



COP 31 Briefing for Observers

Navigating the UNFCCC Process as an Observer

Thursday, 15 October

UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS

What are COPs?



The **Conference of the Parties (COP)** is the supreme decision-making body of the Convention. All States that are Parties to the Convention are represented at the COP, at which they review the implementation of the Convention and any other legal instruments that the COP adopts and take decisions necessary to promote the effective implementation of the Convention, including institutional and administrative arrangements. A key task for the COP is to review the reports submitted by Parties on their GHG emissions and climate action.

More Background on the COP

The COP meets every year, unless the Parties decide otherwise. The first COP meeting was held in Berlin, Germany in March 1995. The COP meets in Bonn, the seat of the secretariat, unless a Party offers to host the session. Just as the COP Presidency rotates among the five recognized UN regions - that is, Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Central and Eastern Europe and Western Europe and Others – there is a tendency for the venue of the COP to also shift among these groups.



For a detailed overview of the UNFCCC process and procedures, see the **Presiding Officer's Guide to the UNFCCC Process.**

OBSERVER ROLES

Who are Observers?

UNFCCC PARTICIPANTS

UNFCCC sessions are not open to the public. All participants must be accredited. Participants fall into three main categories:

PARTIES AND OBSERVER STATES

Representatives of Parties and observer States



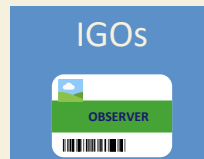
OBSERVER ORGANIZATIONS

Representatives of admitted observer organizations

UN Orgs.



IGOs



NGOs



PRESS AND MEDIA

Accredited press and media representatives



Once admitted, IGOs and NGOs can nominate representatives to attend UNFCCC sessions through the **Online Registration System (ORS)**. Information on **observer admission** is available [here](#).



OBSERVER ROLES

NGO Constituencies & Coordination

The majority of admitted NGOs in the UNFCCC process are **self-organized into constituencies** - loose groupings based on shared interests. These constituencies correspond to the nine Major Groups identified in Agenda 21 and reaffirmed in the Rio+20 outcome document "*The Future We Want*." Each constituency is represented by a Constituency Focal Point (CFP), who facilitates communication with the UNFCCC secretariat. Further information on constituencies and informal groups is available [here](#).

Business and Industry NGOs (BINGO)	Environmental NGOs (ENGO)	Farmers
Indigenous Peoples Organizations (IPOs)	Local Government and Municipal Authorities (LGMA)	Research and Independent NGOs (RINGO)
Trade Union NGOs (TUNGO)	Women and gender Constituency (WGC)	Children and Youth NGOs (YOUNGO)

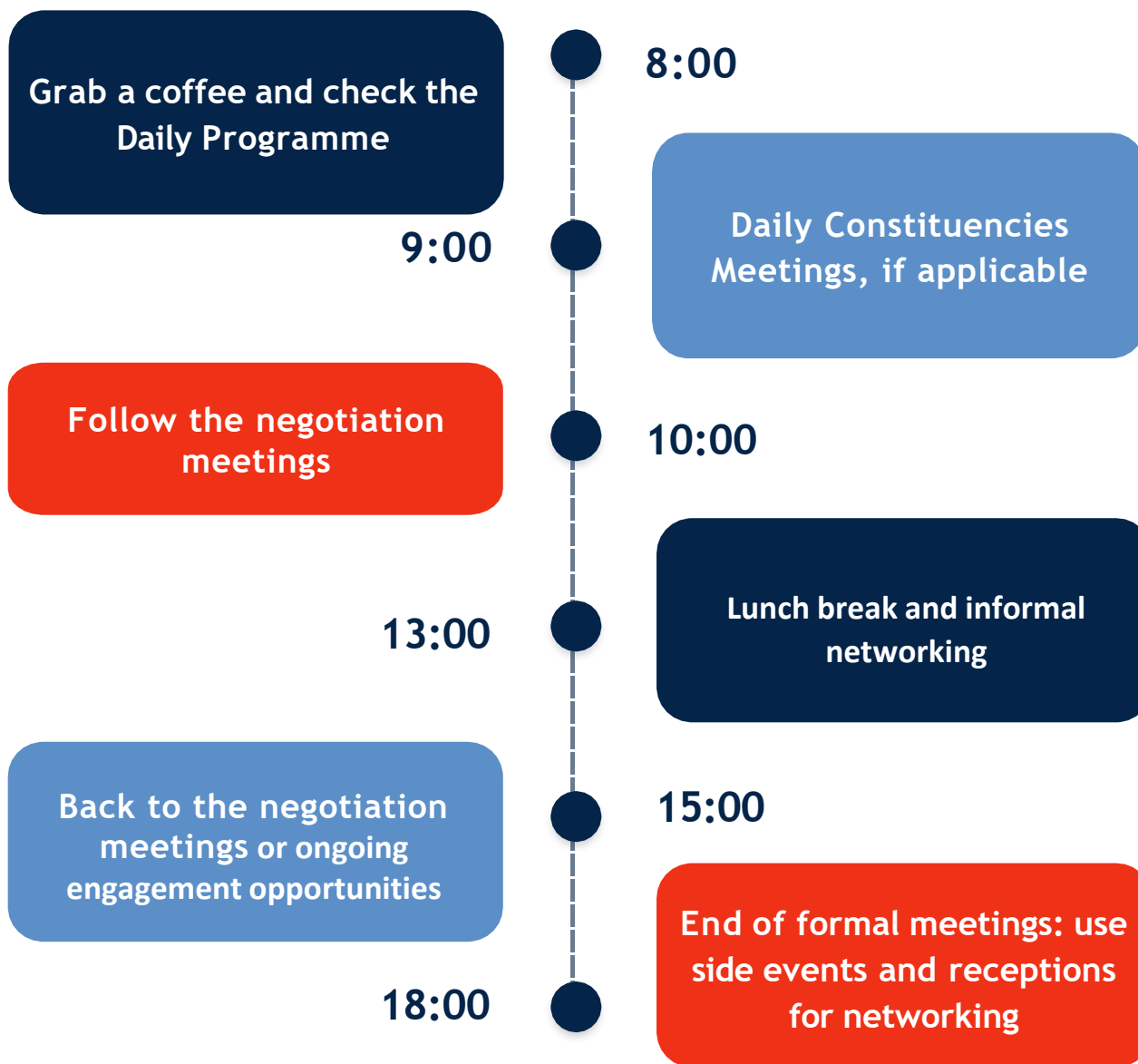


In addition to the nine NGO constituencies, the secretariat recognizes informal groups of admitted observer organizations focused on specific themes, such as:

- Disability Caucus,
- Faith-Based Organizations,
- Parliamentarians,
- Education and Communications NGOs.

The list of Focal Points is available [here](#).

REGULAR CONFERENCE DAY



Ongoing engagement opportunities:

- **Side events:** attend side events based on your interests.
- **Townhalls and Briefings:** join dialogues with the UNFCCC Executive Secretary, SB Chairs, or COP President. Check Daily Programme and CCTV for timings.
- **Advocacy actions:** organize or join authorized actions.
- **Bilateral meetings:** arrange meetings with Party delegates.



ENGAGING IN THE PROCESS

Stay up to Date

DAILY PROGRAMME

Your main source for the day's official schedule, including meetings, mandated events, press briefings and other activities.

- Published each morning on the [COP 31 webpage](#).
- Includes links to relevant documents and information.
- Check regularly for schedule changes.

CCTV MONITORS

Located throughout the venue and useful for real-time schedule updates. The left screen shows formal meetings; the right screen shows side events and other activities.



INFORMATION COUNTER

Need help finding a meeting or where to go? Visit the Information Counter near the venue entrance for assistance from secretariat staff.

EXTERNAL DAILY READS

For additional summaries and analysis of the negotiations:

- TWN Climate change updates and briefing papers
- Earth Negotiation Bulletin
- ECO Newsletter



These are external resources and do not represent the views of the UNFCCC secretariat.



ENGAGING IN THE PROCESS

How Observers Engage in COP 31

Admitted IGOs and NGOs can engage in COP 31 in a variety of ways, including:



Follow the negotiations to provide inputs to Parties, promote transparency, and raise public awareness.



Showcase work and findings through side events and advocacy actions to disseminate research, share lessons, and amplify stories.



Meet with delegates to share policy positions and submissions.

Develop **position papers and make formal submissions** in response to calls for information and views by negotiating bodies.



Hold press conferences to share views and influence public discourse through media outreach.



Attend the Open Dialogue



ENGAGING IN THE PROCESS

Working with Other Observers

NGOs can engage **collectively through the nine recognized NGO constituencies** and, where relevant, through **informal NGO groups**. These structures provide opportunities to coordinate, exchange information and amplify common messages during sessions.



Join coordination meetings to exchange information, discuss developments and coordinate engagement. Meeting times and locations are listed in the Daily Programme and CCTV.



Contribute to joint statements delivered in plenaries and, where possible, other negotiating spaces.



Nominate speakers for UNFCCC-mandated events, workshops and other engagement opportunities.



Coordinate engagement with Parties and the Presidency on issues of shared interest.



Share information and expertise with other observer organizations throughout the session.

NGOs do not need to be affiliated with a constituency or informal group to participate in the UNFCCC process. Admitted NGOs can engage independently through the opportunities outlined on the previous page.



ENGAGING IN THE PROCESS

Access to Negotiation Meetings

Meeting Type	Access	Meeting Details	Documents to Consult
Plenary	Open	Open to observers. NGO Constituency statements, time permitting.	Pre-sessional documents
Contact Groups (CG)	Determined by Parties/Presiding Officers	Usually open; can be closed by Parties.	Pre-sessional documents/ Deliberations/ Draft text
Informal Consultations (ICs)	Determined by Parties/Presiding Officers	Open if decided by Chair/Parties, often restricted. NGO Constituency statements “if time and Parties allow”	Deliberations/ Draft text
Informal Informals (Inf-Inf)	Closed	Not open to observers, used for drafting/small group negotiations.	Draft text
Contact Group Conclusions	Open	Summarize outcomes of contact group discussions.	L Documents
Closing Plenary	Open	Adoption of conclusions and final decisions.	Adoption of L documents

Access Protocol:

- **Parties have priority** where room capacity is limited.
- Observer access may be restricted due to **capacity or at the request of Parties.**
- Open meetings may be closed, and closed meetings may subsequently reopen.
- Please follow instructions from the **presiding officers and secretariat staff** regarding access.

Following each session, a session report is published on the UNFCCC website, providing an official record of the proceedings and outcomes.

ENGAGING IN THE PROCESS

Negotiation

Meeting Rooms & Seating

Access and seating arrangements vary depending on the meeting format, room capacity and decisions of the presiding officers.

Room Capacity:

- If a room reaches capacity, Parties have priority over observers.
- A ticketing system may be introduced for observer access where necessary.



Seating Arrangements:

- **Party representatives must have a seat at the table.**
- Observers sit in the **back rows**.
- In some meetings, observers may be invited to sit at the table after Parties are seated, depending on the agenda and the presiding officers.



If invited to speak:

- Observers invited to make an intervention should use an **available microphone seat**, unless otherwise instructed.

ENGAGING IN THE PROCESS

Interventions in Negotiations

Opportunities for observer interventions vary by meeting and remain subject to the discretion of the presiding officers and Parties.



PLENARIES

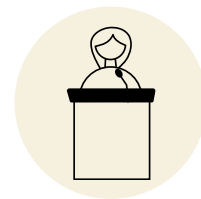
Observers are often invited by the presiding officers to make interventions during opening and closing plenaries, time permitting.

CONTACT GROUPS AND INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS

Co-Chairs or Co-Facilitators may invite observers to make interventions, time permitting and where Parties allow.



If your constituency wishes to speak on a particular agenda item, **approach the secretariat support team** in the room at the beginning of the meeting. They can raise the request with the Co-Chairs or Co-Facilitators.



WHEN OBSERVERS ARE GIVEN THE FLOOR

Where there is no objection from Parties and time allows, observers may be given the floor after Parties have spoken. Representatives of the **nine NGO constituencies** have priority, followed by other observers

Further information on meeting procedures and the role of presiding officers is available in the [Presiding Officer's Guide to the UNFCCC Process](#).



ENGAGING BEYOND COPs

Stay Engaged in Intersessional Period

Observer engagement continues throughout the year. Between sessions, observers can follow ongoing work and contribute expertise, evidence and recommendations to the UNFCCC process.



MAKE WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS



FOLLOW CONSTITUTED BODIES



CONTRIBUTE TO MANDATED WORK



PREPARE FOR UPCOMING SESSIONS



ENGAGE WITH GOVERNMENTS



DEVELOP BRIDGING PROPOSALS



CONNECT INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL ACTION



COLLABORATE WITH OTHERS

ENGAGING IN THE PROCESS

Side Events and Exhibits

Please submit
your questions
to [slido.com](https://www.slido.com)
#1438489



Organized by observer organizations, Parties partnering with observers, [side events](#) and exhibits are popular modes of observer engagement at COPs.

At COP 31, nearly 380 joint side events and 100 exhibits are selected from over 1,600 applications, particularly those proposals by developing country observers. Side events will be held in Side Event Rooms 1 - 9 from 9 - 19 November 2026. The most up-to-date logistical information on COP 31 side events and exhibits can be found in the handbook for [side event](#) and [exhibit](#) organizers.

They cover the following topics:

1. Building Resilience for Cities, Infrastructure and Water
2. Fostering Human and Social Development
3. Stewarding Forests, Oceans and Biodiversity
4. Transforming Agriculture and Food Systems
5. Transitioning Energy, Industry and Transport
6. Unleashing Enablers and Accelerators incl. on Financing, Technology and Capacity Building

[COP 31 Side Events schedule](#)
[COP 31 Exhibits schedule](#)

[How to attend COP 31 side events and exhibits](#)

Is your organization involved in organizing a side event and/or an exhibit?

Check the [home page of SEORS](#) for the most up-to-date logistical information.

Did you know?

The SBI recognized side events as an **essential part of the UNFCCC process** and an important tool for engaging observers in knowledge-sharing, networking and the exploration of actionable options for meeting the climate challenge. (FCCC/SBI/2014/8, paragraph 224).



Source: UNFCCC secretariat



Source: UNFCCC secretariat

SIDE EVENTS AND EXHIBITS

Please submit your
questions to
slido.com #1438489



Side events and exhibits will be running every day (except Sunday, 15 November, the rest day!) from **Monday, 9 November** to **Thursday, 19 November**.

To avoid thematic clashes, most of the **side events** falling under the topics of the COP 31 Presidency thematic days, are **not** allocated on those days. Instead, they are assigned slots **on the days prior to the thematic day** and/or **on the days after the thematic day**.

9 Nov: Food, Agriculture and Health Agriculture and Food Security · Irrigation and Water Efficiency · Food Systems · Climate Change and Health	10 Nov: Energy and Transport Energy Security · Electrification · Grid Infrastructure · Energy Diversification and Efficiency · Sustainable Transport	11 Nov: Zero Waste Zero Waste · Resource Efficiency · Methane · Circular Economy LEADERS' SUMMIT · DAY 1	12 Nov: Resilient Cities and Built Environment Climate-Friendly Buildings · Settlements and Urban Resilience · Disaster Risk Management · Local Governments · Smart Cities · Nature-Based Solutions · Smart Mobility · Built Environment and Infrastructure · Sustainable Waste Systems LEADERS' SUMMIT · DAY 2
13 Nov: Finance and Trade Green Transformation · Climate-Based Investment · Green Finance · Value Chains · Carbon Markets	14 Nov: Children, Youth, Education and Skills Climate Literacy and Education · Green Skills and Workforce · Academia · Curriculum Development · Lifelong Learning	15 Nov: A Breath in Antalya Social and Cultural Programmes	
16 Nov: Science, Industry and Technology Science · Green Industrialisation · Technology and Innovation · SMEs · Digitalisation · Artificial Intelligence · Low-Carbon Manufacturing	17 Nov: Ocean, Seas, Nature and Land Use — Rio Synergy Ocean and Marine Ecosystems · Inland Water Ecosystems · Coastal Resilience · Blue Economy · Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services · Forest and Ecosystem Restoration	18 Nov: Human and Social Development Tourism · Cultural Heritage · Employment and Livelihoods · Traditional and Local Knowledge · Vulnerable Groups · Persons with Disabilities · Women's Empowerment · Just Transition	19 Nov: Imece: Enhancing Implementation Institutional and Technical Capacity Building · Investment-Ready Projects · Access to Finance

Your feedback matters!

Thank you for participating in today's briefing session.

Please take two minutes to complete our short feedback survey.

Your responses will help us improve future capacity-building sessions for observers.

Scan the QR code to share your feedback.

**COP 31 Observer Engagement
Capacity Building Session:
Navigating the UNFCCC Process**

