

Admission and Registration

Background Information and Guiding Questions

Admission mechanism under the Convention & inclusion (non-structured stakeholders)

UNFCCC sessions are not open to the public. Article 7, paragraph 6 of the Convention provides for admission by the COP of organizations as observer organizations. Organizations admitted by the COP according to a set of criteria are notified by the secretariat of the opening of Online Registration System (ORS) as part of the preparation for COPs. Registration of representatives nominated by admitted observer organizations takes place solely through the ORS. (For further details, please refer to the [background note](#))

Given this Convention mechanism for participation, individuals cannot participate if they are not affiliated to an admitted observer organization, such as those who participate in non-structured citizen movements (e.g. Fridays for Future) or those members of some Constituencies whose governance structure is based upon individual, rather than organizational, membership (e.g. YOUNGO). As a workaround to this Convention mechanism, these individuals are advised to seek nomination by Parties, UN or admitted organizations as part of their delegations. With the increasing number of individuals who are participating in this way not truly representing those organizations that underwent the formal admission process, however, another question rises as to whether the resources invested by the secretariat in managing admission is worthwhile.

Non-structured stakeholders such as ‘citizens’ and ‘movements’ without formal status in UNFCCC process (COP admission) have a role to play in their respective countries towards the implementation of the Paris Agreement and increasingly wish to attend UNFCCC COPs. UNFCCC COPs are not open to the public. Should there be a way for citizen movements to register to participate at the COPs in the future? What is the optimal way to balance the participation needs of admitted organizations and that of non-admitted citizen movements?

Registration & purpose of participation (differentiated badge system)

The allocation of the quota of badges per observer organization is a function of: a) the aggregated demand from all the admitted organizations who nominated representatives in the ORS by a specified deadline; b) the capacity of the venue; and c) factors such as an organization’s past records of no-shows (having wasted precious quota that could have been used by other organizations). The requests for quota for COP 26 reached 30,000. Although a quota of 10,000 for observers alone is a significantly high number compared with other UN annual conferences or historically within UNFCCC COPs, there is still the perception that UNFCCC is not inclusive of civil society participation.

Among those high numbers of observer participants, the identification of who they are, or ‘tagging’, currently takes place only at the level of IGOs/NGOs in the official lists of participants, and at the level of constituency for NGOs in the official webpage. Although observers attend UNFCCC sessions for different purposes (please see the [background note](#) for a list of possible “purposes of participation”), this information is not visible in the list of participants. A differentiated badging system that tags at the level of *purpose* of participation and related *activities* at the COP might offer opportunities for more tailored engagement, but

in order to implement such a system it would be necessary to first identify the different categories to include, and to specify whether tagging would take place at the level of individuals or nominating organizations.

- Would a differentiated system that assigns badges according to participants' access needs (i.e. to the negotiation process and/or side-event access) hold value? If so, would such a system be workable? How could potential barriers to its implementation be overcome?
- What measures can ease the burden of both the observer organizations needing more quota for side-event and exhibition access and the secretariat assessing for admission when applicants are not interested in following the negotiation process, while ensuring the representation of the widest possible stakeholders?

Revocation process

At present, once an observer organization receives admission status in the UNFCCC, it is virtually a permanent state of affairs, even if the organization no longer meets the admission criteria or engages in activities that are against the values upheld by the United Nations. Yet, under the current system, such admitted organizations would still be eligible to apply for quota. If the number of active organizations grows bigger than the capacity allocated for observers, the secretariat would not be able to allocate even a quota of one per organization. A potential way to ensure meaningful participation and allocate quota in a more equitable manner would be to implement a “revocation process”, whereby organizations need to reapply for admission at regular intervals.

Given the growing number of admitted organizations, if the majority remains active in the UNFCCC process, it will eventually become difficult to allocate even a quota of one per organization at COPs. Could this prompt a revocation process (reapplication and expression of interest every five years) for administrative purposes?

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 3 have been summarized below to help frame the discussions:

Admission mechanism under the Convention & Inclusion (non-structured stakeholders)	
Key concerns	
The Green Zone should truly be a space for civil society	
Proposed solutions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Green Zone should be open to the public, and if not, at least to all members of a civil society delegation, instead of just those holding badges for the Blue Zone 	
Revocation Process	
Key concerns	
The current standards for admission of new NGOs are too lax, while those who have already been admitted face no real review or oversight to hold them to account for making an impact with the collective resources (space, quota, time, staff resources, etc) which they consume.	
Proposed solutions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A periodic review of admitted NGOs should ensure accountability to the standards/criteria. • Reducing number of "inactive observers from parties" to get higher quota for meaningful observers from other constituencies, facilitating the process for observers to contribute to working papers etc • The UNFCCC Secretariat could create an Ombudsman to review issues of participation by NGOs. 	