

COP 31 Observer Engagement Briefing

Navigating the UNFCCC Process as an Observer

Q&A Summary | Thursday, 15 October 2026

This summary consolidates questions addressed during the two briefing sessions. Answers reflect information provided during the briefings and should be read alongside the official resources, which may be updated.

Access to negotiations and meeting rooms

- 1. Do observers need to pre-register to attend negotiation meetings?**
 - No separate pre-registration is required for individual negotiation meetings. Access depends on whether the meeting is open to observers and on room capacity. Check the daily programme and CCTV screens for meeting information.
- 2. How can observers attend plenary meetings?**
 - Plenaries are generally open to observers. For high-demand meetings, such as the opening plenary, ticketing may be introduced for safety and capacity reasons. If needed at COP 31, arrangements and ticket allocations will be communicated closer to the conference.
- 3. Who has priority when negotiation rooms are full, including compared with Party overflow badge holders?**
 - Party badge holders have priority, followed by observer organizations and then Party overflow badge holders. An exception may apply where a Party delegate needs an accompanying Party overflow badge holder for a particular negotiation. The secretariat seeks to secure representation of the nine NGO constituencies in consistently crowded meetings, subject to capacity and arrangements with facilitators. There is no equal numerical allocation of seats between Parties and observers; participants may need to give up seats to enable negotiations to proceed.
- 4. Where can observers find information on contact groups, agenda items, and relevant documents?**
 - Consult the relevant [session](#) and [governing-body](#) pages on the UNFCCC website. Agenda items, pre-session documents, negotiating texts, and relevant secretariat contacts are made available there. The daily programme and venue screens provide meeting updates.
- 5. How do negotiations typically differ between the first and second weeks of COP?**
 - The first week generally focuses more on technical negotiations, while the second week becomes more political, including ministerial engagement. As negotiations advance and issues become more sensitive, more meetings may be closed to observers, including through closed informal consultations or informal informals.

Virtual participation and the COP 31 platform

- 6. Which negotiation meetings can virtual observers follow, and can they participate actively?**
- The virtual platform generally provides streams of meetings that are procedurally open to observers, mirroring on-site access. Negotiation streams are primarily one-way viewing. Some other events may provide interactive virtual participation, depending on the organizers and format. Please check the respective event information for details. Observers unable to enter a full room may follow an open meeting through the platform.
- 7. Where can virtual participants find instructions on using the platform?**
- The Information for Participants (IFP) webpage includes information about [platform access and AI-powered assistance](#). Registered virtual participants will receive an access link and further instructions by email once the platform is available.

Constituencies, observer status and engagement

- 8. Can an observer organization that is not affiliated with a constituency engage with Parties or the COP Presidency?**
- Yes. Unaffiliated admitted observer organizations can independently arrange meetings and engage with Parties, Party groups and the Presidency. However, secretariat-facilitated engagement opportunities reserved for constituencies are organized through the constituency system.
- 9. Can an independent NGO join a constituency, and how?**
- Yes, subject to the constituency's own membership arrangements. The nine NGO constituencies are self-governed and have different membership criteria. Interested organizations should contact the relevant [constituency focal point](#) directly. Further information about constituencies is available [here](#).
- 10. Which group is relevant for religious or faith-based NGOs?**
- There is no dedicated faith-based [NGO constituency](#) among the nine recognized constituencies. The informal faith-based organizations group may be relevant; interested organizations should contact the group directly to explore engagement.
- 11. How can observers contribute to the COP 31 Presidency's Open Dialogue?**
- The Open Dialogue programme is being co-developed by the Presidency and NGO constituencies. NGOs are encouraged to engage through their constituencies. IGOs may also have opportunities to speak, subject to available time.
- 12. Can refugee-led organizations obtain observer status in their own right?**
- Refugee-led organizations may apply for [observer admission](#). Each application is assessed against the admission criteria endorsed by Parties, including the organization's legal documentation. The secretariat can provide case-specific guidance; admission cannot be guaranteed based on the organization's nature alone.
- 13. How can observers engage in thematic work programmes such as just transition, loss and damage or mitigation?**

- Relevant work programmes may have dedicated meetings during sessions and intersessionally. Observers can follow open meetings and participate in available opportunities, often coordinated through NGO constituencies.

14. Can NGOs submit information directly to the secretariat, or must submissions go through a constituency?

- Yes. Admitted observer organizations may submit information directly to the secretariat in response to relevant calls for submissions, without going through a constituency. Please consult the [UNFCCC Submission Portal](#) for further information and applicable requirements.

15. What kind of contribution does the secretariat hope observers will make?

- Constructive engagement that informs negotiations and helps strengthen ambition. The briefing highlighted the role of observer engagement with Parties and cited the just transition process as an example of such contributions.

16. How can observers bring outcomes of external initiatives into the UNFCCC process?

- An external meeting or initiative is not automatically part of the formal COP agenda. Observers may share its outcomes with Parties and seek to inform their negotiating positions, including through discussions with delegations.

17. How can observers network with others working on similar issues?

- Attend relevant negotiation meetings based on topic, as well as side events and exhibitions. The thematic classifications and organizers' contact information provided in side event and exhibition schedules can help identify relevant events and facilitate connections with other participants.

Side events, exhibits and networking

18. Will COP 31 side events be livestreamed?

- Yes. Side events will be livestreamed through the [secretariat's official YouTube channel](#), with a playlist of pre-scheduled livestreaming sessions for COP 31 side events available for viewing. More information is available through Side Event Organizers Handbook.

19. Can side event speakers participate remotely?

- Yes. A hybrid format is available for side event speakers through the COP 31 virtual meeting platform. Organizers should consult the [Side Event Organizers Handbook](#) for the arrangements.

20. Will side event organizers receive additional badges for their speakers?

- Organizing a side event does not automatically entitle an organization to additional badges or registration quota. Organizations wishing to increase their quota may submit a quota increase request through the Communications Tab on the [Online Registration System](#).

21. When should organizations apply to organize a side event?

- Applications for COP 31 side events had already closed on July 20th. Applications for side events and exhibits generally open well in advance of the conference in July, with announcements and information about the application timeline circulated through the [Side Events and Exhibits system](#).

22. How can virtual participants access side events?

→ Duly registered COP 31 participants can use the COP 31 virtual platform's side event section to find and join sessions. Participants should consult the [IFP](#) and platform instructions when released.

Resources

- [COP 31 Information for Participants \(IFP\)](#)
- [Observer Handbook for COP 31](#)
- [COP 31 observer organizations and briefing resources](#)
- [COP 31 conference page](#)
- [Side Events and Exhibits webpage](#)