

Observer Organizations

Background Information and Guiding Questions

Role of Constituencies

As explained in the [background note](#), NGO Constituencies are loose groups of admitted observer organizations with broadly clustered interests or perspectives, reflecting the nine “major groups”. In addition to the nine Constituencies, there are additional ‘[informal NGO groups](#)’¹ recognized by the UNFCCC secretariat. Each of these groups has its own coordination structure and focal point(s) who play vital roles². As it is, observer organizations are highly diverse, as are their reasons for participating in the UNFCCC process. Thus, identifying the roles, responsibilities and goals of the various observer organizations may assist Constituencies to facilitate a more effective engagement at sessions.

Considering the diverse nature of observer organizations, it might be useful to discuss the potential manners in which their participation could be reorganized so as to combine the different strengths towards achieving their goals. Form follows function: any discussion on the organizational structure of the NGO Constituency system and the various groupings would benefit from some prior reflection on their roles and purpose at UNFCCC meetings.

This is because NGO Constituencies not only enable positive and effective engagement with Parties but also face many challenges. There are thousands of observers who do not work closely during the year but suddenly approach the Constituency focal points at COPs to get a few limited-access tickets for dignitaries’ events and over-crowded negotiation meetings, or hundreds of observers who do not know how to follow the negotiation and/or UN code of conduct and guidelines and express frustrations or face de-badging. Therefore, there might be value in finding common ground on which to build capacity for action and develop strategy, despite the many heterogeneous interests. A practical discussion might include best practices to build the capacity of new participants without prior knowledge of the UNFCCC process to help them navigate most effectively through a COP or ways to collaborate and avoid duplication of labor.

- What are the roles of Constituencies?
- What are the different needs in terms of spaces of Constituencies/other non-state actors to coordinate, advocate and perform their roles?
- How should the engagement of informal NGO groups be managed? Will these informal groups have the same access as the original nine NGO Constituencies? If so, how to do so without increasing the overall number of observers during COPs?
- Whether to, and if yes, how to integrate observers that are not active inter-sessionally into Constituencies so that they can effectively operate during COPs (process to reach out, communication within constituencies)?

¹ For more information on these groups, please refer to the section on “NGO Constituencies and informal groups” in the [background note](#).

² For more information on their roles, please refer to the section “roles of NGO Constituencies” in the [background note](#).

Status of Constituencies

A recent proposal that has been made by some NGO Constituencies is to distinguish the nine Constituencies into stakeholders and rightsholders. It would be helpful to discuss the different roles and responsibilities of these two ‘groupings’, and whether this distinction can be reflected in terms of their participation in the UNFCCC process. In order for this idea to be considered by the various actors involved is to identify the actual practical implications and possible barriers for implementation of different access or participation rights.

- Different Constituencies play different roles. Should there be a differentiation with regards to access and participation based on those roles?
- Are there ways to elevate the role of Rights Holder Constituencies in the UNFCCC? How?

Purpose of participation (coordination of observers)

As mentioned above, there are various and diverse purposes³ behind observer organizations’ engagement in the UNFCCC process. As such, it may be useful to discuss whether to coordinate their engagement primarily around common purposes, rather than the Constituency they belong to, so as to streamline their participation.

- Should coordination of observers happen based on the purpose rather than their affiliation in the process?

³ For more information on these groups, please refer to a comprehensive list of “purposes of participation” in the [background note](#).

The first survey carried out within this process asked participants to think about issues and solutions around concrete ways to facilitate meaningful observer engagement (especially from developing countries), not only during COP, but throughout the year and in other venues (e.g., during SBs, regional climate weeks, etc), and how to support more diverse participation (e.g., from developing countries and groups with less financial resources), such as through the platform of side events/ exhibits.

Inputs addressing these questions from the perspective of Agenda Item 1 have been summarized below to help frame the discussions:

Roles of constituencies
Key concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is necessary to restore more flexibility to the engagement of Observers, particularly in the context of how Constituencies are engaged compared to NGOs. Constituencies have a key role to facilitate broad and inclusive representation directly into the UNFCCC process (interventions, Constituted body meetings, briefings with ES/Co-Chairs/etc and related aspects). However, in other areas (partnerships, projects, expert inputs, and other technical or implementation related aspects) too much emphasis on centralization on Constituencies only stifles NGOs from being able to contribute effectively. The constituency communication and organization could be improved
Proposed solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We suggest that UNFCCC decompartmentalize the constituencies so that they are effective Connecting different smaller organisations up in thematic clusters to workshop how to cooperate together more efficiently, use resources more efficiently and have a louder collective voice.
Provide to the constituencies enough space for allowing them to organize caucus and share with the NGOs observers that belong to them the collected information and organize concrete inputs for the Parties negotiations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One way might be for groups of observers to designate their representatives to attend meetings and report back to the others, similar to the "press pool" of reporters who attend press briefings at venues where open coverage is logistically difficult To facilitate observers groupings (virtually or for real), within Constituencies, so that observers can better know each other and exchange experiences Set up a freely accessible knowledge sharing platform. Set up a 'buddy structure' in which larger organisations support smaller organisations with knowledge and tools for impactful participation (and preparation for example) Small related observer organisations with common interests could pool efforts to jointly staff/contribute to an engagement initiative. Any facilitation in that direction would help Create an official site (platform) where exchanges and interactions will take place before the COP