/or sustainable development, with a clear international scope.**

The process of accreditation includes:

- **Create an account on the UNEP Accreditation Portal - <https://accreditation.unep.org>**
- **Fill in your application in the UNEP Accreditation portal following this user manual- <https://tinyurl.com/4rsfwbzbv>**
- **Upload all required documents (along with translations into English, if the original documents are not in English), including:**
 - o Cover letter drafted using the structure shown in this template (<https://tinyurl.com/mv9bdzbv>)
 - o Certificate of registration showing the organization has been in existence for at least two

years at the time of the application.

- o Proof that your organization is non-governmental.
 - o Proof that your organization is not-for-profit.
 - o Constitution, charter, statutes, or by-laws (including any amendments) signed/ stamped.
 - o Evidence of national and international activities undertaken within the past five years in the area of environment and/or sustainable development. Evidence must be presented in the format provided in this template (<https://tinyurl.com/2kyx2p5s>)
- **Submit the request through the UNEP Accreditation Portal - <https://accreditation.unep.org>**
 - **Application review:** The Civil Society Unit within the Governance Affairs Office reviews the submitted application to determine whether any additional documentation is required. If further documents are needed, the organization is notified accordingly.
 - **Decision and notification:** Upon completion of the review, the organization is formally notified of the decision.
 - **Database update and confirmation:** The Civil Society Unit updates its database to include the newly accredited organization and sends a confirmation email to the organization. The database of accredited organizations is publicly accessible at: <https://bit.ly/2NqIKnM>
 -

Normal processing time for accreditation is 180 days/ 6 months. For further information, please contact us at : unep-accreditation@un.org

Access to the accreditation application portal:

<https://accreditation.unep.org>

Access to more information of accreditation:

<https://www.unenvironment.org/civil-society-engagement/accreditation>

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 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;

- d. If an organisation shows an ongoing non-constructive behaviour in interacting with fellow Major Groups and UNEP.

The observer status of organizations is suspended or withdrawn by decision of the Secretary of Governing Bodies, based on the recommendation of the Civil Society Unit. 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. There is no formal procedure to challenge the decision of the Secretary of the Governing Bodies.

Responsibilities and obligations of accredited stakeholders toward the United Nations Environment Assembly (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 that enough seating is 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 at least every four years with evidence of their existence and activities, such as annual reports, project reports and copies of publications. Alternatively, accredited organisations may also choose to prepare and submit an activity report. Once accredited, organizations of Major Groups have the opportunity in the run-up to the sessions of the UN Environment Assembly to:

- o Receive unedited working documents of the UNEA first-hand and at the same time as the CPR,
- o Submit to UN Environment Programme written contributions to these unedited working documents
- o Participate in all public meetings of the UNEA subsidiary organs such as the CPR
- o Make oral and written contributions to these meetings.

During the sessions of the UN Environment Assembly, accredited organizations of Major Groups can:

- o Participate in the Plenary, the Committee of the Whole and the Ministerial Consultations discussions as observers;
- o Circulate written statements to Governments through the UNEP Secretariat; and
- o Make oral statements during the discussions and sessions of UNEA if invited by the Chair.

Access to list of organizations accredited to UNEP:

<https://www.unep.org/civil-society-engagement/accreditation/list-accredited-organizations>

UNEP HANDBOOK FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Section 1:	The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and Its Subsidiary Organs.....	8
Section 2:	Engagement Approach.....	14
Section 3:	Accreditation.....	19
Section 4:	Participation in Agenda-Setting and Decision-Making Processes.....	25
Section 5:	Access to Information.....	31
Section 6:	Major Groups and Stakeholders Body – Spaces and Roles.....	35
Section 7:	Expert Input and Advice, and Partnerships for Implementation.....	50
Section 8:	Funding for Stakeholder Engagement at UNEP.....	54
Section 9:	Code of Conduct at Meetings Hosted by the UN.....	56
Section 10:	UNEP's Civil Society Unit.....	61
Useful Resources		64

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 can contribute to the governance of UNEP and participate at two levels: on agenda-setting processes, and on policy making and decision-making processes. During the Assembly opening and closing plenary, Ministerial Roundtables, UNEA parallel sessions, Committee of the Whole, official and informal side events, Major Groups and Stakeholders representatives are able – under certain restrictions and often at the discretion of the chair of the particular session and meeting – to make written and oral interventions, access all public sessions and meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR), have designated seats, and access all public documents. In addition, the Greenroom or civil society tent, if available, is a multi-purpose venue primarily reserved for Major Groups and Stakeholders to organize side events, workshops and meetings.



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

Two levels of participation

Decision-making within the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the prerogative of Member States. However, during sessions of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and its subsidiary organs, accredited Major Groups and Stakeholders 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 can contribute to agenda-setting and decision-making processes during the Regional Consultative Meetings (RCMs) (see Section 6) and by participation in Ministerial Meetings, as well as through their Regional Facilitators..

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 United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) plenaries, opening sessions, ministerial dialogues (when convened), leadership dialogues, multi-stakeholder dialogue, 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, including the website of CPR; 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. Major Groups and Stakeholders' 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 or designated civil society space further below).
- The Major Groups Facilitating Committee (see Section 6) facilitates the participation of Major Groups and Stakeholders in these activities/processes.
- Accredited stakeholders may be invited to participate in relevant regional consultations conducted by UNEP which are part of the preparatory process on the way to UNEA.

United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA): Opportunities for Major Groups and Stakeholders to contribute to agenda-setting and decision-making

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) is the 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.

The Assembly meets every two years, in uneven years, and consists of a Plenary, a High-level Segment and the so-called Committee of the Whole. These meetings normally run in parallel. The **opening plenary** is held on the first morning of the Assembly, attended and addressed by the Executive Director of UNEP, who delivers a Policy Statement to Member States. The President of the Assembly 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 Facilitators (two per region) are provided. Often, UNEA is accompanied by associated and other events preceding or following the Assembly which give Major Groups and Stakeholders further space for engagement, contribution and discussion on relevant issues.

There are as many **Leadership Dialogues** 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 associated events 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 discussions. The agendas are already set and appear in the provisional timetable of meetings and events.

Each UN Environment Assembly features a **Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue** on a theme relevant for the Assembly. The facilitated Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue brings together representatives of Member States, Major Groups and the Private Sector and it provides a unique opportunity for Major Groups to interact with high-level decision makers.

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 to the Assembly. The consolidated report/messages result in a conference room paper as developed by the Rapporteurs and form the basis for the draft report of the President on the Ministerial Consultations. Major Groups and Stakeholders 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, such as a **Ministerial Declaration** are presented to the final plenary meeting of UNEA. They succinctly reflect the main points/messages made by delegations, including from Major Groups and Stakeholders. They also contain the outcomes of the Ministerial Consultations. This is the closing session/plenary of the Assembly where the report of the Committee of the Whole and the Assembly resolutions/decisions are adopted. Like the opening plenary, Major Groups and Stakeholders have seats in a designated area of the closing plenary.

The **Committee of the Whole**, 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 the Assembly. The Committee of the Whole 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 CPR, and those which may be submitted by members of 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 Committee of the Whole normally meets for the first time in 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 Committee of the Whole is made immediately available as a Conference Room Paper.

The report of the Committee of the Whole 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 Committee of the Whole, 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 several key representatives from the Major Groups and Stakeholders (usually in coordination with the Major Groups Facilitating Committee) and have meetings with them. It is also understood that the Major Groups Facilitating Committee 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 UNEA website. Short announcements are also displayed on screens if available. Environment-focused exhibitions may be ongoing in the form of audio-visual materials and posters throughout the duration of the Assembly. A field excursion demonstrating the themes of the current Assembly may be organized for interested delegates. There are numerous social events most evenings and attendance is often by invitation only.

Daily **official press conferences** are held during UNEA session, in general organized by UNEP during lunch hours and open to all. **UNEA documents**, including general information about the forthcoming Assembly, are distributed to Major Group and Stakeholder organizations accredited to UNEP 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.

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** 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 and distributed daily. Major Groups and Stakeholders may also provide them with written versions of their interventions as they might be used as inputs for the Earth Negotiations Bulletin.

The **Greenroom or the Civil Society Tent**, a multi-purpose venue reserved primarily for participating Major Groups and Stakeholders, provides a dedicated Groups and Stakeholders space during Assembly sessions for **morning debriefing sessions** for all participating Major Groups and Stakeholders, led by the Major Groups Facilitating Committee, as well as side events, briefings, orientations, dialogues, workshop and meetings, 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, this space has become a favored and alternative meeting room used by Major Groups and Stakeholders, UNEP, regional groups, and other partners alike to organize multi-stakeholder meetings, conferences and panel discussions. This has helped to ensure outreach to the relevant Major Groups and other Stakeholders audience. In addition, Major Groups and Stakeholders may also have the opportunity to partner with Member States for official side events during UNEA.

Major Groups and Stakeholders are invited by a special communication from the Civil Society Unit or by the Major Groups Facilitating Committee to apply for Greenroom spaces, if available. UNEP reserves the right to reject requests.

Registration to participate in the Global Major Groups and Stakeholder Forum (see Section 6) and UNEA is opened on-line at <https://indico.un.org/category/101274/> prior to these meetings. Only Major Groups and Stakeholders accredited to UNEP will be registered for UNEA. Registration usually opens two months prior to the meeting and at that time invitations are sent out, and it closes 15 days before the meeting. Participation in UNEA and Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum is only allowed after registration is formally confirmed by UNEP.

Participants' badges given to Major Groups and Stakeholders 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 required. 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 (CPR): Accredited Major Groups and Stakeholders can participate in all public meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR). This includes the Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECPR), the annual CPR, CPR subcommittee and CPR briefings. If such meetings are to be held in private, advance notice will be given. A calendar of CPR meetings during a given year is distributed by the Civil Society Unit to accredited organizations and is also made available on the CPR portal. See also: <https://goo.gl/zKa2wD>

During these meetings, Major Groups and Stakeholders representatives have designated seats and are able to make oral interventions at the discretion of the Chair. Written interventions can be submitted through the UNEP Secretariat. Accredited Major Groups and Stakeholders wishing to participate in any of these meetings have to inform the UNEP Secretariat/Civil Society Unit at least two days before a given meeting, so that security arrangements to grant entry to the UN compound in Gigiri, Nairobi, Kenya, can be made. For Major Groups representatives who participate regularly in these meetings, badges for multiple access to the UN compound may be issued through the Civil Society Unit.

These meetings give Major Groups and Stakeholders the opportunity to contribute to agenda-setting and decision-making during the year. This is a key opportunity for Major Groups and Stakeholders to contribute to UNEA agenda-setting.

UNEP will ensure webcasting of above-mentioned meetings.

UNEP HANDBOOK FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Section 1:	The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and Its Subsidiary Organs.....	8
Section 2:	Engagement Approach.....	14
Section 3:	Accreditation.....	19
Section 4:	Participation in Agenda-Setting and Decision-Making Processes.....	25
Section 5:	Access to Information.....	31
Section 6:	Major Groups and Stakeholders Body – Spaces and Roles.....	35
Section 7:	Expert Input and Advice, and Partnerships for Implementation.....	50
Section 8:	Funding for Stakeholder Engagement at UNEP.....	54
Section 9:	Code of Conduct at Meetings Hosted by the UN.....	56
Section 10:	UNEP's Civil Society Unit.....	61
Useful Resources		64

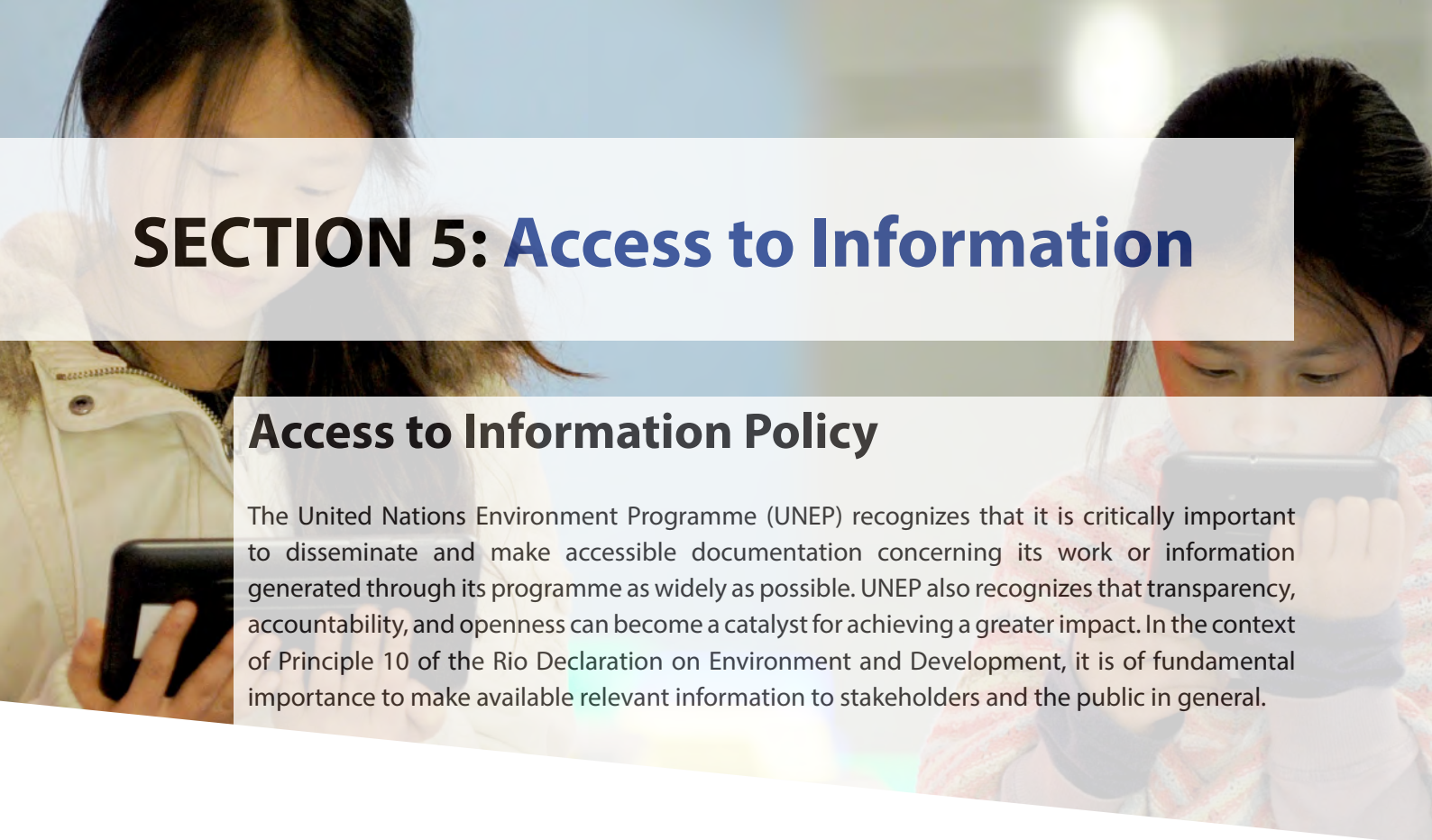
SECTION 5: Access to Information

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 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, including webcasting of Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) and United Nations Environment Assembly (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 an 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.

Access-to-Information Policy in pdf format:

<https://goo.gl/563XXk>

Use of modern Information and Communication Technology to enhance stakeholder engagement

The use of modern information and communications technology, including through the webcasting of Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) and United Nations Environment Assembly (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 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 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 972,000, over one million followers on Instagram 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 Information and Communication Technology 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 building capacity. This is particularly important for some communities 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.



UNEP HANDBOOK FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Section 1:	The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and Its Subsidiary Organs.....	8
Section 2:	Engagement Approach.....	14
Section 3:	Accreditation.....	19
Section 4:	Participation in Agenda-Setting and Decision-Making Processes.....	25
Section 5:	Access to Information.....	31
Section 6:	Major Groups and Stakeholders Body – Spaces and Roles.....	35
Section 7:	Expert Input and Advice, and Partnerships for Implementation.....	50
Section 8:	Funding for Stakeholder Engagement at UNEP.....	54
Section 9:	Code of Conduct at Meetings Hosted by the UN.....	56
Section 10:	UNEP's Civil Society Unit.....	61
Useful Resources		64

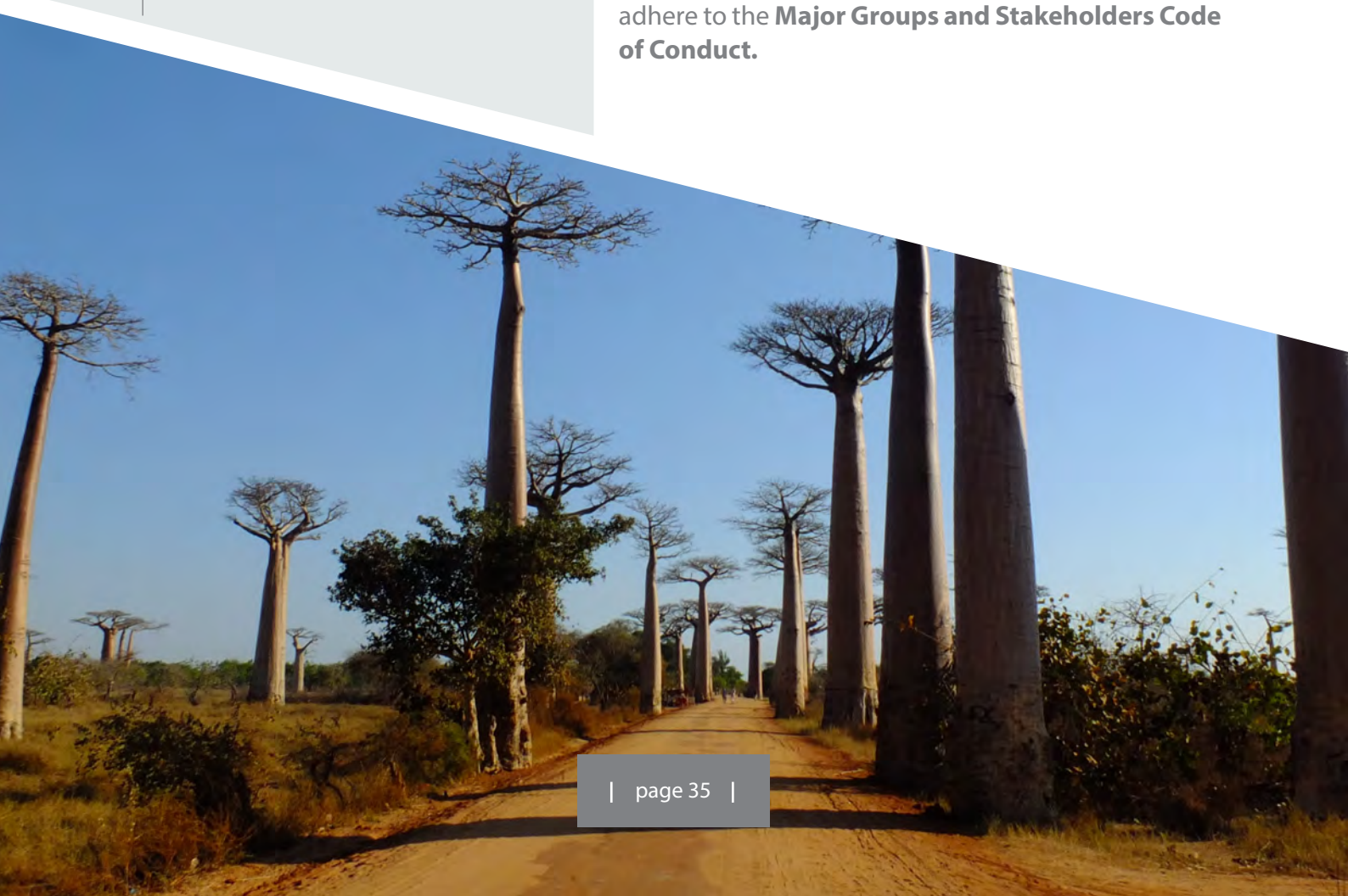
SECTION 6:

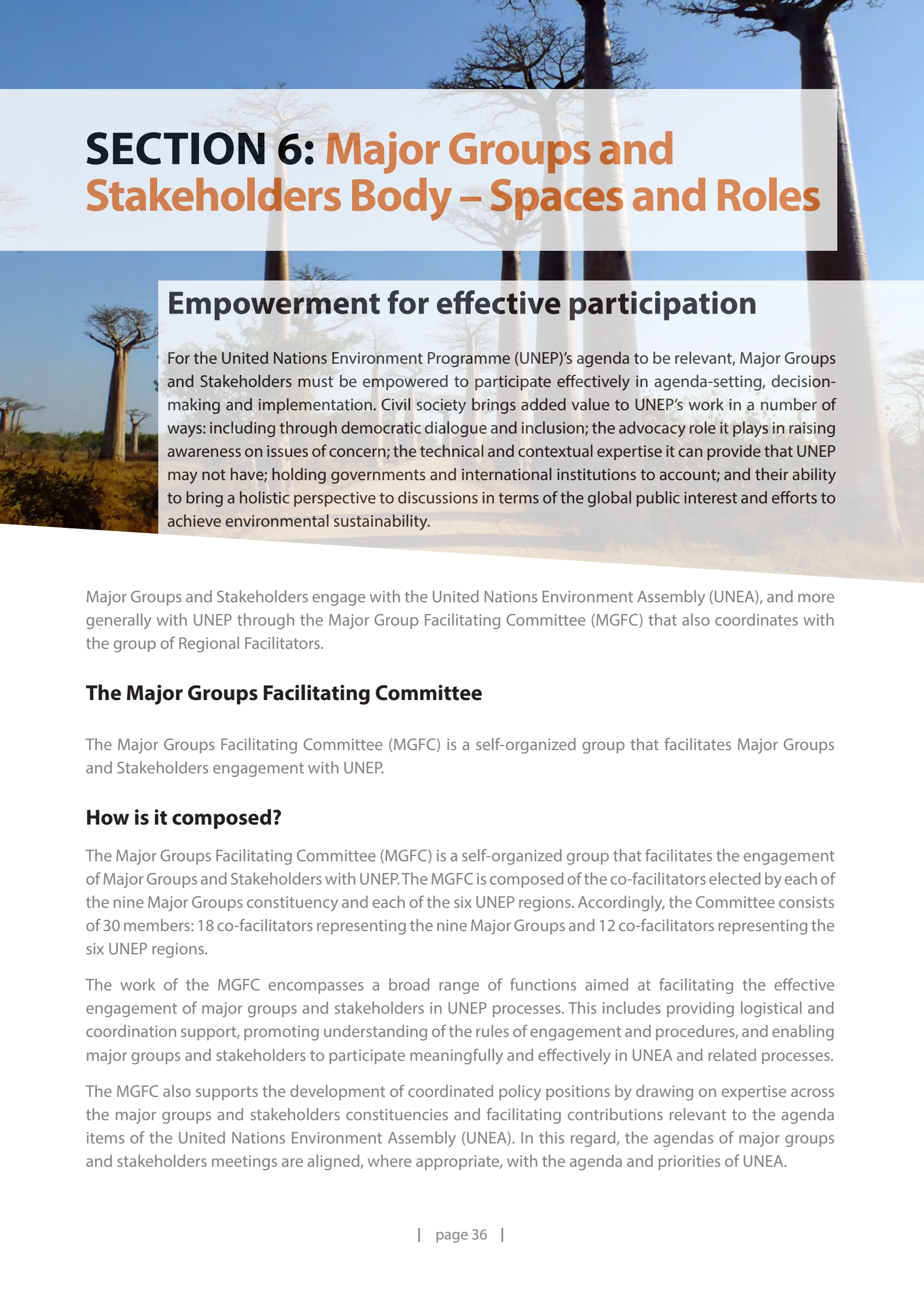
Major Groups and Stakeholders Body – Spaces and Roles

Overview

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

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





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

Empowerment for effective participation

For the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)'s agenda to be relevant, Major Groups and Stakeholders 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 the Major Group Facilitating Committee (MGFC) that also coordinates with the group of Regional Facilitators.

The Major Groups Facilitating Committee

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

How is it composed?

The Major Groups Facilitating Committee (MGFC) is a self-organized group that facilitates the engagement of Major Groups and Stakeholders with UNEP. The MGFC is composed of the co-facilitators elected by each of the nine Major Groups constituency and each of the six UNEP regions. Accordingly, the Committee consists of 30 members: 18 co-facilitators representing the nine Major Groups and 12 co-facilitators representing the six UNEP regions.

The work of the MGFC encompasses a broad range of functions aimed at facilitating the effective engagement of major groups and stakeholders in UNEP processes. This includes providing logistical and coordination support, promoting understanding of the rules of engagement and procedures, and enabling major groups and stakeholders to participate meaningfully and effectively in UNEA and related processes.

The MGFC also supports the development of coordinated policy positions by drawing on expertise across the major groups and stakeholders constituencies and facilitating contributions relevant to the agenda items of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA). In this regard, the agendas of major groups and stakeholders meetings are aligned, where appropriate, with the agenda and priorities of UNEA.

What is expected from Major Groups Facilitating Committee members?

Members of the MGFC are expected to adhere to the obligations outlined in this Handbook and to be able to allocate enough 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 based on 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.

If a member of the MGFC is inactive for a longer period (at least 3 months) and repeatedly not participate in the regular teleconferences of the Committee, UNEP may request the respective Major Group to select a replacement.

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

- Foster the participation of their Major Group organizations during the Regional Consultative Meetings (RCMs);
- In regions where their Major Groups are underrepresented, help to identify and involve emerging or newly-established Major Groups in the regional meetings;
- Advocate for the accreditation of new organizations with UNEP;
- 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 UNEP's Civil Society Unit, regular teleconferences

that bring together members of the MGFC, Regional Facilitators as observers, UNEP's Civil Society Unit and others as deemed necessary. These teleconferences take place at least once every two months. The draft agenda and meeting minutes are prepared by the Chairpersons of the MGFC. Minutes are prepared by a member of MGFC and are distributed by the Civil Society Unit among accredited Major Groups and Stakeholders, and also uploaded on the UNEP website.

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 Groups' 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 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 (see below), serving as its steering committee. Alternatively, the MGFC can decide to entrust an organization accredited to UNEP with the organization of the Forum.

In addition, the MGFC often serves as the body facilitating Major Groups and Stakeholders representation in meetings, such as with the UNEA President.

Elections of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee(MGFC)

The Major Groups Facilitating Committee (MGFC) is composed of 18 members elected from the nine major groups, with each major group electing two representatives, referred to as co-facilitators. Elections for the co-facilitators are held every two years and are organized either by the respective major group or facilitated by UNEP.

New members are selected through a nomination and election process conducted by representatives of accredited organizations within the respective major group, with due consideration given to gender and regional balance. The election results are validated by the UNEP Secretariat, and the elected candidates must belong to the major group they represent. A two-term limit for members of the MGFC, including Regional Facilitators, is recommended and shall be enforced. Following a break of 2 consecutive terms, a former MGFC member can be re-nominated for another term or two. No self-nomination is accepted for any position.

To begin the process, UNEP or the current MGFC members will reach out to all accredited organizations

belonging to a respective major group with instructions on how candidates can be nominated and how the election process will be conducted. Upon conclusion of the nomination period, excluding self-nominations, the Civil Society Unit will inform the respective major group of the nominations received after which a 7-day non-objection period shall commence. Any objections to the nominated candidates should be submitted in writing to the Civil Society Unit. Only representatives of accredited organizations may be elected as members of the MGFC.

Whether UNEP is facilitating the election or the election is conducted by the respective major group, only accredited organizations belonging to the respective major group can take part in the elections. Since there are two seats in the Major Group Facilitating Committee for each major group, a maximum of two votes is allowed per organization, with each vote cast for a different candidate. If an organization casts more than one vote for the same candidate, the organization's vote will be invalidated.

Where UNEP is facilitating the election, a global webinar will be arranged after the nomination of candidates. The webinar will provide the nominees with an opportunity to share with their constituents the areas they will work on and how they will represent the major group at UNEP-led events. It will also provide representatives of accredited organizations within the respective major group with an opportunity to ask the candidates questions and make informed decisions while voting. Each candidate needs to be present at said webinar to be considered a valid candidate. Voting portals will thereafter open to facilitate voting for Co-Facilitators positions by secret ballot. If not, all positions can be filled; a second round of nominations and elections will be organized. In the event of a tie, a second round of balloting shall be held under the same rules as outlined in this section.

Role and Elections of the Regional Facilitators of the Six UNEP Regions

The role of UNEP's six regional offices was strengthened by Governing Council decision 22/14, in which the Executive Director was requested to support and promote the subregional environmental initiatives of each Economic Cooperation Organization region. It also decided to request the Executive Director to promote the work of the respective regional offices and increase their financial capacities for fulfilling the goals of capacity-building and technology transfer to the Economic Cooperation Organization member countries. By so doing, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was requested to establish and strengthen partnerships at the regional and sub-regional levels with other UN bodies, development banks and other institutions, including Major Groups and Stakeholders, with a view to enhance the effectiveness of development and delivery of its programme of work in the regions.

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

Each UNEP region shall be represented by two Regional Facilitators, elected by accredited organizations within the respective region, with due consideration given to gender and subregional balance. The Regional Facilitators are responsible for coordinating and facilitating the engagement of Major Groups and Stakeholders from their region in UNEA and related UNEP processes, including with the assistance of the Regional Offices of UNEP and the Civil Society Unit in Governance Affairs Office.

Elections for Regional Facilitators shall take place every two years and may be organized either by the respective UNEP regional office or by the Civil Society Unit at UNEP headquarters, at the request of the regional office.

Regional Facilitators shall be selected through a nomination and election process involving representatives of accredited organizations within the respective UNEP region. Candidates must belong to an accredited organization which has its headquarters in the UNEP region they seek to represent. Regional Facilitators serve no more than two terms, in order to promote broader participation and diverse representation. As for the MGFC members, a 2-term limit will be enforced under the same conditions. See above.

To begin the process, UNEP shall communicate with all accredited organizations within the respective UNEP region, providing information on the nomination process and election modalities. Following the closure of nominations, UNEP shall circulate the list of nominees to the region, after which a seven-day non-objection period shall commence. Any objections in relation to nominated candidates must be submitted osur formally in writing to UNEP.

As there are two Regional Facilitator positions per region, each accredited organization may cast a maximum of two votes, with each vote allocated to a different candidate. Votes cast more than once for the same / one candidate by a single organization shall be invalidated. Following the nomination process, a webinar shall be organized to provide nominees with an opportunity to present their priorities and proposed areas of work, including how they intend to strengthen regional engagement in UNEP-led processes and events. All relevant candidates must be present during the public webinar of this particular region; otherwise, their nomination will become invalid. If an additional nomination and/or election process is required to fill a vacant position, the Regional Office must organize it in accordance with the established procedures. The webinar will also allow accredited organizations within the region to engage with candidates and make informed decisions prior to voting. Voting shall thereafter take place by secret ballot through an online voting platform. In the event of a tie, a second round of voting shall be conducted in accordance with the same procedures organized by the regional office and the CSU.

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

In addition, Regional Facilitators play a purely facilitating and expert role and have no mandate to formally represent their region or Major Groups and Stakeholders from their region. They may present agreed positions emerging from RCMs as well as from other consultation mechanisms developed during their period of mandate. They are specifically selected to ensure agreed Major Groups and Stakeholders' regional views are presented to UNEA and its subsidiary organs, as well as in other meetings that may be convened.

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

In addition:

- Regional Facilitators play a purely facilitating and expert role and have no mandate to represent their region or Major Groups and Stakeholders from their region.
- They may present agreed positions emerging from Regional Consultative Meetings as well as from other consultation mechanisms developed during their period.
- They are specifically selected to ensure agreed Major Groups and Stakeholders' regional views are presented to the United Nations Environment Assembly and its subsidiary organs, as well as in other meetings that may be convened.

In the absence of positions agreed among Major Groups from a specific region, Regional Facilitators are not

entitled to make official statements on behalf of their regions.

Elections of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee (MGFC) Co–Chairs

After the conclusion of the election processes for the co-facilitators of the nine major groups and the six UNEP regions, the Major Groups Facilitating Committee shall be considered duly constituted, after which the election process of the Co-Chairs of the MGFC shall commence. Only the Co-Chairs of the nine major groups may be elected as MGFC Co–Chairs.

UNEP strongly recommends that the role of the Co-Chair rotates among the MGFC members to allow all MGFC members an opportunity to facilitate and inject new perspectives and ideas into the Committee. Hence, the Co-chairs of the MGFC shall NOT serve more than two consecutive terms.

The election process shall be conducted by the MGFC members, with the support of the elected Regional Facilitators, in accordance with past practice and any procedures agreed upon by the MGFC if required and requested by the MGFC members. The names of the elected Co-Chairs shall be formally communicated to UNEP within four (4) weeks from the commencement of the election process.

In the event that the MGFC members are unable to reach consensus and conclude that the election process should be organised by UNEP, then UNEP may, upon notice to the MGFC members, organize and oversee the election process. Such oversight may include establishing nomination and election procedures and timelines, facilitating a public webinar consultation, as well as convening meetings or voting processes, verifying eligibility and participation, and communicating the final election results to all MGFC members.

Collaboration of MGFC Co-Facilitators in Delivery of their Mandate

As outlined in section 6 of this handbook under the title, “What is expected from Major Groups Facilitating Committee members?” Elected MGFC members are expected to meet certain expectations in their respective constituency, across MGFC colleagues and in cooperation with UNEP’s relevant offices, such as the CSU. The UN Code of Conduct as well as previously agreed internal TORs and guidelines for the MGFC are to be respected and adhered to. Breaching code of conducts or agreed guidelines, or being unable to commit to those agreed expectations, will have consequences such as being asked to step down so as to provide someone available and new to step up, subject to nomination and election guidelines.

MGFC members are strongly encouraged to refrain from raising concerns regarding stakeholder engagement practices directly with the Executive Management of UNEP, including the Executive Director, senior management, members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR), or Member States.

Any concerns, questions, or grievances relating to stakeholder engagement practices should, in the first instance, be addressed directly with the Civil Society Unit (CSU) or the Governance Affairs Office (GAO) with a view to seeking clarification and resolving the matter through established coordination and dialogue mechanisms.

For the successful achievement of these goals, MGFC members are most of the time called upon to go the extra mile by committing extra hours and sometimes their own resources. It's with this acknowledgement that UNEP recommended that MGFC roles be filled by two volunteers who can and must work collaboratively to deliver work for their constituents.

As the election process is democratic in nature, candidates may come from diverse backgrounds and may hold differing perspectives, approaches, and priorities regarding engagement with UNEP and the addressing of pressing environmental issues. Such diversity of views and experiences is both expected and valued.

Consistent with the principles of the United Nations, diversity is recognized as an important source of strength, innovation, inclusivity, and resilience. The existence of differing viewpoints and approaches from civil society experts contributes to more robust dialogue, informed decision-making, and the capacity of the UN system and its Member States to respond effectively and adaptively to complex environmental challenges.

In some instances, however, teams may focus more on their differences than on the strengths that each member brings. The consequences include strained working environments, and lack of collaboration and teamwork that in extreme cases undermine each other's efforts and send the wrong signals to the constituency, UNEP or the Member States. When UNEP is made aware of such a situation, UNEP will make every effort possible to bridge the gap between the two facilitators, provide the needed guidance when needed and possible with the hope that they can put their differences aside and work for their respective constituents.

Following the issuance of renewed guidance and, where appropriate, the conduct of surveys among the constituency, a review may be undertaken within an agreed timeframe to assess whether improvements in working relationships and the delivery of agreed actions have been achieved.

Success is, however, not always the outcome, and the respective major group constituency is left without proper guidance and facilitation, which can weaken their engagement with UNEP and relevant processes. In situations where there is clear negative effect to the respective constituency of the particular major group, because of ongoing disagreements between co-facilitators, or because no regular and transparent communication is organized and relevant written evidence and complaints from members of the major group in question reaches UNEP, then UNEP will declare the seats vacant and call for a new election process. The election process will follow the guidance under the election of co-facilitators in this handbook.

Major Groups and Stakeholders Code of Conduct

Members of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee (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, Major Groups and Stakeholders 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/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 Facilitators should describe themselves as: **"Regional Facilitators of Major Groups and Stakeholders, 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 Major Groups Facilitating Committee and/or Regional Facilitators, 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 Major Groups and Stakeholders should not expect to receive any funding or remuneration either in cash or in 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 Major Groups and Stakeholders, 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 MGFC in involving Major Groups and Stakeholders in its work on policy and programmatic matters. If deemed necessary, UNEP reserves the right to directly approach Major Groups and Stakeholders. At the same time, Major Groups and Stakeholders are not obliged to work exclusively through the MGFC or Regional Facilitators.

Removal of a Major Groups Facilitating Committee (MGFC) member by the major group

If a constituency (the respective Major Group) believes that one or both of its MGFC representatives is not fulfilling their obligations as outlined in this Handbook, UNEP encourages the constituency to first seek to solve the issues internally by following the mechanism it has established, as outlined under Section **VI. Conflict resolution and grievances** on *Explanatory note: Expectations of UNEP accredited Major Groups and their representatives in the Major Groups Facilitating Committee, including Regional Facilitators (Code of Conduct)* that you can access here - <https://tinyurl.com/mr2cx68x>, Supplement to the UNEP Handbook for Stakeholder Engagement October 24, 2022

Where the internal mechanism has failed to resolve the matter, an official complaint should be sent to UNEP's Civil Society Unit in the form of a formal letter signed by the organization(s) raising the complaint, in accordance with the section entitled **Procedure for review of complaints filed pursuant to the Code of Conduct for UN systems event of Explanatory note: Expectations of UNEP accredited Major Groups and their representatives in the Major Groups Facilitating Committee, including Regional Facilitators (Code of Conduct)** (<https://tinyurl.com/mr2cx68x>), *Supplement to the UNEP Handbook for Stakeholder Engagement* October 24, 2022 .

The complaint should be sent to unep-civilsociety@un.org with a copy to the Director of the Governance Affairs Office.

Major Groups and Stakeholders coordination meetings prior to the Open-Ended Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

The Open-Ended Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives may be preceded by a Major Groups and Stakeholders coordination meeting that is self-organized by the Major Groups through the MGFC and facilitated by the Civil Society Unit. This meeting allows Major Groups and Stakeholders to discuss their input and positions towards the Open-Ended Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives. Dependent on available funding, the participation of members of the MGFC, Regional Facilitators, speakers and resource persons, and Major Groups and Stakeholders from developing countries can be financially supported by UNEP.

The Global Major Groups and Stakeholder Forum

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 Major Groups and Stakeholders preparatory meeting to UNEA.

The Forum is either organized by the MGFC, or by an accredited organization that has been entrusted by the Committee with this task (Facilitating Organization).

The Forum benefits from the outcomes of the Regional Consultative Meetings (RCMs), which in turn provide Major Groups and Stakeholders inputs for UNEA. The Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum 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 the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA)?

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 Major Groups and Stakeholders across thematic clusters – not based on constituencies but on expertise of those interested 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 Major Groups and Stakeholders 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 Major Groups and Stakeholders 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 Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Fora is available at <https://bit.ly/2CAf9Fj>

Regional Consultative Meetings (RCMs) and Regional Facilitators

The role of UNEP's six regional offices was enhanced by a decision of the Governing Council (Governing Council 22/14) that requested the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to establish and strengthen partnerships at the regional and sub-regional levels with other UN bodies, development banks and other institutions, including Major Groups and Stakeholders, with a view to enhance 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 levels, 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 Facilitators, previously known as "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 **Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum** that precedes each **United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA)** meeting, is built upon **Regional Consultative Meetings (RCMs)** in all UNEP regions. Major Group and Stakeholder representatives are invited to one- to three-day multi-stakeholder consultation meetings in each region prior to UNEA. These meetings can also be conducted as virtual meetings.

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 following the meeting. The RCMs constitute the main platform for the Major Groups to engage with each other as well as with partners and UNEP's Regional Offices on an annual basis. They may be complemented by additional meetings, workshops, consultations, either self-organized by Major Groups or facilitated by UNEP's Regional Offices. While allowing Major Groups and Stakeholders to prepare for UNEA, the RCMs also serve as capacity-building and networking exercises for the Major Groups in the regions.

In most regions, the RCMs are initiated by the respective Regional Offices, working closely with Regional Facilitators and accredited organizations from the respective region. They are held, whenever possible, prior to, or in conjunction with relevant major regional meetings/fora or events, including at the ministerial level. They are dedicated to discussing relevant regional emerging priorities as well as programme issues and possible cooperative actions and preparing of the Major Groups' inputs to the UNEA, including its themes.

The date, the agenda and the selection of organizations to be invited to the RCMs – in addition to accredited organizations – are agreed upon between Regional Offices and the respective Regional Facilitators who are expected to reach out to their constituents. In this context, UNEP prefers a high degree of self-organization of these meetings by accredited organizations. Regional Offices may choose to request an accredited organization and/or the Regional Facilitators to take responsibility for organizing and conducting the meeting. Invited organizations should include all accredited organizations from the respective region but invitations are not limited and can be sent to other organizations who might be interested and are considered experts on certain themes.

Major Groups Facilitating Committee – Transparency and Accountability Policy

Introduction

1. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)'s Major Group Facilitation Committee (MGFC) consists of two representatives per Major Group and two representatives per regions (Regional Facilitators) which are elected by Major Groups and Stakeholders (MGS) organizations accredited by UNEP. The administrative deliberations of the MGFC are further internally facilitated through two rotating chairpersons that are self-identified among the members of the MGFC.
2. MGFC serves as the formal avenue and main interface for the facilitation of Major Group and Stakeholders (MGS) engagement when it comes to UNEP's governance. Communication between UNEP, represented by its Civil Society Unit (CSU), and the MGFC meetings take place through regularly organized teleconferences, e-mail exchanges, at face-to-face meetings (e.g. during UNEA), and during Regional Consultation Meetings (RCMs), etc
3. The work of UNEP-MGFC members is guided via UNEP's Stakeholder Engagement Handbook and any further internal Terms of Reference (TOR) that Major Groups and regional constituencies may have agreed upon among their groups for their respective representatives.

Arrangements for Teleconferences between UNEP and MGFC

1. Teleconferences (virtual meetings) should take place at least every two months and could be either initiated by UNEP or the chairpersons of the MGFC
2. The agenda of the teleconference is consulted in advance and eventually finalized by the Chairpersons of the MGFC, in consultation with UNEP and members of the MGFC. The members of the MGFC must further consult with accredited organizations for any further agenda items.
3. The agenda will be uploaded (at least 3 days if available) prior to the meeting on UNEP's website and MGFC members must also inform accredited organizations by sharing the link to the agenda. Accredited organizations may suggest agenda items through their representatives in the MGFC.
4. Written summaries of the outcomes of the teleconferences are prepared by (a) note-taker(s) from the MGFC and the MGFC chairpersons within one week after the teleconference. Once approved by the MGFC and UNEP, the minutes are uploaded on UNEP's website, together with any additional documents that were discussed during the teleconferences, as appropriate.
5. MGFC members should then inform their constituents of the uploaded minutes. In parallel UNEP will inform all accredited organizations about the availability of the summary minutes.
6. In addition to joint teleconferences with UNEP, members of the MGFC may at any time organize internal teleconferences or another form of meetings and gatherings, without the participation of

UNEP. The agenda and minutes of these should be shared with accredited organizations through MGFC members, and may be uploaded to UNEP's website if deemed relevant by MGFC.

7. In case the chairperson(s) of the MGFC are not able to discharge their duties, such as not joining up to three consecutive calls with UNEP or not being able to assist with preparatory work for the calls (either themselves or through delegation of tasks), they can be requested by UNEP to step down from their duties and elections for replacements need to be organized..

Activity Reports of members of the MGFC

1. In order to provide information about the work within their constituency, and report back to their constituency on their activity, each member of the MGFC and Regional Facilitators is required to provide short, half-year activity reports by June 30 and December 31 of each year
2. These reports must present their main activities in implementing their mandate as elected members the MGFC or Regional Facilitator. The reports should include activities that were financially supported by UNEP, e.g. participation in meetings or consultations, such as their participation in UNEA, and other UNEP processes.
3. These reports could also comprise relevant activities that are not directly related to UNEP governance, e.g. on their participation in other important meetings at regional or national levels such as meetings of Rio conventions and their COPs, and other processes within the UN system
4. The activity reports, as available from different MGFC members, are uploaded on UNEP's website – together with any other relevant information – and accredited organizations are informed by receiving the link from UNEP
5. Any MGFC member who fails to provide an activity report (see above) may be denied funding for their participation in RCMs or UNEA meetings and will be requested to eventually also step down from his or her responsibility as a MGFC member..

Regular reporting to relevant constituencies, and keeping information up-to-date

1. Members of the MGFC including Regional Facilitators are expected to develop their own system for regular interaction with their respective major or regional group. In addition to the above-mentioned activity reports, agendas and minutes, this could include regular e-mail communications, organization of webinars or teleconferences on specific topics, organization of meetings and briefings during events at which UNEP accredited organizations and constituency members are present.
2. Furthermore, members of the MGFC and Regional Facilitators are expected to complement the work of UNEP in maintaining and updating the list of accredited organizations to ensure that contact information is up-to-date.

Table summarizing MGFC activities to be posted on UNEP's website

Report/Activity	Responsible Person	Timeline
Agendas of Regular Teleconferences (UNEP and MGFC)	UNEP and MGFC Chairpersons	At Least 3 days before teleconference takes place
Agendas of Other Teleconferences, MGFC gathering...etc	UNEP-MGFC Chairpersons, or any other MGFC members who may call for a MGFC meeting	At Least 3 days before teleconference takes place
Teleconference minutes	Note taker and UNEP-MGFC Chairpersons	One week after the call
Activity Report MGFC	MGS reps. and RFs	Half-year activity reports

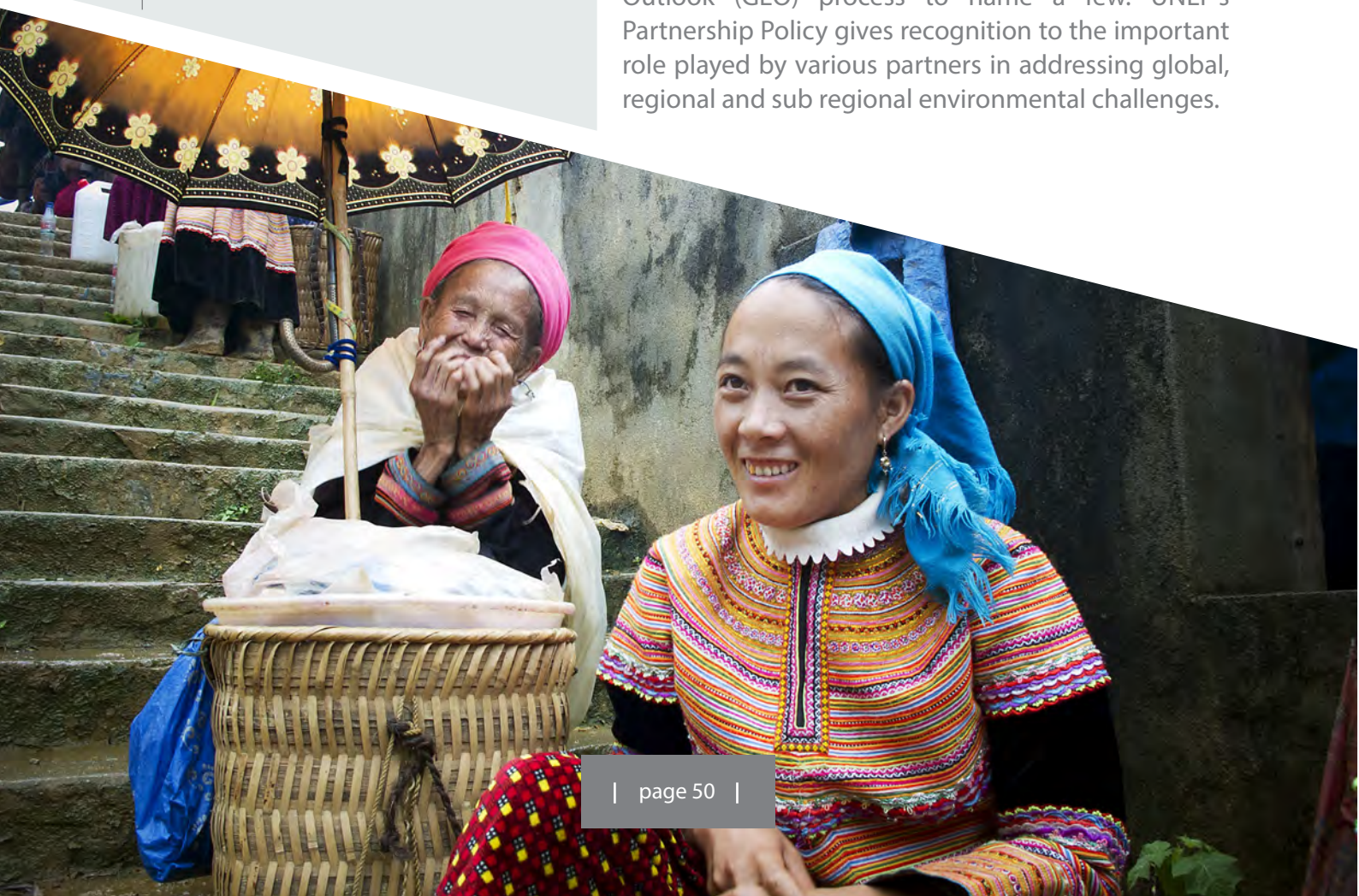
UNEP HANDBOOK FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Section 1:	The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and Its Subsidiary Organs.....	8
Section 2:	Engagement Approach.....	14
Section 3:	Accreditation.....	19
Section 4:	Participation in Agenda-Setting and Decision-Making Processes.....	25
Section 5:	Access to Information.....	31
Section 6:	Major Groups and Stakeholders Body – Spaces and Roles.....	35
Section 7:	Expert Input and Advice, and Partnerships for Implementation.....	50
Section 8:	Funding for Stakeholder Engagement at UNEP.....	54
Section 9:	Code of Conduct at Meetings Hosted by the UN.....	56
Section 10:	UNEP's Civil Society Unit.....	61
Useful Resources		64

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 indigenous and traditional knowledge holders such as Indigenous Peoples, through a number of processes, including the International Resource Panel; the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity & Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the Science-Policy Forum and the Sustainable Innovation Expo held prior to or during the UN Environment Assembly, and the Global Environmental Outlook (GEO) process to name a few. UNEP's Partnership Policy gives recognition to the important role played by various partners in addressing global, regional and sub regional 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 Science-Policy Forum and the Sustainable Innovation Expo held prior to the UN Environment Assembly, and the Global Environmental Outlook (GEO) process, just to name a few. See also - 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. Most of UNEP's activities at the programmatic level are implemented in partnerships with non-governmental organizations.

Major Groups and Stakeholders can:

- provide input to the development of the medium-term strategy and the programme of work (PoW), this is done usually through the Major Groups and Stakeholders Civil Society Unit, in close cooperation with the relevant Division or Office; and
- participate in project implementation.

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 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: <https://goo.gl/HdLCXL>

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.



Access to the Policy Guidance online:

<https://goo.gl/HdLCXL>

UNEP's work is also guided by a number of other policies, for example:

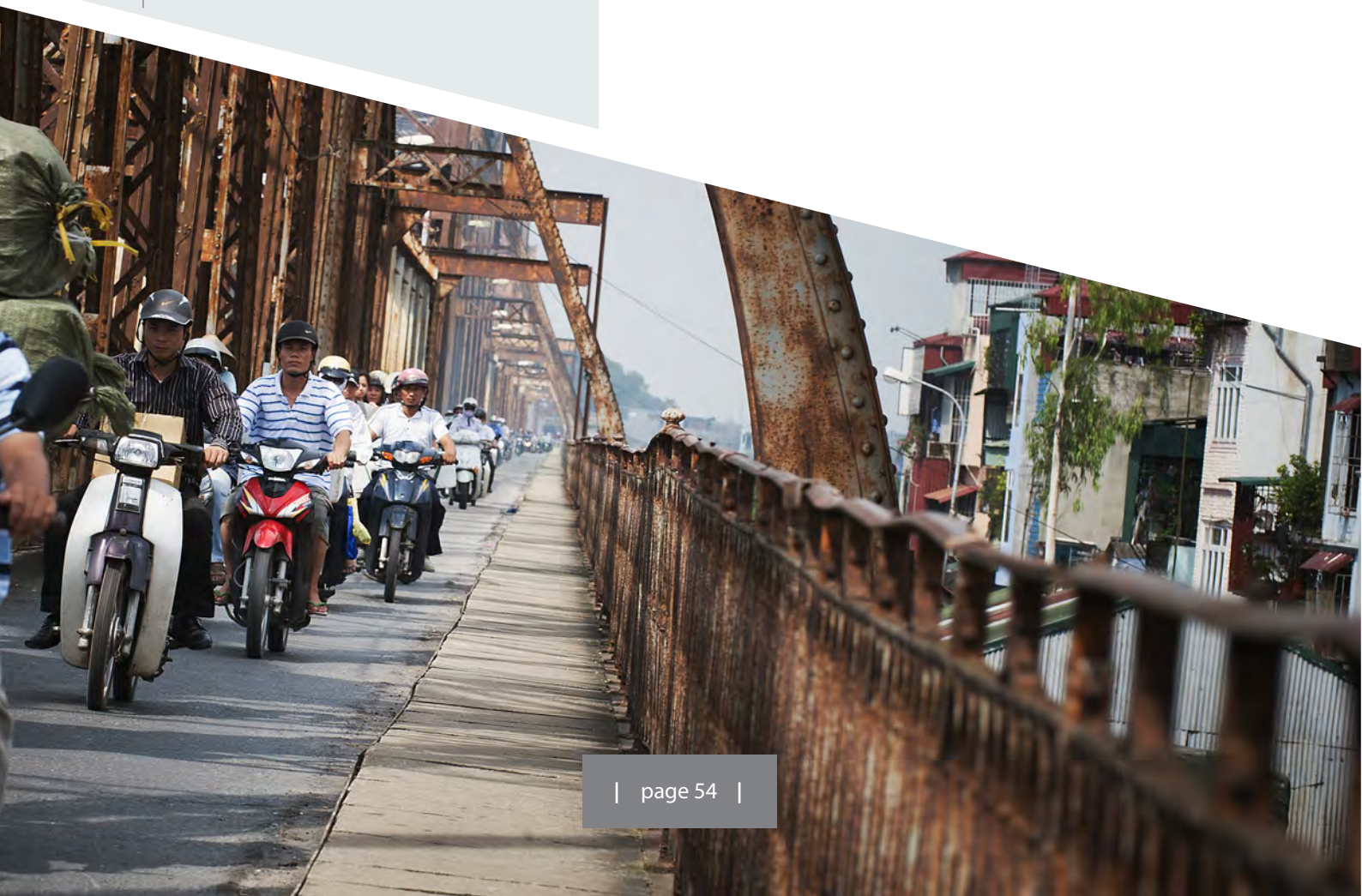
- **Gender Policy** - <https://goo.gl/WJzwmp>: The UNEP Gender Equality and The Environment Policy and Strategy outlines the complete gender mainstreaming policy statement and operational framework to guide UNEP's work in all programme areas.
- **Safeguards Policy** - <https://goo.gl/LPSMx3>: The Environmental and social sustainability framework was revised in February 2020 - <https://bit.ly/2CBfF5V>. The framework aims to strengthen the sustainability and accountability of UNEP's work. The Stakeholder response mechanism can be found on the following link [<https://bit.ly/37WXPgG>].
- **Strategy for Private Sector Engagement** - <https://bit.ly/2Bv0evw>: UNEP has developed its first Strategy for Private Sector Engagement which was approved by Senior Management Team and endorsed by Member States in October 2019.
- **Partnership Policy and Procedures 2011** - <https://goo.gl/vp17f4>: The document outline UNEP's partnership with the non-for profit and for-profit sector, and also governmental, non-governmental, a inter-governmental organizations.
- **Environmental Human Rights Defenders Policy** - <https://bit.ly/2BwHjAr>: The policy promotes greater protection for individuals and groups who are defending their environmental rights, and identifies solutions to mitigate the abuse of environmental rights.

UNEP HANDBOOK FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Section 1:	The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and Its Subsidiary Organs.....	8
Section 2:	Engagement Approach.....	14
Section 3:	Accreditation.....	19
Section 4:	Participation in Agenda-Setting and Decision-Making Processes.....	25
Section 5:	Access to Information.....	31
Section 6:	Major Groups and Stakeholders Body – Spaces and Roles.....	35
Section 7:	Expert Input and Advice, and Partnerships for Implementation.....	50
Section 8:	Funding for Stakeholder Engagement at UNEP.....	54
Section 9:	Code of Conduct at Meetings Hosted by the UN.....	56
Section 10:	UNEP's Civil Society Unit.....	61
Useful Resources		64

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 able to commit itself to financial support to Major Groups and Stakeholders for participation in meetings or activities. If funding is available, UNEP may support the travel of Major Groups and Stakeholders to participate in the Open-Ended Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), focusing on members of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee, Regional Facilitators, speakers and resource persons, and representatives from developing countries.



UNEP HANDBOOK FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Section 1:	The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and Its Subsidiary Organs.....	8
Section 2:	Engagement Approach.....	14
Section 3:	Accreditation.....	19
Section 4:	Participation in Agenda-Setting and Decision-Making Processes.....	25
Section 5:	Access to Information.....	31
Section 6:	Major Groups and Stakeholders Body – Spaces and Roles.....	35
Section 7:	Expert Input and Advice, and Partnerships for Implementation.....	50
Section 8:	Funding for Stakeholder Engagement at UNEP.....	54
Section 9:	Code of Conduct at Meetings Hosted by the UN.....	56
Section 10:	UNEP's Civil Society Unit.....	61
Useful Resources		64

SECTION 9:

Code of Conduct at Meetings Hosted by the United Nations

Overview

When attending meetings at the United Nations, all 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 United Nations

- Only representatives whose names have been communicated to the Secretariat through the designated contact are admitted to sessions of the Conference and shall be registered and receive a badge.
- Badges issued at registration shall always be worn visibly.
- Participants shall be prepared to have their identity verified upon the request of United Nations officials or security staff.
- 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 to Member States.
- 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 the 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 consider 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.
- Written statements that were not read out publicly can be submitted for online upload and sharing purposes.
- Demonstrations or any other assemblies are only permitted with prior approval of UNEP. Demonstrations that are held without such approval might result in eviction from the UN compound and lifetime loss of the right to enter any UN compound.

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

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

The information can be found below:

Purpose.

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

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

Applicability.

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

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

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

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

Prohibited conduct.

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

Sexual harassment is a specific type of prohibited conduct. Sexual harassment is any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offense or humiliation. Sexual harassment may involve any conduct of a verbal, nonverbal or physical nature,

including written and electronic communications, and may occur between persons of the same or different genders.

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

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

Complaint process.

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

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

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

The victim of alleged harassment may also seek help from other relevant authorities, such as the police,

bearing in mind the applicable legal framework.

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

Prohibition of retaliation:

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

UNEP HANDBOOK FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Section 1:	The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and Its Subsidiary Organs.....	8
Section 2:	Engagement Approach.....	14
Section 3:	Accreditation.....	19
Section 4:	Participation in Agenda-Setting and Decision-Making Processes.....	25
Section 5:	Access to Information.....	31
Section 6:	Major Groups and Stakeholders Body – Spaces and Roles.....	35
Section 7:	Expert Input and Advice, and Partnerships for Implementation.....	50
Section 8:	Funding for Stakeholder Engagement at UNEP.....	54
Section 9:	Code of Conduct at Meetings Hosted by the UN.....	56
Section 10:	UNEP's Civil Society Unit.....	61
Useful Resources		64

SECTION 10: UNEP's Civil Society Unit

Overview

UNEP's Civil Society Unit is part of the **Governance Affairs Office** and facilitates the coordination of stakeholders' inputs into UNEP's work. The mandate of the Unit, which provides a range of services, is to cooperate with Major Groups and Stakeholders and facilitate their fair representation and efficient engagement in UNEP/UN policy-making and implementation, as well as engaging them at the intergovernmental level.

The Unit 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 Civil Society Unit

The mandate

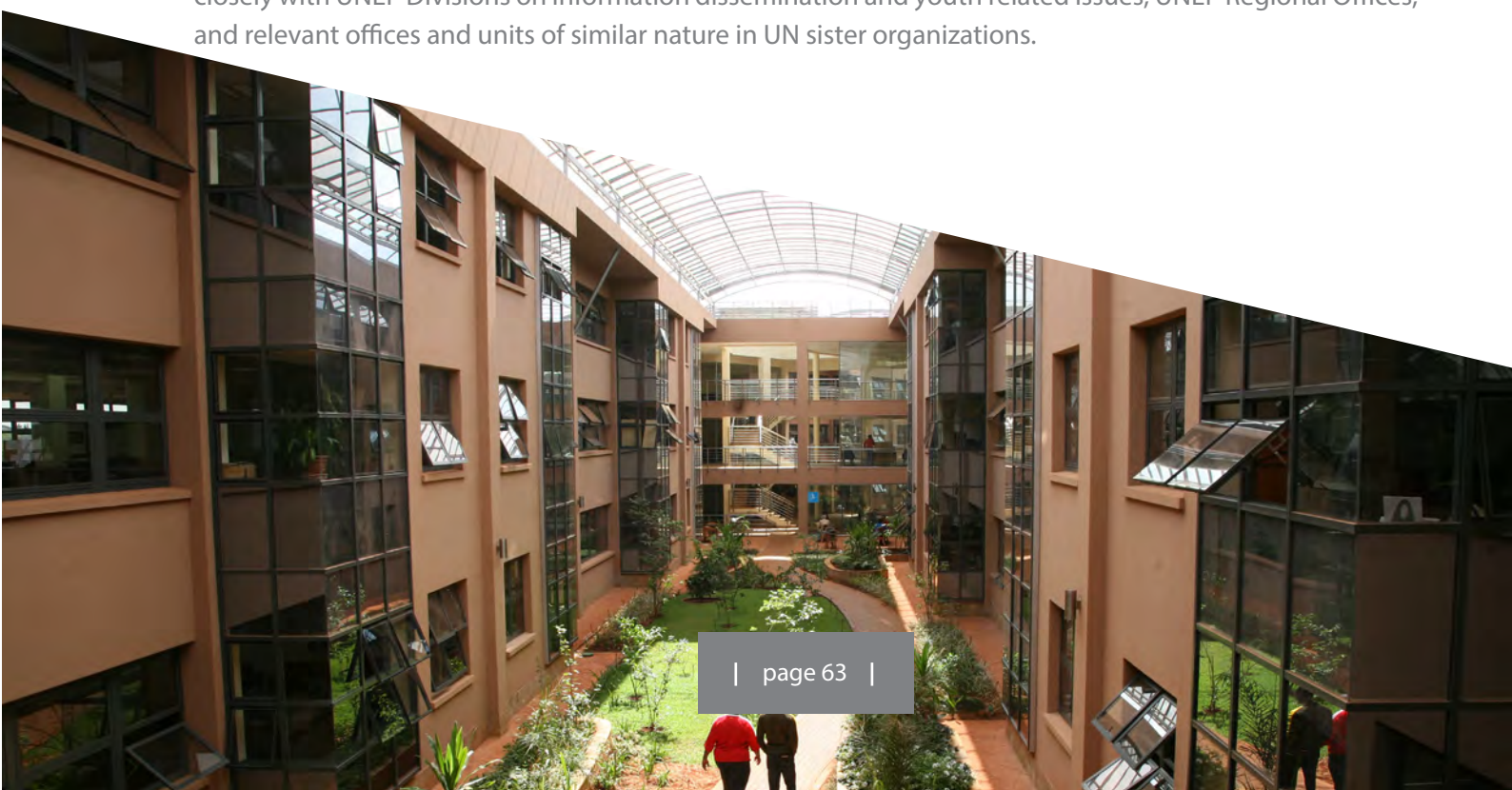
UNEP's Civil Society Unit was put in place in response to demands from Major Groups and Stakeholders and Governments to further improve coordination of stakeholder input into UNEP's work. The mandate of the Unit is to cooperate with Major Groups and Stakeholders. The Unit facilitates their fair representation and efficient engagement in UNEP/UN policy-making and implementation. This is done by 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. The Unit also engages 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 Unit, previously the Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch, became part of the Secretariat of Governing Bodies (now Governance Affairs Office).

The Unit provides the following range of services to Major Groups and Stakeholders:

- 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 Major Groups and Stakeholders;
- facilitating the organization of the Global Major Groups and Stakeholder Forum (prior to the United Nations Environment Assembly) and coordinating and facilitating Major Groups and Stakeholders' participation and inputs in the work of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR), the CPR Bureau and the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) Bureau, including a Major Groups and Stakeholders coordination meeting before the Open-Ended Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and back to back with Bureau meetings. In addition, the organization of the Greenroom during UNEA is facilitated by the Unit;
- convening of regional and international consultations that relate to UNEA themes and strategic objectives of UNEP; such consultations are also held to involve Major Groups and Stakeholder organizations that are not accredited to UNEP;
- facilitation of the Major Groups and Stakeholders participation in annual Regional Consultative Meetings (RCMs) 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 Major Groups and Stakeholders.

- promoting and facilitating the active participation and contributions of Major Groups and Stakeholders in the work of UNEP at programmatic level;
- supporting the development of strategic partnerships and coalitions that involve Major Groups and Stakeholders to support thematic work and/or sub-programmes;
- facilitating UNEP's communication with Major Groups and Stakeholders, including through the Major Groups Facilitating Committee (MGFC) and elected Regional Facilitators.
- servicing Major Groups and Stakeholders by:
 - o providing concise information to Major Groups and Stakeholders on latest developments in UNEP with regards to UNEA processes and deliberations, including through the Publication series "Perspectives" and a dedicated website;
 - o answering individual information requests and inquiries;
 - o providing advice on opportunities to engage with other UN processes and events;
- o organizing targeted meetings and consultations at global and regional levels
- o accreditation of international non-governmental organizations;
- o enhancing the participation of Major Groups and Stakeholders from developing countries.
- implementing specific projects under UNEP's Programme of Work that relate to Major Groups and Stakeholders engagement.
- inter-agency coordination and contribution to strengthen multi-stakeholder dialogue and alliance-building on Major Groups and Stakeholders and UN related issues, activities and reports.

The Unit also acts as an advocate for Major Groups and Stakeholders participation and oversees UNEP's engagement with them. The Unit 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 Unit cooperates closely with UNEP Divisions on information dissemination and youth related issues, UNEP Regional Offices, and relevant offices and units of similar nature in UN sister organizations.



Useful Resources

Civil Society Unit website:

<https://www.unep.org/civil-society-engagement/civil-society-engagement>

Committee of Permanent Representatives website:

<https://www.unep.org/cpr>

UN Environment Assembly stakeholder participation homepage:

<https://goo.gl/xyw2q2>

UNEA homepage:

<https://www.unep.org/environmentassembly/>

UNEP Homepage:

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

For accreditation:

<https://www.unep.org/civil-society-engagement/accreditation>

Regional Offices:

<https://www.unep.org/regions/africa>

<https://www.unep.org/regions/asia-and-pacific>

<https://www.unep.org/regions/europe>

<https://www.unep.org/regions/latin-america-and-caribbean>

<https://www.unep.org/regions/north-america>

<https://www.unep.org/regions/west-asia>

©**Photo Credit Front and Back Page:** Alex Chen, "Sagano Bamboo Forest", 12 September 2014 via Flickr, Creative Commons.

©**Photo Credit Section 1:** UNEP Photo/Francis Dejon, "View of the opening plenary of the OECPR", 24 March 2014 via iisd.ca.

©**Photo Credit Section 2:** UNAMID Photo/Albert González Farran, "300 beds of El Daein hospital, East Darfur", 3 December 2012 via Flickr, Creative Commons.

©**Photo Credit Section 3:** UN Photo/ Mark Garten, "A view of Islamic scholarly texts at the Institute", 5 November 2013 via Flickr, Creative Commons.

©**Photo Credit Section 4:** UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferre, "Zero Race departure from UN", 16 August 2010 via Flickr, Creative Commons.

©**Photo Credit Section 5:** ITU Pictures/R.Farrell, "Stand With Malala @ ICT Discovery", 8 November 2012 via Flickr, Creative Commons. Alexandre Dulaunoy, "Children who Took Pictures of a Photographer" 2 November 2014 via Flickr, Creative Commons.

©**Photo Credit Section 6:** Tee la Rosa, "Avenue of the Baobabs", 8 September 2014 via Flickr, Creative Commons.

©**Photo Credit Section 7:** UN Photo/Kibae Park, "Indigenous Hmong Women, Viet Nam", 25 June 2011 via Flickr, Creative Commons. UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferré, "The Yellow Bird Apache Dancers during th Opening of Fourth the session of the Expert Mechanism on the rRght of Indigenous Peoples." 7 November 2011 via Flickr, Creative Commons.

©**Photo Credit Section 8:** UN Photo/Kibae Park, "Urban View: Traffic in Hanoi", 29 June 2011 via Flickr, Creative Commons.

©**Photo Credit Section 9:** UN Photo/Albert González Farran, "Celebrating UN Day in Darfur", 24 October 2012 via Flickr, Creative Commons.

©**Photo Credit Section 10:** Richard Olvera, "pont jungle", 7 May 2014 via Flickr, Creative Commons. UNEP Photo, "Garden path inside the facilities" 18 March 2011 via Flickr, All rights reserved.

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 Civil Society Unit
Governance Affairs Office
Email: unep-civilsociety@un.org**

Website: <http://www.unenvironment.org/civil-society-engagement>