

Update on the Stakeholder Engagement Policy

Report to the 3rd annual subcommittee meeting of the CPR and the 132nd meeting of the CPR

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1. Background

The Rio+20 outcome document “The Future We Want” in its paragraph 88(h), invited UNEP to review its mechanisms for Major Groups and Stakeholders’ participation. It states:

“We are committed to strengthening the role of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda (...) (and) (h) Ensure 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.”

Subsequently, the UNEP Governing Council at its first universal session in February 2013 adopted decision 27/2 on institutional arrangements for UNEP governance which, in its paragraph 7:

“Decide[d] that the governing body will ensure the active participation of all relevant stakeholders, particularly those from developing countries, drawing on best practices and models from relevant multilateral institutions and will explore new mechanisms to promote transparency and the effective engagement of civil society in its work and that of its subsidiary bodies, 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 mechanism 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”*

The draft stakeholder engagement policy (SEP) was discussed at the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-1) in June 2014. While considerable progress had been made since the policy was debated in the first meeting of the open-ended Committee of

Permanent Representatives to UNEP (24-28 March 2014), UNEA-1 could not conclude with an agreed text of the policy and relevant amendments to the UNEA rules of procedures. Therefore, it is left to the second session of UNEA (UNEA-2) in May 2016 to take a final decision. The text of the policy as left by the end of UNEA-1 (with bracketed text) can be found in the annex of this report.

2. The Informal Process

For the inter-sessional period until OECPR-2 (February 2015 – January 2016) an informal process was put in place by the CPR to discuss open issues with respect to SEP.

As recommended by the CPR Chair at the 2nd annual meeting of CPR subcommittee in October 2014, informal consultations have been taking place with member States, under the leadership of the President of the UNEA Bureau, to come up with new proposals on the outstanding elements of SEP. The UNEP Secretariat of Governing Bodies provided expert support to the informal process.

In leading the informal process, the UNEA President decided to focus mainly on those issues in the SEP that were not agreed upon during UNEA-1.

These include:

Definition of Stakeholder (Paragraph 10 bis)

Paragraph 10 bis calls for UNEP to promote the participation of stakeholders such as local communities; volunteer groups and foundations; migrants and families; older persons; and persons with disabilities through the nine major groups.

a. Accreditation process and criteria (Paragraph 11 – 16)

Paragraph 12 still contains bracketed text, with respect to criteria for accreditation. In this context in particular, regional balance of accredited stakeholders as well as the question of whether accreditation should be limited to organizations working in the field of the environment or extended to organizations working in the area of sustainable development was discussed during UNEA-1. Paragraph 14d is related to this. Some member States proposed that legal registration should not be a requirement (12.1.).

Paragraph 13 still contains bracketed text with respect to providing accreditation to MGS that are already accredited with multilateral agreements.

Paragraph 15 deals with who approves requests for accreditation – the Secretariat, CPR or UNEA and against which criteria (criteria listed in the policy or “Veto Right” for member States).

b. Access to pre-session and in-session documents

Paragraph 18d still has bracketed text that relates the paragraph to UNEP's Access to Information Policy.

c. Meetings of accredited MGS with the UNEA Bureau

Paragraph 26 foresees that the UNEA Bureau and its subsidiary organs may hold informal consultations with representatives of accredited stakeholders on specific items of mutual interest. This was objected by some member States on the grounds that the UNEA Bureau is only in charge for procedural matters and not matters relating to substantive issues. Therefore, it was suggested to either delete this paragraph or to limit the scope of such meetings to the Assembly process or procedural matters.

3. Meetings Held

During the informal process, meetings were organized at UNEP offices in Nairobi, Beijing, Brussels and in the margins of various events in New York and in Bangkok

During these meetings, representatives of the following countries participated:

-Argentina, Brazil, China, Egypt, Norway, Russia, USA, Zimbabwe, and the European Union as well as Ambassador Julia Pataki, Chair of the Working Party on SEP during UNEA-1.

Furthermore, a meeting with the representative of the UNEP's Major Groups Facilitating Committee, took place.

A briefing on the SEP consultation process was given to representatives of Major Groups and Stakeholders during the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development held in July 2015 in New York.

4. Key Issues and the Way Forward

During the above mentioned meetings, discussions focused mainly on accreditation criteria and process.

Currently UNEP adheres to the following accreditation process:

4.1. Current Practices at UNEP

The UNEP secretariat reviews accreditation requests against the following criteria:

- The organization must be legally registered in a UN member State.
- The organization needs to have been in place, registered and operational for at least two years.

- The organization must demonstrate an interest in the environment (e.g. through annual reports, articles, work programmes, project reports, press releases, etc.).
- The organization must demonstrate an international scope of work (location of headquarters, regional and other national offices, programmes, international activities, etc.).
- The organization must have a not-for-profit status.

Applications from interested organizations that include legally certified documents to prove that the organizations meet the criteria above, are reviewed by the Secretariat of Governing Bodies and Stakeholders for final approval or rejection under the authority of the Secretary of the Governing Bodies.

Accreditation is given for unlimited time, and organizations are required to send in quadrennial reports to prove that they still meet the above-mentioned criteria. In case they do not, accreditation may be withdrawn by the Secretariat.

According to current practices, accreditation is not endorsed by UNEP governing bodies, e.g. UNEA, but all parties concerned – CPR member, individuals, government, etc. – may challenge the decision of the Secretary of Governing Bodies by providing proof that an organization does not meet the accreditation criteria.

4.2. Key Issues with Respect to the New SEP

4.2.1. Option 1: continue current practices

Continuing current practices would include:

- only organizations working in the field of environment will be allowed to get accreditation
- legal registration is a requirement
- only organizations working internationally (in more than one country) would get accreditation
- accreditation requests will be approved or rejected by the Secretary of Governing Bodies
- ECOSOC-accredited organizations are not treated preferentially.¹

4.2.2. Option 2: Partly change current practices

Such changes could include *one or more* of the following

- Allow accreditation also for organizations that work in the field of sustainable development

¹ If there is no agreement on the Stakeholder Engagement Policy at UNEA 2, current practices as described will continue to be applied.

- Allow accreditation for organization that are not legally registered
- Allow accreditation for organizations that are working on the national level
- Involve member States in reviewing and approving accreditation requests
- Give UNEP accreditation to ECOSOC-accredited organizations on request

4.3. Proposed Way Forward

Taking into account the Rio + 20 Outcome Document that called on UNEP to “ensure 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” (paragraph 88h) and UNEA-1 deliberations, the following approach with respect to accreditation modalities is proposed.

While many countries support the continuation of the above mentioned current practice with eventually changed criteria (interest in environment and/or sustainable development; international and/or national scope of work), some countries requested a stronger role of member States in approving accreditation requests, including applying the non-objection principle.

The President is committed to present a full proposal that accommodates positions of member States on the basis of the text of the SEP as left at the end of UNEA-1². On the basis of the wide consensus on the General Principles³ applied in implementing the SEP, the President proposes the following:

- continued informal consultations, in an enhanced manner until the Open Ended Meeting of the CPR in February 2016, to reach consensus on accreditation criteria⁴ and process⁵;
- adherence to the strict application all relevant UN General Assembly resolutions;

This approach entails bilateral meetings and informal technical consultations convened by the President or her designated representative, with the support of the secretariat, in Nairobi, open to all member States. Such consultations should assist the President in identifying points of consensus for a proposal of the SEP to be presented in advance of the OECPR.

Annex: draft SEP as left by the end of UNEA-1

² UNEP/EA.1/L.1/Add.1

³ 2.A. of UNEP/EA.1/L.1/Add.1

⁴ C.12. of UNEP/EA.1/L.1/Add.1

⁵ C.14 – 15. of UNEP/EA.1/L.1/Add.1



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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.

14. Accreditation procedures

Stakeholders seeking accreditation shall forward all relevant documents, including the following, to the UNEP secretariat:

- (a) Letter requesting accreditation, printed on the official stationery of the organization;
- (b) Copy of the constitution, charter, statutes or by-laws of the organization and any amendments to those documents;
- (c) List of affiliates;
- (d) Proof of interest or experience in the environment; [or sustainable development;]
- (e) Detailed account of the scope of the activities of the organization

⁶ Abstracts from General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex, paras. 43, 52 and 53.

⁷ "Business and industry" refers to business associations which have a not-for-profit status, not individual private companies.

15. The UNEP secretariat will review the requests and notify applicants of their accreditation. The entire review process will take no longer than three months. The list of accredited organizations will be submitted to the regular session of the Assembly [for review].

[15.bis. The term of accreditation of the stakeholders is six years and it can be renewed for other terms. The Secretariat of UNEP, before each open-ended meeting of the Committee of the Permanent Representatives (OECPR), shall prepare a list of stakeholders seeking accreditation or the renewal of their term.]

[15.ter. A consultation process, upon request, between the concerned member-states and the secretariat regarding the fulfilment of the accreditation criteria shall take place for one month after the OECPR concludes its meetings. [and the further action on such accreditation after the consultation should be made on the non-country objection basis.]

[15.quer. After the expiration of the aforementioned consultation period, the secretariat shall submit to the assembly for adoption at the beginning of its session, the list of Non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders which fulfil the criteria mentioned above.]

[15 ALT. The UNEP Secretariat will review the requests against the accreditation criteria and prepare a list of those organisations which comply with these criteria. This list will be circulated among the UNEA members no later than one month before the Open ended CPR session. If a member has a concern about the fulfilment of the accreditation criteria by a particular organisation, it shall inform the UNEA members why this member believes that the organisation does not meet the criteria. The member shall engage in consultations with the Secretariat, and the Secretariat shall inform the members about that decision, and the reason for that decision at the Open ended CPR.]

16. Accreditation is not a requirement for participation in the implementation of projects, programmes or partnerships. Participation modalities in the implementation of such projects, programmes or partnerships are set out in the UNEP partnership policy.

D. Privileges of accredited stakeholders

17. While retaining the intergovernmental character of the Assembly and its subsidiary organs, accredited stakeholders will have the opportunity to participate in the governance of UNEP and to work at two levels: on agenda-setting processes and on policymaking and decision-making processes.

18. All accredited stakeholders shall enjoy the same privileges, which shall include the following:

(a) Accredited stakeholders may participate in all public meetings of the Assembly and its subsidiary organs, in accordance with the relevant rules of procedure. Should participation in a particular meeting be restricted, an advanced notification will be issued. The UNEP secretariat will provide accredited stakeholders with the dates, venue and agenda of the meetings in a timely manner;

(b) UNEP will convene a multi-stakeholder dialogue during the session of the Assembly in accordance with paragraph 5 (e) of Governing Council decision 27/2. The secretariat will provide accredited stakeholders with the dates, venue and agenda of the meetings in a timely manner;

(c) Designated seats will be reserved for major groups and stakeholders in all public meetings of the Assembly and its subsidiary organs. Major groups and stakeholders will designate their representatives according to criteria to be set out in the implementation handbook that will support this policy;

(d) Accredited stakeholders will have access to documents publicly available on the UNEP websites and portals; official documents and reports of UNEP; and documentation related to the work of the Assembly and its subsidiary organs, including pre-session and in-session documents made available in public meetings. The UNEP secretariat will make every effort to provide access to such documents in a timely manner, using electronic and other modern information systems to facilitate delivery. Accredited stakeholders will be granted access to relevant information portals [, according to the UNEP policy on access to information]. The UNEP secretariat will ensure that input received from major groups and stakeholders will be made available on the relevant web portals;

(e) Accredited stakeholders will be able to make written submissions to the Assembly and its subsidiary organs, in accordance with the relevant rules of procedure. Such submissions may include contributions and recommendations for agenda items of sessions of the Assembly and its subsidiary organs and recommendations on the subject matter of draft decisions for consideration by member States. Such contributions and recommendations may be submitted to the UNEP secretariat for distribution to member States in time for consideration by the relevant body. The UNEP secretariat will make such submissions available to member States, using electronic means whenever possible;

(f) Accredited stakeholders may be invited to make statements during public meetings of the Assembly and its subsidiary organs, in accordance with the relevant rules of procedure. Session presidents or chairs are encouraged to provide opportunities for accredited stakeholders to speak on topics of interest in such public meetings;

(g) Accredited stakeholders may be invited to participate in relevant regional consultations conducted by UNEP.

E. Responsibilities and obligations of accredited stakeholders

19. All accredited stakeholders shall have the same obligations, which shall include the following:

(a) Accredited stakeholders will be expected to act in accordance with the present policy and the relevant rules of procedure for any meeting or session which they attend;

(b) Accredited stakeholders will comply with the registration requirements and seating arrangements for any meeting or session which they attend. Meeting and session organizers will make every effort to have sufficient seating available for stakeholders during open sessions, so as to facilitate their participation. In situations where seating is limited, stakeholders may be asked to designate representatives to occupy the available seats, in accordance with the procedures laid out in the implementation handbook, to be developed by the UNEP secretariat in consultation with major groups and stakeholders;

(c) Accredited stakeholders will provide the secretariat with a biennial communication outlining their activities in the field of the environment during the previous two years. This communication may be in the form of the annual report of the organization or may be a separate document prepared specifically to comply with this reporting requirement.

3. Other matters

A. Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum

20. Prior to each session of the Assembly and the open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, UNEP will facilitate the organization of a Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum that will provide an opportunity for accredited stakeholders to consolidate their views and prepare their input to the Assembly and its subsidiary organs.

21. Member States and representatives of international organizations may participate in the Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum as observers. Major groups and stakeholders are encouraged to submit the main outcomes of such meetings in writing to the Assembly, through the UNEP secretariat, on the first working day of the Forum.

B. Major Groups and Stakeholders Mechanism

22. Accredited stakeholders may form stakeholder bodies or other groups to organize their contributions and facilitate their participation in UNEP processes. While self-organized, such bodies must adhere to the principles of transparency, responsibility and accountability, and respect the diversity of views among stakeholders on all issues.⁸

C. Use of information and communications technology to enhance effective participation

23. The use of modern information and communications technology will enhance the effective participation of stakeholders in a cost-effective manner. In addition to physical presence at meetings, virtual and online participation will also be made possible through webcasting of relevant meetings of the Assembly and its subsidiary organs, UNEP events, information platforms and discussion forums in accordance with the rules of procedure and the related access to information policy.

D. Participation of non-accredited stakeholders

24. While retaining the intergovernmental nature of the Assembly and its subsidiary organs, the president of the Assembly or the chairperson of a subsidiary organ, in consultation with the relevant bureaux, may invite a non-accredited organization or individual, on the basis of their competency,

⁸ As set out in paragraph 3 of this report, the policy will be complemented by an implementation handbook, which will contain the operational and self-organization modalities of the Major Groups and Stakeholders Mechanism. The handbook will be developed by the UNEP secretariat in an open and transparent manner, and comments will be invited from member States, including with regard to budgetary implications.

expertise and experience, to meetings of the Assembly and its subsidiary organs for a specific task or purpose, in accordance with the existing rules of procedure.

25. Organizers of other UNEP meetings may invite non-accredited stakeholders, on the basis of their competency, expertise and experience, to participate in panels or thematic discussions on topics of relevance, as appropriate.

E. Consultations with the bureaux of the United Nations Environment Assembly and its subsidiary organs

26. [The bureaux of the Assembly and its subsidiary organs may hold informal consultations with representatives of accredited stakeholders on specific items of mutual interest relating to [Assembly processes] [procedural matters].

F. Funding

27. Funding for stakeholder participation will be accounted for in the UNEP programme of work and budget. UNEP will endeavour to mobilize adequate funding including through extrabudgetary resources, to support stakeholder participation, particularly from developing countries.

28. Member States are invited to provide financial resources or take other initiatives to support participation of stakeholders, particularly those from developing countries, in relevant processes.
