

Stakeholder Engagement at UNEP

Draft Policy

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Note:

This policy was prepared by the UNEP Secretariat, pursuant to Decision 27/2 on the implementation of paragraph 88 of the Outcome Document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development adopted at the United Nations Environment Programme Governing Council at its first universal session in February 2013. The Decision called for the active participation of all relevant stakeholders, particularly those from developing countries, drawing on best practices and models from relevant multilateral institutions and to explore new mechanisms to promote transparency and the effective engagement of civil society in its work and that of its subsidiary organs, building on best practices in multilateral organisations.¹

The policy sets forth the new mechanisms to promote transparency and the effective engagement of civil society in the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEA) and its subsidiary organs, to be presented at the first session of the UNEA in June 2014.

¹ The current policy builds on best practices of stakeholder engagement in multilateral organisations. The UNEP Secretariat prepared a *Review of Current Practices of Stakeholder Engagement in Multilateral Organisations*, released in July 2013, as called for by the Governing Council Decision 27/2 (http://www.unep.org/civil-society/Portals/24105/documents/resources/stakeholder_engagement/Review_of_current_practices_of_stakeholder_engagement_in_multilateral_organisations_30July_2013.pdf).

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List of acronyms

CPR	Committee of Permanent Representatives
CSD	United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
GC	Governing Council
GMGSF	Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum
HLPF	High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
MEAs	Multilateral environmental agreements
MGFC	Major Groups Facilitation Committee
MGS	Major Groups and Stakeholders
MGSB	Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
PoW	Programme of Work
SGB	Secretariat of the Governing Bodies
UN	United Nations
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCSD	United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

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1. Background

1. Stakeholders participation in the work of UNEP is rooted in Principle 10 of the 1992 Rio Declaration and in paragraph 88(h) of the Outcome Document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD, also referred to as Rio+20), which calls for 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”, in the framework of its decision on “strengthening the role of the United Nations Environment Programme as the leading global environmental authority.”²
2. Paragraph 7 of the Governing Council Decision 27/2 on the Implementation of paragraph 88 of the Outcome Document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development adopted at the United Nations Environment Programme Governing Council at its first universal session in February 2013, clearly mandates “the governing body to ensure the active participation of all relevant stakeholders, particularly those from developing countries, drawing on best practices and models from relevant multilateral institutions and will explore new mechanisms to promote transparency and the effective engagement of civil society in its work and that of its subsidiary organs, *inter alia* by:
 - a) Developing by 2014 a process for stakeholder accreditation and participation that builds on the existing rules of procedure and takes into account inclusive modalities of the Commission of Sustainable Development and other relevant United Nations bodies;
 - b) Establishing by 2014 mechanisms and rules for stakeholders expert input and advice;
 - c) Enhancing by 2014 working methods and processes for informed discussions and contributions by all relevant stakeholders towards the inter-governmental decision-making process.”³
3. While inputs from stakeholders can provide valuable contributions to the intergovernmental process, decision-making within UNEP remains the prerogative of member states. This policy is intended to facilitate the effective engagement of stakeholders in the work of the UNEA and that of its subsidiary organs, and in the work of UNEP. The policy provides a set of principles and guidance to UNEP and its staff and to stakeholders to enhance practices in working and dealing with stakeholders for routine and special circumstances, and to facilitate the effective engagement of stakeholders in UNEP’s governance. The policy will be accompanied by an Implementation Handbook (to be elaborated upon approval of the policy).⁴
4. This policy is aligned with relevant UNEP and UN regulations and rules, as well as guidelines and initiatives relating to the United Nations’ cooperation with stakeholders.⁵ It further builds

² United Nations Resolution A/RES/66/288, “The Future We Want”
(http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/66/288&Lang=E)

³ UNEP Decision 27/2 on Implementation of paragraph 88 of the Outcome Document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development
([http://www.unep.org/gc/gc27/docs/Decisions adopted by the first universal session \(advance\).pdf](http://www.unep.org/gc/gc27/docs/Decisions%20adopted%20by%20the%20first%20universal%20session%20(advance).pdf))

⁴ **[The policy will be complemented by an Implementation Handbook, to be elaborated upon approval of the Policy. Such handbook will determine the operational and self-organisation modalities of the Major Groups and Stakeholders. It will be developed by the UNEP Secretariat in an open and transparent manner.]**

⁵ Several reference documents guide the work of UNEP and the UN in working with stakeholders: UNEP Guidelines for Participation of Major Groups and Stakeholders in Policy Design at UNEP, August 2009 (<http://www.unep.org/civil-society/Portals/24105/documents/Guidelines/Guidelines-for-CSO-participation-Aug2609.pdf>); UNEP and Indigenous Peoples: A Partnership in Caring for the Environment, Policy Guidance, November 2012 ([http://www.unep.org/civil-society/Portals/24105/documents/Guidelines/UNEP Indigenous Peoples Policy Guidance endorsed by S MT 26 11 12.pdf](http://www.unep.org/civil-society/Portals/24105/documents/Guidelines/UNEP%20Indigenous%20Peoples%20Policy%20Guidance%20endorsed%20by%20SMT%2026%2011%2012.pdf)); UNEP. Guidelines for the development of national legislation on access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters, February 2010 ([http://www.unep.org/civil-society/Portals/24105/documents/Guidelines/GUIDELINES TO ACCESS TO ENV INFO 2.pdf](http://www.unep.org/civil-society/Portals/24105/documents/Guidelines/GUIDELINES%20TO%20ACCESS%20TO%20ENV%20INFO%202.pdf)); Guidelines

on the General Assembly resolution 67/290 on the *Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development*.⁶

Purpose of the policy

5. The Rio+20 outcome document calls in many instances⁷ for strengthened public participation, access to information and access to justice in environmental matters and underlines the importance of partnerships with civil society in achieving the ambitions of the outcome document.
6. UNEP engages with civil society to benefit from their wide knowledge and experience in sustainable development and their involvement in UNEP processes and activities in keeping the environment under review and setting the global environmental agenda; in developing and implementing policies and programmes; and in improving environmental decision-making, as inter-governmental decisions will have broader recognition and support by the public if stakeholders' views are taken into account in agenda setting, policy-making and decision-making processes, as well as implementation.
7. Civil society stakeholders often provide a way to channel the voice of those likely to be most affected by environmental problems and related policies, to call attention to emerging environmental problems and take account of the interests of the future generations. Another important function of stakeholders lies in reaching out to societies and the public at large.

2. The Policy

a. Guiding principles of the Policy

8. In accordance with the Rio+20 outcome document, and taking into account the principles that were adopted by Major Groups and Stakeholders at the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum (GMGSF) in February 2013 prior to the First universal session of the Governing Council of UNEP, this policy is founded on the following principles:⁸

8.1. Acknowledgement of the inter-governmental nature of UNEP processes, as per paragraph 3 above;

8.2. Participation in decision-making processes

UNEP will grant participation and access privileges to all accredited stakeholders, consistent with the relevant rules and practices concerning the work of UNEP. UNEP may also use social media and new information technology to foster broader participation.

[8.2. bis. Access-to-information

Accredited stakeholders will have access to all relevant documents, and will be granted access to relevant information portals.]

on Co-operation between UNEP and Business, March 2004; Guidelines on Co-operation between the United Nations and the Business Community, July 2000; UNEP Partnerships Policy, September 2011.

⁶ General Assembly resolution 67/290 on the Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development

(http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/67/L.72&Lang=E)

⁷ United Nations Resolution A/RES/66/288, "The Future We Want," makes extensive reference to involvement of civil society and stakeholders in paragraphs 42 to 55 of Section 2/C on Engaging major groups and other stakeholders. In addition to paragraph 88(h), paragraph 99 states: "We encourage action at regional, national, sub-national and local levels to promote access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters, as appropriate."

⁸ Principles on Stakeholder Participation in UNEP adopted at the 14th Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum, 17 February 2013 ([http://www.unep.org/civil-society/Portals/24105/documents/GMGSF/GMGSF%2014/Stakeholder participation principles/Participation and Transparency 11 principles as adopted.pdf](http://www.unep.org/civil-society/Portals/24105/documents/GMGSF/GMGSF%2014/Stakeholder%20participation%20principles/Participation%20and%20Transparency%2011%20principles%20as%20adopted.pdf))

8.3. Transparency and accountability for mutual benefit

Engaging with Major Groups and Stakeholders is based on the premise of mutual trust and benefit, as well as transparency, responsibility and accountability.

8.4. Respect for diversity of views and respect for self-organisation

UNEP acknowledges the diversity of views among stakeholders and in striving for more openness, will facilitate that different voices are heard, including those outside of the nine Major Groups, to embrace the full spectrum of actors of civil society, including the UNEP National Committees.

8.5. Improvements on current engagement practices

UNEP will promote continuous improvement of current practices, including opportunities for exploring innovative mechanisms, without regression with regard to existing practices.

b. Definition of stakeholders

9. UNEP applies the nine major groups approach, based on the categories of stakeholders as outlined in Agenda 21, and as *noted* in decision SS/II.5 of 15 February 2002.

10. Therefore, UNEP recognizes the following categories of stakeholders:

1. Nine major groups: farmers (including small-scale farmers, fisherfolk, pastoralists, and foresters);⁹ women; scientific and technological community (including research and academia); children and youth; indigenous peoples and their communities; workers and trade unions; business and industry; non-governmental organizations; local authorities;
2. **[Environmental NGOs, as organizations that work solely on environmental issues];**
3. **[Other stakeholders, such as local communities; volunteer groups and foundations; migrants and families; older persons; and persons with disabilities.]¹⁰**

[ALT 10.2. UNEP recognizes the particular importance of environmental NGOs within the NGO major group. UNEP will strive to include other stakeholders such as local communities; volunteer groups and foundations; migrants and families; older persons; and persons with disabilities, within the nine major groups.] (Proposal by the Chair)

c. Accreditation criteria and process

11. Accreditation is the main pre-requisite for stakeholder participation in UNEP governance. Organizations seeking observer status with the UNEA and its subsidiary organs must be accredited according to the process below.

12. Accreditation criteria and process

Accreditation will be granted to stakeholders meeting the following criteria:

1. **[Be legally constituted as a not-for-profit entity in a given country;]**

[ALT 1. Providing the text of its constituent instruments (articles of incorporation, bylaws, etc.), as well as an indication of the date and place where they were established;]

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