



UC REVELLE PROGRAM ON CLIMATE SCIENCE AND POLICY

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Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Re: Views 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

Dear Sir or Madam,

The UC Revelle Program on Climate Science and Policy (hereafter UC Revelle) wishes to express appreciation to the Secretariat for the opportunity to propose a means to make engagement of non-Party stakeholders more effective.

For the past 17 years, UC Revelle has sent delegates to UNFCCC meetings, predominantly the conferences of the parties (COPs). Our NGO is based at Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California San Diego, which is a renowned pioneer in climate change research. Our NGO, however, represents the entire University of California system, an entity with more than 500,000 academics, students, and staff members. Within that population are several thousand people whose areas of research and study are directly germane to the COP process.

In a typical year, the composition of the University of California delegation will include a diverse mix of individuals ranging from law, policy, public health, and gender studies experts to social scientists, economists, and climate scientists, oceanographers, and geophysicists. All of them play a vital ongoing role in the successful implementation of the Paris Agreement.

As has been widely noted, the number of admitted observer organizations has nearly doubled since 2008. Following the establishment of quotas in 2010, the 10 universities within the University of California system have seen a trend of overall decline in the number of accreditations they receive. UC Revelle was allotted 20 accreditations for COP16, nine for COP17, 13 for COP18, 15 for COP19, nine for COP20, eight for COP21, and six initially for COP22.

The COP22 allotment to our university system was on par with that given to significantly smaller observer organizations. For instance, representatives of the Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development (IGSD), a Washington D.C.-based NGO, revealed that it was granted five accreditations to COP22, one fewer than what was allotted to the University of California. IGSD has a staff of 12 people.

It is typically the case that our delegation cannot accommodate all the requests for participation from researchers, professors, and students that we receive. In our view, the participation of a key constituency – one whose input is essential to the implementation of the Paris Agreement – is diminished to the detriment of the UNFCCC mission.

For instance, the success of the Paris Agreement depends on whether nationally determined contributions by governments meet their targets and how much those targets advance the UNFCCC's overarching goal of preventing dangerous human interference with the climate system. That success can only be determined with the aid of a mechanism of stringent continuous analysis, an endeavor in which academic observer organizations play a crucial role. A review mechanism guides the needed course corrections that will inevitably arise as NDCs evolve. Analysis encourages transparency, cooperation, and good faith among Paris Agreement signatories.

There have been proposals within UC Revelle to enhance access to UNFCCC meetings by having individual campuses within the University of California request status from the UNFCCC as separate NGOs. The Secretariat has advised, however, that our university system is more properly considered one legal entity and that such efforts would likely be unsuccessful.

In deference to that opinion, the University of California requests that the Secretariat consider allowing for fairer representation of large entities, particularly multi-campus university systems such as the University of California, the State University of New York, the University of Washington, and similar academic centers outside the United States.

We propose that the size of observer organizations be considered as a criterion used to determine the number of accreditations that they receive. We would be pleased to participate in the creation of guidelines to that effect in collaboration with the Climate Observer Organizations Liaison and other entities as deemed appropriate by the Secretariat.

UC Revelle thanks the Secretariat for its consideration of this matter and looks forward to further engagement.