

Current Modes of Observer Engagement

Background Information and Guiding Questions

Quality of engagement of observer organizations

This agenda item seeks to explore the potential ways in which to promote an enabling environment for meaningful engagement for observers to achieve their goals, as well as measures that can be taken to this end by different actors. There is what observers want from the process and there is what the process wants from observers. Quality of engagement is high when these two are matched.

- How do you define quality engagement?
- What are the criteria for meaningful engagement?
- In addition to promoting a quantitatively representative engagement in the UNFCCC process, what steps can be taken to promote higher quality engagement for observers?
- Are there ways for the UNFCCC to become more bottom-up?

Current modes of engagement

A detailed explanation of the “current modes of observer engagement” can be found in the section with the same heading in the [background note](#). UNFCCC formal sessions such as COP are the most popular avenues for observers to engage in the process. However, there are many other opportunities for observers to get involved in the work of the UNFCCC throughout the year. In addition to contributing to the work of constituted bodies (please see Agenda Item 5), observers can drive implementation and enhanced ambition by engaging directly with Party delegates through national channels, for example during the process of NDC formulation, or they may form partnerships with other NGOs to achieve their goals. Engaging with Parties’ NDCs and NAPs offers an opportunity for non-structured stakeholders such as ‘citizens’ and ‘movements’ who do not enjoy formal status in the UNFCCC and are not admitted to formal sessions to play a role in driving implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Another opportunity of engagement is through mandated work programmes, such as the [global stocktake](#) of the Paris Agreement (GST) - a process which aims to assess the collective progress of all Parties towards achieving the purpose of the Paris Agreement and its long-term goals. Its highly participatory structure invites inputs and engagement from non-Party stakeholders through submissions and participation in technical dialogues.

Within the UNFCCC process, there are also a wide range of initiatives, events, platforms and actors whose objective is to increase climate action by engaging non-Party stakeholders. One such initiative is the [Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action](#) (MP). Under the leadership of the High-Level Climate Champions, MP supports the implementation of the Paris Agreement by enabling collaboration between governments and cities, regions, businesses and investors on climate action across seven thematic areas (land use, water, human settlements, transport, energy, industry, oceans and coastal zones) and two-cross cutting areas (resilience and finance). There are also UNFCCC secretariat-led initiatives aimed at non-Party stakeholders such as the [Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action](#), [Sports for Climate Action Framework](#) and [Climate Neutral Now](#) (CNN).

In addition to these initiatives, the [Regional Climate Weeks](#) (RCWs) offer the opportunity for a host of actors to engage at the regional level, as general registered participants regardless of admission status. These events take place each year in Africa, Latin-America and Caribbean, Asia-Pacific, Middle East and Northern Africa, bringing together diverse stakeholders from governments and NGOs around a common goal of addressing climate change. The RCWs include a series of events that provide space for an exchange of knowledge and best practices across the region on the gamut of relevant climate issues and opportunities.

Throughout the year:

- How could observers be more meaningfully engaged in the Global Climate Action (GCA) work of the secretariat (Fashion Industry Charter, Sports for Climate Action, CNN) the Marrakech Partnership and any other work of the High-Level Champions?
- How could observers be more meaningfully engaged in the Global Stocktake?
- How could observers be more meaningfully engaged in Regional Climate Weeks?
- Non-structured stakeholders such as ‘citizens’ and ‘movements’ without formal status in the UNFCCC process have a role to play in respective countries towards the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Are there concrete measures that can be taken within the scope of this review process and respecting UNFCCC mandates (as explained in the background note) to support individuals to be engaged throughout the year, focusing on NDCs and NAPs, rather than COP attendance?

During the sessions:

- Statements made by observers in plenary are made after statements made by Parties. In practice, this often means that observer statements are delivered to an empty room in the middle of the night. Are there concrete measures to enhance the visibility of observer statements within the scope of this review process and respecting UNFCCC mandates (as explained in the background note)?
- What steps can be taken to enhance current dialogues with the Executive Secretary/COP President/SB Chairs/High-Level Champions?
- What steps can be taken to meaningfully engage observers in COP Presidency events?
- Side events and exhibits – are there solutions to further facilitate interaction between Parties, NGOs and other observers for enrichment of discussions?

Inclusion (side event selection criteria)

- Given the growing number of side event applications shown in the background information, could a regional rotation approach be applicable to side event eligibility or selection?
- Which other solutions could be proposed to improve the selection of side events and exhibits in light of the mandate to enhance participation of observers from developing countries?

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 4 have been summarized below to help frame the discussions:

Quality of engagement of observer organizations
Key concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving the accessibility of communication which often assume a high level of understanding UNFCCC processes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A clear mapping of the "routes in" and channels to high quality/meaningful engagement is required. As a new IGO Observer organisation we are not at all clear about ways in which which we are encouraged or permitted to contribute.
Proposed solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informational and training sessions [for newcomers] [on how to contribute most efficiently to the negotiation in specific areas] [briefing on on-going processes] (21); Preparatory meetings by regions (6).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a platform for observer organizations to properly articulate their views and activities prior to COP meetings (9).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A specific organization/department should be established to facilitate the observer organization (2).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Match making between Observers in terms of technical capabilities and questions/needs of UNFCCC, parties and other NGO's. More input into theme and issues.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide greater opportunities for organized networking. Provide contact information for observers to connect with one another. Provide greater opportunities to showcase the work NGOs are doing in the global fight against climate change. Also, provide more opportunities to exchange technical solutions (for example for decarbonization) rather than just policy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earlier and more complete information on event schedules and content would be most welcome so that we can participate more effectively (4).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More transparency and documenting regarding how participation actually impacts positively outcomes (4).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of platforms for national, regional and international discussions between parties and observers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarifying pupose and objective - making the intended outcomes far simpler to understand in terms of the process required to get there; so people actually understand how to best engage and input.

Current modes of engagement (throughout the year and during the sessions)

Key concerns

- The programs of the upcoming Bonn Climate Change Conference and the recent MENA Regional Climate Week are published very late, by which time it is difficult to free work schedules and make travel arrangements. For first-time participants such as us, it is also difficult to understand what the benefits of attendance would be. The information published so far on the Bonn Climate Conference seems very technical and arcane.
- Lack of information upon which to make choices and decisions is also at issue so concentrating on what is truly useful (i.e. the meeting schedule for the next day posted the evening before it used to be rather than on the day of the meeting as in COP26) in a simple text format.

Proposed solutions

- Allowing more formal and informal exchanges between the Presidencies/Secretariat and Secretariat legal staff members with observers through dialogues and briefings (4).
- Facilitation of meetings/discussions between the delegates and observers on different issues relevant to the agenda/discussions (4).
- The process of registering for SBs and COPs can be more transparent. Such as the timetable (when to open SEORS) can be announced at a fixed date (3).
- It is very helpful to have a designated point person within the Secretariat who can provide information and help to navigate through the often complex process. For example the LCIPP team within the UNFCCC has been an excellent resource for the IPOs. The LCIPP webportal is also a great example of where information can be easily and clearly found and communicated.
- Observer statements should be interspersed through out the negotiation period - this might encourage more member states hearing the statements.
- One idea would be to have a pre-sessional day dedicated to a Party-NGO exchange. NGO constituencies would each have 45 minutes for an exchange with Parties to outline their key views and answer questions/engage in dialog with Parties. (2)
- Facilitate additional Talanoa-style dialogues during COP, perhaps as part of the GST.
- Organizing hybrid COPs allows more people to have access to the climate negotiations, be informed about the discussion at a global level, and then participate actively in national processes such as the implementation of the NDC.
- More calls/opportunities for written submissions or remote/asynchronous contributions (9).
- Clearer communication of the opportunities for Observer organisations, including timelines (8).
- Meetings could be designed to engage participants well-ahead of the scheduled meeting time through requests for submissions, dissemination of background documents, and a digital timeline which tracks the tasks and deadlines necessary to achieving valuable outcomes and a productive meeting.
- We would very much like to explore having our students provide some meaningful assistance leading up to or during the COP perhaps in providing research for groups/parties that need some additional help in preparation to the meeting or in note taking during sessions. Our University can pilot a trial of having our students provide notetaking and shadowing for groups that need it.

Inclusion (side event selection criteria)

Proposed solutions

- Matchmaking for side-event mergers ahead of the first round of selection, with incentives to pair with developing countries [or include developing country speakers] (8).
- Ensure geographical balance (3),
- Aggregate similar applications (5).
- Create a public pool of speakers with expertise [especially from developing countries]. (3)
- Quotas of representatives from developing countries as a condition for side events to be approved (3).
- Provide support in the application process from the Secretariat such as pre-assessment of proposals (5).
- One or more themed days focusing on topics directly relevant to developing countries (3).
- Set aside a given proportion for developing country-led side events only.
- Suggest to have a 'bulletin board' or similar type of platform where multiple observers can find each other and join together around particularly topics for side events (2).
- Clearer guidelines as to what results in an event being accepted or not (3).
- Reserve some portion for under-represented groups.
- For me, with regards to qualities requirements, I think it should be advisable to allocate quota on a rotational basis, based on the Specific Climate Change Priorities of each Continent, I mean, for example, COP27: Focus on Africa Continent only: Opportunities and Concrete Solutions. With regards to that the number of Participants would be limited to the African Intergovernmental Organizations, African NGOs, African non-Party stakeholders, UNFCCC's Experts, UN Organizations, Media Staff and Technical Staff. COP 28: The Asian one, ... By doing so we are going to promote more Engagement and Competition from targeted Stakeholders. At the same time the total number of Participants can be limited to let say 400 people. This is the way to go.