UNFCCC standard admission process for non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

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I. Admission of observer organizations: Guidance by Parties

Admission of observer organizations in the Convention process is subject to Article 7, paragraph 6, of the Convention, and to the draft rules of procedure being applied (FCCC/CP/1996/2). Article 7, paragraph 6, of the Convention reads: "Any body or agency, whether national or international, governmental or non-governmental, which is qualified in matters covered by the Convention, and which has informed the secretariat of its wish to be represented at a session of the Conference of the Parties as an observer, may be so admitted unless at least one third of the Parties present object. The admission and participation of observers shall be subject to the rules of procedure adopted by the Conference of the Parties."

In order to facilitate the implementation of Article 7, paragraph 6, working procedures have had to be developed. Mindful of the Convention, and drawing on general United Nations practice, Parties took note in 2004 of the procedures that the secretariat developed for the admission of IGOs and NGOs as observer organizations as well as in 2025 of an update to clarify the non-profit requirement. These procedures are publicly available on the secretariat web site, and state that intending observer organizations shall provide, inter alia:

(a) A statement of competence in Convention matters

(b) Confirmation of independent juridical personality

(c) Confirmation of non-profit status in a State member of the United Nations, or of one of its specialized agencies or of the International Atomic Energy Agency, or in a State Party to the International Court of Justice.

Entities which cannot provide the necessary documentation are not considered eligible for admission as observer organizations. Organizations which fulfil the criteria are included in a list of organizations which the secretariat recommends, through the Bureau, to the COP for admission as observers.

Parties also took note of the procedures for admission of observer organizations as below:

(a) Multilateral agreements that do not establish an independent juridical entity are not considered eligible for admission;

(b) Organizations which have been established by, and report to, governments and carry out government-mandated activities, but which cannot provide evidence of independence from government, are not considered eligible for admission. They are encouraged to participate as part of government delegations;

(c) Organizations which carry out functions on behalf of governments, including activities relating to the flexible mechanisms, provided that they meet the criteria listed in paragraph 8 above and that their governance structure is independent of governments, are considered eligible for admission.

Further details can be found in documents FCCC/SBI/2004/5 paragraphs 7 – 10 , FCCC/SBI/2004/10 paragraph 100, FCCC/SBI/2020/INF.8, FCCC/SBI/2022/10 paragraph 169, FCCC/SBI/2025/6, paragraph 38(e).

II. Application process

Why do I need to get observer status?

In order to attend any sessions or meetings of the UNFCCC, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have to be admitted by the Conference of the Parties (COP) as observer organizations to the UNFCCC process.

What is the deadline for submission of application and how long does the process take?

The secretariat is continuously receiving applications. Assessment will be conducted subject to the availability of resources.

Do I have to apply for observer status for each UNFCCC session?

Admission as observer organization to the UNFCCC is a one-off process and does not need to be repeated once observer status has been granted. However, in order for representatives to **attend any sessions of the UNFCCC**, the Designated Contact Point (DCP) of the already-admitted organization has to **register its representatives** through the Online Registration System (ORS) for the session they wish to attend within the set deadline. Please ensure that the contact details of the DCP of your organization are up to date, and in case a change is needed, kindly ensure the submission of the form well in advance of the relevant ORS deadlines. More information on how to submit a Contact Details Form (CDF) is available here.

My organization has observer status with ECOSOC and/or other UN agency, do I still need to apply for admission?

Yes, the UNFCCC admission process is independent from any other admission process under ECOSOC, or other UN organizations and agencies.

Where should I check if my organization is already admitted?

Before applying for observer status, please check whether your organization has **already been admitted** at the links below. If it has been already admitted, you do not need to re-apply in the OAS.

- List of admitted NGOs
- List of admitted IGOs

What are the eligibility criteria?

Please note the following established practice on eligibility (see section III. "Mandate and legal provisions" for more details on eligibility criteria):

- Organizations have to furnish proof of **independent juridical personality**, therefore:
    - Universities can only apply as a whole. Affiliate schools, institutes or departments of a university are not eligible for admission.
    - Networks and initiatives can apply only if independent juridical personality is proved.
- **"Higher-order principle": Regional, national or sub-national offices, branches, chapters, affiliates, etc.** of an organization are not eligible. Their representatives are advised to come under the umbrella of their parent organization. This principle applies also to independently operating entities of the same name/brand.
- In line with the provisions regarding organizations which have been established by, and report to, governments and carry out government-mandated activities, **local governments and municipal authorities** are not considered eligible for admission. They are advised to participate in the UNFCCC process either as part of national government delegations or through other observer organizations already admitted by the Conference of the Parties, such as Inter-Parliamentary Union, GLOBE International, ICLEI, C40, Climate Alliance, that are networks of elected members of federal/national, regional and local governments.
- By extension political parties are not eligible for admission for their purpose of being in the executive branch of a government. Members of political parties are invited to participate through the nominations by Parties to the Convention or already admitted organizations.
- Your organization must have completed at least one full accounting year as at the time of application. This is anyway necessary for your organization to be able to submit one of the required documents, i.e., the financial statement that covers a full accounting year.
- Your organization must demonstrate competence in matters covered by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol, and/or the Paris Agreement.
- For-profit entities and individuals are not eligible for admission.

How do I apply for admission?

All applications for admission must be duly submitted through the UNFCCC Online Admission System (OAS), no applications by email or post will be accepted. After completing uploading the required documents in OAS and entering the pages where the relevant information can be found in each document uploaded, make sure to submit the application in the system. Applications under the status 'draft' will not be assessed. For more information in the OAS, please refer to the OAS User Manual.

What do I need to know before applying for admission?

- Check if your organization is already admitted (NGOs/ IGOs).
- If your organization is a national/regional chapter of an already-admitted umbrella of the organization, you do not need to apply.
- Your organization needs to be at least one year old at the time of submission of the application.
- Read carefully the OAS User Manual in case of **any technical problems**.
- Please do not submit your application more than **once** as it slows down the review process.
- Applications must be **complete**, including all required official documents and information and indication of the pages in which the relevant information can be found. Incomplete or draft applications will not be considered for review.

What do I need to know when completing my application in OAS?

- Applications are **only** accepted in **one of the six official UN languages** (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish). The review of your application will not commence unless the documents are in one of the UN languages.
- If **your organization is located in non-UN language speaking country**, the documents for items 2-5 (as indicated in Documents tab in the OAS) **must be** submitted in the **original language** along with a **full translation** in one of the official UN languages. Translation must be certified or notarized.
- Once you submit your application, please be informed that the assessor may contact the applicant during the review cycle. The applicant is bound to regularly check the inbox/spam folder to be able to timely act upon the request made by the assessor. Please make sure that the applicant's email address is up to date (refer to OAS user manual).
- The communication log in the OAS is the channel between the applicant and the assessment team during the review process.

What documents do I need to apply for admission?

1.	Letter of application from the head of the organization. a) The letter has to be signed by the head of organization, i.e. the highest-ranking official. Provide a proof that the head is the highest-ranking official (e.g. official communication or web posting). If your organization is a university, the letter of application must come from the President/Chancellor/Rector of the university. b) The letter has to include a paragraph confirming compliance with the UNFCCC guidelines and policies by representatives of the organization. A template for the letter is available under item 1 in the upload documents section of your OAS account. c) It is encouraged to include a paragraph on your organization's anti-discrimination policy, e.g.: I confirm that my organization does not tolerate any form of discrimination whatsoever on the basis of race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation or national origin.
2.	Copies of signed and/or certified articles of association, bylaws, statutes, or constitution detailing the mandate, scope and governing structure of the organization. a) The documents should include information on the handling of assets in case of dissolution of the organization and amendments to those documents. b) If the statutory objectives of these documents do not relate to matters covered by the UN Climate Change Convention, please submit another official document to that effect (e.g. strategic plans, decisions or resolutions) endorsed by the governing body of the organization (board of directors, general assembly, executive committee, etc.).
3.	Certificate of incorporation/registration/establishment of the organization issued, stamped, and signed by a government authority in the country where your organization's headquarters is located. Any other document will not be accepted.
4.	Certificate of the non-profit status of the organization issued, stamped, and signed by a government authority in the country where your organization headquarters are located. Alternatively, an organization may prove its non-profit status by providing a copy of the relevant law/regulation certifying the non-profit status of the organization due to its legal nature. Any other document will not be accepted.
5.	A financial statement of the organization of the most recent accounting year, including income and expenditure breakdowns.
6.	List of the names of all donors and other funding sources in the last two years. The treatment of the information is strictly confidential.
7.	Evidence of competence in the matters covered by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. For example, substantial evidence of activities in the area of climate change or environmental protection. The evidence should not be older than 12 months.
8.	List of networks your organization is part of and/or affiliations with other organizations involved in climate change activities.
9.	In the case of research institutes, including universities, evidence of academic independence or academic freedom of your organization (e.g. relevant sections of state law, certificate from a 3rd party institution that certify independence, etc.).

I have submitted my application for admission, what is next?

Your organization's application will be assessed by the secretariat for eligibility against the criteria set by the Convention. During the assessment, one of our assessors may contact the applicant in the communication log in the OAS to request more information or clarification. The names of the organizations whose applications are deemed eligible will be further submitted to the Bureau of the COP, CMP and the CMA for its attention.

Eligible applicant organizations, following the view expressed by the Bureau of the COP, CMP and the CMA, may then be granted provisional admission in order that they may make arrangements to attend the conference on the understanding that the final authority for the admission of observers rests with the COP. Please see the indicative timeline available here.

How can I communicate with the secretariat during the application process?

If you have any further questions, please address them through the **communication log in the OAS**.

III. Mandate and legal provisions

See also the relevant section on the UNFCCC website.

Mandate for admission

EXTRACT FROM THE UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Article 7, paragraph 6

"The United Nations, its specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency, as well as any State member thereof or observers thereto not Party to the Convention, may be represented at sessions of the Conference of the Parties as observers. Any body or agency, whether national or international, governmental or non-governmental, which is qualified in matters covered by the Convention, and which has informed the secretariat of its wish to be represented at a session of the Conference of the Parties as an observer, may be so admitted unless at least one third of the Parties present object. The admission and participation of observers shall be subject to the rules of procedure adopted by the Conference of the Parties."

Eligibility procedures

The secretariat informed SBI 20 of its procedures concerning eligibility, which SBI duly noted (see FCCC/SBI/2004/10, paragraph 100). These procedures provide, inter alia, that applicant organizations are required to furnish proof of their independent juridical personality and non-profit and/or tax-exempt status in a State Member of the United Nations, of one of its specialized agencies or of the International Atomic Energy Agency, or in a State Party to the International Court of Justice Organizations.

Please see chapter II. "Admission of observer organizations" of FCCC/SBI/2004/5.

Furthermore, Parties requested at COP 25, to review the current admission process, for which the secretariat prepared an information note (FCCC/SBI/2020/INF.8). After reviewing, the SBI took note of the current eligibility procedure as it is (FCCC/SBI/2022/10, paragraph 169).

SBI 62 took note of an update to clarify the non-profit requirement (FCCC/SBI/2025/6, paragraph 38(e)).

Single admission process for COP, CMP and CMA

In accordance with decision 36/CMP.1, which provides that a single process would be used for the admission of observer organizations to sessions of the COP and of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP), with decisions on admission of observer organizations being taken by the COP, admitted observer organizations may be represented at sessions of both COP and CMP as well as their subsidiary bodies in the Convention process.

Furthermore, in accordance with decision 2/CMA.1, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA) decided that when applying the draft rules of procedure of the Conference of the Parties, pursuant to Article 16, paragraph 5, of the Paris Agreement, with respect to draft rules 6 and 7, a single process would be used for the admission of observer organizations to sessions of the COP and the CMA, with decisions on the admission of observer organizations being taken by the COP.