



# Presiding Officers' Guide

## to the UNFCCC Process



United Nations  
Climate Change

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The secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement

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# Table of Contents

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Welcome – Your Role in the UNFCCC Process

Page 2

---

1

**Institutional  
Structure of the  
UNFCCC Process**

Page 5

2

**Meetings**

Page 24

3

**Conduct of Business  
and Roles and  
Responsibilities of  
Presiding Officers**

Page 35

---

4

**Observer  
Participation**

Page 43

5

**Ethics and the  
Code of Conduct**

Page 47

6

**Outcomes and  
Documentation**

Page 52

---

Appendix I – Resource Index

Page 62

---

Appendix II – Glossary

Page 65

---

Endnotes

Page 73

# Foreword

Presiding Officers are at the heart of the UNFCCC process. Whether leading plenary meetings, guiding contact groups, or facilitating informal consultations, they play an indispensable role in ensuring that the deliberations of Parties proceed in an orderly, transparent, and inclusive manner. The success of our collective work depends not only on what is discussed, but also on how it is conducted.

This *Presiding Officers' Guide* has been developed by the Legal Affairs division of the UNFCCC secretariat to support all those entrusted with these important responsibilities. It brings together, in one practical resource, the rules, procedures, and established practices that govern the conduct of business under the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement. Drawing on decades of experience and institutional memory, it aims to provide clear, accessible guidance to help Presiding Officers carry out their duties with confidence and consistency.

The Guide is not a legal instrument. Rather, it is intended as an accessible reference to assist Presiding Officers in navigating the procedural and institutional dimensions of their work with confidence. It aims to promote a consistent understanding of the draft rules of procedure being applied, and of the principles of impartiality, transparency, and inclusivity that underpin their application.

In undertaking their functions, Presiding Officers play a vital role in upholding a process that serves all Parties. This Guide seeks to assist them in that role – to maintain the trust and procedural integrity that have long characterized the UNFCCC process.

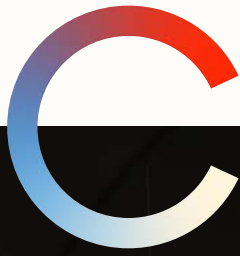
On behalf of the UNFCCC secretariat, I thank all those who have contributed to the preparation of this Guide and all Presiding Officers – past, present, and future – for their continued dedication to upholding the principles that make this process both effective and enduring.



**Noura Hamladji**

*Deputy Executive Secretary*





Credit: UN Climate Change - Kiara Worth

# Welcome – Your Role in the UNFCCC Process

Welcome to the UNFCCC secretariat's Presiding Officers' Guide, as prepared by the UNFCCC Legal Affairs division.

As a presiding officer, you play a pivotal role in guiding negotiations and decision-making that underpin the global response to climate change. The authority and responsibility entrusted to you – whether as President, Chair, co-chair, or co-facilitator – are central to ensuring that the work of Parties advances with integrity, transparency, inclusiveness, and effectiveness.

This guide is designed to be your practical companion, providing clear explanations of the institutional structure, procedural tools, and operational best practices that will support you throughout your service.

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## How This Guide Supports Your Role

The sections that follow offer step-by-step guidance grounded in the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement, and the draft rules of procedure being applied, as well as established practices and precedents. The guide is structured to help you navigate all aspects of your role – from opening meetings and facilitating consensus, to managing procedural challenges and upholding the procedural rights of Parties, to closing meetings and harvesting outcomes.

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### What This Resource Covers

- Key responsibilities and functions specific to your position as a presiding officer
- Practical guidance on decision-making processes, managing meetings, and the role of the secretariat
- Techniques for managing complex procedural or political scenarios
- References to relevant articles, rules, and decisions for fast consultation

You may use this guide as both a preparatory tool in advance of your assigned meetings and a real-time reference for addressing questions or challenges as they arise.

## Types of Presiding Officers Who May Benefit from This Guide

This guide supports all categories of presiding officers within the UNFCCC process, including:

- **President of the COP, CMP, and CMA:** Leads the proceedings of the governing bodies and represents the overall authority thereof.
- **Chairs of the SBSTA and SBI:** Responsible for steering the work of the subsidiary bodies, which is crucial to technical and implementation negotiations.
- **(Co-)chairs and (co-)facilitators:** Manage and guide the work of contact groups, informal consultations, and smaller group settings.
- **Vice-Presidents, Vice-Chairs, Rapporteurs:** Play essential supporting roles to ensure procedural integrity, including that they may step in to facilitate meetings as needed.

Each type of presiding officer will find practical, role-specific information and real-world examples throughout this guide to help them carry out their mandates confidently and effectively.

## A Resource for All Stakeholders

While this guide is tailored first and foremost for those actively serving as presiding officers, its utility extends to all stakeholders engaged in the UNFCCC process – including delegates, observers, members of the secretariat, and those seeking to better understand the formal and informal workings of climate negotiations.

By providing clear, practical guidance and real-world examples, this guide aims to foster a common understanding of how the UNFCCC process functions, empowering all participants to engage more effectively and inclusively. Whether leading negotiations, supporting discussions, or simply seeking to better understand the process, your contribution is essential to advancing ambitious, collaborative climate action under the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement.

*I would like to express my sincere thanks to the team in the Legal Affairs division that worked tirelessly on making this guide happen and, in particular, I would like to thank Anna Charles for leading this effort and her determination in making this information user-friendly and accessible.*

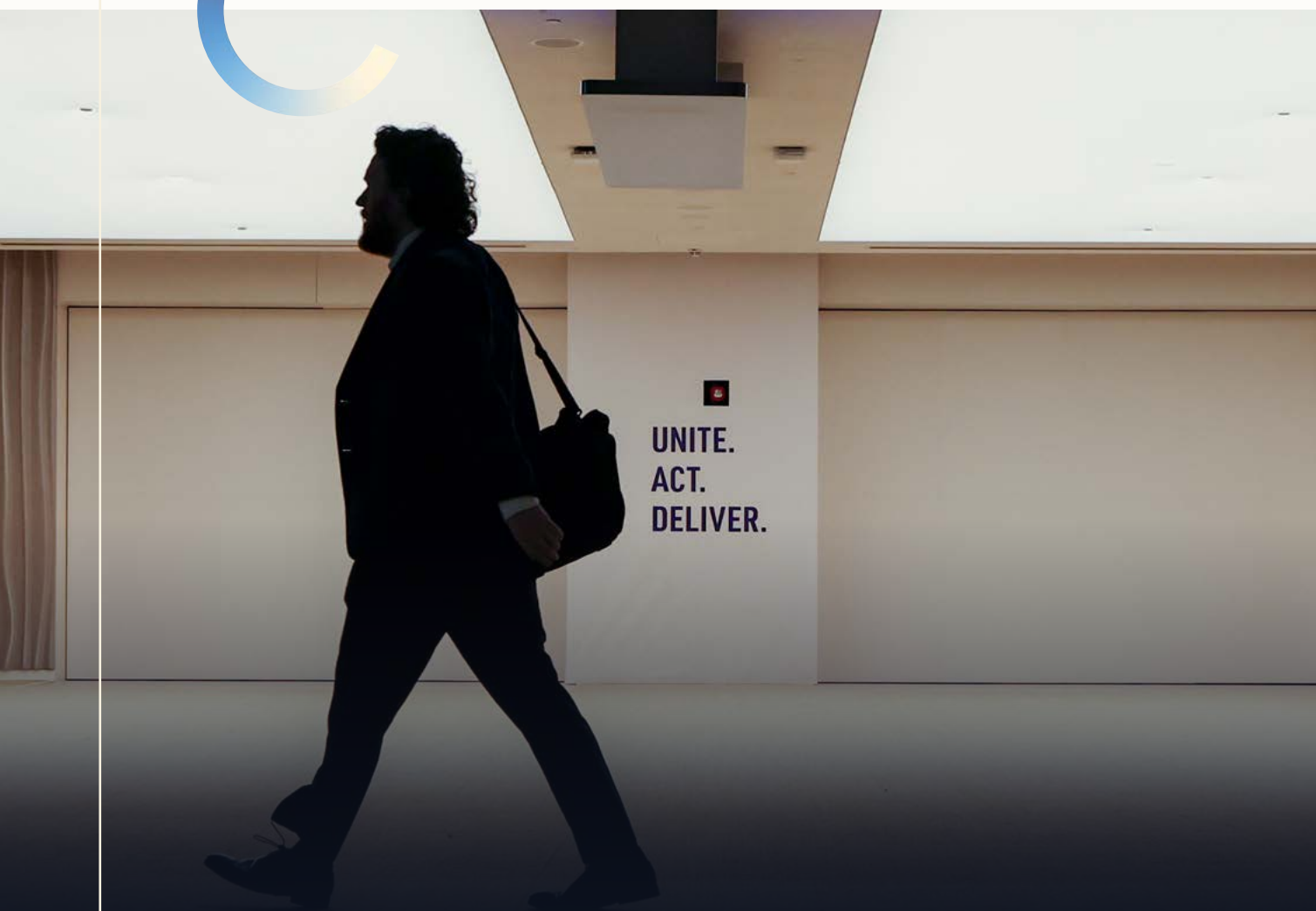
**Finally, thank you to all who contribute to the UNFCCC process for your continued commitment to advancing this collective effort.**



**Christine Adam**

Director, Legal Affairs





Credit: UN Climate Change – Mahmoud Khaled

## Chapter 1

# Institutional Structure of the UNFCCC Process





# Legal Instruments

Before exploring the institutional structure of the UNFCCC process, it is essential to understand the foundational treaties that define it. The work of all presiding officers, Parties, and other stakeholders is rooted in these instruments, each establishing key principles, obligations, commitments, and governance arrangements that underpin climate negotiations and implementation.

## United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Adopted in 1992 and entering into force in 1994, the Convention provides the overarching legal and institutional framework for international cooperation to address climate change. Its objective is to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system (Article 2).

The Convention sets out key principles, differentiates responsibilities between Annex I and non-Annex I Parties, and establishes foundational bodies such as the Conference of the Parties (COP), the two permanent subsidiary bodies, and the Financial Mechanism of the Convention.

## Kyoto Protocol

Adopted in 1997 and entering into force in 2005, the Kyoto Protocol imposes binding greenhouse gas emission reduction and limitation targets for Annex I Parties in commitment periods.

The Kyoto Protocol introduced three innovative market mechanisms: emissions trading, the Clean Development Mechanism, and Joint Implementation, deepening the operational framework for mitigation. The governing body of the Kyoto Protocol is the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP).

### THE DOHA AMENDMENT

The Doha Amendment, adopted in 2012, established the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, covering the years 2013 to 2020, following the first commitment period which began in 2008 and continued until 2012. Having become an integral part of the Protocol's architecture, it set revised and more ambitious targets for Annex I Parties and made several changes to agreed aspects under the Kyoto Protocol, including updates to the list of greenhouse gases and commitments of Parties.



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## Paris Agreement

Adopted in 2015 and entering into force in 2016, the Paris Agreement represents a milestone in the climate regime by establishing universal, nationally determined contributions for all Parties. Its objectives include holding the global temperature increase to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C, as well as goals on adaptation and related to finance flows.

The Paris Agreement introduces new frameworks on mitigation, adaptation, finance, transparency, compliance, and a global stocktake. Its governing body is the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA).



## Governing Bodies

The institutional framework of the UNFCCC process is built upon three distinct yet interconnected governing bodies that serve as the supreme decision-making authorities for their respective instruments.

These governing bodies – the COP, CMP, and CMA – collectively oversee the global multilateral climate regime and provide the institutional foundation for international climate action.

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## Conference of the Parties

The COP is established by Article 7 of Convention and serves as “the supreme body” of the Convention, constituting its highest decision-making authority. It supervises and provides guidance to all bodies, institutions, and arrangements established under the Convention, ensuring their effective operation in line with relevant mandates.

### COMPOSITION AND PARTICIPATION

The COP is composed of all Parties to the Convention, whose universal membership makes the UNFCCC one of the largest multilateral processes in the United Nations system.<sup>1</sup>

The COP meets annually unless it decides otherwise, with ordinary sessions held every year as mandated by Article 7, paragraph 4, of the Convention. The first session of the COP was held in Berlin, Germany in March 1995.<sup>2</sup>



United Nations  
Climate Change



COP29  
Baku  
Azerbaijan



Credit: UN Climate Change – Kiara Worth

The presiding officer of the COP is the President, which normally rotates among the five UN regional groups: African States, Asia-Pacific States, Eastern European States, Latin American and Caribbean States, and Western European and other States.

Article 7, paragraph 6 of the Convention also provides for the representation of observer organizations and observer States at the COP. Their participation has become an integral part of each session, as discussed in [chapter 4](#) of this guide.

## FUNCTIONS AND POWERS

The COP's mandate encompasses a comprehensive range of functions as outlined in Article 7 of the Convention. Key functions include:

- Assessing the implementation of the Convention by Parties based on all available information, including national communications and greenhouse gas emission inventories;
- Examining the overall effects of measures taken pursuant to the Convention and evaluating progress toward achieving the Convention's ultimate objective;
- Making recommendations on any matters necessary for the implementation of the Convention;
- Establishing subsidiary bodies as deemed necessary for implementation;
- Reviewing reports from subsidiary bodies and providing guidance to them;
- Adopting rules of procedure and financial rules for itself and subsidiary bodies; and
- Promoting and facilitating the exchange of information on climate measures among Parties.



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## Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol

The CMP operates under the authority of the Kyoto Protocol (Protocol), serving as the supreme body for all matters relating to the Protocol's implementation. The CMP exercises authority over and provides guidance to the mechanisms and institutions established under the Kyoto Protocol, while also providing guidance to those entities that serve the Kyoto Protocol even if not established under it, such as the Adaptation Fund.

### COMPOSITION AND PARTICIPATION

All States that are Parties to the Protocol participate in the CMP.<sup>3</sup> States that are Party to the Convention that are not Party to the Protocol may participate as observers in proceedings, as per Article 13, paragraph 2 of the Protocol. As observers, such States are without decision-making rights in matters of the CMP.

As provided in Article 9 of the Protocol, the CMP reviews the implementation of the Protocol and makes decisions to promote its effective implementation.

Pursuant to Article 13, paragraph 6 of the Protocol, the CMP holds annual sessions in conjunction with sessions of the COP, with the COP President also serving as the President of the CMP.<sup>4</sup> It operates under the other provisions of Article 13 of the Protocol, which establishes its authority and procedures.

### FUNCTIONS AND POWERS

The CMP's mandate focuses specifically on overseeing the Protocol's implementation. Primary functions include:

- Reviewing implementation of the Protocol by Parties and making necessary decisions;
- Providing authority and guidance to the Protocol's flexibility mechanisms;
- Reviewing annual reports from bodies created and operating under the Protocol;
- Making decisions on rules, modalities, and procedures for Protocol mechanisms; and
- Overseeing compliance procedures and addressing appeals from the enforcement branch.

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## Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement

Article 16 of the Paris Agreement establishes that the "Conference of the Parties, the supreme body of the Convention, shall serve as the meeting of the Parties to this Agreement". This article further notes that the CMA is responsible for overseeing and promoting the effective implementation of the Paris Agreement. The CMA thus provides

supervision and direction to the mechanisms, bodies, and institutional arrangements established under the Agreement, aligning their work with the mandates set by Parties. Furthermore, like the CMP, the CMA also provides guidance to those entities that were established by another governing body but that also serve the Paris Agreement, in accordance with Article 19 thereof.

### **COMPOSITION AND PARTICIPATION**

All States that are Parties to the Paris Agreement are represented at the CMA.<sup>5</sup> Parties to the Convention that are not Parties to the Paris Agreement may participate as observers in CMA proceedings, as set out in Article 16, paragraph 2 of the Agreement. However, they may not participate in decision-making under the CMA.

The CMA meets annually alongside the COP, as it has done since the Agreement's entry into force.<sup>6</sup> As is the case for the CMP, the President of the COP also serves as the President of the CMA.

### **FUNCTIONS AND POWERS**

As specified in Article 16, paragraph 4 of the Paris Agreement, the CMA "shall keep under regular review the implementation of this Agreement and shall make, within its mandate, the decisions necessary to promote its effective implementation". Key functions include:

- Establishing subsidiary bodies as deemed necessary for Agreement implementation;
- Exercising functions assigned by the Paris Agreement;
- Adopting rules, modalities, and procedures for Agreement mechanisms;
- Overseeing the enhanced transparency framework under Article 13;
- Conducting periodic assessments of support mechanisms; and
- Providing guidance to constituted bodies and financial mechanisms serving the Agreement.

Credit: UN Climate Change - Kiara Worth







## Subsidiary Bodies

The governing bodies are supported by two permanent subsidiary bodies: the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI). These bodies are central to the functioning of the UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement, providing specialized input and facilitating the effective adoption and implementation of decisions by the governing bodies.

The SBSTA and the SBI were established under Articles 9 and 10 of the Convention, respectively. Their mandates are extended under Article 15 of the Kyoto Protocol and Article 18 of the Paris Agreement, enabling them to serve the COP, CMP, and CMA.<sup>7</sup>

Both subsidiary bodies act under the authority and guidance of the governing bodies and coordinate on cross-cutting issues. However, they remain two separate bodies that are distinct in their areas of expertise and responsibility.

### Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice

The SBSTA is tasked with providing the COP, CMP, and CMA with information and advice on scientific and technological matters. Its core functions include:

- Supplying objective scientific and technical advice relevant to the Convention and its related instruments;
- Responding to scientific, technological, and methodological questions posed by the governing and subsidiary bodies;
- Advising on scientific programmes, international cooperation in research and development, and supporting capacity-building in developing Parties;
- Developing methodologies for national greenhouse gas inventories and projections;
- Reviewing the reports of constituted bodies and making recommendations to the governing bodies; and
- Acting as a bridge between scientific research (notably from the IPCC) and policy needs of the UNFCCC process.

The SBSTA plays a pivotal role in ensuring that the latest scientific knowledge and technological advances inform the development and implementation of climate policy.

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## Subsidiary Body for Implementation

The SBI's primary role is to assist the COP, CMP, and CMA in the review and assessment of the implementation of the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement. Its main functions include:

- Considering information communicated by Parties to assess the aggregated effect of actions in light of the latest scientific assessments;
- Assisting the governing bodies in reviewing the adequacy of commitments and implementation;
- Advising on budgetary and administrative matters;
- Reviewing reports from certain constituted bodies and making recommendations to the governing bodies; and
- Shaping its agenda around key implementation areas: transparency, mitigation, adaptation, finance, technology, and capacity-building.

The SBI is instrumental in translating policy decisions into practical actions and in monitoring progress towards the objectives of the three instruments.

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## Work of the Subsidiary Bodies

The subsidiary bodies traditionally meet in parallel, twice a year – for their first sessions, mid-year (usually in Bonn) and, for their second sessions, in conjunction with the COP, CMP, and CMA at the end of the year.<sup>8</sup> All Parties to the Convention, Kyoto Protocol, and Paris Agreement may participate in the work of the SBSTA and the SBI, with observer States and organizations participating in accordance with established rules and practices.

Both the SBSTA and the SBI each have their own Bureau, consisting of a Chair, Vice-Chair, and Rapporteur. SBSTA and SBI Bureaux officers are elected for one year and may be re-elected for a second consecutive one-year term. While the COP elects the Chairs, the subsidiary bodies elect their own Vice-Chair and Rapporteur.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast to the governing bodies, the SBSTA and the SBI adopt conclusions and recommendations, often preparing draft decisions for consideration and adoption by the governing bodies. As such, the final adoption of decisions rests with the COP, CMP, or CMA.

While remaining distinct from one another, the SBSTA and the SBI work together on issues that the governing bodies determine should be considered by both subsidiary bodies, which are considered under so-called “joint items”. This may include matters that require both scientific/technical and implementation perspectives, such as matters relating to adaptation, the global stocktake, just transition, response measures, and the consideration of reports by certain constituted bodies and conducting their reviews.



Credit: UN Climate Change – Lara Murillo

To facilitate this work and to encourage efficiency in the UNFCCC process, the SBSTA and the SBI often convene their plenary meetings together, which are presided over by both Chairs. However, each Chair retains authority over their respective subsidiary body.

## Role in the Broader Institutional Structure

The SBSTA and the SBI are open to participation by all Parties and are the primary negotiating bodies for technical and implementation matters. They report directly to the governing bodies and play a central role in the negotiation and review processes that underpin the UNFCCC regime.

## Non-Permanent Subsidiary Bodies

In addition to the SBSTA and the SBI, the UNFCCC process has frequently relied on non-permanent, or “ad hoc,” subsidiary bodies to address specific, time-limited mandates. These bodies are established by the COP, CMP, or CMA under the authority granted by Article 7.2(i) of the Convention and the corresponding provisions of the Kyoto Protocol (Article 13.4(h)) and Paris Agreement (Article 16.4(a)), as reflected in rule 27 of the draft rules of procedure.<sup>10</sup>

Examples of such non-permanent subsidiary bodies include:

- **The Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol** (AWG-KP – from 2005 to 2012), established to discuss future commitments for industrialized countries under the Kyoto Protocol, and whose mandate was fulfilled with the CMP’s adoption of the Doha Amendment;
- **The Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention** (AWG-LCA – from 2007 to 2012), established to conduct a comprehensive process to enable the full, effective, and sustained implementation of the Convention through long-term cooperative action, and whose mandate was fulfilled by decisions 1/CP.16, 2/CP.17, and 1/CP.18;
- **The Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action** (ADP – from 2011 to 2015), established primarily to develop a protocol, another legal instrument, or an agreed outcome under the Convention applicable to all Parties no later than 2015, for adoption at COP21 and implementation beginning in 2020. The mandate of the ADP was fulfilled by the adoption of the Paris Agreement; and
- **The Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement** (APA – from 2015 to 2018), established to develop the rules and modalities required for the implementation of the Paris Agreement, and whose mandate was fulfilled with the adoption of the Katowice Climate Package at CMA1.3.

These bodies are typically open-ended, allowing participation by all Parties to the relevant instrument, and are dissolved once their mandates have been fulfilled.

The working modalities of non-permanent subsidiary bodies generally mirror those of the SBSTA and the SBI. They operate under the draft rules of procedure, unless otherwise decided, with the process of electing their own presiding officers varying in practice.<sup>11</sup>

These bodies may meet in plenary, contact groups, or informal consultations, and their outputs – usually in the form of draft decisions or recommendations – are submitted to the relevant governing body/ies for consideration and adoption.

Both the establishment and dissolution of such bodies allow the UNFCCC process to remain flexible and responsive to evolving negotiation needs and emerging issues.



## IV. Constituted Bodies

The UNFCCC process is also supported by a range of constituted bodies. These expert bodies have limited membership and are established by the COP, CMP, and/or CMA to advance specific thematic and technical areas under the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement respectively.<sup>12</sup> These bodies are essential for translating high-level decisions into practical guidance, standards, and recommendations, and for supporting the effective implementation of Parties' commitments across the process.

### Definition and Role

Constituted bodies are subsidiary to the governing bodies but distinct from the permanent subsidiary bodies (SBSTA and SBI). They are established to address specific mandates relating to, for example, adaptation, loss and damage, finance, technology, capacity-building, compliance, specific cross-cutting matters, or the provision of support for particular groups of Parties.

Unlike the open-ended subsidiary bodies, constituted bodies have limited membership, with members often appointed or elected to ensure balanced representation, including regional and gender balance.

Each constituted body operates under the authority and guidance of and remains accountable to one or more of the governing or subsidiary bodies. Their work is guided by mandates set out in relevant decisions and, where applicable, in the Convention, Kyoto Protocol, or Paris Agreement themselves.

### Mandate and Functions

The mandates of constituted bodies are defined by their establishing decisions and are regularly updated by the governing bodies. Their functions typically include:

- Developing technical guidance, methodologies, and tools;
- Providing recommendations and reports to the COP, CMP, and/or CMA;
- Supporting capacity-building and technical assistance for Parties;
- Overseeing the implementation of specific mechanisms or work programmes;
- Facilitating the sharing of best practices and lessons learned; and
- Engaging with stakeholders and observers in their thematic areas.





## Working Modalities

The working modalities of constituted bodies under the UNFCCC process are shaped by each body's mandate, rules of procedure, and guidance from the governing bodies. While details vary, most constituted bodies share several core features.

Membership is limited, with the number of members and terms of office determined by the relevant governing body – be it the COP, CMP, and/or CMA. For instance, some constituted bodies provide that members are to serve two-year terms and some also provide for a limit of a set number of consecutive terms.<sup>13</sup> Regional and gender balance are typically important considerations in the selection of members.<sup>14</sup> In addition, terms are often staggered, in most cases as of the establishment of the respective constituted body, which helps to ensure continuity and institutional memory.

Once formed, each constituted body elects from among its members its own presiding officers, such as a Chair and Vice-Chair<sup>15</sup> or Co-Chairs,<sup>16</sup> who are responsible for guiding the work impartially and upholding high ethical standards.

Most constituted bodies have their own rules of procedure; if not, the draft rules of procedure are applied. Meetings are held throughout the year, sometimes several times annually, and may include expert groups or panels to address specific issues.

Decision-making is generally by consensus, though some bodies' own rules of procedure contain voting procedures for particular matters. The presiding officer(s) plays a key role in building consensus and ensuring inclusive and transparent discussions.

Each constituted body reports regularly – usually annually or as otherwise mandated – to the relevant governing or subsidiary body or bodies on its activities, progress, and challenges, including that such reports may include recommendations.



Credit: UN Climate Change - Habib Samadov

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## Engagement with Parties and Observers

While the SBSTA and the SBI are open to all Parties, constituted bodies' meetings are generally attended by their members, with support from the secretariat. Observers may also be permitted to attend or participate, with the extent of this typically being set out in each body's respective rules of procedure.

In addition, many constituted bodies have developed other practices for engaging observers, such as inviting written submissions or oral interventions from them on certain matters and providing for participation in specific agenda items or side events. Such engagement is typically provided for in official documents, such as approved workplans of the constituted body or other decisions of the relevant governing body or bodies relating to the activities of the constituted body.

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## Relationship to Other Bodies

Constituted bodies are an integral part of the UNFCCC institutional architecture. They work under the guidance of the governing and subsidiary bodies, including as outlined above, and may coordinate with each other on cross-cutting issues, in line with their respective mandates. Their outputs, such as technical papers, guidelines, tools, and recommendations, inform the negotiations and/or implementation efforts of the Parties and other stakeholders.



## Bureau of the COP, CMP, and CMA

The Bureau of the COP, CMP, and CMA is a central institutional mechanism designed to support the effective functioning of the governing and subsidiary bodies. While its role has evolved over time, the Bureau now provides guidance on organizational, process, procedural, and institutional matters, ensures continuity between sessions, and upholds the principles of transparency, inclusivity, and impartiality throughout the intergovernmental process, with more information on its functions being available below.

Meetings of the Bureau are convened during sessions of the governing and subsidiary bodies and as needed between sessions, including virtually if required, to address urgent matters or provide continuity in the process.

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## Composition and Election

As per rule 22 of the draft rules of procedure, the Bureau is composed of 11 members:<sup>17</sup>

- The President;
- Seven Vice-Presidents;
- The Chair of the SBSTA;
- The Chair of the SBI; and
- A Rapporteur.

Members are elected from among the representatives of Parties, with two from each of the five United Nations regional groups<sup>18</sup> and one representative of the small island developing States (SIDS).

The President is traditionally elected by acclamation during the opening plenary of each session and is typically a high-level official such as a minister of the host country's government. The remaining Bureau officers other than the President are elected during the closing plenary of the session. Officers serve for a term of one year and, as provided in rule 22.2 of the draft rules of procedure, may not serve more than two consecutive terms.

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## Functions

Neither the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol, nor the Paris Agreement provide details on the role of the Bureau. As such, the role of the Bureau has developed over time.

Rule 20 of the draft rules of procedure contains the only explicit function of the Bureau, requiring that the Bureau “examine the credentials [submitted by Parties] and submit its report” to the COP with a recommendation on whether it accepts the credentials of all Parties mentioned in the report. All additional functions of the Bureau have thus evolved, instead, as a matter of practice.

Based on such practice, the Bureau's primary functions also include:

- Advising and supporting the President in facilitating the work of the COP, CMP, and CMA, especially in organizing sessions and guiding the ongoing intergovernmental processes;
- Providing procedural guidance on the conduct of business;
- Reviewing applications from intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations for observer status and recommending their provisional admission;
- Supporting the secretariat and the presidency in making arrangements for sessions, including logistical and organizational matters, and advising on institutional and budgetary matters between sessions; and
- Being consulted by the United Nations Secretary-General on the appointment of the UNFCCC Executive Secretary.<sup>19</sup>

The Bureau may also be assigned specific tasks by the COP, CMP, or CMA, such as providing advice on organizational or procedural matters that arise between sessions,<sup>20</sup> and may also function as a decision-making body in exceptional circumstances.<sup>21</sup>

## Membership Adjustments for the CMP and CMA

For the CMP and CMA, any Bureau member representing a Party to the Convention that is not a Party to the Kyoto Protocol or the Paris Agreement is replaced by an additional member elected by and from among the Parties to the respective instrument, as required by Article 13.3 of the Kyoto Protocol and Article 16.3 of the Paris Agreement, respectively. The election of such additional members is a standing item on the CMP and CMA agendas.



## The Secretariat

The primary functions of the secretariat are set out in Article 8 of the Convention and further elaborated in rule 28 of the draft rules of procedure.<sup>22</sup> These include:

- Making arrangements for sessions of the governing and subsidiary bodies and providing them with required services;
- Compiling and transmitting reports submitted to it;
- Facilitating assistance to Parties, particularly developing country Parties, on request, in compiling and communicating information required under the Convention;
- Preparing reports on its activities and presenting them to the governing bodies;
- Ensuring coordination with secretariats of other relevant international bodies;
- Entering, under the overall guidance of the governing bodies, into administrative and contractual arrangements as required for effective discharge of its functions; and
- Performing other secretariat functions specified in the various instruments and as determined by the governing bodies.

The secretariat's staff are United Nations international civil servants and, in accordance with Articles 100 and 101 of the Charter of the United Nations and the Staff Rules and Regulations of the United Nations, must act with impartiality, integrity, and competence, serving only the interests of the UNFCCC process and not seeking or accepting instructions from any government or external authority.





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COP29  
Baku  
Azerbaijan



Credit: UN Climate Change - Kiara Worth

## Core Functions in the Process

The secretariat's functions are both statutory and practical, and include:

- **Assisting Presiding Officers and the Bureaux:** The secretariat provides procedural, legal, and process-related advice, prepares speaking notes, maintains the list of speakers, and assists in the preparation of reports and draft decisions. It ensures presiding officers are fully briefed on their powers, duties, and responsibilities;
- **Supporting Sessions:** The secretariat has the responsibility to draft the provisional agenda of the sessions of the governing and the subsidiary bodies, in agreement with the respective presiding officer.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, it plans and organizes meetings, including the conclusion of host country agreements to ensure the application of privileges and immunities to all participants at UNFCCC sessions, manages logistics, sets up conference rooms, and coordinates with relevant UN offices. The secretariat also ensures interpretation, translation, and distribution of documents in all six official UN languages for the governing and subsidiary bodies;
- **Facilitating the Conduct of Business:** The secretariat verifies quorum, advises on points of order and procedural motions, and assists in the calculation of required majorities for decision-making. It also supports the presiding officer in ensuring equal treatment of all Parties and facilitates observer participation in accordance with the draft rules of procedure;
- **Managing Documentation:** The secretariat processes, translates, and distributes official documents, maintains sound recordings of sessions, and ensures the custody and preservation of session records. It also manages the publication of technical papers, conference room papers, and other official documents;



- **Reporting and Briefings:** It prepares reports on credentials, administrative and budgetary implications, and provides regular briefings to the Bureau and Parties on organizational and substantive matters;
- **Observer Admission and Participation:** The secretariat assesses applications for observer status and manages the process for their admission in accordance with established criteria and rules. It also facilitates observer participation in meetings, subject to the priority accorded to Parties; and
- **Capacity-Building and Technical and Substantive Advice:** At the request of the COP, CMP, or CMA, the secretariat organizes training, workshops, and webinars to build and strengthen the capacity of Parties and stakeholders. The secretariat also offers technical and substantive advice across thematic areas, in accordance with relevant mandates.



## Entities Entrusted with the Operation of the Financial Mechanism

The operation of the Financial Mechanism of the Convention, which also serves the Paris Agreement, is entrusted to three operating entities: the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Green Climate Fund (GCF), and the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD). These entities play a central role in mobilizing and channeling financial resources to support climate action, particularly in developing country Parties, in line with guidance provided by the COP and CMA.

### Global Environment Facility

The GEF was established in the early 1990s to address global environmental challenges and serves as an operating entity of the Financial Mechanism under Article 11 of the Convention. The GEF also serves as a financial mechanism for several other multilateral environmental agreements, but its role under the Convention is defined by a specific mandate and guidance from the COP.

The GEF is governed by the GEF Council and the GEF Assembly, with the COP providing regular guidance to the GEF on policies, programme priorities, and eligibility criteria for funding.



## FUNDING AND ACTIVITIES

The GEF provides grants and mobilizes co-financing for projects and programmes in developing country Parties. It provides grants and mobilizes co-financing for thousands of projects globally.

In addition to the main GEF Trust Fund, the GEF also administers the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) and the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF), both of which serve the Convention and the Paris Agreement and are targeted at supporting the most vulnerable developing countries.

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## Green Climate Fund

The GCF was established by decision 1/CP.16 as a second operating entity of the Financial Mechanism, in accordance with Article 11 of the Convention. The GCF is designed to promote a paradigm shift towards low-emission and climate-resilient development by providing financial support to developing country Parties for mitigation and adaptation activities.

The GCF is governed by a Board comprising 24 members who are nominated by the relevant regional groups and constituencies, ensuring equal representation from developed and developing country Parties. The GCF operates under the guidance of, and is accountable to, the COP and the CMA.

Its working relationship with the COP is defined by decision 5/CP.19 and the GCF's governing instrument (annex to decision 3/CP.17), which ensure that the GCF supports projects, programmes, policies, and other activities in developing country Parties in line with COP guidance.

## FUNDING AND ACTIVITIES

The GCF is the world's largest dedicated climate fund, supporting projects and programmes across mitigation and adaptation, with a particular focus on the needs of least developed countries, SIDS, and African States.

It employs a country-driven approach, requiring developing countries to appoint a national designated authority to interface with the Fund and approve all GCF-supported activities. The GCF offers a range of financial instruments, including grants, concessional loans, equity, and guarantees, and engages directly with the private sector through its Private Sector Facility.

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## Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage

In 2022, by decisions [2/CP.27](#) and [2/CMA.4](#), the COP and CMA respectively decided to establish the FRLD to provide focused assistance to developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change in responding to both economic and non-economic loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, including extreme weather events and slow onset events. The following year, the FRLD was designated as the third entity entrusted with the operation of the Financial Mechanism<sup>24</sup> in accordance with Article 11 of the Convention.

The FRLD is governed by a Board comprising 26 members from Parties to the Convention and Paris Agreement, as nominated by the relevant regional groups and constituencies, with 12 members from developed country Parties and 14 members from developing country Parties. The FRLD is accountable to and functions under the guidance of the COP and CMA.

### FUNDING AND ACTIVITIES

The FRLD finances country-specific, tailored initiatives to help vulnerable communities recover from climate-related losses and damage resulting from incidents such as climate-induced extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and other climate-induced crises. The FRLD thus works closely with governments, civil society, and international organizations to pioneer innovative climate response financing mechanisms such that communities are empowered to lead recovery and resilience efforts.

The FRLD is supported by contributions from governments, private donor partners, and other innovative financing sources.

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## Guidance and Reporting

The GEF, GCF, and FRLD each receive regular guidance from the COP and the CMA regarding policies, programme priorities, and eligibility criteria. They are required to report annually to the COP and CMA on their operations, funding decisions, and responsiveness to guidance.

This ensures transparency, accountability, and the alignment of financial flows with the objectives of the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement.



Credit: UN Climate Change – Kiara Worth

## Chapter 2

# Meetings



# Plenary Meetings

Plenary meetings are the formal cornerstone of the UNFCCC process, serving as the official setting for discussion and decision-making by Parties. These meetings take place at the level of the governing bodies as well as the subsidiary bodies, with the conduct of these meetings being governed by the draft rules of procedure.

Rule 30 of the draft rules of procedure provides that plenary meetings of the governing bodies shall be public unless Parties decide otherwise. This means that they are open to all Parties, observer States, observer organizations, accredited media, and other registered participants, and are also webcast.

This rule further provides that meetings of the subsidiary bodies shall be held in private unless the COP decides otherwise. In practice, meetings of the two permanent subsidiary bodies are always open to the public.

Plenary meetings are not typically the venue for detailed negotiations on substantive issues; instead, they provide an essential forum for general statements, high-level interventions, and the formal adoption of decisions and conclusions that have been developed in the negotiating forums described below.

Three of the more common types of plenaries are described in further detail below. However, in practice, a presiding officer may convene a plenary at any time during a session.

## Opening Plenary

At the outset of each session, the presiding officer (that being the President of the governing body or the Chair of a subsidiary body) opens the plenary, oversees the adoption of the agenda, and manages the organization of work.

The provisional agenda is prepared in advance by the secretariat in agreement with the President or Chair, and must include items arising from the articles of the respective instrument (whether that be the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol, or the Paris Agreement) and from mandates decided at a previous session, as well as outstanding items from previous sessions, proposals from Parties received before the agenda is circulated, and any urgent and important items proposed during the opening of the session.<sup>25</sup>

The presiding officer must seek consensus on the agenda, with consultations often being held by presiding officers on this matter with negotiating groups, heads of delegations, and individual Parties prior to the opening of a session to seek to ensure the swift adoption of the agenda in plenary.





Following the adoption of the agenda, the governing or subsidiary body then allocates agenda items or sub-items to subsidiary bodies (in the case of the governing bodies), contact groups, or informal consultations, assigns co-chairs or co-facilitators to each agenda item or sub-item, and may request the President or Chair, as applicable, to conduct further consultations on specific issues. The allocation and assignment of each agenda item or sub-item must be agreed to by Parties during the opening plenary before work on that item or sub-item may be launched.

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## Stocktaking Plenaries

Stocktaking plenaries (often simply referred to as a “stocktake”) are so-called informal plenaries that are convened at key moments during UNFCCC sessions to provide all Parties with a comprehensive update on the state of negotiations and the status of work across the agenda. Presided over by the President or Chair, these meetings allow facilitators to report on progress in negotiations, and create an opportunity for Parties to offer feedback, raise concerns, and help shape the direction of further work.

The focus in these informal plenaries is on transparency, inclusiveness, and participatory governance. They enable the presiding officer to keep the process on track by informing the full plenary about developments, highlighting critical or stalled issues, and introducing any new facilitators or senior negotiators who will help resolve outstanding matters, especially in the high-level phase of sessions of the governing bodies.

Distinct from the official opening and closing plenaries, no decisions are adopted in stocktaking plenaries; instead, they serve as a public forum for information sharing and for Parties to signal priorities or concerns. Similarly, their “unofficial” nature means that there are other differences compared to the official plenaries, including that interpretation is not made available.

By providing a regular, open platform for updates and interventions amid intense parallel negotiations, stocktaking plenaries ensure the process remains Party-driven, inclusive, and transparent.

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## Closing Plenary

At the closing plenary, draft decisions and conclusions – typically resulting from the work undertaken by contact groups, informal consultations, and any other consultations that have taken place during the session – are formally considered and adopted if there is consensus among Parties. If consensus cannot be reached on a specific matter, the item is included on the agenda of the next session in accordance with rule 16 (as further discussed in [chapter 6](#) of this guide).

Notwithstanding rule 22.1,<sup>26</sup> the practice of the COP has been to elect the officers of the Bureau other than the President (consisting of seven Vice-Presidents, the Chairs of the SBSTA and the SBI, and a COP Rapporteur) during the closing plenary of each session to ensure sufficient opportunity throughout the session for nominations for each position to be gathered. Officers are thus normally elected on the basis of the consultations on elections that typically take place throughout each session on behalf of the President. This is also typically the case for the election of officers of the SBSTA and SBI other than the Chairs (namely, the Vice-Chair and Rapporteur of each subsidiary body).

In addition, at their closing plenaries, each of the governing bodies are invited by the President to elect the members and alternate members (where applicable) to relevant constituted bodies under the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement based on the names contained in the list of nominations published on the UNFCCC Elections page.<sup>27</sup>

## General Guidance on Plenary Management

The presiding officer manages the list of speakers (with the assistance of the secretariat), with practice in the UNFCCC process having evolved so that major negotiating groups typically speak first in plenary meetings. To this end, the Bureau has encouraged presiding officers to allow the Group of 77 and China, the European Union, the Umbrella Group, and the Environmental Integrity Group (these being the four groups whose membership does not overlap) to make interventions before other groups, followed by individual Parties.



With the exception of the precedence given to the non-overlapping groups and subject to the fact that negotiating groups will generally speak before individual Parties, as mentioned above, presiding officers shall call upon speakers in the order in which they signify their desire to speak.<sup>28</sup>

The presiding officer is responsible for maintaining order, ruling on points of order, and ensuring that interventions remain relevant to the agenda.<sup>29</sup> If a point of order is raised, the presiding officer must rule on it immediately; any Party may then appeal the ruling, which is then put to a vote.<sup>30</sup>

The quorum needed for conducting business is also governed by the draft rules of procedure: at least one third of Parties must be present to open a meeting and permit debate, and two thirds are required for any decision to be taken.<sup>31</sup> In the event that quorum is challenged through a point of order being raised, the presiding officer, with the support of the secretariat, is responsible for verifying quorum.

Decisions in plenary are generally adopted by consensus, as there is no agreed voting rule in light of the lack of agreement regarding rule 42 (for more information on this, see [chapter 3](#) of this guide on the draft rules of procedure). Only in specific cases, such as certain procedural motions, elections, and amendments to the relevant instrument, do the draft rules of procedure or the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement specify a required majority.



## Contact Groups and Informal Consultations

While plenary meetings provide the formal structure for the process, the detailed negotiations on individual agenda items are conducted primarily in contact groups and informal consultations. These forums are designed to facilitate more focused, interactive, and efficient discussions among Parties.

Although there are some differences in how these two types of meetings are managed, such as with respect to the participation of observers and the number of meetings of each type that can take place in parallel, there is no hierarchical difference between the two in the UNFCCC process, including that outcomes produced by each of them are considered as having the same status.

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## Contact Groups

Contact groups are established by a governing or subsidiary body (or bodies, for joint items), based on a proposal by the President, Chair, or a Party, to negotiate specific agenda items with the aim of achieving an agreed outcome.

The presiding officer(s) of a contact group, referred to as (co-)chair(s), are proposed by the presiding officer of the body establishing the contact group from among the representatives of Parties, with efforts made to ensure geographical and gender balance, generally resulting in co-chairs from both developed and developing Parties. These presiding officers are formally agreed to by Parties in plenary.

Contact groups are open-ended, meaning all Parties may participate. Observer organizations may attend unless one third of Parties present at the session object, or unless the presiding officer of the contact group decides otherwise. The presiding officer must ascertain, at the time of establishment, whether there are any objections to observer participation, and may close the meeting to observers at any time.<sup>32</sup>

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## Informal Consultations

Informal consultations are generally established in the same way as contact groups.<sup>33</sup> This includes that the process of and considerations for proposing and agreeing to presiding officers of informal consultations, known as (co-)facilitators, also follows the same process, and that informal consultations are also generally open-ended.

Observer participation in informal consultations is managed slightly differently than in contact groups. In the absence of a contact group for an agenda item, at least the first and last meetings of informal consultations may be open to observers, unless any Party objects.<sup>34</sup> However, (co-)facilitators are encouraged to seek Party agreement on observer participation at the outset and at subsequent meetings. Accordingly, in practice, meetings of informal consultations are generally open to observers, similar to contact groups.

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## General Guidance on Management of Contact Groups and Informal Consultations

The conduct of business in contact groups and informal consultations is characterized by flexibility, with negotiations in such groups being guided by the draft rules of procedure, allowing for efficient negotiations while maintaining procedural equity and transparency. Discussions and documentation are conducted in English only and meeting times and venues are announced in advance.



Credit: UN Climate Change – Lara Murillo

No formal decisions are taken within these forums; all outcomes, including any draft conclusions or draft decisions, must be reported back to the establishing body, ensuring that all Parties, including those not directly involved in the smaller forums, have the opportunity to review and decide on the outcomes of negotiations.

It should also be noted that, in contrast to plenary meetings, the speaking order is determined on a first-come-first-served basis. This means, for example, that negotiating groups do not take precedence in terms of the list of speakers.

Any requests for information on the administrative and budgetary implications of proposed draft decisions need to be channeled through the presiding officer to the secretariat, which will typically provide a cost estimate within 24 hours. This helps ensure that all Parties have timely and realistic information on potential budgetary implications to inform negotiations, while maintaining the integrity and impartiality of the secretariat's role.

The presiding officer is responsible for balancing the need for efficiency with the imperative of openness, transparency, and inclusivity, and for reporting regularly to the President or Chair of the establishing body on progress, seeking their assistance if difficulties arise.

By maintaining such openness, inclusivity, and clear communication, presiding officers ensure the legitimacy and effectiveness of contact groups and informal consultations as core venues for reaching consensus within the UNFCCC process.



## Other Smaller Group Settings

Beyond plenary meetings, contact groups, and informal consultations, the UNFCCC process frequently relies on additional, smaller group settings to advance negotiations, particularly when issues are technically complex, politically sensitive, or require rapid progress. These settings include so-called “informal informals” and “Friends of the Chair” meetings.

Each has a distinct function, but all share certain procedural characteristics and are subject to specific expectations regarding transparency, representation, and reporting.

### Types of Smaller Group Settings

#### **INFORMAL INFORMALS**

Informal informals – often referred to as “inf infs”, drafting groups, or spin-off groups – are established either with the agreement of the relevant body or at the presiding officer’s own initiative. They are typically tasked with troubleshooting a specific problem, resolving contentious issues, or expediting the drafting of particular sections of text.

#### **PRESIDENCY/CHAIR’S CONSULTATIONS**

Presidency/Chair’s consultations are informal meetings initiated by the presiding officer to engage selected Parties or negotiating groups on procedural or substantive challenges, often with the aim of gathering feedback, resolving impasses, or building consensus on sensitive issues. These consultations can take various formats – bilateral, small group, or open-ended – but always emphasize inclusivity, transparency, and balanced representation, with care taken to communicate outcomes to Parties not directly involved.

While not decision-making forums, Presidency/Chair’s consultations frequently shape key outcomes by clarifying issues and fostering understanding.

#### **FRIENDS OF THE PRESIDENCY/CHAIR MEETINGS**

Friends of the Presidency or Friends of the Chair meetings are convened by presiding officers with a small group of interested Parties to address especially difficult or politically sensitive matters, often at critical junctures in the process. In these settings, the presiding officer may chair the group or designate a facilitator.

These differ from Presidency/Chair’s consultations primarily in their targeted purpose, by generally involving a small group of relevant Parties chosen specifically to address high-stakes or particularly sensitive issues, usually at critical moments in negotiations.



In contrast, Presidency/Chair's consultations are typically broader and more flexible in both participation and scope, serving as a tool for the presiding officer to gather views or troubleshoot procedural and substantive challenges, and are generally more inclusive and transparent in design and reporting.

### **HEADS OF DELEGATION MEETINGS**

Heads of Delegation meetings (often simply referred to as a "HoDs") are convened at the invitation of the presiding officer to bring together the lead negotiators from each Party. These meetings provide a forum for high-level guidance, address process-wide or strategic issues, and help clarify direction on critical or sensitive matters.

Participation is typically limited to one representative per Party, although they may also be allowed to bring one subject matter expert, and discussions may support resolution of impasses, endorse approaches to negotiations, or coordinate responses to emerging challenges.

### **BILATERALS**

Bilaterals are direct consultations between two Parties, or between a Party (or group) and the presiding officer, usually arranged to address specific concerns, clarify positions, or resolve sensitive issues outside the formal negotiation setting.

These meetings are private and flexible, allowing for candid exchanges that can help facilitate consensus or unblock contentious points ahead of or during formal discussions.

Bilaterals between the presiding officers and Parties/negotiation groups during the days preceding a session (referred to as "pre-sessional consultations" or often simply "pre-sessionals") have evolved as a practice, particularly in the subsidiary bodies for the Chairs to present their plans for the session and hear initial views, questions, or concerns.

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## **General Guidance on Management of Smaller Groups**

### **COMPOSITION**

Participation in these smaller groups is generally by invitation only, and the meetings are not open to observers. The presiding officer is responsible for ensuring that the group's composition is balanced and representative, with a particular focus on including major negotiating groups and key Parties to reinforce both the legitimacy and effectiveness of the group's outcomes.

In practice, it is common for the presiding officer to invite negotiating groups to nominate their representatives, which helps to foster a sense of transparency and inclusivity.

If the group is open-ended, all major groups and key Parties should be present to ensure broad acceptance of any outcome.

### **MANDATE AND WORKING METHODS**

The presiding officer should clearly define the mandate of the group at the outset and communicate this to all participants.

A defining feature of these smaller settings is that they do not operate under the draft rules of procedure. Instead, the conduct of business in these groups is at the discretion of the presiding officer or designated facilitator.

Practically, this means presiding officers do not usually chair or direct such meetings in the same way they would manage contact groups or informal consultations. Rather, presiding officers often play a facilitative or oversight role – appointing facilitators to lead discussions, ensuring the group is properly constituted and briefed, and providing clarification as needed.

Presiding officers may attend these meetings to monitor progress and support the group if requested, but their intervention is typically limited and non-intrusive, reflecting the flexible, focused, and informal nature of these sessions.

It also means that requirements pertaining to quorum do not apply in such meetings although, as above, it is generally prudent to ensure that major groups and key Parties are in attendance when such meetings are open to all Parties.

### **COMMUNICATION AND PARTICIPATION**

Meetings are not typically advertised on official channels such as the Daily Programme or the UNFCCC website, and their time and venue may only be communicated directly to invited participants. For example, in cases where such smaller meetings are established by a contact group or informal consultation, which is often the case with informal informals and in which case all Parties would typically be invited to attend, the time and venue of the smaller meeting may be communicated in a meeting of the establishing body.



Credit: UN Climate Change – Kiara Worth

The working language is English, and the group may establish its own order of speakers – usually following the order in which Parties signal their wish to speak, such as by raising their flags.

While these groups are closed to observers and limited in participation, their legitimacy depends on adherence to the principles of openness, transparency, and inclusiveness. The presiding officer must ensure that the outcomes of these meetings are reported back to the parent body – whether a contact group, informal consultation, or plenary – so that all Parties have the opportunity to review, consider, and, if necessary, challenge or endorse the results. This reporting is essential to maintain the integrity of the process and to ensure that decisions are ultimately made by consensus among all Parties.

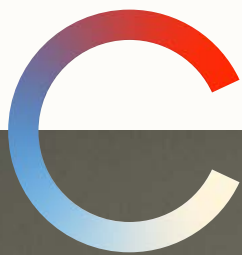
## OUTCOMES

No formal decisions are taken in these smaller group settings. Instead, any draft text or proposed outcome must be forwarded to the relevant establishing body for formal consideration and possible adoption. Similarly, in the event that consensus cannot be reached within the small group, the issue is returned to the establishing body for further discussion.

To enable such consideration by the establishing body, particularly when that body is a contact group or informal consultation, the co-chairs or co-facilitators (as applicable) will typically open the next meeting of that body with a request that Parties report back regarding the progress made and/or challenges raised during the smaller setting. From there, options for the presiding officer(s) include proposing to the contact group/informal consultation that:

- Work continue on the basis of progress made during the smaller setting;
- The body agree to recommend the outcome of any work done by the smaller setting to the relevant governing or subsidiary body (as applicable) for consideration and adoption;
- The smaller setting be convened again to allow further work to be undertaken; or
- Should there be significant challenges and/or minimal progress, that the presiding officer(s) report back to the President or Chair (as applicable) for guidance on the way forward.

When a smaller setting has been established by a governing or subsidiary body, the President or Chair will typically ask the facilitator of that smaller setting to report back on progress made in plenary once the meeting turns to the relevant agenda item, although the President/Chair can also report back on this themselves, especially in the case of Presidency/Chair consultations. From there, the presiding officer can propose an approach accordingly, whether that be, for example, adopting any outcomes of the smaller setting<sup>35</sup> or acknowledging that there was no consensus on the way forward.<sup>36</sup>



Credit: UN Climate Change - Lara Murillo

## Chapter 3

# Conduct of Business and Roles and Responsibilities of Presiding Officers



# The Draft Rules of Procedure and Their Application

The conduct of business in the UNFCCC process is governed by the draft rules of procedure of the COP and its subsidiary bodies, as contained in document [FCCC/CP/1996/2](#). These have been applied since the first session, with the exception of rule 42 on voting, which remains bracketed and is not in effect. The same draft rules are applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the CMP, CMA, SBSTA, and SBI, as well as those subsidiary and constituted bodies without their own rules of procedure.

## Background

At COP 1 in 1995, Parties considered a comprehensive set of draft rules of procedure to guide the conduct of business of the COP and its subsidiary bodies. While consensus was reached on almost all provisions, agreement could not be found on draft rule 42, which concerns voting procedures. As a result, the COP was unable to adopt the rules of procedure.

Nevertheless, to ensure the smooth functioning of the process, the COP decided at that first session – and reaffirms at every subsequent session of the COP – to apply the draft rules of procedure, with the exception of rule 42 on voting.<sup>37</sup>

Similarly, at their respective first sessions, the CMP and CMA were invited to also apply these draft rules of procedure. The CMP decided to do so, *mutatis mutandis*, with the exception of draft rule 42,<sup>38</sup> while the CMA adopted decision [2/CMA.1](#), outlining its understandings in applying the draft rules of procedure of the COP.

## Application

The draft rules of procedure address essential aspects of the conduct of business, including agenda preparation and adoption, quorum, the roles and powers of presiding officers, motions and proposals, and decision-making. These rules are designed to ensure equality, openness, inclusivity, and transparency throughout the process.

Presiding officers – including the President of the COP, Chairs of subsidiary bodies, chairs of contact groups, and facilitators of informal consultations – are expected to act with impartiality, fairness, good faith, and mutual respect. This is in line with the overarching role of the presiding officer being to facilitate the process and ensure that all Parties are treated equally and that the process is transparent and inclusive.



The draft rules of procedure remain under the authority of the Parties, who are the ultimate interpreters and implementers of these rules. Information tools and procedural guides provided by the secretariat are intended to support understanding and application of the rules, but do not have legal status and do not override the authority of the Parties or the governing and subsidiary bodies.



## Organizing and Conducting Meetings

### Agenda Management

Agenda management is a central responsibility for presiding officers of the governing and subsidiary bodies and is governed by several key provisions in the draft rules of procedure.

The secretariat prepares the provisional agenda for each session of the COP, CMP, and CMA in agreement with the President (rule 9); for sessions of subsidiary bodies, the provisional agenda is prepared in agreement with the respective Chair. The provisional agenda must include items arising from the articles of the respective instrument (whether that be the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol, or the Paris Agreement), from mandates decided at or outstanding items from a previous session, proposals from Parties received before the agenda is circulated, and any urgent and important items proposed during the opening of the session (rules 10, 13, and 16).

The provisional agenda and supporting documents must be distributed by the secretariat in all six official UN languages at least six weeks before the session opens (rule 11). Items proposed after the provisional agenda is produced but before the opening of the session are included in a supplementary provisional agenda (rule 12).

At the opening plenary, the presiding officer of the relevant governing or subsidiary body, as applicable, invites the body to adopt the agenda. The body may add, delete, defer, or amend items, but, as above, only those considered urgent and important may be added (rule 13). The presiding officer must be guided by the views expressed by Parties and seek consensus on any changes.



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## Agenda Adoption

Agendas are proposed for adoption by the President or Chair, as applicable, in a plenary meeting of the relevant governing or subsidiary body. However, it is important for these presiding officers to conduct pre-session consultations with Parties to identify potential concerns, such as when there is disagreement over the inclusion of an item on the agenda, to facilitate a smooth adoption of the agenda.

In such cases, the presiding officer or members of their team typically engage in intensive consultations with Parties regarding the item in dispute prior to proposing a provisional agenda for adoption in plenary. These may be undertaken through Heads of Delegation meetings, smaller group consultations, or bilateral meetings with individual Parties.

Once there is consensus on a proposed approach, a plenary meeting is convened, and the President or Chair proposes the agenda for adoption. At this time, the presiding officer will inform the relevant body of the outcome of their consultations and may also refer to any agreements or understandings reached with Parties on the way forward on the relevant item(s), to be reflected in the report on the session. Given that any such understanding serves to clarify the consensus-based position reached by Parties regarding the agenda, it can be understood as forming part of the adoption decision.

With respect to the subsidiary bodies, and as provided in rule 27.7 of the draft rules of procedure, a governing body may, in its opening plenary, refer a matter to a subsidiary body for its consideration, which thus needs to be included in the subsidiary body's agenda. In such cases, at the subsidiary body's own opening plenary (that is, prior to the subsidiary body adopting its agenda), the Chair will inform Parties that the governing body has referred the matter for the subsidiary body's consideration. The Chair will then propose that the matter be considered under a new item or sub-item to be included on the subsidiary body's agenda that will then be proposed for adoption.<sup>39</sup>

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## Quorum

Quorum is a key requirement for conducting meetings and taking decisions. Rule 31 of the draft rules of procedure establishes two types of quorum: the quorum for opening a meeting and the quorum for decision-making.

For meetings of the governing and subsidiary bodies, at least one-third of the Parties must be present for the presiding officer to declare a meeting open and permit debate to proceed. For any decision to be taken, the presence of two-thirds of the Parties to the relevant instrument is required.<sup>40</sup>

Quorum may be challenged by any Party via a point of order. If quorum is challenged and found lacking, the presiding officer must suspend proceedings until quorum is restored.

The presiding officer of any governing body, subsidiary body, contact group, or informal consultation is responsible for determining the existence of a quorum, which is done through the secretariat confirming this and informing the presiding officer accordingly. In practice, it is confirmed that representatives of all major negotiating groups are present before opening a meeting or proceeding to a decision.

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## Points of Order

A point of order is a procedural tool that allows any representative to intervene during discussions to request the presiding officer's ruling on matters relating to the application of the draft rules of procedure, maintenance of order, or the conduct of proceedings. This is typically raised by a delegate either holding up their Party's flag and tapping it with their hand to form a T-shape or turning on their microphone and, in either case, stating "point of order".

A point of order holds precedence over all other matters, including the procedural motions specified in rule 38, and the presiding officer is required to rule on it without delay, in accordance with rule 34 of the draft rules of procedure.

As further provided in rule 34, the representative raising the point of order may not speak on the substance of the matter under discussion, and the intervention must be confined strictly to procedural compliance.

If a representative disagrees with the presiding officer's ruling, they may appeal against it. The appeal is put to an immediate vote, and the ruling stands unless overruled by a majority of the Parties present and voting. This process ensures that procedural integrity is maintained while respecting the collective decision-making authority of the body.

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## Right of Reply

The right of reply allows a representative of a Party to respond to a statement that has been made by another Party that concerns the first Party in some manner. While not explicitly detailed in the draft rules of procedure,<sup>41</sup> this right is recognized in established UNFCCC practice and may be granted at the discretion of the presiding officer, including when a speech delivered after the closure of the speakers' list warrants a response.

The presiding officer should evaluate whether the nature of the preceding intervention justifies granting the right of reply, ensuring it is not misused to reopen substantive debate or circumvent procedural limits. That said, in practice, the right of reply is typically granted by presiding officers, although they are able to ask the relevant Party whether exercising this right is strictly necessary and/or request the Party to keep the reply brief in the interests of time.

When accorded, the right of reply is exercised either at the end of the meeting or, when the statement for which a right of reply is requested was made during consideration of a specific item in (what is usually) a plenary meeting, at the conclusion of such consideration.

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## Suspension and Adjournment

In the UNFCCC process, “suspension” refers to a temporary pause of a meeting, with the presiding officer having the authority to declare the same meeting resumed at a later time and/or date. On the other hand, “adjournment” refers to closing a meeting, with a new meeting able to be convened by the presiding officer thereafter.

The procedure for suspension or adjournment depends on who proposes it. When the presiding officer proposes suspension or adjournment, as per rule 23.2, they may present it directly to the body. This may be done to provide time for holding informal negotiations when there is no consensus on a specific matter or to break a session for practical reasons. In these circumstances, the presiding officer exercises discretion to manage the meeting efficiently and responsively.

However, when a Party proposes suspension or adjournment, a more formal procedural process applies under the draft rules of procedure. According to the process outlined in rule 38, a motion to suspend or adjourn made by any Party must be put to the body for consideration, with any such motion taking precedence over all other proposals or motions.

If such a motion is raised, the presiding officer must first allow the proposer and one speaker in favor to present their views, followed by two speakers against. While rule 38.2 states that the matter shall then be put immediately to the vote, given that rule 42 on voting remains bracketed, such procedural motions can only be adopted by consensus.

If consensus cannot be reached on a motion for suspension or adjournment, whether made by a Party or the presiding officer themselves, the presiding officer may explore alternatives, such as adjourning debate on a specific agenda item while allowing other work to continue. This flexibility helps prevent procedural blockages and ensures that sessions remain productive.

The presiding officer should also consider factors like time constraints and the overall progress of negotiations when ruling on these motions, always prioritizing the efficient conduct of business and the need for openness, transparency, and inclusivity in the process.



## Decision-Making

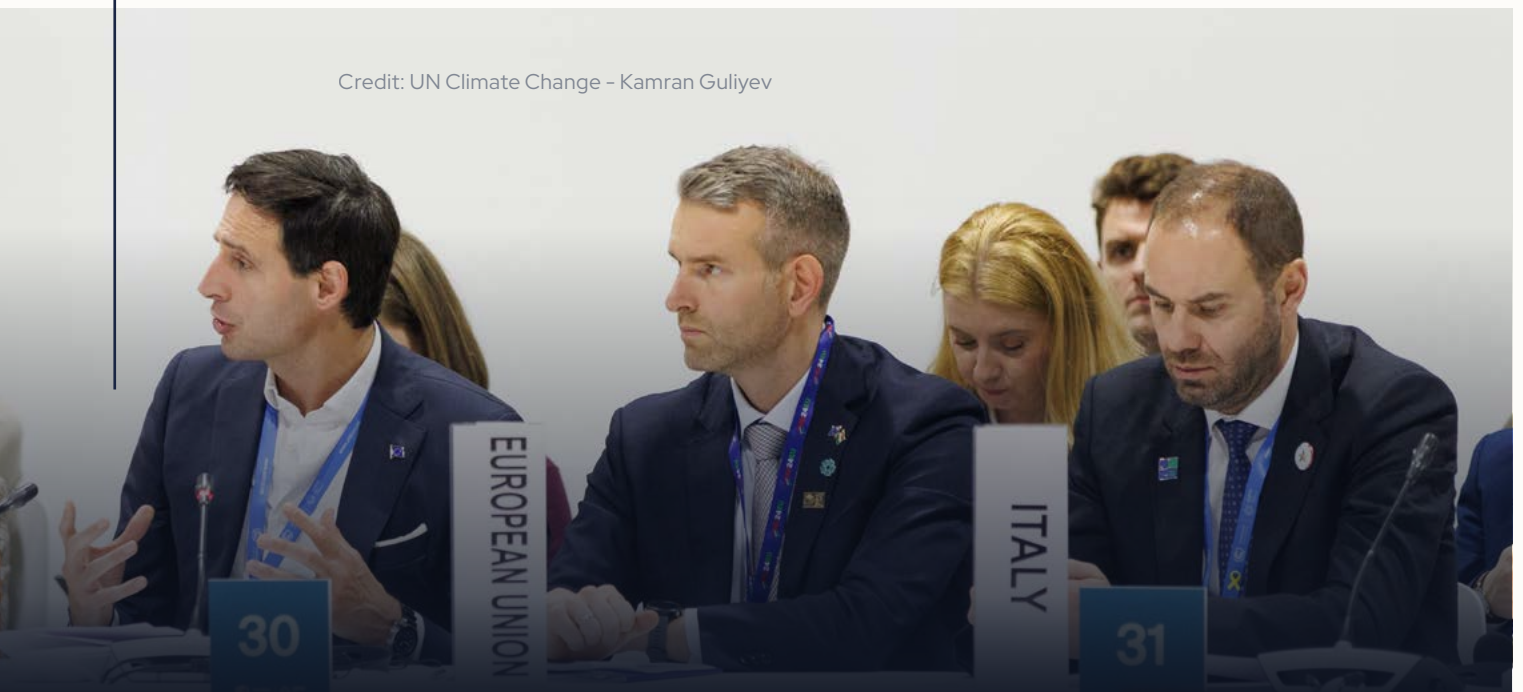
Decision-making in the UNFCCC process is fundamentally based on consensus given that Parties have not agreed on a voting majority (as per draft rule 42). As a result, all decisions – both procedural and substantive – are taken by consensus, except in specific cases where the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement, or the draft rules of procedure themselves explicitly provide for a voting majority, as discussed below.

Throughout the decision-making process, the presiding officer must continue to act impartially and transparently, ensuring that all Parties have the opportunity to participate and that the process is conducted in accordance with the highest standards of fairness and integrity. The secretariat stands ready to provide advice and support to presiding officers in navigating decision-making in the UNFCCC process, including by offering procedural guidance and helping to clarify the established practice regarding consensus and objections.

### Consensus

Consensus is not defined in the Convention or in the draft rules of procedure but is understood as adoption by general agreement without resort to voting in the absence of any formal objection, in line with established UN practice.

Credit: UN Climate Change – Kamran Guliyev



Furthermore, in an opinion by the UN Legal Counsel in 2002 on the interpretation of the term “consensus”, it was noted that consensus “does not mean that every State participating in the meeting or conference is in favor of every element of the resolution or decision”.

To this end, Parties may express reservations or declarations, make interpretive statements, or state their positions, ideally after a decision has been adopted. Such expressions do not constitute a formal objection blocking consensus unless a Party explicitly states an objection at the moment of adoption.

If a Party makes a statement that could be construed as a possible objection during the adoption of a decision, it is the responsibility of the presiding officer to clarify whether this constitutes a formal objection to consensus or is simply a statement of position. In cases where it is not clear whether a Party is blocking consensus, the presiding officer should pause proceedings and directly ask the Party to clarify its intent.

This step is crucial, as Parties may not always use the precise language of objection, and it is important to distinguish between a statement of concern and a formal block to consensus.

If the Party confirms that it is formally objecting, the presiding officer cannot proceed with adoption by consensus. The presiding officer may then seek to resolve the objection through, for example, appealing to the Party to allow adoption while recording their reservation in the report on the session, suspending the meeting for further consultations, or, if necessary, proposing the deferral of the item to a later session.

If the Party indicates that it does not intend to block consensus, the presiding officer may request the Party to wait until after the decision is adopted to give its statement. Should the Party still wish to intervene at that moment, the presiding officer should allow the Party to speak before proposing the decision for adoption again. In the event that the Party agrees to wait until after adoption, the decision can proceed to adoption.

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## Voting

On rare occasions, if consensus cannot be reached and the matter is one where a voting majority is provided for, the presiding officer of the governing or subsidiary body may proceed to a vote in accordance with the applicable rules. Voting is permitted only in specific scenarios: appeals against rulings on points of order;<sup>42</sup> reconsideration of adopted or rejected proposals;<sup>43</sup> elections of officers;<sup>44</sup> and amendments, or the adoption and amendment of annexes, to the Convention, Kyoto Protocol, or Paris Agreement “if all efforts at consensus have been exhausted, and no agreement reached”.<sup>45</sup>

However, voting is extremely rare in the UNFCCC process,<sup>46</sup> and the overwhelming majority of decisions are adopted by consensus.



Credit: UN Climate Change - Kiara Worth

## Chapter 4

# Observer Participation



Observer participation is a cornerstone of the UNFCCC process, reflecting principles of openness, inclusivity, and transparency. The rules governing observer involvement are defined by the Convention, Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement, the draft rules of procedure, and subsequent decisions and conclusions by Parties, balancing the need for broad engagement with the efficiency of negotiations.

Rule 7 of the draft rules of procedure establishes the foundation for observer participation. It states that observers may attend sessions of the COP unless at least one-third of Parties present object, and they may participate in proceedings without voting rights under the same condition. This principle also extends to the Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement meetings, where observer States, those being Parties to the Convention that are not Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and/or Paris Agreement, as applicable, participate as observers without decision-making authority.



## Participation in Different Types of Meetings

In **plenary sessions**, observers may attend unless blocked by a one-third objection.

For **contact groups**, decision [18/CP.4](#) provides for observer attendance unless one-third of Parties object, with co-chairs retaining discretion to close meetings at any time. Recent practice, however, favors openness unless explicitly challenged.

While **informal consultations** historically restricted observer access, SBI 34 recommended opening at least the first and last meetings to observer organizations where no contact group exists.<sup>47</sup> Current practice involves co-facilitators seeking consensus at each meeting to allow observer attendance, though any single Party can object to this.

**Smaller settings** like “informal informals” or “Friends of the Chair” remain closed to observers in order to facilitate candid negotiations, unless Parties decide otherwise. However, outcomes from these closed settings must be reported to their parent body to ensure transparency and inclusivity.



Credit: UN Climate Change – Mahmoud Khaled



## Distinctions Between Observer Categories

**Observer States** are States member of the United Nations and Parties to the Convention but not the Kyoto Protocol and/or Paris Agreement.<sup>48</sup> They may participate in, respectively, CMP and/or CMA proceedings but cannot participate in decision-making by the relevant body. Similarly, they cannot block consensus in the subsidiary bodies or in a contact group or informal consultation on any matter relating to the instrument to which they are not a Party.

**Observer organizations** may speak only after Parties, assuming sufficient time in a meeting is available and subject to Parties' agreement to this.

In the case of opening plenary meetings, practice has evolved so that a joint plenary of all governing and subsidiary bodies meeting at a session is typically convened to hear statements by observer organizations.<sup>49</sup> Here, once all Parties that wish to do so have made their statements, certain United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations<sup>50</sup> typically provide oral reports.

Once those statements have concluded, the floor will then be opened for statements from civil society representatives of other observer organizations.<sup>51</sup>

Observers have no decision-making role, meaning that they cannot block consensus. Presiding officers must ensure observers do not disrupt proceedings, intervening if statements exceed scope or time limits.



## Best Practices for Presiding Officers

Presiding officers typically clarify participation rules at the start of meetings including, for informal consultations, explicitly asking Parties whether observers may attend all informal consultations at the session under a particular item on a no-objection basis.

They may also encourage observers to submit written statements if speaking time is limited and ensure all decisions involving observer access are documented in session reports.

Recent sessions show a trend toward greater observer inclusion, particularly with facilitators increasingly seeking consensus to open informal consultations fully. Presiding officers must navigate this by upholding procedural equity, ensuring observer access does not impede Party-led consensus-building while maintaining legitimacy through transparent reporting of outcomes.

Credit: UN Climate Change – Kiara Worth





Credit: UN Climate Change – Kamran Guliyev

## Chapter 5

# Ethics and the Code of Conduct



The UNFCCC process is founded on the principles of equality, openness, inclusivity, transparency, and, crucially, respect for all participants. Central to this ethos is the *Code of Conduct for UNFCCC Events* (Code of Conduct),<sup>52</sup> which establishes clear expectations for the behavior of all individuals attending UNFCCC meetings and which all participants of official UNFCCC meetings agree to follow when registering their attendance.

For presiding officers, upholding the Code of Conduct is not only a matter of personal integrity but a core responsibility that directly impacts the legitimacy and effectiveness of the negotiation process.



## I. The Role of the Presiding Officer

Presiding officers – whether serving as the President of the COP, the Chair of a subsidiary body, or as a chair or facilitator of a contact group or informal consultations – are entrusted with the authority to guide proceedings in a manner that ensures both procedural fairness and a safe, respectful environment for all participants.

Impartiality is the cornerstone of the presiding officer's role. In this regard, rule 22.3 of the draft rules of procedure stipulates that a presiding officer must not simultaneously exercise the rights of a Party representative while chairing a session.

That said, it is not necessary to recuse oneself simply because, for example, an issue concerning one's country is under discussion; the key is to avoid any real or perceived conflict of interest and to act solely in the interest of the process.



## II. The Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct applies to all participants, including presiding officers, Party delegates, observers, media, and secretariat staff.<sup>53</sup> Its purpose is to ensure that everyone conducts themselves in a professional, respectful, and responsible manner, treating all others with dignity regardless of gender, race, nationality, age, religion, or any other status.

It explicitly prohibits harassment in any form, including sexual harassment, bullying, intimidation, and discrimination.

Presiding officers are expected to embody and model these principles at all times. Their conduct sets the tone for the meeting and signals to all participants that inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated. The presiding officer's visible commitment to the Code of Conduct is essential to fostering an environment where all voices can be heard and where all participants feel safe and respected.



## Upholding the Code of Conduct

Presiding officers are vested with a range of powers to maintain order and address violations of the Code of Conduct. These may include:

- Recalling the need to maintain a respectful working environment;
- Calling speakers to order if their statements are irrelevant or offensive;
- Proposing the suspension or adjournment of a meeting in the event of persistent misconduct;
- Granting the right of reply to Parties who have been the subject of allegedly offensive remarks; and
- Proposing procedural measures, such as limiting speaking time or closing the list of speakers, to de-escalate tensions and ensure the smooth functioning of the meeting.

If a presiding officer observes or is informed of behavior that contravenes the Code of Conduct, they must act promptly. This may involve intervening directly, referring the matter to the secretariat, informing the affected person of relevant complaint channels, or involving UN security or local authorities.

The secretariat provides support and guidance to presiding officers in these situations, including information on reporting mechanisms and available support services.<sup>54</sup>







Credit: UN Climate Change

## Addressing Harassment and Discrimination

Harassment, including sexual harassment, is expressly forbidden at all UNFCCC events. Presiding officers must be vigilant in identifying and addressing any such behavior. The Code of Conduct provides clear reporting channels, including confidential hotlines and support from the secretariat and UN security.

Presiding officers should ensure that all participants are aware of these mechanisms and encourage a culture of reporting and accountability. To this end, speaking notes relating to the Code of Conduct are typically provided to presiding officers by the secretariat to read out at the start of the first meeting of a contact group or informal consultations, so all participants understand their obligations and the options available to them should an issue arise.

In the event of a report or observation of harassment, the presiding officer should take immediate steps to stop the behavior, support the affected individual, and initiate appropriate follow-up, which may ultimately include actions by the secretariat and/or UNDSS which result in removal of the offending participant from the venue, suspension of access to the session, and/or referral to authorities, as appropriate.



## Supporting Inclusivity and Gender Balance

The Code of Conduct may be read alongside broader UNFCCC commitments to gender balance and inclusivity. Decisions such as [23/CP.18](#) and [7/CP.29](#) underscore the importance of the full, meaningful, and equal participation of women and other underrepresented groups in the process.

Presiding officers should be proactive in ensuring that all participants, regardless of identity, have equitable opportunities to contribute to discussions and decision-making in a respectful working environment.



## Practical Recommendations for Presiding Officers

To uphold the Code of Conduct, presiding officers should:

- Clearly communicate expectations for behavior at the outset of each meeting;
- Act swiftly and decisively in response to any breaches of the Code;
- Ensure that all participants are aware of reporting mechanisms and support services;
- Model impartiality, fairness, and respect in all interactions; and
- Collaborate closely with the secretariat and security personnel to address incidents and support affected individuals.

The effectiveness and legitimacy of the UNFCCC process depend on the ability of presiding officers to uphold the highest standards of conduct. By enforcing the Code of Conduct with consistency and transparency, presiding officers not only protect the rights and dignity of all participants but also strengthen the foundation for meaningful, inclusive, and productive negotiations.





Credit: UN Climate Change - Habib Samadov

## Chapter 6

# Outcomes and Documentation



# Substantive Outcomes

## Types of Substantive Outcomes

### CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions are formal outcomes most commonly adopted by the subsidiary bodies (but also sometimes by governing bodies<sup>55</sup>), often based on “draft conclusions” that are recommended to the relevant body/ies by the contact group or informal consultation that was established to work on the specific matter.

In general, conclusions capture the results of negotiations where agreement on a substantive matter does not involve a decision. They are adopted by consensus and are recorded in the official report on the relevant session.<sup>56</sup>

### DECISIONS

Decisions are the outcomes adopted by the governing bodies and set out agreed measures, adopt guidelines or work programmes, define or modify institutional arrangements, or take other action within the bodies’ mandates. Once adopted, decisions become part of the official UNFCCC legal framework.

A draft decision may be negotiated within a contact group or informal consultation and be recommended for consideration and adoption directly to a governing body/ies or through a subsidiary body/ies, depending on the body that established the contact group or informal consultation. For a draft decision that is first recommended to a subsidiary body/ies, that body/ies will also then need to agree on recommending the draft decision for consideration and adoption to the relevant governing body/ies.<sup>57</sup>

Decisions typically follow a formal structure: citing legal and procedural bases (“Recalling Article X...” or referencing an earlier relevant decision), setting out operative paragraphs, specifying next steps or responsibilities, taking note of the estimated budgetary implications of any activities to be undertaken by the secretariat in the decision (if any), and, where relevant, requesting that the actions of the secretariat called for in the decision be undertaken subject to the availability of financial resources. They may also contain one or more annexes setting out additional relevant information, which also forms part of the decision.

Adoption of a decision requires consensus of all Parties participating in the relevant session.

Both conclusions and decisions are fundamental to the effective operation of the UNFCCC process, capturing the results of negotiations and shaping the ongoing work of all Parties under the Convention, Kyoto Protocol, and Paris Agreement and the continuous development of the UN climate change regime.





## Documentation for Substantive Outcomes

At each session, the aim of presiding officers is always to obtain consensus by Parties on draft text. Once such consensus is obtained, and ideally as far in advance as possible of the plenary meeting in which the text is to be proposed for adoption, the presiding officer(s) of the group in which the draft text was negotiated should request the secretariat to prepare an official “limited distribution document” (L-document) containing the agreed draft decision and/or conclusion.<sup>58</sup> These documents are formatted as: “FCCC/[governing or subsidiary body acronym]/[session year]/L.XX” and undergo translation into all six UN languages before being published on the page of the relevant governing or subsidiary body on the UNFCCC website.

Once published, the L-document is then submitted to the establishing governing or subsidiary body for consideration and adoption at a plenary meeting of the relevant body.

Importantly, issuance of an L-document does not guarantee consensus or adoption. A presiding officer may request an L-document when the text appears ready, but Parties can still propose amendments (which may, for example, be done orally from the floor in a plenary meeting if such amendments are seen as not extensive enough to require the issuance of a new L-document), request further consultations, or object to its adoption.

As such, the production of an L-document is a procedural step indicating readiness for formal consideration, not a substantive guarantee that the text will be adopted. The final decision always rests with the Parties.



## Procedural Outcomes

### Situations Where Procedural Outcomes Arise

#### **WHERE THERE IS AGREEMENT TO CONTINUE WORK AT A LATER SESSION**

If, at the last meeting of a contact group or informal consultation, Parties are unable to reach consensus on a draft text, the co-chairs or co-facilitators should encourage the group to agree on procedural conclusions that clearly state how and when work will continue under that item. This ensures that any work done at a particular session is not “lost” going forward.

Specifically, these conclusions should state when consideration of the matter will resume and the basis on which work will continue, with a reference to the specific text that will be the basis for such work. This is typically done through a footnote being inserted with the URL of the relevant text.<sup>59</sup>

Ensuring that any procedural conclusions contain both of these aspects allows all work done at a session to be carried forward and to serve as the starting point for further negotiations. Notably, should there be no reference to a document which will form the basis of future work, subsequent negotiations on the matter will start from scratch.<sup>60</sup>

For the subsidiary bodies, they will typically agree in such cases to continue consideration of the matter at their next session. The governing bodies may do the same<sup>61</sup> or, as is often the case, they may request one or both subsidiary bodies to continue consideration of the matter at their next session with a view to recommending a draft decision for consideration and adoption at the next session of the governing bodies.<sup>62</sup>

### **WHERE THERE IS AGREEMENT TO TRANSITION WORK TO A GOVERNING BODY**

Procedural conclusions can also be developed for situations where a subsidiary body is not able to conclude its own work on a matter and thus agrees to forward the matter to a governing body/ies for consideration.

This approach is usually seen more often during the sessions of the subsidiary bodies convened in the second half of the year, alongside the sessions of the governing bodies, and seeks to enable such work to transition to week two of the conference – that is, from negotiations of the subsidiary bodies in the first week to the second week when the governing bodies undertake their negotiations.

That said, it should be noted that it is the prerogative of the governing bodies whether or not to accept such work, even if the subsidiary bodies have agreed to this approach on a particular matter. If a presiding officer of a contact group or informal consultation established by a subsidiary body believes that Parties wish for this to happen with respect to the item under their authority, discussions should be held with the Presidency as soon as possible, to seek their views on whether the President is willing to propose that the governing bodies take up this work.

Such views may be based on the perceived willingness of Parties to work on a particular matter at the governing bodies level or on the priorities of the Presidency for the conference, noting that, given the limited negotiation time in week two of the conference, not all referred matters may always be able to be taken up.

As above, conclusions of the subsidiary bodies in such cases may be on the basis of a draft text setting out the work that has already been undertaken, as indicated through a footnote being added.<sup>63</sup> This may be accompanied by language in the conclusions indicating that the draft text does not reflect consensus.<sup>64</sup>



## Documentation for Procedural Outcomes

As noted earlier, if Parties in a contact group or informal consultation are unable to reach consensus on a draft text, the co-chairs or co-facilitators should encourage the group to agree on procedural conclusions that specify at which session the matter will next be considered and the basis on which discussions will continue.

That is, to ensure progress made during the session is not lost, these conclusions should include a reference to the specific text that will serve as the starting point for further work. This is typically done by inserting a footnote containing the URL of the relevant text.<sup>65</sup> Without such a reference, there is a risk that future negotiations will begin without an agreed foundation, effectively requiring the Parties to start from scratch.<sup>66</sup>

An L-document may be prepared for such procedural conclusions. However, the UNFCCC process has evolved to not always require these in such situations.

That is, for procedural conclusions without substantive content, practice in the UNFCCC process is such that no L-document is required or issued unless a Party requests it.<sup>67</sup> Instead, these conclusions are posted on the relevant session web page under the respective agenda item, reported orally at the closing plenary, and captured in the official session report.

Co-chairs and co-facilitators are typically provided with speaking notes by the secretariat at the start of each session. These set out, among other issues, what should be said to Parties at the last meeting of a contact group or informal consultation to ensure that all relevant aspects are captured orally for any procedural outcomes of this nature. This, in turn, allows Parties in the room to agree with the content of these procedural conclusions (without an L-document having to be issued), with a view to ensuring their smooth adoption at the closing plenary of the relevant governing or subsidiary body.





## No Agreement to Substantive or Procedural Outcomes

In the event that Parties cannot agree on any substantive or procedural conclusions, rule 16 of the draft rules of procedure applies. In this case, the item is automatically included in the provisional agenda for the next session, but negotiations will resume from scratch, with no guarantee that previous documents or progress will be taken into account.

If a co-chair or co-facilitator believes that discussions under their authority are at risk of being subject to rule 16, it is recommended that they seek immediate guidance from the President or SB Chair(s), as applicable, rather than allowing negotiations to conclude. This may allow the presiding officer of the governing or subsidiary body to intervene through, for example, holding consultations with relevant Parties and thus assist in preventing loss of progress under the item.

For such cases, no L-document is required. Instead, the President or SB Chair, as applicable, will inform the plenary of this outcome, which will be reflected in the report on the session accordingly.<sup>68</sup>

It is noted that having procedural conclusions that do not refer to a document on which work will be based is essentially identical in practice to an item that is subject to rule 16, in that negotiations will resume from scratch in both cases. However, presiding officers have tended to encourage the former over the latter due to the perception of this being the more constructive option, through showing a willingness from Parties to at least agree to this outcome. Ultimately, however, this is in the hands of Parties.



## Process of Producing Documents In-Session

During sessions, the negotiation process is supported by a range of in-session documents, which are essential for tracking the evolving state of negotiations and for recording the outcomes of discussions. In-session documents are produced in real time as negotiations progress, reflecting the dynamic and iterative nature of the process.



## In-Session Documents as Negotiations Progress

A variety of informal documents are commonly used to facilitate negotiations, all of which have the same informal status despite different document names having evolved through practice in the UNFCCC process. These may include:

- **Draft texts, non-papers, and informal notes:** These are typically prepared by presiding officers, including (co-)chairs and (co-)facilitators, although non-papers and informal notes may also sometimes be introduced by Parties, and seek to capture the state of discussions, reflect possible compromise language, or set out options for further consideration. Draft texts are the most common form of capturing progress used by presiding officers; various iterations of the draft text may be issued to reflect steps in the negotiations as they advance (with differences of views often reflected through the inclusion of square brackets around and/or options relating to contentious text).
- **Compilation texts:** At the request of Parties or presiding officers, the secretariat may issue compilation documents that incorporate all agreed changes or proposals to a draft text, with areas of disagreement presented in square brackets. These compilation texts serve as the basis for continued negotiations and are updated as consensus emerges.
- **Presiding officer's texts:** In situations where negotiations are at an impasse, the presiding officer may, under their own responsibility and using their political authority, introduce a compromise text to help bridge differences and move the process forward. As further detailed below, such texts are often bracketed and are presented for consideration by Parties, who may accept, amend, or reject them.

The preparation of such texts is typically supported by the secretariat, which assists in drafting and compiling the text based on the state of negotiations, input from Parties, and previous iterations of the draft outcome. However, the text is never presented as a secretariat draft.

Presiding officers may wish to seek agreement from those Parties present at a negotiation for any such in-session documents to be prepared, which thus provides a mandate for the relevant presiding officer to proceed to do so (with the support of the secretariat), although this is not strictly needed, as further detailed in the section below. Either way, the typical process is then for any such text to be published as far in advance as possible of the next negotiation, to allow it to be a basis for discussions at that meeting.

While any of these documents may be referenced in session reports for transparency, such as when conclusions indicate that work on a particular matter will continue at a subsequent session on the basis of the work contained in the non-paper, this does not confer legitimacy.

That is, these documents bear no official UNFCCC document symbol and lack formal status, distinguishing them from, for example, "L documents". Indeed, many such documents contain an explicit notation that the document reflects work-in-progress without prejudging outcomes.<sup>69</sup>

## **PRESIDING OFFICERS PRODUCING TEXT OF THEIR OWN ACCORD**

As above, in the course of negotiations, there are occasions when the presiding officer may consider preparing and presenting their own text. This is typically undertaken to help bridge differences among Parties and facilitate progress when negotiations have reached an impasse or when consensus on a draft outcome proves elusive.

A cardinal procedural principle is the obligation of impartiality. The presiding officer must act in the interest of all Parties and not as a representative of their own Party (rule 22.3). As such, when considering the preparation and presentation of their own text, the presiding officer must carefully assess the political context and the readiness of Parties to receive such a text.

It should also be noted that presiding officers may prepare and present their own texts without prior explicit mandate from Parties. This means that they can proactively develop compromise texts and propose them for consideration at the next contact group or informal consultation under the relevant agenda item. However, any Party may object to considering such a text at that stage, requiring the presiding officer to withdraw it and pursue further consultations.

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## **Process of Preparing Documents In-Session**

The preparation of documents during sessions is a dynamic process that requires careful coordination between presiding officers, facilitators, and the secretariat to ensure efficiency, transparency, and procedural equity. This workflow is critical for capturing the evolving state of negotiations while maintaining momentum toward agreed outcomes.

### **INITIAL DRAFTING PHASE**

The President or SB Chairs, as applicable, typically mandate co-chairs and co-facilitators to prepare initial draft texts as soon as practicable after discussions commence. This directive ensures that substantive exchanges are translated into structured proposals without delay.

Co-chairs and co-facilitators, supported by the secretariat, distill Party interventions and emerging common ground into one of the types of documents included in the previous section above. These documents – bearing no official symbol – serve as negotiation aids and are characterized as being informal texts that do not prejudge outcomes.

### **ITERATIVE REFINEMENT**

Following each negotiation round, co-chairs and co-facilitators work with the secretariat to revise the relevant draft to incorporate Party feedback.

Revised texts are circulated via email and should be published on the UNFCCC website before subsequent meetings, allowing delegations and observers adequate review time. This also ensures greater transparency in allowing the public, particularly observer organizations, to remain informed on the progress of negotiations.

This practice upholds transparency and inclusiveness, ensuring all Parties can engage meaningfully. Crucially, it is recommended that drafting on-screen during meetings be avoided to the extent possible, to maintain focus on substantive debate rather than specific textual edits, which tend to slow down the pace of negotiations.



## Pre- and Post-Session Documents

### Pre-Session Documents

Pre-session documents serve as important input for the work of Parties at each session of the governing and subsidiary bodies. These documents are prepared and distributed by the secretariat in advance of each session, as mandated, ensuring that Parties are well informed and able to participate effectively in negotiations.

The preparation of pre-session documents is governed by the draft rules of procedure, in particular rule 11, which requires that the provisional agenda for each session, together with supporting documentation, be distributed by the secretariat to the Parties in all six official languages of the United Nations at least six weeks before the session opens.

The provisional agenda is prepared by the secretariat in agreement with the President (for the governing bodies) or with the Chair (for subsidiary bodies), and must include items arising from previous sessions, items proposed by Parties prior to circulation, and any other matters deemed necessary under the relevant legal instruments.<sup>70</sup>

Pre-session documents typically include:

- **The annotated provisional agenda**, which provides context and background for each agenda item and may highlight key issues or procedural considerations;
- **Reports from constituted bodies**, such as technical papers, synthesis reports, or annual reports, which provide updates on progress and inform the deliberations of the session;
- **Information notes and technical papers** prepared by the secretariat, which may address specific technical, legal, or procedural issues relevant to the session's work; and
- **Submissions from Parties and observer organizations**, where requested, which may be compiled and made available by the secretariat to inform the discussions.



While the annotated provisional agenda and most official pre-session documents are issued in all six official languages, other documents, such as information notes and technical papers, may be distributed in English only, reflecting the need for timely and efficient communication of technical information. All official pre-session documents bear an official UNFCCC document symbol (e.g., FCCC/CP/2025/1) and are made available on the relevant session page on the UNFCCC website.

The timely distribution of pre-session documents is critical for transparency, inclusivity, and the effective participation of all Parties. These documents provide the basis for delegations to prepare their positions, consult within their negotiating groups, and engage in preliminary discussions before the session formally opens.

The secretariat also issues notifications to Parties and observers with practical information on registration, credentials, and logistical arrangements, further supporting the preparatory process.

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## Post-Session Documents

Following the conclusion of a session of the governing and/or subsidiary bodies, the Rapporteur of each body, assisted by the secretariat, prepares an official report documenting the proceedings and outcomes. This report, distributed in all six official UN languages, serves as the formal record of decisions adopted, conclusions reached, and statements made during the session.

It includes verbatim records and links to relevant parts of the webcast, where applicable, and annexes containing adopted texts, ensuring transparency and institutional memory.

The President of the governing bodies or the Chair of a subsidiary body may also issue informal notes under their own authority, reflecting on discussions and identifying potential pathways for future work.

These informal notes, while unofficial, provide contextual insights to assist Parties in subsequent sessions. Crucially, they do not prejudice outcomes or limit Parties' rights to advance differing views.



## Appendix I

# Resource Index

This Resource Index is designed to support those serving as presiding officers in all UNFCCC forums, as well as other participants, in quickly accessing essential guidance, documents, and reference materials for effective management of sessions and procedures.

It highlights direct pathways to navigate the UNFCCC website, access governing texts, find session documents, and understand the procedural landscape relevant to your responsibilities.

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## Documents and Scheduling

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### Session Documents

Access all draft, official, in-session, and archival documents on the [UNFCCC Documents page](#), where users can search/filter by, for example, session, body, document type, or year.

Locate current session's documents (e.g., L-documents) on the session-specific pages, which you can access by either:

- Selecting the relevant session on the [UNFCCC Calendar/Events page](#);
- Selecting the relevant body on the page on the UNFCCC website with general information on the [governing and subsidiary bodies](#), each of which contains a list of each session of that body; or
- Navigating to the current session page from the [UNFCCC homepage](#), where a direct link is typically made available during sessional periods.

In addition, past decisions may be found on the [UNFCCC Decisions page](#).

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## Daily Scheduling In-Session

Daily schedules in-session may be found on the relevant session's page, which may be accessed as set out above. Information on official UNFCCC meetings and mandated events may also be found on the UNFCCC Calendar/Events page.

At some sessions of the governing and subsidiary bodies, an app may also be made available to all participants which includes the daily schedules.

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## Legal Instruments and Key Procedural Resources

### Legal Instruments

UNFCCC (the Convention):

- The text of the Convention is available [here](#) in all six official UN languages.
- The status of ratification of the Convention is available [here](#).

Kyoto Protocol:

- The text of the Kyoto Protocol is available [here](#) in all six official UN languages.
- The status of ratification of the Kyoto Protocol is available [here](#).

Doha Amendment:

- The text of the Doha Amendment is available [here](#) in all six official UN languages.
- The status of ratification of the Doha Amendment is available [here](#).

Paris Agreement:

- The text of the Paris Agreement is available [here](#) in all six official UN languages.
- The status of ratification of the Paris Agreement is available [here](#).

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## Draft Rules of Procedure

The draft rules of procedure of the COP and subsidiary bodies are available [here](#) in all six official UN languages.

For those constituted bodies that have adopted their own rules of procedure, these may be found on the relevant body's page, as available [here](#), or on the page of the session where those rules were adopted.

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## Other Relevant Information

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### Code of Conduct for UNFCCC Events

The Code of Conduct for UNFCCC Events is available [here](#) in English, with links on that page to versions in all six official UN languages.

This page also includes other relevant information, including how to report a complaint under the Code, as well as a link to the Code of Ethics for elected and appointed officers under the UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement ([here](#)), which was endorsed by the Bureau to be "applied provisionally".

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### Observer Organizations

The main page on the UNFCCC website relating to observers is available [here](#). This includes links to lists with information on those intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have been admitted as observer organizations to the UNFCCC process.

Information on how organizations may be admitted as observers to the UNFCCC process is also available [here](#).

## Appendix II

# Glossary

### A

#### ABEYANCE

A procedural device by which an item proposed for inclusion on an agenda is included thereon when the agenda is adopted but is not considered at that particular session. Holding that item in abeyance is typically proposed to Parties at the time of adopting the agenda and thus forms part of the understanding relating to such adoption. This often applies when there is no consensus on removing an item that is not deemed to be a priority for consideration at a particular session.

#### ADDENDUM

A supplementary document issued in addition to a main official document. In UNFCCC documentation, addenda update or complement the original text and carry the symbol “Add.” (e.g., [FCCC/SBI/2025/5/Add.1](#); [FCCC/PA/CMA/2024/17/Add.3](#)).

#### AD HOC SUBSIDIARY BODY

A temporary body established by the COP, CMP, or CMA for a specific purpose or task, such as preparing a negotiated outcome(s) or recommendation(s) on a defined issue (e.g., the [Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement](#)).

#### AGENDA

The official list of items to be considered during a session. It normally evolves from a *provisional* to an *adopted* agenda through a decision by the relevant body, in accordance with rules 9 to 16 of the draft rules of procedure. A *supplementary* agenda may also be issued if any new item is proposed by a Party before the opening of the session, pursuant to rule 12 of the draft rules of procedure.”

### B

#### BILATERALS

Direct, private consultations between two Parties/groups or between a Party/group and the presiding officer, often arranged to address sensitive issues, clarify positions, or facilitate agreement on specific points. They are an important tool for building understanding and resolving conflicts outside the formal negotiation forums.

## BUREAU

Typically refers to the Bureau of the COP, CMP, and CMA established pursuant to rule 22 of the draft rules of procedure, although may be used to refer to the Bureaux of the SBSTA or SBI. The Bureau of the COP, CMP, and CMA comprises the President, seven Vice-Presidents, Chairs of the two subsidiary bodies (SBSTA and SBI), and Rapporteurs and supports organizational and procedural matters, including examining credentials and assisting with report preparation.

## C

### CHAIR (OR CO-CHAIR)

An individual(s) appointed or elected, as applicable, to preside over a subsidiary body, contact group, or other smaller meeting. Responsible for guiding discussions, ensuring the application of the draft rules of procedure, and building consensus. Co-chairs are often appointed to preside over contact groups to ensure Annex I/non-Annex I and gender balance, promoting balanced leadership.

### CODE OF CONDUCT FOR UNFCCC EVENTS

The binding set of principles and rules to ensure respectful, professional, and harassment-free conduct for all participants in UNFCCC sessions, including presiding officers, Parties, and observers. It reinforces the need for impartiality and ethical behavior and is available [here](#).

### CONFERENCE ROOM PAPER (CRP)

Conference room papers were used in the early years of the UNFCCC process to present a textual proposal by a Party or group to the negotiations. In current practice, these are, in general, no longer produced, as Party/group proposals received during a session can be posted on the relevant UNFCCC webpages (e.g., on the relevant session page relating to a specific item or through the submission portal) if so desired. For the sake of clarity, it is noted that the legal status of proposals by Parties/groups is the same, irrespective of their form (oral or written), label, or title; all are proposals by Parties that require consensus amongst other Parties to engage thereon.

### CONSENSUS

The practice of adopting decisions by general agreement of all Parties present, without a formal vote. Consensus does not require unanimity but absence of any formal objection. Parties wishing to express different views other than objecting to the adoption of a decision may do so by, for example, making statements of position or reservations, which become part of the official record.

### CONSTITUTED BODIES

Expert bodies comprised of elected (or appointed) members, with limited membership, established by one or more of the governing or subsidiary bodies to provide advice, technical analysis, guidelines or other tools. They often operate under their own respective rules of procedure and report regularly to their establishing body/ies. A list of constituted bodies in the UNFCCC process is available [here](#).

### CONTACT GROUP

A negotiation forum established by a governing or subsidiary body, typically led by (co-) chairs. Participation is open to all Parties, with observer organizations generally allowed unless one third of Parties present object or the presiding officer decides otherwise. All outcomes from contact groups must be reported back to the establishing body, with any draft conclusions or decisions forwarded to the plenary for consideration and adoption.

### CONSULTATIONS

A process, typically informal, by which the presiding officer, Parties, or designated facilitators engage with Parties to gather views, clarify positions, or explore potential options on a specific issue. Consultations can occur at the request of the plenary, the President/Chair, or a group of Parties, and may be open to all or limited in participation. The outcome may inform further negotiations or be reported back to the main body for decision-making.

## D

### DECISION

A formal resolution or outcome adopted by a governing body, typically following negotiations thereon. A decision may be adopted based on a recommendation from a subsidiary body(ies).

### DEFERRAL

The formal postponement of consideration of an agenda item to a later meeting or session, often agreed at the opening plenary meeting of a session at the time when the item is first addressed.

### DRAFT RULES OF PROCEDURE

The procedural framework (available [here](#)) that sets out how meetings are to be conducted, including agenda setting, roles of presiding officers and the secretariat, procedures on points of order, and voting (in some specific circumstances). As agreement could not be reached on rule 42 on voting, which remains bracketed, it was decided at COP 1 – and reaffirmed at every subsequent session of the COP – to apply the draft rules of procedure, with the exception of rule 42.

## F

### FACILITATOR (OR CO-FACILITATOR)

An individual or two individuals appointed to preside over informal consultations or smaller groups. Responsible for guiding discussions, ensuring the application of the draft rules of procedure, and building consensus. Co-facilitators are often appointed to ensure geographical and gender balance, promoting balanced leadership, and may also be nominated for conducting or guiding processes other than negotiations, such as work programmes of dialogues.



## FINANCIAL MECHANISM

Established by Article 11 of the Convention, while also serving the Paris Agreement as per Article 9 thereof, to provide financial support to Parties for implementing commitments under the Convention and Paris Agreement. The operating entities of the Financial Mechanism are the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Green Climate Fund (GCF), and the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD), each of which are guided by the COP and CMA.

## FRIENDS OF THE PRESIDENCY/CHAIR

A group convened by a presiding officer of a governing or subsidiary body to address particularly challenging or politically sensitive issues, often at pivotal stages in the process. These meetings may be chaired directly by the presiding officer or by a designated facilitator, and participation is usually limited to a small number of key Parties to encourage frank discussion and help broker consensus.

## G

### GOVERNING BODIES

The supreme decision-making organs of the UNFCCC legal instruments:

- **COP** (Conference of the Parties)
- **CMP** (Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol)
- **CMA** (Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement)

## H

### HEADS OF DELEGATION MEETING (HODS)

A meeting to bring together the lead negotiators from each Party, typically at the invitation of the presiding officer, to provide high-level guidance, address process-wide concerns, or seek direction on critical issues. These meetings play a key role in resolving impasses, aligning on negotiation strategy, and communicating political or procedural priorities during a session.

## I

### INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS

A negotiation forum established by a governing or subsidiary body, typically led by (co-) facilitators. Participation is usually open to all Parties, with Parties also encouraged to allow observer participation, although any one Party may object to this. All outcomes from informal consultations must be reported back to the establishing body, with any draft conclusions or decisions forwarded to the plenary for consideration and adoption.

## INFORMAL INFORMALS

Small-group negotiation sessions (sometimes called “inf infs”; may instead be referred to as drafting groups or spin-off groups) established by a governing or subsidiary body, a contact group, or an informal consultation. They are typically used to resolve difficult issues, clarify language, or troubleshoot sticking points in drafting text. The outcomes of these must be reported back to the establishing body for any work undertaken to be formally considered.

## L

### L-DOCUMENT

A draft or working document issued during sessions with limited distribution, often containing draft conclusions, a draft decision, or negotiating text, to be proposed to the plenary for adoption.

## M

### MANDATED EVENT

An official event convened during a session at the explicit request of the governing or subsidiary bodies, such as through a decision and/or based on a mandate in the Convention, Kyoto Protocol, or Paris Agreement, intended to fulfill specific procedural, technical, or policy requirements as part of the formal process (e.g., to inform negotiations or implementation).

### MEETING

A group of Parties gathering within a sessional period to conduct official business; may include a plenary meeting or a meeting of a contact group or informal consultations.

### MOTION

A formal proposal presented by a Party during a meeting addressing a procedural matter (e.g., suspension or adjournment of meeting) or substantive content (e.g., amendment of text). Motions require immediate ruling and may be subject to challenges or appeals under the draft rules.

## N

### NEGOTIATING GROUP

Coalitions of Parties, often geographically or interest-based, including the four groups with non-overlapping membership (G77 and China, the Umbrella Group, the EU, and EIG) as well as the AGN, AILALC, AOSIS, LDCs, LMDC and many others, which coordinate positions and interventions during negotiations. Information on the groups within the UNFCCC process is available [here](#).

## **NON-PAPER**

An informal, unofficial document prepared to facilitate discussion and reflect proposals or options; non-papers have no formal status and are not part of the official meeting records.

# O

## **OBSERVER**

A non-Party State, intergovernmental organization, or non-governmental organization admitted under defined criteria to the UNFCCC process. Observers' participation rights are specifically regulated in the Convention, the draft rules of procedure, decisions, recommendations, and through practice in the UNFCCC process.

# P

## **PARTIES**

States and regional economic integration organizations that have ratified the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol, and/or the Paris Agreement, with the right to participate fully in decision-making of the relevant body.

## **PLENARY**

A formal meeting convened by a governing or subsidiary body where Parties may adopt conclusions and decisions, as well as where Parties and designated observers may deliver statements. These are presided over by the President, in the case of a governing body, or a Chair, in the case of a subsidiary body.

## **POINT OF ORDER**

A procedural intervention by a Party to call attention to an alleged breach of the draft rules of procedure or the conduct of business, as provided in rule 34 of the draft rules of procedure. The presiding officer must rule immediately when a point of order is raised, and the decision can be appealed. The representative raising the point of order may not speak on the substance of the matter under discussion, and the intervention must be confined strictly to procedural compliance.

## **PRE-SESSIONAL CONSULTATIONS (OR PRESESSIONALS)**

Bilateral meetings held between the presiding officers and Parties/negotiation groups before a session, where presiding officers present their planned approach for the session and hear initial views, questions, or concerns thereon.

## **PRESIDENT**

The presiding officer elected by the Parties to lead the COP, CMP, and CMA. The President facilitates meetings of the governing bodies, ensuring adherence to the draft rules of procedure in doing so, and may undertake consultations with Parties with a view to obtaining consensus on a given matter.

### **PRESIDING OFFICER (PO)**

Any individual responsible for chairing meetings or negotiations, including Presidents, Chairs, co-chairs, and co-facilitators. Presiding officers are required to maintain impartiality, uphold the draft rules of procedure, and facilitate consensus.

## **Q**

### **QUORUM**

The minimum number of Parties required under rule 31 of the draft rules of procedure to be present to open a meeting or take decisions: one-third for opening, two-thirds for adoption of decisions.

## **R**

### **RAPPORTEUR**

A Bureau member supporting the President or Chair, as applicable, responsible for assisting in report preparation and ensuring accurate recording of meeting conclusions.

### **REGIONAL GROUP**

One of five United Nations regional groupings: African States, Asia-Pacific States, Eastern European States, Latin America and Caribbean States, Western European and other States. Information on the members of each regional group is available [here](#).

### **RESERVATION/STATEMENT OF POSITION**

An official recorded declaration by a Party expressing its view or dissent regarding a decision or action adopted by consensus, without formally obstructing the adoption.

## **S**

### **SECRETARIAT**

The permanent body established under Article 8 of the Convention to support the Convention, Kyoto Protocol, and Paris Agreement processes, with its functions also set out in that Article as well as in the draft rules of procedure.

### **SESSION**

The scheduled meeting period of a governing or subsidiary body, encompassing plenary meetings, contact groups, informal consultations, and any other smaller groups that meet during this period, as well as mandated and side events.

### **SIDE EVENT**

Supplementary events organized by Parties, observers, the secretariat, or other stakeholders during sessions to share information, raise awareness, launch initiatives, or showcase work, practices, or achievements; not part of the formal negotiation process.

## **SUBSIDIARY BODY**

Bodies established by the governing bodies to assist in implementation and negotiation. The permanent subsidiary bodies are the SBSTA and the SBI.



## **VICE-PRESIDENT**

Elected members of the Bureau supporting the President, representing UN regional groups and the small island developing states (SIDs), and prepared to carry out duties on the President's behalf as needed.



# Endnotes

- 1 See the current status of ratification of the Convention [here](#).
- 2 A full list of each session of the COP that has been convened may be found [here](#).
- 3 See the current status of ratification of the Kyoto Protocol [here](#).
- 4 A full list of each session of the CMP that has been convened may be found [here](#).
- 5 See the current status of ratification of the Paris Agreement [here](#).
- 6 A full list of each session of the CMA that has been convened may be found [here](#).
- 7 See also decision [6/CP.1](#) for more information on the roles and functions of the SBSTA and SBI.
- 8 A full list of each session of the SBSTA that has been convened may be found [here](#) and a full list of each session of the SBI that has been convened may be found [here](#).
- 9 The current members of the Bureau of the SBSTA may be found [here](#) and of the SBI [here](#).
- 10 The draft rules of procedure of the COP and its subsidiary bodies, contained in document [FCCC/CP/1996/2](#), shall be referred to as the “draft rules of procedure” in this document, but may also be referred to as the “draft rules of procedure being applied” in the UNFCCC process. Similarly, specific numbered references to a “rule” or “rules” throughout this document shall be understood as referring to draft rules in the draft rules of procedure.
- 11 For example, the AWG-LCA’s Chair and Vice-Chair were initially elected directly by the COP at the same session in which the body was established (see para. 63 of the report on COP 13, document [FCCC/CP/2007/6](#)). In later sessions, the AWG-LCA continued to elect its own presiding officers, but in accordance with the stipulation that the Chair and Vice-Chair alternate annually between an Annex I and a non-Annex I Party (para. 5, decision [1/CP.13](#)). By contrast, the ADP initially operated under an interim arrangement in which a designee of the President presided (see paras. 4-5, [FCCC/ADP/2012/2](#)) until a multi-year Bureau arrangement was agreed by the ADP (see para. 7, [FCCC/ADP/2012/2](#)) and later endorsed by the COP as an explicit exception to rule 27 (para. 2, decision [2/CP.18](#)).
- 12 A full list of constituted bodies in the UNFCCC process may be found [here](#).
- 13 See, for example, the rules of procedure of the Adaptation Committee found [here](#) (rule 4), the Clean Development Mechanism found [here](#) (rule 4), and the Executive Board of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage Executive Committee (WIM ExCom) found [here](#) (rule 5). Each stipulates a term of two years, with a maximum service of two consecutive terms. Alternatively, the [rules](#) governing the membership of the Article 6.4 Supervisory Body (paras. 14-17) mandates a maximum of two, two-year terms, whether consecutive or not and including any period as an alternate member. The Facilitative Working Group of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform provides for three-year terms; however, the body does not allow for consecutive service.
- 14 See, for example, the rules of procedure of the Paris Committee on Capacity-Building found [here](#) (rule 4) and of the WIM ExCom found [here](#) (rule 3), each of which refer to the need to take into account the goal of gender balance with respect to their membership. This may be contrasted with the rules of procedure of the Adaptation Fund Board found [here](#), which do not make reference to this. All three, however, seek to provide for equitable geographical representation. In addition, it is worth noting that, for elections, Parties are typically invited to give active consideration to the nomination of women and men equally for elective posts in all bodies to achieve gender balance (see, for example, para. 15, document [FCCC/CP/2024/11](#)).
- 15 The rules of procedure for constituted bodies often provide that the Chair and Vice-Chair shall be elected from among its members such that one is a member of an Annex I Party, and the other is a member from a non-Annex I Party. In this case, the positions of Chair and Vice-Chair then alternate annually between a member from an Annex I Party and a member from a non-Annex I Party. See, for example, rule 9 of the [rules of procedure](#) governing the Technology Executive Committee.
- 16 See, for example, the annex to decision [24/CMA.4](#), containing the rules of procedure of the Paris Agreement Implementation and Compliance Committee. Rule 4 provides that Co-Chairs are elected, one from a developed country Party and one from a developing country Party, to serve three-year terms.
- 17 The current composition of the Bureau may be seen [here](#).
- 18 As above, these are the African States, Asia-Pacific States, Latin American and Caribbean States, Eastern European States, and Western European and other States.
- 19 As per decision [14/CP.1](#), para. 7.
- 20 See, for example, decision [9/CP.12](#), in which the COP invited “the Bureau to decide, by 15 February 2007, based on the report by the Executive Secretary [...] on the host and venue of [COP 13] and [CMP 3].”
- 21 See, for example, the message to Parties, observer States, and observer organizations from the UNFCCC Executive Secretary of 22 June 2020, available [here](#), which conveyed the Bureau’s decision to postpone SB 52 in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 22 Further functions are specified in rules 3, 4.3, 5, 8, 9-12, 15, 29, 32, and 57, as summarized later in this Guide.
- 23 Rules 9 to 12 of the draft rules of procedure (in conjunction with rule 27.1 for the subsidiary bodies).
- 24 Decision [1/CP.28](#), para. 5; decision [5/CMA.5](#), para. 5.
- 25 See rules 9 to 13 of the draft rules of procedure.





- 26 Rule 22.1: "At the commencement of the first meeting of each ordinary session, a President, seven Vice-Presidents, the Chairmen of the subsidiary bodies established by Articles 9 and 10 of the Convention, and a Rapporteur shall be elected from among the representatives of the Parties present at the session. [...]"
- 27 Available [here](#).
- 28 See rule 32 of the draft rules of procedure.
- 29 See rules 23 and 32 of the draft rules of procedure.
- 30 See rule 34 of the draft rules of procedure.
- 31 See rule 31 of the draft rules of procedure.
- 32 As per decision [18/CP.4](#).
- 33 On occasion, contact groups themselves have established informal consultations. See, for example, document [FCCC/APA/2016/2](#), para. 13.
- 34 As recommended by SBI 34. See the report on SBI 34 in document [FCCC/SBI/2011/7](#), para. 167.
- 35 See, for example, the Presidency consultations that led to the adoption of decision [16/CP.28](#), as described in paras. 34 to 36 of document [FCCC/CP/2023/11](#).
- 36 See, for example, the outcomes on the Presidency consultations reported at the closing plenary of CMA 6, as contained in para. 19 of document [FCCC/PA/CMA/2024/17](#).
- 37 See the report on COP 1 in document [FCCC/CP/1995/7](#), paras. 9 and 10.
- 38 See the report on CMP 1 in document [FCCC/KP/CMP/2005/8](#), para. 12.
- 39 See, for example, the report on SBI 57 in document [FCCC/SBI/2022/20](#), para. 4.
- 40 For the subsidiary bodies, these amounts are calculated on the basis of the number of Parties to the Convention. For contact groups and informal consultations established by more than one governing body, the governing body with the larger membership should be used for the purpose of this calculation.
- 41 This differs from, for example, the rules of procedure of the UN General Assembly, rule 73 of which allows the President of the General Assembly to "accord the right of reply to any member if a speech delivered after he has declared the list closed makes this desirable".
- 42 Rule 34 of the draft rules of procedure provides that for appeals of this nature, upon immediate vote of the Parties, the ruling stands unless "overruled by a majority of the Parties present and voting".
- 43 Rule 40 of the draft rules of procedure provides that, once a proposal has been adopted or rejected, reconsideration of that proposal at the same session can only occur by a vote of a two-thirds majority of the Parties present and voting in favor of reconsideration.
- 44 For voting procedures regarding the election of officers, see rules 52 and 53 of the draft rules of procedure.
- 45 These circumstances require a three-fourths majority in each case. See Articles 15.3 and 16.2 of the Convention, Articles 20.3 and 21.4 of the Kyoto Protocol, and Article 22 and 23 of the Paris Agreement, which respectively apply the provisions of Article 15 and 16 of the Convention to the Agreement.
- 46 There is only one example within the UNFCCC process of a vote having been undertaken, which related to an appeal of ruling on a point of order at SBI 38. The Chair immediately put the appeal to a vote by a simple show of hands, with only the appealing Party voting in favor of the appeal. The ruling of the Chair was thus upheld.
- 47 See the report on SBI 34 in document [FCCC/SBI/2011/7](#), para. 167.
- 48 Article 7, paragraph 6 of the Convention provides that "any State member [...] or observers [to the United Nations, its specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency] not Party to the Convention, may be represented at sessions of the Conference of the Parties as observers."
- 49 See, for example, the report on COP 29 in document [FCCC/CP/2024/11](#), para. 136.
- 50 This often includes statements by representatives of, for example, the Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the World Climate Research Programme, the World Meteorological Organization, the Global Climate Observing System, the International Maritime Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO.
- 51 This typically includes statements from representatives of each of the observer constituencies in the UNFCCC process. More information on these constituencies is available [here](#).
- 52 Available [here](#).
- 53 Reference is made to the section on 'Applicability' in the Code of Conduct, which provides that the Code supplements, and does not affect, the application of, inter alia, other relevant policies, regulations, and rules.
- 54 For example, information on reporting a complaint can be found on [this page](#) on the UNFCCC secretariat website setting out the Code of Conduct for UNFCCC Events.
- 55 See, for example, the conclusions adopted by COP 24 in paras. 67 and 68, document [FCCC/CP/2018/10](#).
- 56 See, for example, the draft conclusions in document [FCCC/SBI/2024/L.14](#), which were adopted at SBI 61 and included in the report on the session (document [FCCC/SBI/2024/25](#); see paras. 116 to 123).
- 57 See, for example, the draft decision in document [FCCC/SBI/2024/L.11](#), which both subsidiary bodies recommended for consideration and adoption at COP 29 (see, for example, para. 99 of the report on SBI 61 in document [FCCC/SBI/2024/25](#)). On the basis of the recommendation of the subsidiary bodies, the COP adopted this as decision [10/CP.29](#), as stated in the report on COP 29 (see para. 107 of document [FCCC/CP/2024/11](#)).
- 58 See, for example, the draft conclusions in document [FCCC/SBI/2024/L.17](#), in which SBI 61 recommended a draft decision for consideration and adoption at COP 29. The draft decision can be found in document [FCCC/SBI/2024/L.17/Add.1](#). This was ultimately adopted as decision [15/CP.29](#); see the report on COP 29 in document [FCCC/CP/2024/11](#), para. 115.
- 59 For an example of a procedural conclusion containing such aspects, see the report on SBI 60 in document [FCCC/SBI/2024/13](#), para. 150.
- 60 See, for example, the report on SBI 60 in document [FCCC/SBI/2024/13](#), para. 19.
- 61 See, for example, the report on COP 29 in document [FCCC/CP/2024/11](#), para. 130.



- 62 See, for example, the report on CMA 6 in document [FCCC/PA/CMA/2024/17](#), para. 42.
- 63 See, for example, the report on SBI 61 in document [FCCC/SBI/2024/25](#), para. 113. This may be contrasted with para. 58 in the same document, where a matter was forwarded to CMA 6 without any accompanying draft text.
- 64 See, for example, the report on SBI 61 in document [FCCC/SBI/2024/25](#), para. 48.
- 65 For an example of procedural conclusions containing such aspects, see the report on SBI 60 in document [FCCC/SBI/2024/13](#), para. 150.
- 66 For an example of this, see the report on SBI 60 in document [FCCC/SBI/2024/13](#), para. 19.
- 67 For an example of such procedural conclusions, see the report on SBI 60 in document [FCCC/SBI/2024/13](#), para. 23.
- 68 For an example of how an item that is subject to rule 16 is reflected in the report on the session, see the report on SBI 60 in document [FCCC/SBI/2024/13](#), para. 152.
- 69 See, for example, the statement at the beginning of [this "Co-chairs' non-paper"](#) from SB 61.
- 70 See rules 9, 10, and 16 of the draft rules of procedure.





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