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**United Nations
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**United Nations Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment Programme**

First session

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Items 5, 6, 7 of the provisional agenda*

Policy issues

**Follow-up to and implementation of the outcomes of
United Nations summits, in particular the United Nations
Conference on Sustainable Development, and major
intergovernmental meetings of relevance to the United
Nations Environment Assembly**

**Budget and programme of work for the biennium
2016-2017 and the Environment Fund and other
budgetary matters**

**Draft resolutions/decisions prepared by the Committee of
Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment
Programme for consideration by the first session of the
United Nations Environment Assembly**

Addendum

**Policy on stakeholder engagement in the United Nations Environment
Programme**

* UNEP/EA.1/1.

Policy on stakeholder engagement in the United Nations Environment Programme

(Working draft as at 19 June 2014)

Note

This policy was prepared by the secretariat of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) pursuant to Governing Council decision 27/2 on the implementation of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, adopted by the Governing Council of UNEP at its first universal session, held in Nairobi from 18 to 22 February 2013. That decision called for the active participation of all relevant stakeholders, particularly those from developing countries, to be ensured, drawing on best practices and models from relevant multilateral institutions, and for new mechanisms to be explored to promote transparency and the effective engagement of civil society in the work of the governing body of the United Nations Environment Programme and that of its subsidiary organs, building on best practices in multilateral organizations.*

This policy therefore sets forth the proposed new mechanisms for the promotion of transparency and the effective engagement of civil society with the Assembly and its subsidiary organs, to be submitted to the Assembly at its first session, to be held in Nairobi from 23 to 27 June 2014.

* This policy builds on best practices of stakeholder engagement in multilateral organizations. The secretariat of UNEP prepared a *Review of Current Practices of Stakeholder Engagement in Multilateral Organizations*, released in July 2013, as called for by Governing Council decision 27/2 (http://www.unep.org/civil-society/Portals/24105/documents/resources/stakeholder_engagement/Review_of_current_practices_of_stakeholder_engagement_in_multilateral_organisations_30July_2013.pdf).

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1. Background

1. The participation of stakeholders in the work of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is rooted in Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and in paragraph 88 (h) of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled “The future we want”, which calls for “the active participation of all relevant stakeholders, drawing on best practices and models from relevant multilateral institutions and exploring new mechanisms to promote transparency and the effective engagement of civil society” within the framework of its decision on strengthening the role of the United Nations Environment Programme as the leading global environmental authority.¹

2. Paragraph 7 of decision 27/2 of the UNEP Governing Council on the implementation of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, adopted by the Governing Council at its first universal session in February 2013, mandates the governing body to ensure the active participation of all relevant stakeholders, particularly those from developing countries, drawing on best practices and models from relevant multilateral institutions and to explore new mechanisms to promote transparency and the effective engagement of civil society in its work and that of its subsidiary organs, inter alia by:

- (a) Developing by 2014 a process for stakeholder accreditation and participation that builds on the existing rules of procedure and takes into account inclusive modalities of the Commission of Sustainable Development and other relevant United Nations bodies;
- (b) Establishing by 2014 mechanisms and rules for stakeholders’ expert input and advice;
- (c) Enhancing by 2014 working methods and processes for informed discussions and contributions by all relevant stakeholders towards the intergovernmental decision-making process.

3. While input from stakeholders can provide a valuable contribution to the intergovernmental process, decision-making within UNEP remains the prerogative of member States. This policy is intended to facilitate the effective engagement of stakeholders in the work of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme and that of its subsidiary organs, and in the work of UNEP. The policy provides a set of principles and guidance to UNEP, its staff and stakeholders, and is intended to enhance practices in working and dealing with stakeholders in both routine and special circumstances, and to facilitate the effective engagement of stakeholders in the governance of UNEP. The policy will be accompanied by an implementation handbook, which will be drafted upon approval of the policy.²

4. The policy is aligned with all relevant UNEP and United Nations rules and regulations, as well as with the guidelines and initiatives relating to United Nations cooperation with stakeholders.³ It further builds on General Assembly resolution 67/290 on the format and organizational aspects of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

¹ General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex.

² The policy will be complemented by an implementation handbook, determining the operational and self-organization modalities of the Major Groups and Stakeholders Mechanism, which will be developed by the UNEP secretariat in an open and transparent manner upon approval of the policy.

³ Several reference documents guide the work of UNEP and the United Nations in working with stakeholders. These include the following: “Guidelines for participation of major groups and stakeholders in policy design at UNEP” (August 2009) (<http://www.unep.org/civil-society/Portals/24105/documents/Guidelines/Guidelines-for-CSO-participation-Aug2609.pdf>); “UNEP and indigenous peoples: a partnership in caring for the environment” (November 2012) (http://www.unep.org/civil-society/Portals/24105/documents/Guidelines/UNEP_Indigenous_Peoples_Policy_Guidance_endorsed_by_SMT_26_11_12.pdf); “UNEP guidelines for the development of national legislation on access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters” (February 2010) (http://www.unep.org/civil-society/Portals/24105/documents/Guidelines/GUIDELINES_TO_ACCESS_TO_ENV_INFO_2.pdf); “Guidelines on cooperation between UNEP and business” (March 2004); “Guidelines on cooperation between the United Nations and the business community” (July 2000); and the UNEP partnership policy and procedures (September 2011).

Purpose of the policy

5. The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development called in several instances⁴ for strengthened public participation, access to information and access to justice in environmental matters, and underlined the importance of partnerships with civil society in achieving the ambitions of its outcome document.

6. UNEP engages with civil society to benefit from its wide knowledge and experience in sustainable development and its involvement in UNEP processes and activities in keeping the environment under review and setting the global environmental agenda; in developing and implementing policies and programmes; and in improving environmental decision-making, as intergovernmental decisions will have broader recognition by and support from the public if the views of stakeholders are taken into account in the agenda-setting, policymaking, decision-making and implementation processes.

7. Civil society stakeholders often provide a way to channel the voices of those most likely to be affected by environmental problems and related policies, calling attention to emerging environmental problems, taking account of the interests of future generations and reaching out to society and the public at large.

2. The policy

A. Guiding principles

8. In accordance with the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, and taking into account the principles adopted by major groups and stakeholders at the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum in February 2013, prior to the first universal session of the Governing Council of UNEP, this policy is founded on the following principles:⁵

8.1. *Acknowledgement of the intergovernmental nature of UNEP processes, as set out in paragraph 3 above*

8.2. *Participation in decision-making processes*

UNEP will grant participation and access privileges to all accredited stakeholders, consistent with the rules and practices governing its work. UNEP may also use social media and new information technology to foster broader participation.

8.3. *Access to information*

It is critically important to disseminate and make accessible the information concerning its work or information generated through its programme as widely as possible. Transparency, accountability, and openness can become a catalyst for achieving a greater impact. In particular in the context of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, it is of fundamental importance to make available relevant information to stakeholders and the public in general.

8.4. *Transparency and accountability for mutual benefit*

Engagement with major groups and stakeholders is based on the premise of mutual trust and benefit, transparency, responsibility and accountability.

8.5. *Respect for diversity of views and self-organization*

UNEP acknowledges the diversity of views among its stakeholders and, in striving for greater openness and with a view to embracing the full spectrum of civil society actors, including the UNEP national committees, will ensure that those differing voices are heard, including those outside the nine major groups.

⁴ In the outcome document, extensive reference is made to the involvement of civil society and stakeholders (see, for example, paras. 42 to 55 on engaging major groups and other stakeholders). In addition, paragraph 99 reads: "We encourage action at the regional, national, subnational and local levels to promote access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters, as appropriate"

⁵ *Principles on Stakeholder Participation in UNEP*, adopted at the fourteenth Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum, 17 February 2013 (http://www.unep.org/civil-society/Portals/24105/documents/GMGSF/GMGSF%2014/Stakeholder_participation_principles/Participation_and_Transparency_11_principles_as_adopted.pdf).

8.6. *Improvements to current engagement practices*

UNEP will promote continuous improvement of its current practices, including opportunities for exploring innovative mechanisms, without regression and with regard to current practice.

B. Definition of stakeholders

9. UNEP applies the nine major groups approach, based on the categories of stakeholders as outlined in Agenda 21 and as noted in Governing Council decision SS.VII/5 of 15 February 2002.

10. UNEP therefore recognizes as stakeholders the nine major groups: farmers (including small-scale farmers, fisherfolks, pastoralists and foresters);⁶ women; the scientific and technological community (including research and academia); children and youth; indigenous peoples and their communities; workers and trade unions; business and industry;⁷ non-governmental organizations; and local authorities.

10.bis. UNEP recognizes the particular importance of environmental non-governmental organizations within the non-governmental organizations major group. UNEP will promote the participation of other stakeholders, such as local communities; volunteer groups and foundations; migrants and families; older persons; and persons with disabilities through the nine major groups.

C. Accreditation criteria and process

11. Accreditation is the main prerequisite for stakeholder participation in the governance of UNEP. Stakeholders, as referred to in paragraph 9 above, seeking observer status with the Assembly and its subsidiary organs must be accredited according to the process set out below.

12. Accreditation will be granted to stakeholders meeting the [following] criteria [as set out in the Rules of procedure.] [contained in the rules of procedure.]:

1. [Being legally constituted] as a not-for-profit entity in a given country;

[Ensure that their own aims and purposes shall be in conformity with the spirit, purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations;]

[It should ensure, to the extent possible, participation of stakeholders from all regions, and particularly the developing countries, in order to help achieve a just, balanced, effective and genuine involvement of stakeholders from all regions and areas of the world.] (suggest to move to the section on guiding principles)

[regional balance, manage the number of accredited stakeholders]
2. Having been constituted for more than two years;
3. Having a [track record and [credentials]] [proven] interest in environmental issues; [or sustainable development;]
4. Having a national or international scope of activities.

13. Accreditation with the United Nations Economic and Social Council [and/or multilateral environmental agreements]
Stakeholders accredited with the United Nations Economic and Social Council [and/or with multilateral environmental agreements having equivalent accreditation criteria [, for which UNEP serves as Secretariat]] and who provide sufficient proof of such accreditation will receive UNEP accreditation upon request.

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