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Subsidiary Body for Implementation

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Item 19 of the provisional agenda

Arrangements for intergovernmental meetings

Information on past sessions and regional distribution of observer organizations

Information paper by the secretariat

Summary

This document presents information on past sessions of the governing and subsidiary bodies, including the number of agenda items, the number of proposals for new agenda items, the number of facilitators required and the number of participants for 2012–2022, and the venue size and capacity and the size and number of meeting rooms for 2015–2022. It also presents information on the regional distribution of admitted and accredited observer organizations for 2012–2022.



Abbreviations and acronyms

CMA	Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement
COP	Conference of the Parties
IGO	intergovernmental organization
NGO	non-governmental organization
SB	sessions of the subsidiary bodies
SBI	Subsidiary Body for Implementation

I. Introduction

A. Mandate and scope

1. SBI 56 considered the efficiency of the UNFCCC process towards increasing ambition and strengthening implementation and agreed that consideration of this matter would continue at SBI 58.¹ It requested the secretariat to prepare an information paper on:

(a) Information on past sessions of the governing and subsidiary bodies, including number of agenda items, number of requests for new agenda items, number of facilitators required, number of participants, venue size and capacity, and size and number of meeting rooms;

(b) Information on regional distribution of admitted and accredited observer organizations over time.²

2. This paper provides information on all the elements referred to in paragraph 1 above for 2012–2022, with the exception of venue size and capacity and the size and number of meetings rooms, for which information is provided for the second sessional period in 2015–2022 only.

B. Possible action by the Subsidiary Body for Implementation

3. The SBI may wish to take note of the information contained in this paper in considering the efficiency of the UNFCCC process towards increasing ambition and strengthening implementation under this agenda item.

II. Information on past sessions

A. Number of agenda items and number of requests for new agenda items

4. Figure 1 presents the number of items included in the adopted agendas³ for the sessions of the governing and subsidiary bodies in 2012–2022, which ranges from 56 to 87 for the first sessional period of the year and from 131 to 203 for the second. The information presented shows an overall increase in the number of agenda items for both sessional periods over time, by an average annual growth rate of 1.9 per cent for the first sessional period and 3.4 per cent for the second. In 2016 the number of agenda items was up 21.4 and 12.0 per cent from the previous year for the first and second sessional periods respectively, owing to the adoption of the Paris Agreement and the establishment of the CMA. The number of agenda items increased further in 2019 following the adoption of the Paris Agreement work programme. Another significant increase occurred in the second sessional period in 2021, with the number of agenda items rising by 31.8 per cent compared with 2019, following the resumption of in-person sessions after the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic.⁴ In 2022, the number of agenda items for both sessional periods was higher than the pre-pandemic numbers.

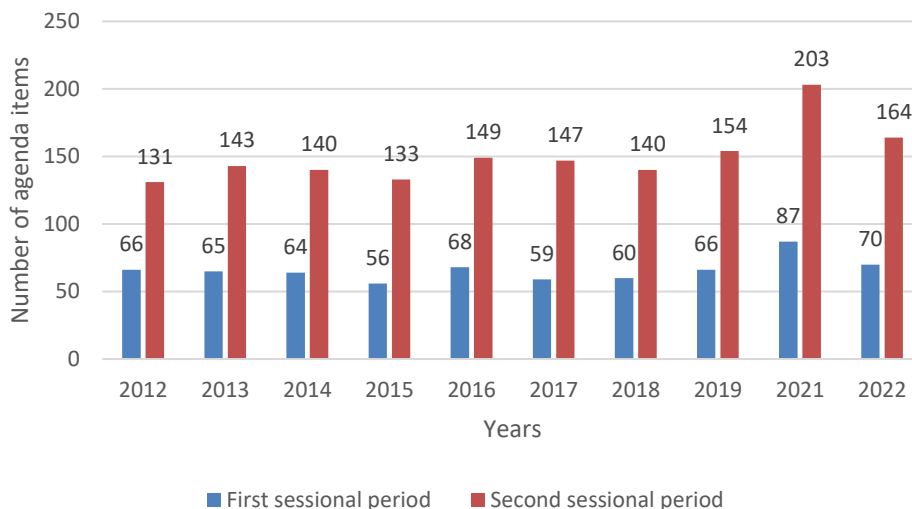
¹ FCCC/SBI/2022/10, para. 164.

² FCCC/SBI/2022/10, para. 163.

³ For the virtual May–June 2021 sessions of the subsidiary bodies, the number of provisional agendas of the subsidiary bodies was used as a proxy.

⁴ During the pandemic, in the absence of in-person sessions, the secretariat held the virtual UNFCCC June Momentum for Climate Change (June 2020), UNFCCC Climate Dialogues 2020 (November–December 2020) and May–June 2021 sessions of the subsidiary bodies. The postponed sessions were resumed at COP 26.

Figure 1
Number of items included in the adopted agendas for the sessions of the governing and subsidiary bodies in 2012–2022

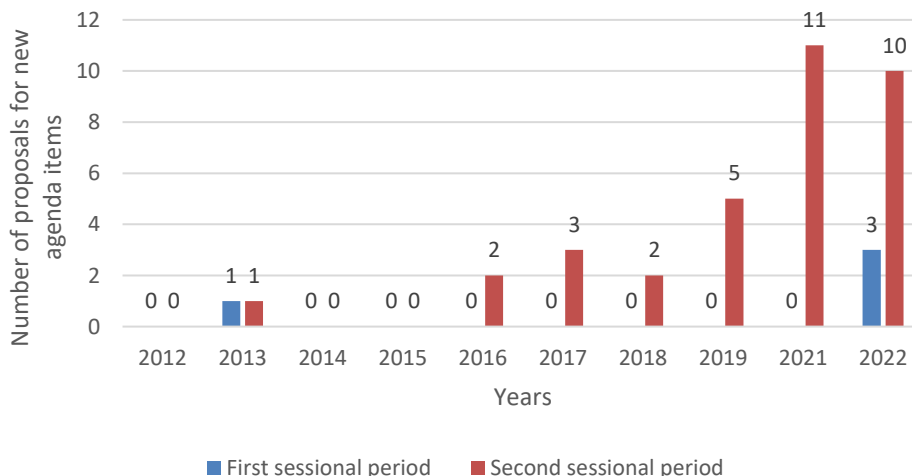


Notes: (1) The number of agenda items is counted for each body and then summed up for the session; (2) agenda sub-items are counted towards the total number of items (e.g. an agenda item with two sub-items is counted as two items).

5. As per rules 10(d) and 12 of the draft rules of procedure being applied, new items proposed by Parties shall be either included in the provisional agenda for a session if submitted by a Party and received by the secretariat before the provisional agenda is circulated or included in a supplementary provisional agenda if received after the provisional agenda has been produced but before the opening of the session. The number of proposals from Parties for agenda items referred to in this paper is based on the provisional agendas and supplementary provisional agendas for the sessions of the governing and subsidiary bodies.

6. Figure 2 shows the number of proposals from Parties for agenda items to be included in the provisional agendas for the sessions of the governing and subsidiary bodies in 2012–2022. Only four proposals were received for sessions held during the first sessional period of the year (one for SB 38 and three for SB 56). For the second sessional period, the number of proposals for new items was low between 2012 and 2018, ranging from 0 to 3 proposals per year, after which it increased to 5 proposals in 2019, 11 in 2021 and 10 in 2022.

Figure 2
Proposals for new agenda items to be included in the provisional agendas for the sessions of the governing and subsidiary bodies in 2012–2022

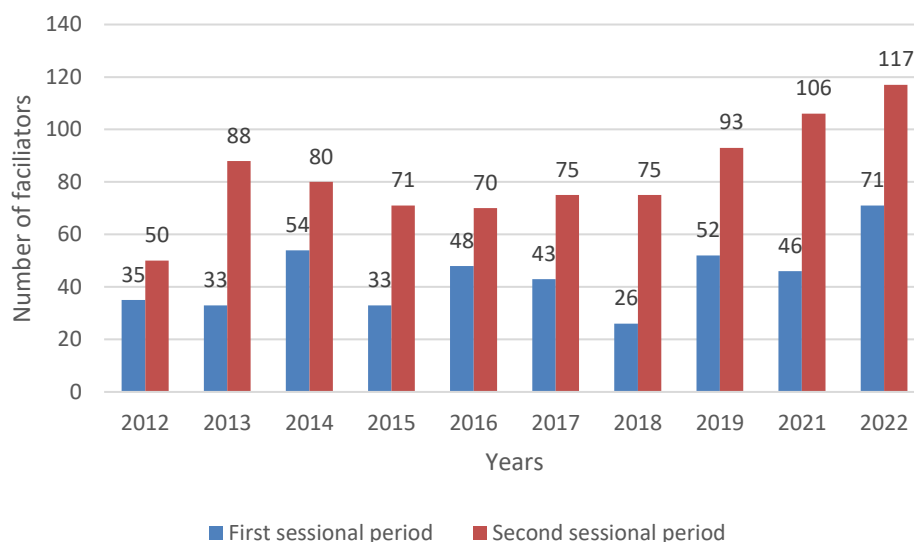


B. Number of facilitators required

7. Figure 3 shows the number of facilitators responsible for facilitating agenda items for, as well as those appointed to undertake consultations on behalf of the COP Presidency during the sessions of the governing and subsidiary bodies in 2012–2022, which ranges from 26 to 71 for the first sessional period of the year and from 50 to 117 for the second. This number did not appear to follow a clear upward or downward trend in the first sessional period, though a peak of 71 was reached in 2022. The number followed a generally increasing pattern for the second sessional period, with a continuous upward trend observed between 2018 and 2022 to a peak of 117 in 2022.

Figure 3

Number of facilitators required during the sessions of the governing and subsidiary bodies in 2012–2022

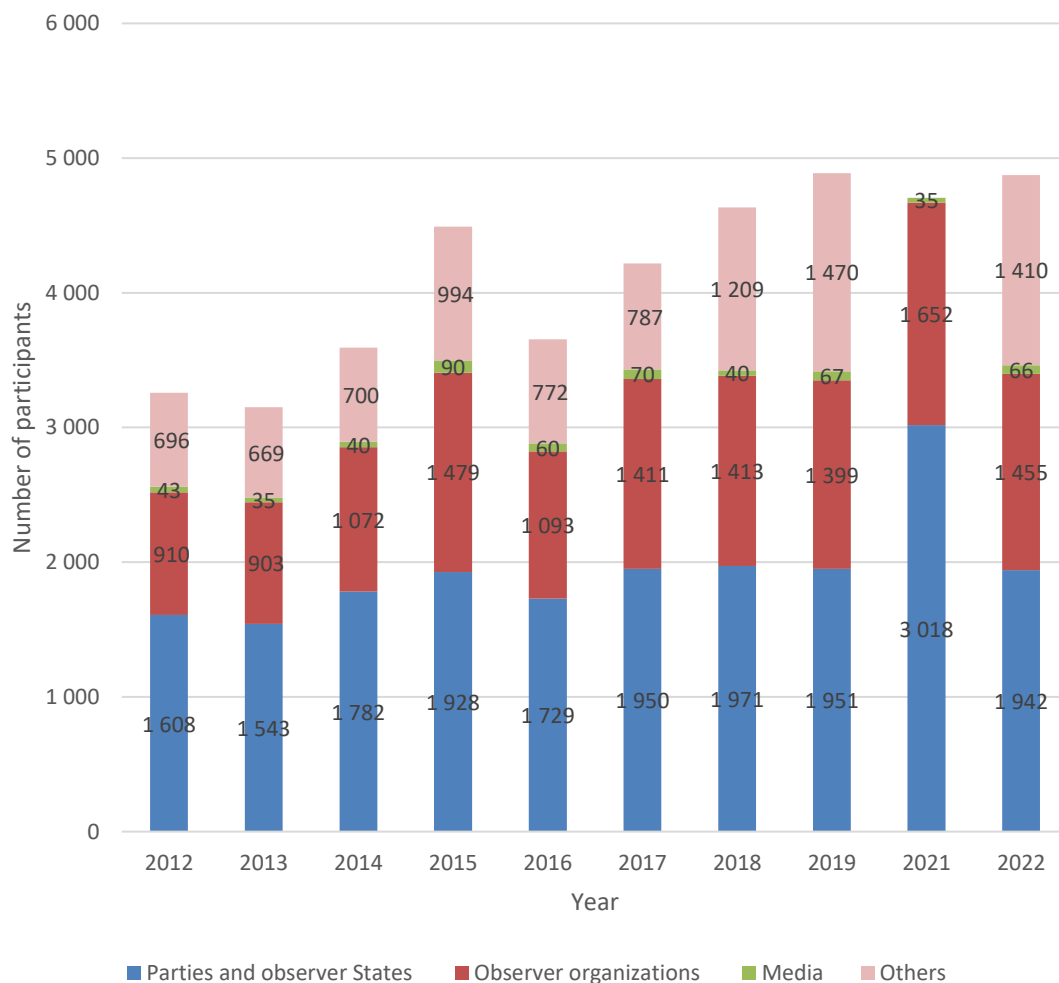


Notes: (1) For joint items, facilitators have only been counted once; (2) information is based on information in the reports on the sessions of the governing and subsidiary bodies.

C. Number of participants

8. Figure 4 shows that the number of participants at the sessions held in the first sessional period of the year ranged from 3,150 to 4,887 in 2012–2022. During this period, the number of participants followed an upward trend with an average annual growth rate of 5.3 per cent. The number of participants at the sessions held in the first sessional period in 2015, which took place immediately before COP 21, increased by 25 per cent compared with in 2014, followed by a decrease in 2016, after which the number increased, peaking in 2019.

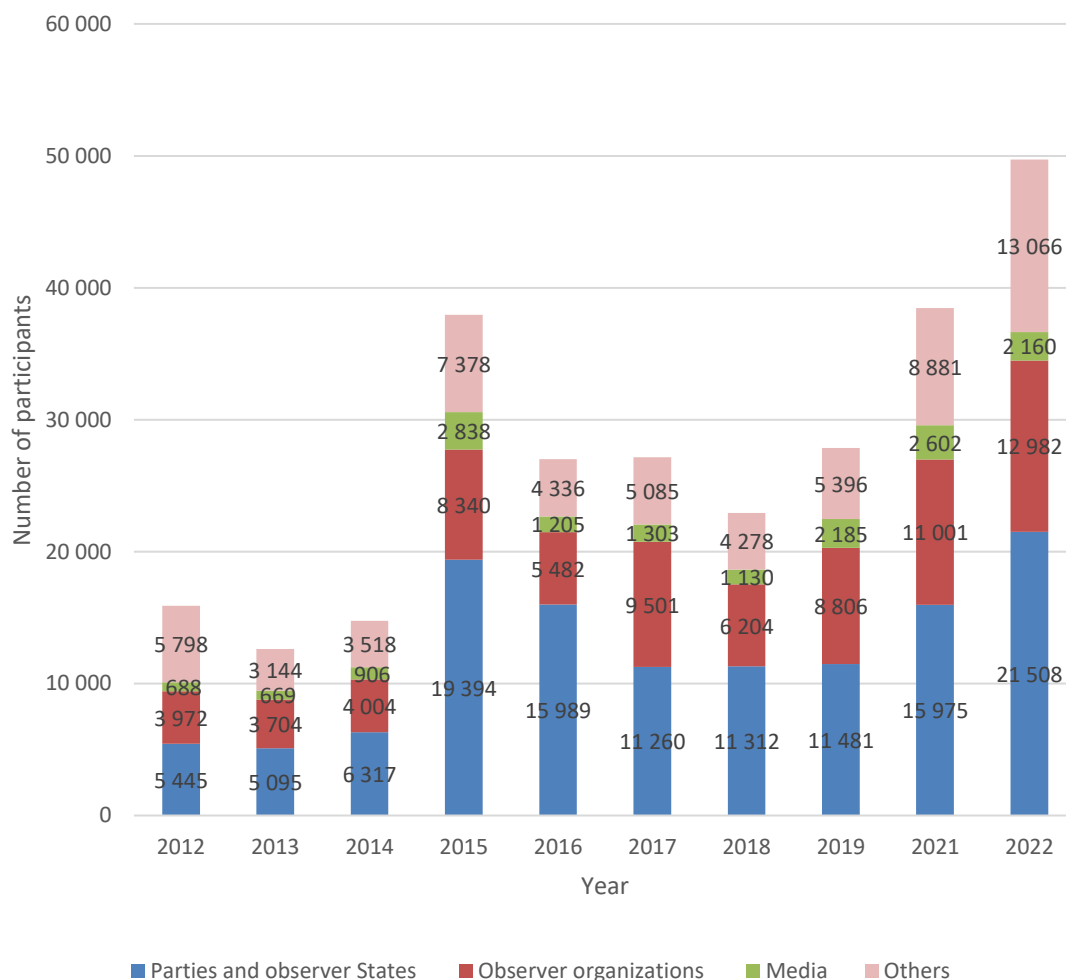
Figure 4
Number of participants at the sessions held in the first sessional period in 2012–2022



Note: “Others” refers to staff members (e.g. technical, local, security and secretariat staff) and temporary participants.

9. Figure 5 shows the number of participants that were registered and received badges for the sessions of the COP in 2012–2022. During this period, the average annual growth rate for the number of participants is 22.1 per cent. The information presented shows that, prior to COP 21 in 2015, the average number of participants was 14,420, rising to 37,950 in 2015 and then dropping to around 27,000 in 2016 and 2017. Since 2018, the number of participants has increased steadily by around 30 per cent per year, with the number in 2022 more than double that in 2018, at a record number of 49,716.

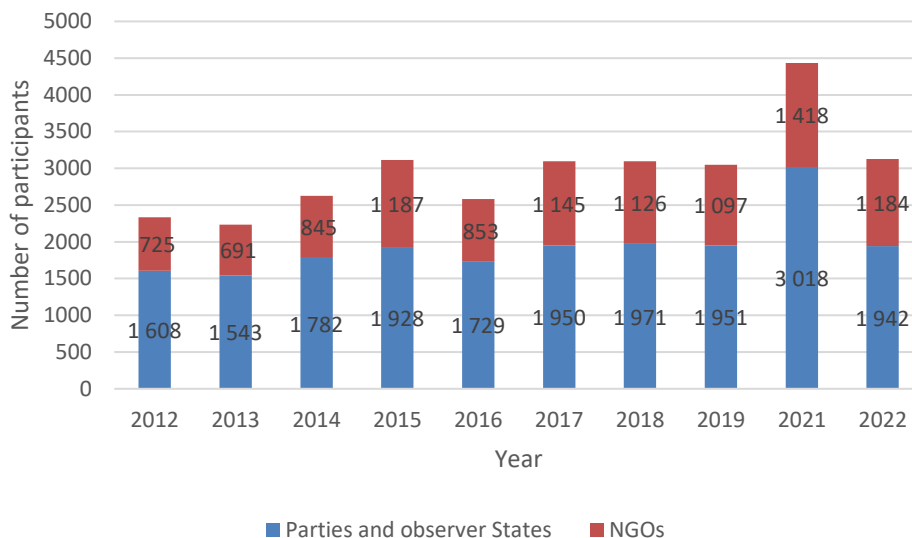
Figure 5
Number of participants at the sessions held at the second sessional period in 2012–2022



Note: “Others” refers to staff members (e.g. technical, local, security and secretariat staff) and temporary participants.

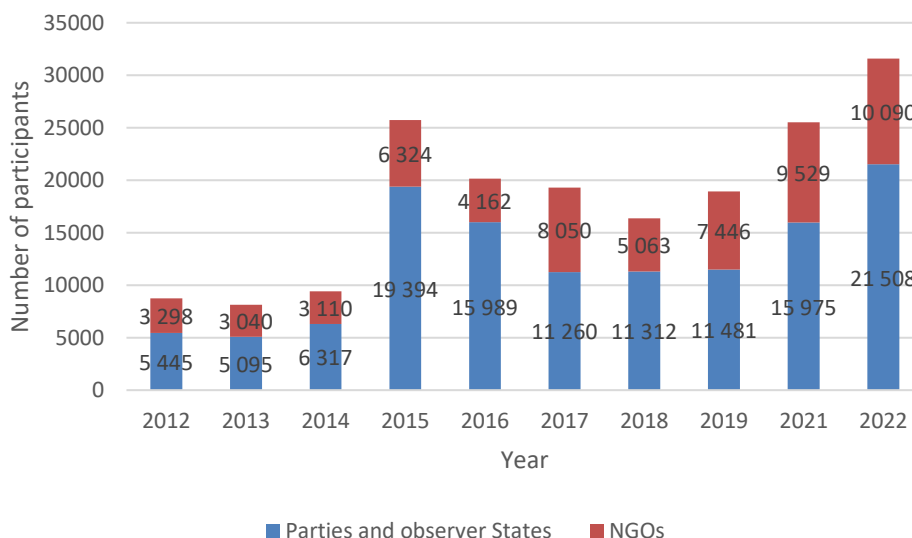
10. Figure 6 shows the number of delegates from Parties and NGOs, which account for around 45 and 23 per cent respectively of total participants, on average, who participated in the sessions held in the first sessional period in 2012–2022. The information presented shows that the number of Party delegates remained relatively constant during this period, increasing by 4.6 per cent per year on average, while the number of NGO delegates increased by 8.1 per cent in total over the same period. The significant increase in participants in the 2021 May–June sessional period compared with 2019 is likely due to the sessions being held virtually as a result of the pandemic, which made participation therein easier.

Figure 6
Number of delegates from Parties and non-governmental organizations who participated in the sessions held during the first sessional period in 2012–2022



11. Figure 7 shows the number of delegates from Parties and NGOs who participated in the sessions of the COP in 2012–2022. The information presented shows that the average annual growth rate for Party and NGO delegates is 28.1 and 22.3 per cent respectively. The trends observed are very similar to those shown in figure 5, with the number following an upward trend from 2018, almost doubling between 2018 and 2022. The number of NGO delegates in 2017 nearly doubled since 2016, which was mainly owing to the amount of space available for non-negotiation activities at COP 23, such as for events, exhibits and pavilions.

Figure 7
Number of delegates from Parties and non-governmental organizations who participated in the sessions held during the second sessional period in 2012–2022



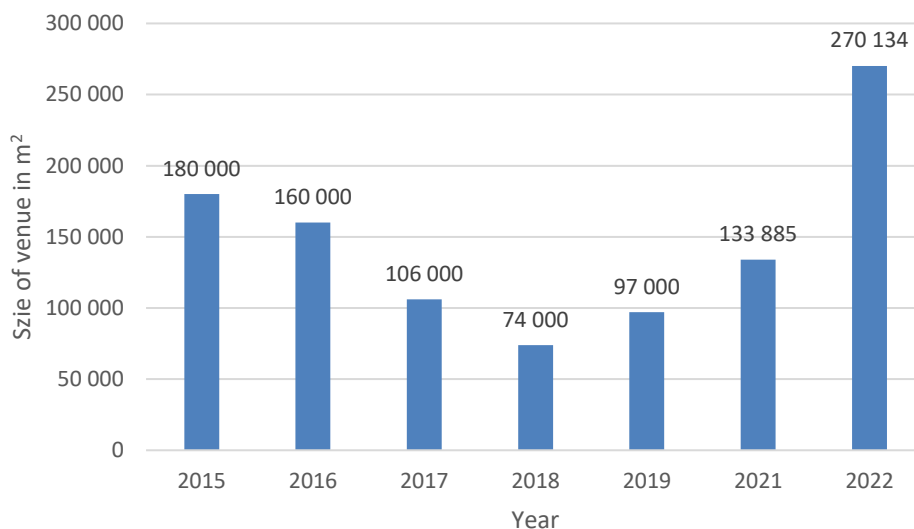
D. Size and capacity of venues

12. Figure 8 shows the size, in square metres, of the venues hosting the sessions of the COP in 2015–2022. The information presented shows that the size of the venues ranged from 74,000 to 270,134 m² during this period, with an average size of 145,860 m². The size started to decrease after 2015, falling to its lowest point in 2018, before starting to rise again and

peaking in 2022. This trend mirrors the change in the number of participants over the same period, as shown in figure 5, though the venue size is not purely driven by the number of participants. For example, the exceptional size of the venue in Sharm el-Sheikh in 2022 (270,134 m²) was in part due to the existing structure of the venue.

Figure 8

Size of the venues hosting the sessions of the Conference of the Parties in 2015–2022



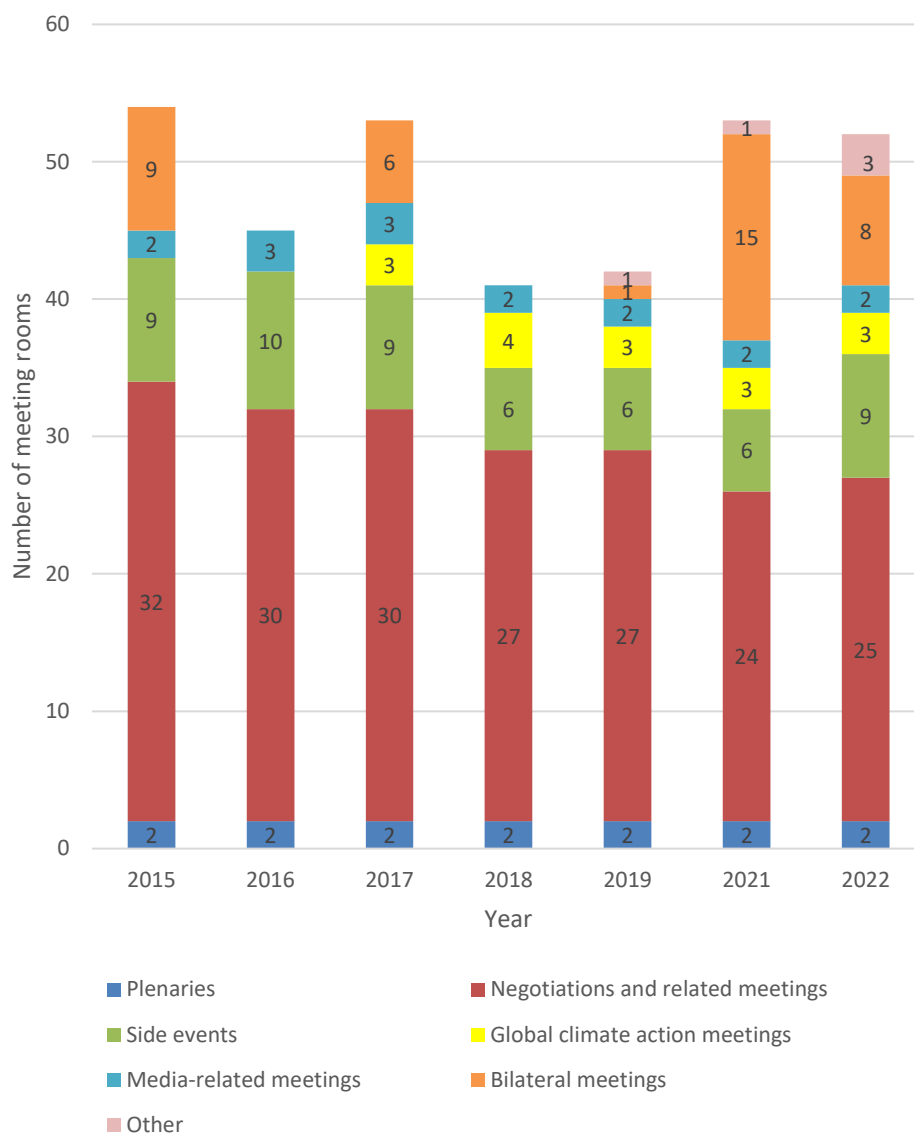
E. Size and number of meeting rooms

13. Figure 9 shows the number of meeting rooms used for the sessions of the COP in 2015–2022. The meeting rooms are used for, inter alia, plenaries, negotiations, mandated events, meetings of Parties, negotiation groups and observers, global climate action events, side events, and press conferences and other media-related meetings. The information presented shows a fluctuation in the total number of meeting rooms during this period, from 41 in 2018 to 54 in 2015, with no clear upward or downward trend observed.

14. Rooms used for negotiations and mandated events accounted for at least half of the total number of meeting rooms every year, though this share decreased from 65 per cent in 2015 to 50 per cent in 2021. Meanwhile, the number of rooms used for side events ranged from 6 to 10 in 2015–2022, the rooms used for plenaries remained constant at 2, the rooms for media-related meetings (including press conferences) remained virtually constant at 2 or 3, the rooms for global climate action events remained virtually constant at 3 or 4 since the introduction of such events in 2017, and the rooms used for bilateral meetings⁵ fluctuated greatly, accounting for as much as 28 per cent of all rooms in 2021 but being non-existent in 2016 and 2018.

⁵ Bilateral meetings are meetings that do not serve a negotiation purpose.

Figure 9
Number of meeting rooms, by type of meeting, used for the sessions of the Conference of the Parties in 2015–2022



Note: “Other” refers to the room used for events of the Paris Committee for Capacity-building in 2019–2022 and two rooms used for Presidency meetings in 2022.

15. The size of the aforementioned meeting rooms varied significantly, from 10 seats in small rooms for bilateral meetings to 1,600 seats in plenary rooms. The total capacity of all meeting rooms remained stable at approximately 8,500 seats from 2015 to 2022, with the exception of in 2021 in Glasgow with a total capacity of 4,000 seats owing to the need for social distancing measures in response to pandemic-related regulations.

III. Regional distribution of admitted and accredited observer organizations

16. IGOs and NGOs⁶ may be admitted to the UNFCCC process as observer organizations. Admission is a one-off exercise for the organizations and merely accords them the right to

⁶ This chapter only covers IGOs and NGOs, since other types of observer organizations are not required to follow the admission process set out in Article 7, para. 6, of the Convention.

request accreditation. Once admitted, IGOs and NGOs must request accreditation for each sessional period in order for their organizations to be represented.

17. Figure 10 shows the regional distribution of IGO and NGOs applying in a timely manner for admission as observers at sessions of the COP in 2012–2022, while figure 11 shows the regional distribution of admitted IGOs and NGOs and figure 12 the regional distribution of accredited IGOs and NGOs, with the regions of the organizations determined on the basis of the location of their headquarters, as specified in the certificate of incorporation submitted in support of admission. Figure 13 shows the regional distribution of registered participants from accredited IGOs and NGOs.

18. Figures 10 and 13 have been included in this paper to provide a comprehensive overview of the regional distribution of IGOs and NGOs from the application stage to participation.

Figure 10
Regional distribution of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations applying for admission as observers in 2012–2022

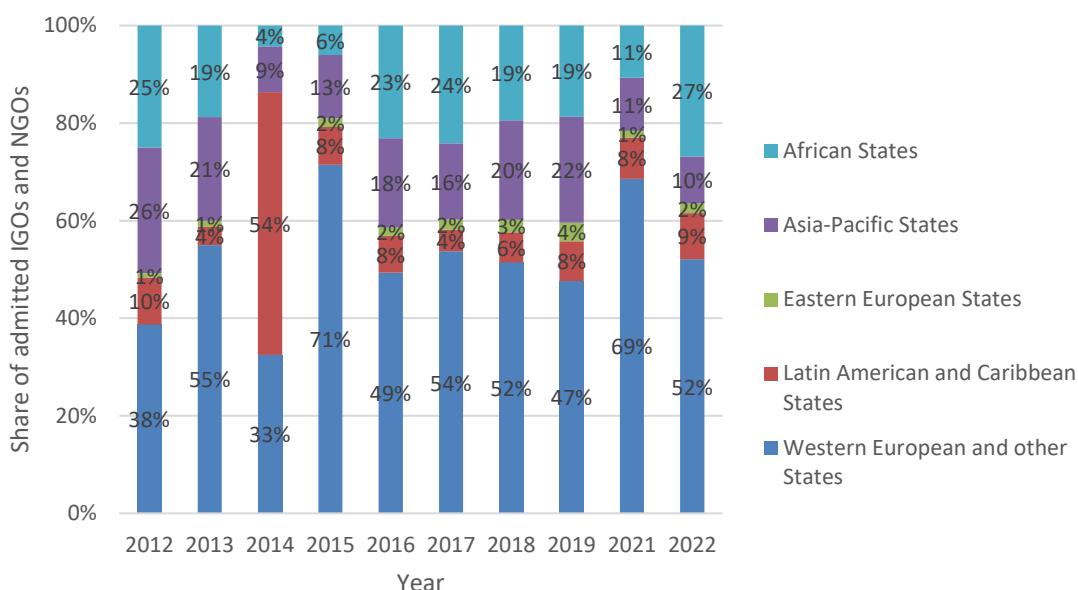


Figure 11
Regional distribution of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations admitted as observers in 2012–2022

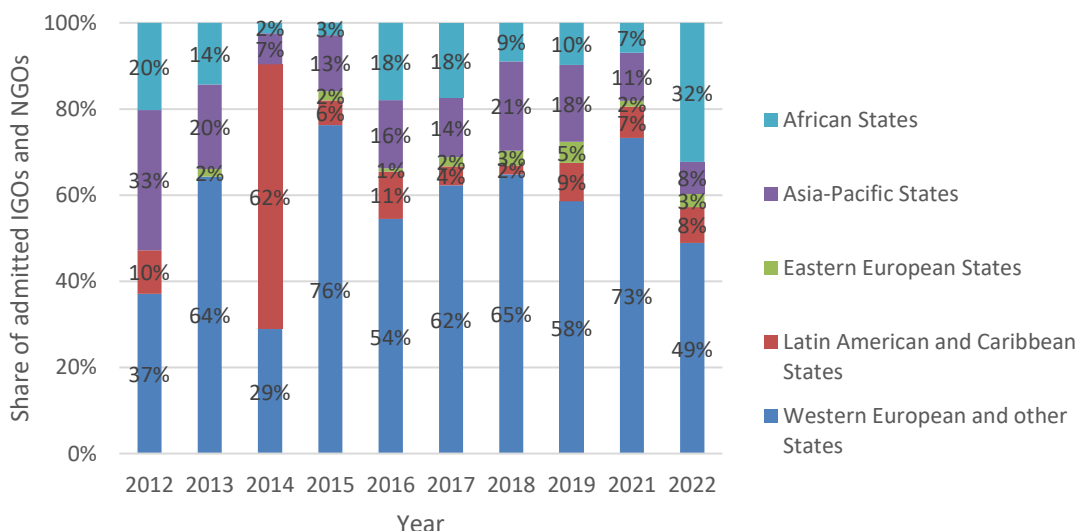


Figure 12
Regional distribution of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations accredited as observers for sessions of the Conference of the Parties in 2012–2022

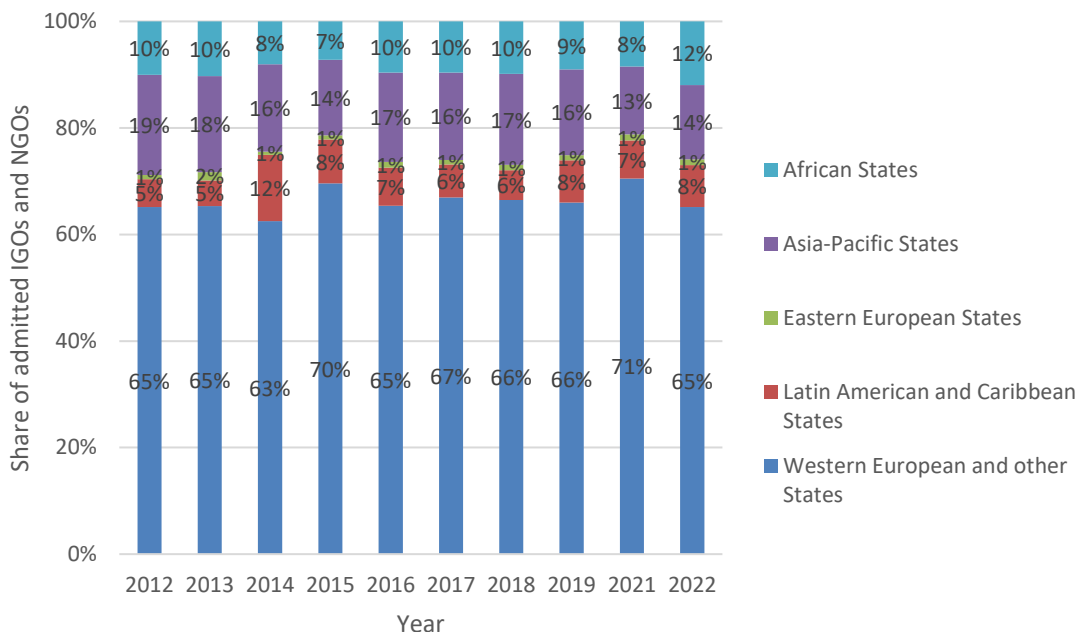
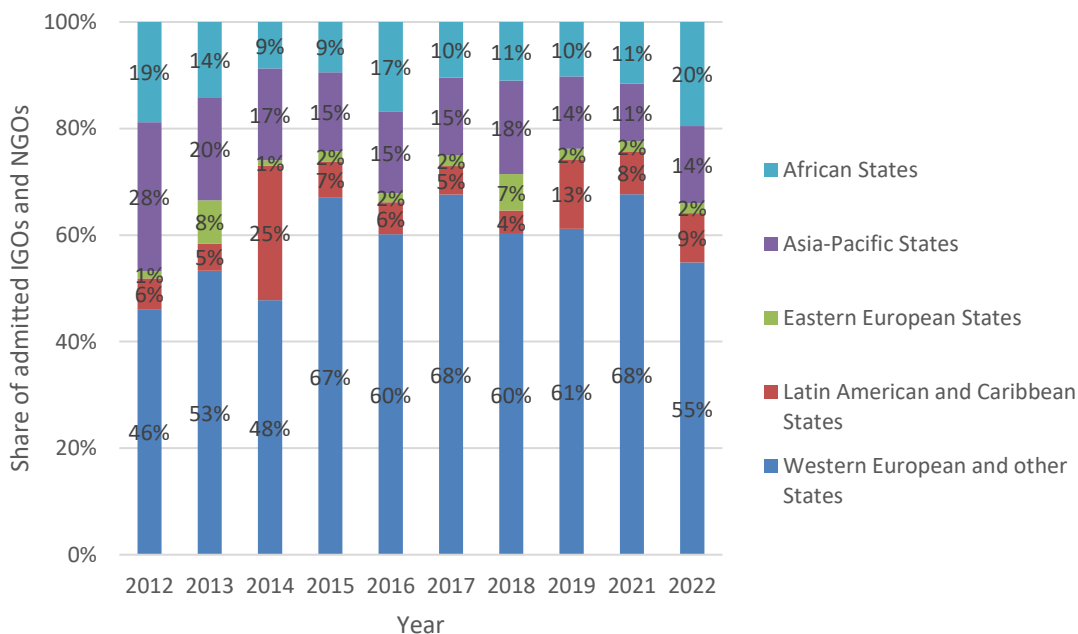


Figure 13
Regional distribution of registered participants from intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations accredited as observers for sessions of the Conference of the Parties in 2012–2022



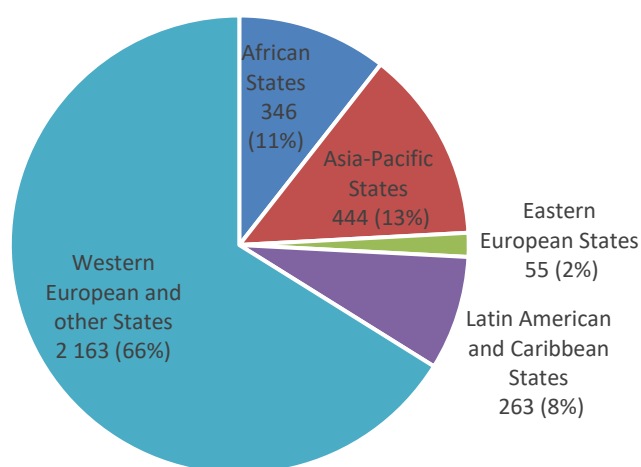
19. Figure 10 shows that organizations from Western European and other States accounted for the majority of those applying for admission in all years except 2014. Figure 11 indicates that applications from organizations from Western European and other States were successful more often than applications from organizations from other regions, with organizations from Western European and other States making up more than half of the admitted IGOs and NGOs in seven of the years shown. The share of admitted IGOs and NGOs from Latin American and Caribbean States increased dramatically to 62 per cent in 2014, when the sessions were held in Peru, a country within that region.

20. Figure 12 shows that accredited IGOs and NGOs from Western European and other States accounted for an average of 66 per cent of all accredited IGOs and NGOs in 2012–2022, followed by Asia-Pacific States (16 per cent), African States (10 per cent), Latin American and Caribbean States (7 per cent) and Eastern European States (1 per cent). Figure 13 shows that the share of registered participants from Western European and other States was lower than the share of accredited IGOs and NGOs from that region, except for in 2017, suggesting that accredited organizations from this region were nominating participants from other regions to their delegations.

21. Figure 14 presents the regional distribution of all IGOs and NGOs admitted as observers in the UNFCCC process as at COP 27.

Figure 14

Regional distribution of all intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations admitted as observers at sessions of the governing and subsidiary bodies



IV. Summary and observations

22. UNFCCC sessions have increased in scale in the last 10 years, a trend reflected in increases in the number of agenda items, requests received for new agenda items, the number of facilitators and participants, and venue size, with record highs in these areas observed in the past two years.

23. Since the adoption of the Paris Agreement and the establishment of the CMA at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris in 2015, the number of items included in the adopted agendas for the sessions of the governing and subsidiary bodies has increased substantially, reaching a record high of 203 items at COP 26, when in-person sessions resumed after the pandemic, and the number of agenda items for both sessional periods in 2022 was higher than the pre-pandemic numbers. The number of proposals for new agenda items has also increased, reaching a new peak in 2021 and remaining high in 2022, and reflects a growing interest in addressing a wider range of climate-related issues. In response to these increases, the number of facilitators also increased significantly, peaking at 71 at SB 56, for sessions held in the first sessional period of the year, and 117 at COP 27, for sessions held in the second sessional period of the year. In addition, the number of participants at sessions of the COP more than doubled from 2018 to 2022 to reach the highest number ever recorded (49,716 participants), with the venue size also peaking in 2022. The size and number of meeting rooms, however, did not follow the same upward trend.

24. There is a regional imbalance in terms of both admitted and accredited IGOs and NGOs. To compensate for the imbalance, the secretariat is making efforts to enhance the quality of engagement by observers from developing countries by encouraging NGO

constituencies and accredited IGOs and NGOs to nominate observers from developing countries to represent them at various in-session activities while respecting the rights of NGO constituencies and accredited IGOs and NGOs to determine who should represent them.

25. In conclusion, the increase in the scale of UNFCCC sessions reflects a growing awareness of the urgent need to address climate change. However, this is placing increasing pressure on host countries in terms of providing adequate facilities and on Parties, in particular small delegations, as well as presiding officers and the secretariat, in terms of having to manage more complex agendas with broader scopes.
