



Request for submission on opportunities to further enhance the effective engagement of non-Party stakeholders with a view to strengthening the implementation of the provisions of decision 1/CP.21

Please find below submissions from Young European Leadership to the UNFCCC Secretariat for consideration by the Parties.

These are focused around: a) an assessment of current methods of involvement of non-Party stakeholders, b) recommendations for improvement and c) specific comments on the youth constituency.

A. Reflections on current methods of involvement in the COP process

Dialogue

In so far as this refers to one-to-one or similar meetings, this is an effective and meaningful way of engaging and has considerable potential. A key challenge here is how to make this a more accessible channel to all non-Parties, in particular for smaller organizations or those newer to the COP process who are less influential and well connected with key players in the field.

Presentation to Parties

This has the potential to be an effective way to engage and share information as Parties respond well to professionalism and a presentation encourages a certain level of this.

Technical means

Publication of materials on the web, and use of informational videos is very helpful. These should be extended to include more interactive technical means, such as live webinars, web conferences and digital communities allowing for interaction between non-Party stakeholders and Parties to facilitate the involvement process (further details below).

Interventions

In so far as this refers to non-Party stakeholder interventions in the plenary sessions, these are limited as means of engagement. Whilst they offer a voice to non-Parties, these interventions are often included at the end of the sessions where there is limited time for Parties to consider the contributions made and respond. Non-Party participation in these plenaries offers valuable transparency over the proceedings to the non-Parties, but chiefly in an ‘observer’ rather than ‘active participant’ capacity.

Workshops, side events and exhibits

These sessions are an opportunity for non-Parties to build networks and share ideas with like-minded organizations. They do not however constitute engagement of these non-Parties with Parties, which the primary focus of the COP.



Actions

Direct action (or campaigning) takes place when non-stakeholder groups feel that they are not being heard. Whilst this is helpful in raising awareness around an issue in a broad sense, it tends to create a confrontational dynamic between non-Party stakeholders and Parties, thereby undermining their ability to create a constructive working relationship.

B. General Suggestions for Improvement

The current methods for non-Party stakeholders involvement in the COP process enable them to follow negotiations, advocate for certain issues and respond to developments in the proceedings in a public forum. Whilst these are critical aspects of involvement, improvements could be made to ensure a more systematic mechanism for non-Parties to make constructive contributions towards solutions, where they are explicitly required to take into account the constraints and challenges faced by the UNFCCC and the Parties.

Furthermore, the capacity and resources of non-Party stakeholders that enable their active participation at COPs does not necessarily mirror their legitimacy in representing certain interests, nor their ability to partner effectively in implementing agreements at a national level.

We lay out below recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of non-Party stakeholder engagements with the UNFCCC and the COPs:

1) Facilitate and encourage non-Party stakeholder dialogues in a national context before the COPs. Increase public participation where it matters and where it has a possibility for influence.

This could take the form of workshops whereby the UNFCCC secretariat acts as facilitator between either regional or national party representatives and key stakeholder groups. It is also possible that this could be implemented without significant resources from the UN, perhaps with the COP Presidency host facilitating this, or individual parties putting forward representatives from their delegation to host.

2) Professionalise the interactions between non-Party stakeholders and parties in order to encourage a more effective, constructive and meaningful relationship.

- a) Include formal meeting rooms in the setup of the COPs so that parties do not have to resource this themselves in their exhibitions. Where space is limited, prioritize allocation of space to meeting rooms rather than exhibitions.
- b) Allow for time in the schedule, or perhaps schedule in the week in advance, for non-Party stakeholders to meet with parties, either in person at the venue or virtually through conference calls and webinars. An enhanced digital platform allowing Parties and non-Party stakeholders to interact around specific proposals could also facilitate



these in-person and virtual meetings, both in helping these stakeholders deepen their understanding of the issues, and allowing for more focused discussion.

- c) Improve information during the COPs about where, when, what is taking place, (both formal and informal activities). Information channels become clear over time but for new or non-regular stakeholders, a barrier to engagement and involvement and consequently ownership of any instruments being implemented is not knowing where and what is taking place. A more effective ‘onboarding’ process would be beneficial - for example through technical means such as webinars or short videos provided in an information pack.
- d) Maximise efficiency, functionality and focus on the purpose of the COPs. There are many activities called ‘engagement’ for non-Party stakeholders that are limited in their ability to facilitate meaningful discussions or outcomes (see comments above, in particular around on current formats of workshops, exhibitions, side events and interventions). Reallocating the resources used for these to put towards discussions, workshops, meetings and technical means especially between non-Party and Party stakeholders would be more impactful.

3) Implement a more systematic consultation process drawing on successful previous examples from the SDGs and technical means

A consultative process on certain decisions or points for all non-Party stakeholders could allow a channel for this “voice” to be considered and included more appropriately and constructively. This does not necessarily need to be face-to-face connections or constitute any formal decision or power. For example, the World We Want consultation process on the sustainable development agenda could be repeated on a smaller scale with fewer resources for COPs. This consultation process could take place in the months prior to the COPs. Again, technical means can facilitate the involvement of large numbers of non-Party stakeholders through a digital community allowing for interactive discussion around specific issues, as well as webinars and web conferences. By giving non-Party stakeholders the ability to interact with the UN and Parties, it is likely to enhance their sense of ownership and responsibility, and thereby facilitate constructive outcomes.

Summary

As climate change becomes a ‘kitchen table issue’, more and more organizations will want to participate in the COPs as they gain prestige as the World Cup of climate action. The UNFCCC should take measures to support and facilitate adequate engagement, influence, communication and involvement in the implementation of the Paris agreement at a national and regional level. That is the first step to ensuring more effective implementation at the COPs.

It is increasingly critical that the institutional structure of the COPs and UNFCCC evolve to foster a constructive collaboration between Parties and non-Party stakeholders. Leaving non-Party stakeholders on the sidelines tends to result in the development of a



confrontational relationship between parties and non-Parties that is largely unhelpful to the end mission of either group, or of the UN itself.

C. Specific recommendations on the Youth Constituency

1. Ensure more balanced representative of youth groups within YOUNGO

YOUNGO offers youth organizations valuable networking opportunities, but there is no clear strategy in place to ensure the broad and balanced representation of countries and social groups. This lack of representativeness risks undermining the credibility of perspective put forward by YOUNGO. This reflects a similar situation concerning indigenous peoples, where there is little evidence of mechanisms to ensure their meaningful input into the process.

2. Institutionalise youth representation within the COP process

A clear organizational structure, proposal and decision making process is required if the youth constituency is to have any meaningful impact on the COP process. Currently many youth organisations at COP do not know who is representing them, and there is no systematic process for making contributions to the plenary sessions. Such contributions from youth organizations tend to be ad-hoc and access to policymakers is primarily determined by how long the organization has been involved in the process. A more democratic and transparent approach is needed.

As a first step, an internal structure along the lines of the party plenary itself could be created. All organisations in the constituency can be asked to submit votes to elect a president, vice-presidents for fulfilling particular functions, a secretary and perhaps a liaison officer. The ultimate aim could be a youth assembly within the COP able to take decisions and votes, and make statements, in a way that allows equal access and an equal voice to all youth organisations. This would be a substantial improvement in terms of transparency and representation.

In addition to the idea of a youth assembly, the UN under Rio+20 and through various other channels have discussed a more formal and institutionalized representative of young people and future generations. This discussion is also taking place at a national level and there are a range of examples (including Hungary, New Zealand and Malta). The UN also has youth representatives for the SDGs, to the general assembly and a youth envoy. A stronger and more systematically rolled out institutional mechanism for youth / future generation influence in the UNFCCC, at the COPs, and in the UN in general would make for more meaningful engagement with implementing the Paris Agreement, the COP Process and the UNFCCC as a whole.