



**UN**  
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**UN NGLS**  
Non-Governmental Liaison Service

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# **HANDBOOK**

## **FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

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United Nations Environment Programme



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

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# 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 people and their communities, 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.

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