Observers' Guide to Advocacy Actions

WELCOME!

Is this your first UNFCCC session or are you a seasoned observer looking to maximize your impact?

This Guide is designed to help you plan and implement advocacy actions during UNFCCC sessions. It provides key information and tips to ensure your actions are effective and aligned with UNFCCC guidelines.

We hope this Guide supports you before and during the session – wishing you a fruitful and impactful conference!

Observer Relations Team

No to
False
'Solutions'!

POLLUTERS
FUNDING FOR CLIMATE ACTION
OIL
GAS

NO 1.5 OR CLIMATE JUSTICE WITHOUT FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION
FOOD LAND AND WATER FOR PEOPLE NOT PROFIT
JUST TRANSITION EQUITABLE HUMANE AND AGROECOLOGICAL FOOD SYSTEMS
END INDUSTRIAL AGRICULTURE
FINANCE FOR AGROECOLOGY AND FOOD SYSTEM TRANFORMATION NOW

SINDICATOS POR UNA TRANSICIÓN JUSTA
Nizami
Plenary Hall
PAY UP
OUR MONEY FOR A COMMON FUTURE
Civil society
CLIMATE ACTION

FULL
FUNDED
FAIR
FAST
FEMINIST
FOREVER
NO MORE FOSSILS
NO MORE FOSSILS
JUST + EQUITABLE
FOSSIL FUEL
WE ARE HERITAGE PROTECTORS
CLIVER CLIMATE FINANCE
JUST &

FUL
CLIMATE JUSTICE WORKERS' JUSTICE
TRADE UNIONS FOR JUST TRANSITION
CLIMATE JUSTICE
WORKER JUSTICE NOW
CLIMATE JUSTICE
WORKER JUSTICE NOW

In solidarity for a
Green World
DON'T LET
FAIL
PAY UP & PHASE OUT!

Introduction to Advocacy Actions

Advocacy actions are impactful, creative demonstrations (e.g. visual displays, performances, protests) organized by admitted observer organizations to **raise awareness and contribute meaningfully** to the UNFCCC process.

The UNFCCC secretariat, in collaboration with the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), is committed to facilitating these actions. While advocacy activities are generally not permitted within UN premises, this unique practice under the UNFCCC is possible thanks to a **longstanding relationship of mutual trust and collaboration** among observer organizations, UNDSS, and the secretariat.

Observers' strong record of **compliance with the Code of Conduct and clearance process** has been essential to sustaining this space. In turn, these actions offer a valuable platform to highlight key messages and channel the constructive energy of civil society toward Parties.

With mutual trust and coordination, observers can engage meaningfully while ensuring a safe and respectful environment for all.

Code of Conduct: Creating a Safe and Respectful Space for Advocacy

The **Code of Conduct** applies to all participants at a UNFCCC event. By attending or being involved in any capacity at a UNFCCC event, participants agree to abide by the UNFCCC Code of Conduct, including:

Code of Conduct for UNFCCC Events:

- "The UNFCCC secretariat is committed to enabling events at which everyone can participate in an **inclusive, respectful, healthy and safe environment and be treated with fairness and dignity."**
- "The UNFCCC is committed to **upholding the fundamental human rights, dignity and worth of the human person**, and **equal human rights of all participants** in a UNFCCC event. "
- "UNFCCC events are guided by the **highest ethical and professional standards**, and **all participants are expected to act with integrity and respect towards all participants.**"
- "Participants must:
  - **cooperate and comply with requests and instructions from United Nations officials and security staff** issued in their official capacity regarding the use of facilities and access to and conduct within the venues of the UNFCCC event."
  - **refrain from using the UNFCCC venues for unauthorized demonstrations**."

We encourage reporting any incident either to SpeakUp@unfccc.int or directly to any badged UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) officer.

Code of Conduct: Creating a Safe and Respectful Space for Advocacy, Cont.

By attending or being involved in any capacity at a UNFCCC event, participants also agree to abide by the points below, among others:

- **UN Security Guidelines**
  - "**No activity derisory** to the UN, any of their Member States, organizations, or any individual or **criticism that would go against basic rules of decorum is allowed**."
    - For example, this includes **naming of countries, cities, organizations, or individuals, except where:**
      - **countries, cities, or organizations** are referenced in connection with factual extreme weather events (e.g. floods, droughts, heatwaves, wildfires, or other climate-related impacts);
      - **individuals** are named in an honorary, memorial, or commemorative context; **or**
      - countries are referenced in the context of **self-identification** (e.g. "I am from [country]")**.**
  - "Advocacy actions and publicity events in the designated areas (NGO spots) **authorized by the Observer Relations Team** are permitted."

- **Guidelines for the Participation of Representatives of NGOs**
  - "The secretariat welcomes the full support of participants in **maintaining an ambience conducive to intergovernmental discussions and negotiations,** and to open and fruitful dialogue between Parties and observers."
  - "No participant shall **harass or threaten** any other participant."
  - "**Interfering with the movement** of participants at any time or location within the venues is not permitted."
  - "The **flags and any officially recognized symbols of the United Nations and of its member States** shall not be treated with disrespect. "

Secretariat Facilitation of Advocacy Actions at COP 30

At COP30, a high volume of advocacy actions were facilitated, reflecting both growing engagement by civil society and our ongoing commitment to inclusive participation under the UNFCCC process, within our staffing capacities.

- A **total of 124 eligible applications** were submitted for advocacy actions.
- Of these, **118 actions were authorized**, representing a **95% authorization rate** among eligible submissions.
- An **estimated 4,800 participants were involved in these actions.** This mirrors the scale of SB58 and highlights the wide reach and mobilization of observer organizations and the UN staff operating at full capacity.
- Submissions demonstrated a strong thematic focus on **climate action, just transition, climate justice, fossil fuel phaseout, and loss and damage finance.**

Compared to COP29, there was a slight increase in total applications; but the **authorization rate of applications improved from 90% to 95% at COP 30.** These figures highlight observers' deeper understanding of the clearance process and their strong compliance with the code of conduct for impactful advocacy actions within the negotiation space.

Planning Your Advocacy Action: What is Needed for Authorization

The UNFCCC secretariat is committed to facilitating impactful advocacy actions. To ensure smooth authorization and effective delivery, your action must meet the following criteria:

- **Accountability as an admitted observer organization:** As admitted observers, the applicant organizations are responsible for compliance of the Code of Conduct, internal communication, media relations, and coordination with the secretariat.
- **Approved location:** All actions must take place in co-determined action locations agreed upon with the secretariat, UNDSS, and observer organizations.
- **Location-specific guidelines:** Each location has clear parameters regarding:
  - Maximum number of participants
  - Permitted noise levels
  - Safety and accessibility considerations
- **Adhere to the Code of Conduct:** Actions must adhere to the Code of Conduct for UNFCCC Events.
- **Clear link to climate change:** Your message should clearly link to climate change or the UNFCCC process.
- **Authorization by the secretariat and UNDSS:** Submit your application by 10:00 am the day prior to your proposed action for authorization. Organizers of authorized actions will be notified of authorization, or any required modifications to their application, by the evening prior to the proposed action.
- **Stewards:** Actions with more than 15 participants require at least one steward per 15 participants, who must be clearly identified and briefed by the secretariat.

Planning Your Advocacy Action: Preparing your Application

To help ensure your application is processed smoothly, please ensure to include all of the following information when submitting the application - by 10:00 AM* local time the day before your planned action:

- **Applicant Organization**
  - Name of the admitted observer organization coordinating the action.
- **Contact Information**
  - Name, email address, and mobile number of the lead contact person on-site.
- **Action Details**
  - Title and description of the action, including the link to climate change (please be as specific and detailed as possible).
  - Proposed date and time of the action (**note: all actions are limited to 30 minutes**).
- **Location and Size**
  - Select the preferred location and its respective specifications (number of people and noise level).
- **Materials and Equipment**
  - List any technical equipment, props, banners, signs, or materials you plan to bring.
  - Submit photos of all props and visual materials with your application. **These will be forwarded to UNDSS as cleared items to ensure smooth entry into the venue.**
- **Special Considerations**
  - If you require any items typically restricted (e.g. tools, audio equipment), please explain their necessity for the action. Exceptions may be granted in consultation with the UNDSS.

If you do not have all of the information by the 10:00 a.m. deadline, please submit what you have and send the remaining information to cool@unfccc.int.

Clearance Process for Advocacy Actions

The UNFCCC secretariat has established a clear and supportive clearance process to help you bring your message forward.

Prior to the conference

WALK THROUGH VENUE

- Usually, the day prior to the start of the session
- UNDSS; UNFCCC secretariat; interested and available observer organizations co-determine advocacy action locations and answer any questions

The day prior to proposed action

SUBMIT APPLICATION BY 10:00 am*

- Observer organizations submit application via online form
- Consultations with applicants on content, timing, location
- Ensure Code of Conduct and guidelines are followed

The evening prior to proposed action

CLEARANCE BY SECRETARIAT AND UNDSS

- Political sensitivity
- Clear link to climate change
- Logistical arrangements
- Code of Conduct adherence
- Safety and security
- Capacity of UNDSS and secretariat

In case of feedback/need for revision, the secretariat will contact the applicant if needed.

The day of the action

AUTHORIZED ACTION

- UNFCCC secretariat, UNDSS presence with organizers
- Agreed time and content
- Code of Conduct
- Talk to secretariat staff if any issues
- Remove all materials after

If you do not have all of the information by the 10:00 a.m. deadline, please submit what you have and send the remaining information to cool@unfccc.int.

Organizing Your Advocacy Action

General Principles

- **Follow the Code of Conduct and all guidance provided by the secretariat and UNDSS.**
- **Plan your advocacy action early and coordinate** with the UNFCCC secretariat to ensure timely authorization.
- Keep advocacy actions **creative and respectful** of the UNFCCC environment.
- Stay within **approved locations and follow all location-specific guidance**, including limits on number of people, materials, and sound levels.
- Ensure your message is **clearly linked to climate change**.
- **Conclude your activity responsibly** by removing all materials and leaving the area clean and orderly.

*Please note that **final decisions on the authorization of advocacy actions are context-specific and may vary depending on the location, timing, and nature of the action**. All actions remain subject to review and authorization by the UNFCCC secretariat and UNDSS.*

Organizing Your Advocacy Action

Organization and Coordination

- **Submit your advocacy application** for review and approval before the session; spontaneous or unapproved actions are not permitted.
- Coordinate with other observer groups to **amplify shared messages and foster collaboration.**
- Send all banners, props, and materials to the secretariat to **ensure smooth entrance into the venue.**
- **Keep materials supervised** throughout your action to ensure safety and smooth logistics.
- **Prepare backup plans** for timing or location changes in case of security or logistical adjustments.

Content and Conduct

- Maintaining **respect and dignity toward all participants.**
- Use symbols and visuals that are **culturally sensitive and aligned with your message** (e.g., art, lanyards, traditional attire).
- Keep **pathways accessible** and maintain a **safe atmosphere for all participants**.
- Remain **substance-free and professional** throughout your advocacy activities.
- No **naming of Parties, cities, organizations, and individuals**, except when:
  - Parties, cities, or organizations are referenced in connection with **factual extreme weather events** (e.g., floods, droughts, heatwaves, etc.); or
  - Individuals are named in an **honorary or commemorative context.**

*Please note that **final decisions on the authorization of advocacy actions are context-specific and may vary** depending on the location, timing, and nature of the action. All actions remain subject to review and authorization by the UNFCCC secretariat and UNDSS.*

FAQ

General Questions

- **What is considered an "advocacy action"?**
  - An authorized advocacy action is a peaceful, creative demonstration (e.g., visual displays, performances, symbolic gestures) organized by admitted observer organizations to raise awareness and amplify messages related to climate change.
- **Have there been any changes to the Advocacy Actions policy since last year?**
  - Core principles remain the same: enabling impactful, safe, and respectful advocacy. In terms of content, naming of Parties, countries, cities, and organizations is permitted if it is linked to factual extreme weather events (e.g., droughts, floods). Naming of individuals is permitted if in an honorary or commemorative manner.
- **When will the application form be available?**
  - The authorization form will be shared once locations are finalized. Contact **cool@unfccc.int** for updates.
- **Where can we hold advocacy actions?**
  - Actions are permitted in designated locations within the Blue Zone, subject to authorization.
  - Actions outside the venue fall under the host country's jurisdiction. Please contact the host country liaison.
- **Can newly admitted NGOs hold actions in the Blue Zone?**
  - Yes, as long as the organization is admitted by the COP. Only admitted organizations can apply for advocacy actions.
- **How can we join a walk through of the venue to co-determine advocacy action locations?**
  - Please reach out to cool@unfccc.int if you are interested in joining.
- **Can we organize actions outside of the venue?**
  - Advocacy actions outside of the venue are under the jurisdiction of the host country.
- **Can I distribute flyers in the venue?**
  - Distribution of materials would constitute an advocacy action. Please follow the clearance process.
- **Is taking a photo with a banner considered an advocacy action?**
  - Yes, this is considered an advocacy action. Please follow the clearance process if you wish to do so.

FAQ

Organizing your action

- **Can we bring banners, fabrics, or materials into the venue?**
  - Yes, provided that all materials were listed in your authorized application, which will be shared with the UNDSS staff at the security screening. This is why it is a requirement that you upload photos of all materials to your application or send to cool@unfccc.int.
- **Can we use speakers, microphones, or megaphones?**
  - Sound equipment use depends on the venue and designated location. Noise levels must align with location-specific guidelines.
- **How long can advocacy actions last?**
  - All advocacy actions are limited to 30 minutes to ensure that all admitted organizations have equal opportunities to engage and share their messages within the venue.
- **When will I know if my advocacy action is authorized?**
  - The UNFCCC secretariat and UNDSS review all applications each afternoon. You will receive confirmation the evening before your scheduled action. This process ensures that all actions meet safety, security, and procedural guidelines.
- **How does the clearance process work for joint actions between multiple NGOs?**
  - One admitted observer organization must take the lead and be accountable for the action - from submission of applications to the compliance with code of conduct by all participating groups.
- **Can we plan and get authorization before a UNFCCC session begins?**
  - Early coordination is encouraged, but authorization is not guaranteed. Please reach out to cool@unfccc.int to discuss your ideas ahead of time.
- **How do we sign up for the venue walkthrough?**
  - You can register for the walkthrough by contacting cool@unfccc.int. Walkthroughs typically take place the day before the session starts.
- **Is there flexibility with the application deadline?**
  - Yes. The secretariat can be flexible with the 10:00 a.m. deadline if you inform the team that an application is on its way. Please submit the information you have by the deadline and send any remaining details to **cool@unfccc.int.**

FAQ

Content and Messaging

- **Can participants identify where they are from during an advocacy action?**
  - Yes. Participants may reference their country in the context of self-identification (e.g. "I am from [country]"). However, such references may not be used to criticize or target Parties.
- **What does "linked to climate change" mean? Can we address broader climate justice issues?**
  - Yes, actions can highlight broader climate justice issues, as long as there is a clear link to climate change. The secretariat supports inclusive messaging within this framework.
- **Can we mention countries or cities in our messaging?**
  - Only if it is in reference to a factual extreme weather events (i.e., floods, hurricanes, etc.).
- **We are able to name countries in side events or press conferences; why are we not allowed to say countries in advocacy actions?**
  - Unlike in meetings, side events, or press releases, advocacy actions do not allow audience to exercise their right of reply.
- **Can we name or display imprisoned environmental activists in our advocacy action?**
  - Yes, provided the activists' work is clearly linked to climate change.
- **Can we include references to currencies in our advocacy action?**
  - Yes.

Didn't find your question?
Reach out to cool@unfccc.int – we are here to help you plan a successful and impactful action!

United Nations
Climate Change

We wish you a productive conference!

UN Climate Change website
Our official website. You can find documents, calendar of events, news and resources here.

X (previously Twitter)
@UNFCCC
@simonstiell

Instagram
@unclimatechange

LinkedIn
UN Climate Change
Simon Stiell

Tiktok
UN Climate Change

UN Climate Change App
This app will give you quick access to information about the UN Climate Change process and associated events.

Apple Android