

UNEP HANDBOOK
FOR STAKEHOLDER
ENGAGEMENT

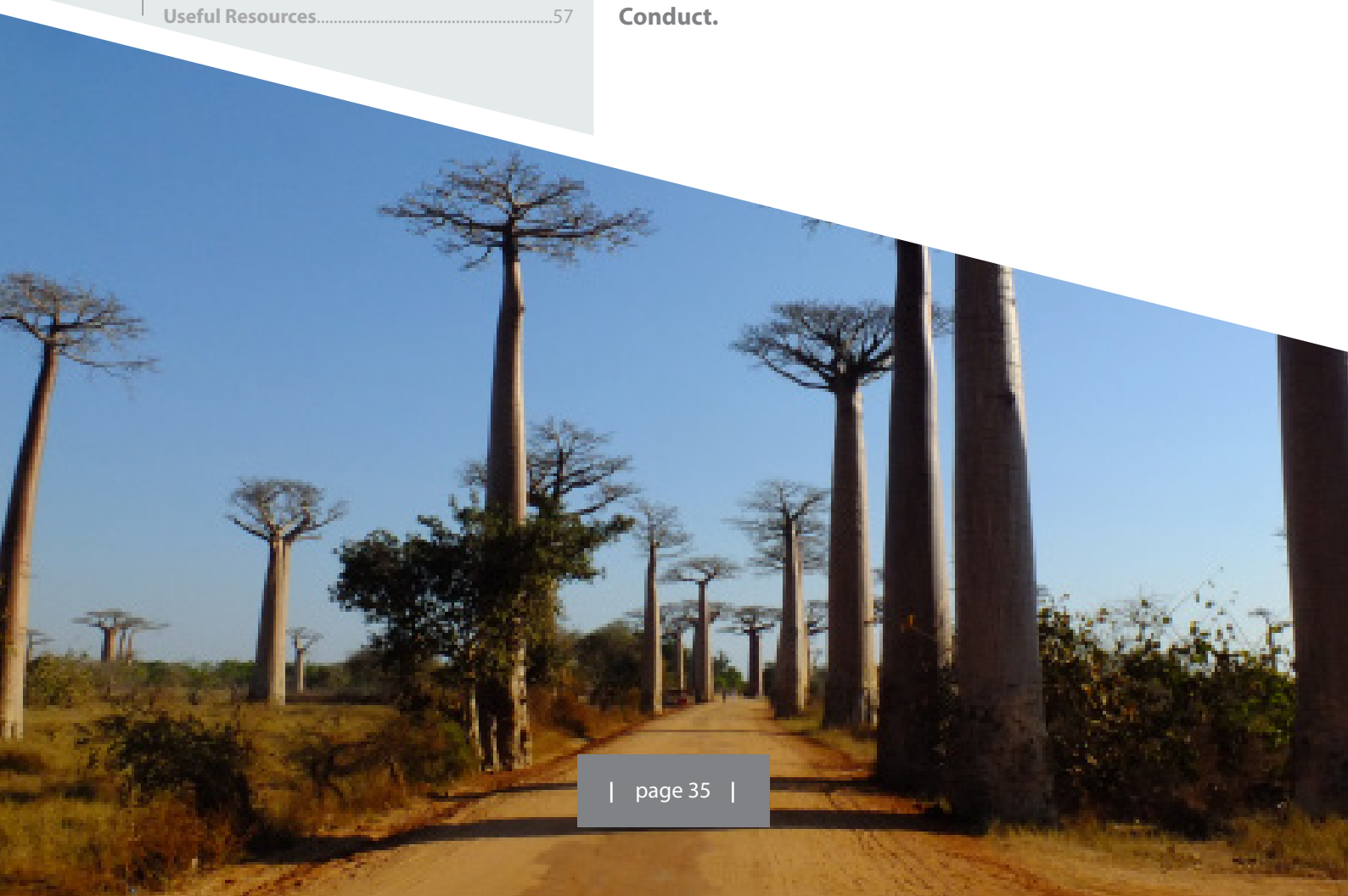
- Section 1:** The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and Its Subsidiary Organs.....8
- Section 2:** Engagement Approach..... 14
- Section 3:** Accreditation..... 19
- Section 4:** Participation in Agenda-Setting and Decision-Making Processes.....25
- Section 5:** Access to Information.....31
- Section 6:** Major Groups and Stakeholders Body – Spaces and Roles..... 35
- Section 7:** Expert Input and Advice, and Partnerships for Implementation.....44
- Section 8:** Funding for Stakeholder Engagement at UN Environment.....48
- Section 9:** Code of Conduct at Meetings Hosted by the UN.....50
- Section 10:** UN Environment’s Civil Society Unit/Governance Affairs Office..... 54
- Useful Resources**.....57

SECTION 6:
**Major Groups and Stakeholders
Body – Spaces and Roles**

Overview

Civil society brings added value to UN Environment’s work in several ways, helping to make the United Nations Environment Programme’s agenda relevant. To do so, Major Groups and Stakeholders must be empowered to participate effectively in UN Environment’s agenda-setting and decision-making processes, as well as implementation.

Major Groups and Stakeholders engage with UN Environment through the **Major Group Facilitating Committee (MGFC)** that provides guidance and facilitates the engagement of UN Environment-accredited Major Groups in the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum and annual **Regional Consultative Meetings (RCMs)**, as well as participation in United Nations Environment Assembly. Members of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee are expected to adhere to the **MGS Code of Conduct**.



SECTION 6: Major Groups and Stakeholders Body – Spaces and Roles

Empowerment for effective participation

For the United Nations Environment Programme's agenda to be relevant, Major Groups and Stakeholders must be empowered to participate effectively in agenda-setting, decision-making and implementation. Civil society brings added value to UN Environment's work in a number of ways: including through democratic dialogue and inclusion; the advocacy role it plays in raising awareness on issues of concern; the technical and contextual expertise it can provide that UN Environment may not have; holding governments and international institutions to account; and their ability to bring a holistic perspective to discussions in terms of the global public interest and efforts to achieve environmental sustainability.

Major Groups and Stakeholders engage with the United Nations Environment Assembly, and more generally with UN Environment through the Major Group Facilitating Committee that also coordinates with the group of Regional Facilitators.

The Major Groups Facilitating Committee

The Major Groups Facilitating Committee is a self-organized group that facilitates Major Groups and Stakeholders engagement with UN Environment.

How is it composed?

The Major Groups Facilitating Committee is composed of representatives from Major Groups and Stakeholders accredited to UN Environment, supported by Regional Major Groups and Stakeholders Facilitators from the six UN Environment regions who have observer status (see below). Each of the nine Major Groups selects two representatives for a two-year period, as result of elections that are either organized by UN Environment or within the respective Major Group. Up to three co-chairs are elected from within the Major Groups Facilitating Committee. The Committee is supported by two Regional Facilitators from each region, 12 altogether, elected for a two-years term during the Regional Consultative Meetings or via an electronic voting process organized by UN Environment or Major Groups from a given region themselves. Members of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee and the Regional Facilitators must come from accredited organizations. It is advisable that Major Groups Facilitating Committee Members come from the respective Major Group they represent in the Committee.

The work of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee falls under broad categories, including its ability to provide support on logistics and foster understanding of the process so that Major Groups and Stakeholders can maximize their presence, operating within the rules of engagement and procedure that UN Environment has set up; and providing guidance and finding expertise to develop policy positions

representing the best contributions from the Major Groups and Stakeholders constituencies relevant to the agenda points of United Nations Environment Assembly. In doing so, the agendas of Major Groups and Stakeholders meetings will reflect those of the United Nations Environment Assembly.

What is expected from Major Groups Facilitating Committee members?

Members of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee are expected to adhere to the obligations outlined in this Handbook and to be able to allocate enough time to their functions in the Major Groups Facilitating Committee. It is expected that their interventions and actions are based on regular and intensive interaction with their constituency (their respective Major Group). UN Environment is not able to provide any financial or other remuneration. Furthermore, Major Groups Facilitating Committee members are expected to:

- Maximize participation of representatives of its Major Group worldwide in United Nations Environment Assembly and its related meetings;
- Promote good representation of the respective Major Group at the Regional Consultative Meeting (see below), and ensure that the participants have received the necessary information relating to the agenda beforehand;
- Facilitate the involvement of Major Groups members with specific issue knowledge in UN Environment-related work, both in the local, national and regional contexts as well as at United Nations Environment Assembly;
- Foster balanced representation based on gender, focus and region;
- Mobilize knowledgeable representatives of the Major Groups to participate in United Nations Environment Assembly and its subsidiary organs;
- Assist participating Major Group members in: having access to information related to the agenda for the UN Environment meetings; participating fully in United Nations Environment Assembly and its related meetings; and having free and unfettered access to delegates;
- Provide general information, training and capacity building on UN Environment processes;
- Generate broad media-interest, as well as on-going educational programmes around the world;
- Maintain a web-based information hub, issues-based listservs, as well as general informational sites;
- Disseminate issue-based information from the Major Groups and Stakeholders focusing on these issues, to others not directly involved in those issue-networks; and
- Coordinate the preparation of the Major Groups policy papers.

If a member of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee is inactive for a longer period (at least 3 months) and did repeatedly not participate in the regular teleconferences of the Committee, UN Environment may request the respective Major Group to select a replacement.

The Major Groups Facilitating Committee shall also be responsible for coordinating their activities with the regional level in cooperation with their regional networks, Regional Facilitators and with UN Environment's Secretariat and Regional Offices. Each of the Major Groups' representatives is encouraged to support the UN Environment Secretariat to:

- Foster the participation of their Major Group organizations during the Regional Consultative Meetings;
- In regions where their Major Groups are underrepresented, help to identify and involve emerging or newly-established Major Groups in the regional meetings;

- Advocate for the accreditation of new organizations with UN Environment;
- Promote inter-regional exchange and coordination of inputs within their Major Group;
- Facilitate the integration of regional concerns into the Major Groups policy statements; and
- Actively participate in identification of skilled or specialized presenters or facilitators at meetings as appropriate

The Chairs of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee organize, with the support of the UN Environment's Civil Society Unit, regular teleconferences that bring together members of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee, Regional Facilitators as observers, UN Environment's Civil Society Unit and others as deemed necessary. These teleconferences take place at least once every two months. The draft agenda and meeting minutes are prepared by the Chairpersons of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee. Minutes are prepared by a member of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee and are distributed by the Civil Society Unit among accredited Major Groups and Stakeholders.

During the United Nations Environment Assembly, the Major Groups Facilitating Committee also organizes a daily morning briefing/debriefing and process meeting, chaired by Major Groups Facilitating Committee members on a rotational basis, to:

- Provide an overview of the official agenda for that day;
- Appoint volunteers to follow critical issues on the agenda who then report back the next day;
- Promote consensus on Major Groups' representation during the plenaries and other relevant sessions;
- Report back to the morning meeting from the discussions held the preceding day, including sharing central and important observations and comments gathered from the United Nations Environment Assembly discussions and possibly facilitate consensus building processes to plan for the day ahead in a strategic manner, including outreach to relevant delegations or other partners;
- Promote discussions on important messages or concerns raised from any of the Major Groups;
- Make announcements and address any other relevant business.

Members of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee can also facilitate the organization of caucus groups meeting to discuss specific issues, and to caucus, regroup, or nominate people to attend the various sessions.

While the Major Groups Facilitating Committee is not a decision-making body, it does provide guidance and facilitates the engagement of UN Environment-accredited Major Groups in the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum (see below), serving as its steering committee. Alternatively, the Major Groups Facilitating Committee can decide to entrust an organization accredited to UN Environment with the organization of the Forum.

In addition, the Major Groups Facilitating Committee often serves as the body facilitating Major Groups and Stakeholders representation in meetings, such as with the United Nations Environment Assembly President.

Elections of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee

Every two years the members of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee should be replaced. This is either done by an election organized by and within the specific Major Groups or by UN Environment. New

members are identified through a nomination and election process among accredited organizations, ensuring gender- and regional balance. It is recommended that members of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee do not serve more than two terms. The selected candidates are to be endorsed by the UN Environment Secretariat and it is advisable that they come from the specific Major Groups they represent.

To begin the process, UN Environment or the current Major Groups Facilitating Committee members representing each Major Group, will reach out to the accredited organizations belonging to the respective Major Group with instructions on how organizations can nominate candidates for potential new Major Groups Facilitating Committee members and how the election of candidates is undertaken. Only representatives of accredited organizations may be elected as members of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee. Generally, the election process and rules differ slightly depending on whether it is the Major Group that is holding the elections by themselves or whether UN environment is helping the major group conduct the elections. If UN Environment is conducting the elections, only accredited organization that belong to the particular Major Group take part in the elections. Because there are two seats in the Major Group Facilitating Committee for each Major Group, a maximum of two votes are allowed per organization, with two votes being for two different candidates. If an organization casts more than one vote for the same candidate, the organizations vote will be invalid.

Major Groups and Stakeholders Code of Conduct

Members of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee are expected to adhere to the following:

1. No member of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee shall be considered, in any respect, as agents or staff members of UN Environment. They are not entitled to introduce themselves, act, and/or speak on behalf of, or for UN Environment. With regards to the Major Groups Facilitating Committee, Major Groups and Stakeholders representatives must ensure that they highlight their functions as Facilitators/Participants/Members of such bodies to UN Environment in an appropriate manner that avoids misunderstandings. They are expected to always present their organizational affiliation, and clearly indicate that the respective person represents its constituents to UN Environment, and not the other way around. Thus, formulations such as “Representative for UN Environment...”, “Representative of UN Environment...” are not legitimate. Members of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee, for example, should describe themselves as: **“Children and Youth Representative to UN Environment’s Major Groups Facilitating Committee.”** Regional Facilitators should describe themselves as: **“Regional Facilitators of Major Groups and Stakeholders, Name of the Region.”**
2. No organization or individual is authorized to use UN Environment’s name for the promotion, advertisement or marketing of its personal interests, products, services, views or ideas, without prior written approval of UN Environment. Major Group and Stakeholder representatives, such as members of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee and/or Regional Facilitators, shall only use the UN Environment name, logo and emblem with prior express and written consent of UN Environment, in line with UN Environment’s policy on the use of its logo.

Under no circumstances will the UN Environment name or emblem, or any abbreviation thereof, be granted for commercial purposes.

Specifically, the following uses are not permitted:

- any use of the logo suggesting or implying a certification or seal of approval for activities, services and/or products;
- any use of UN Environment’s logo on business cards;

- any use of the logo as a component of an organization's own logo, trademark or other branding elements, including their websites;
- any use of the logo for the promotion or advertising of products, services and other activities intended to solicit business;
- any use of the logo as a permanent graphical element of stationery, business cards, or other variably utilized print materials;
- the use of the UN Environment brand in a way that might prejudice the UN Environment brand and/or the reputation and credibility of UN Environment.

In any case, for all proposed uses of the UN Environment logo, permission must be sought in advance from the UN Environment Secretariat.

3. Representatives of Major Groups and Stakeholders should not expect to receive any funding or remuneration either in cash or kind from UN Environment, nor should they represent to anyone that they receive any kind of funding or remuneration by virtue of their being a Major Group and Stakeholder representative.

In its cooperation with Major Groups and Stakeholders, in particular in the context of United Nations Environment Assembly, UN Environment will strive to involve the Major Groups Facilitating Committee. However, UN Environment does not oblige itself to work exclusively through the Major Groups Facilitating Committee in involving Major Groups and Stakeholders in its work on policy and programmatic matters. If deemed necessary, UN Environment reserves the right to directly approach Major Groups and Stakeholders. At the same time, Major Groups and Stakeholders are not obliged to work exclusively through the Major Groups Facilitating Committee or Regional Facilitators

Major Groups and Stakeholders coordination meetings prior to the Open-Ended Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

The Open-Ended Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives may be preceded by a Major Groups and Stakeholders coordination meeting that is self-organized by the Major Groups through the Major Groups Facilitating Committee and facilitated by the Civil Society Unit. This meeting allows Major Groups and Stakeholders to discuss their input and positions towards the Open-Ended Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives. Dependent on available funding, the participation of members of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee, Regional Facilitators, speakers and resource persons, and Major Groups and Stakeholders from developing countries can be financially supported by UN Environment.

The Global Major Groups and Stakeholder Forum

The Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum takes place every two years prior to United Nations Environment Assembly and is the main entry point for civil society participation at the highest level of UN Environment and serves as a Major Groups and Stakeholders preparatory meeting to United Nations Environment Assembly.

The Forum is either organized by the Major Groups Facilitating Committee, or by an accredited organization that has been entrusted by the Committee with this task (Facilitating Organization).

The Forum benefits from the outcomes of the Regional Consultative Meetings, which in turn provide Major

Groups and Stakeholders inputs for United Nations Environment Assembly. The Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum seeks to facilitate civil society participation in the Assembly and associated meetings, identifies important themes and decisions under consideration by the United Nations Environment Assembly, and provides a platform for an exchange of views and expertise on these themes between governments and civil society. Traditionally, the Forum also features an open dialogue between UN Environment's Executive Director and Major Groups and Stakeholders ahead of United Nations Environment Assembly.

How does the Forum enhance civil society's contribution to the United Nations Environment Assembly?

For civil society to influence the process, the Forum plays a coordinating role in presenting civil society speakers with relevant expertise to engage in discussions on the high-level themes, draft decisions/resolutions, and operational issues relevant to UN Environment. It also convenes expert panel discussions and facilitates the drafting of common statements, including organizing Major Groups and Stakeholders across thematic clusters – not based on constituencies but on expertise of those interested to provide the most specialized expertise. Thematic clusters do not replace the Major Groups structure; instead they facilitate cross-sector discussions along the subject themes of United Nations Environment Assembly. It is the role of the thematic cluster facilitator to facilitate development of Major Groups and Stakeholders statements, track the discussions and report back to the larger group. There is no expectation for consensus within the clusters; they seek rather to preserve the diversity of views, while facilitating in-depth discussions along a theme.

Accredited Major Groups and Stakeholders are automatically invited to the Forum. Representatives of governments and international organizations may participate in the Forum as observers.

Major Group and Stakeholder statements have to be cleared by the President via the Secretary to United Nations Environment Assembly before they are submitted to all delegates as official United Nations Environment Assembly documents and potentially read out in the relevant meetings, if given the floor by the respective Chair of the session.

Information on previous Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Fora is available at <https://goo.gl/PtXthn>

Regional Consultative Meetings and Regional Facilitators

The role of UN Environment's six regional offices was enhanced by a decision of the Governing Council (Governing Council 22/14) that requested UN Environment to establish and strengthen partnership at the regional and sub-regional level with other UN bodies, development banks and other institutions, including Major Groups and Stakeholders, with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of development and delivery of its programme of work in the regions.

The six UN Environment regions include: Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and West Asia.

Given their work at the national and regional level, Major Groups and Stakeholders are well placed to participate in the implementation of UN Environment's work through co-operation with the regional offices. The Regional Facilitators, previously known as "Regional Representatives", provide varied views from both the global North and South; these geographically diverse perspectives complement the Major Groups and Stakeholders model, allowing civil society to substantively contribute to UN Environment processes.

The above-mentioned **Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum** is built around six annual Regional Consultative Meetings. Major Group and Stakeholder representatives are invited to a one- to three-day multi-stakeholder consultation meetings in each region prior to **United Nations Environment Assembly**. Each region engages in a substantive dialogue on environmental issues that will be discussed during the next United Nations Environment Assembly and produces a regional statement or key messages.

The Regional Consultative Meetings constitute the main platform for the Major Groups to engage with the Regional Offices of UN Environment on an annual basis. While allowing Major Groups and Stakeholders to prepare for United Nations Environment Assembly, Regional Consultative Meetings also serve as capacity-building and networking exercises for the Major Groups in the regions.

The Regional Consultative Meetings are initiated by the Regional Offices and held, whenever possible, prior to, or in conjunction with, relevant major regional meetings or events, including at the ministerial level. They are dedicated to discussing relevant programme issues and possible cooperative actions, and/or preparing of the Major Groups' inputs to United Nations Environment Assembly, including United Nations Environment Assembly's themes.

The date, the agenda and the selection of organizations to be invited to the Regional Consultative Meetings are agreed upon between Regional Offices and the respective Regional Facilitators who are expected to reach out for this to their constituents. In this context, UN Environment prefers a high degree of self-organization of these meetings by accredited organizations. Regional Offices may choose to request an accredited organization to take responsibility for organizing and conducting the meeting. Invited organizations include all accredited organizations from the respective region but are not limited to them and it is recommended that the meetings are multi-stakeholder meetings in nature.

Role and Selection of Regional Facilitators

Two Regional Facilitators per region are selected by accredited organizations from the respective region during the six Regional Consultative Meetings where participants are asked to nominate and elect two Regional Facilitators, with attention to gender and sub-regional balance, to attend the United Nations Environment Assembly, and who have the relevant expert knowledge of the thematic issues to be dealt with at the upcoming session. Alternatively, Regional Facilitators can be selected as a result of an electronic nomination and voting process self-organized by accredited organisations or – on request – by UN Environment. Regional Facilitators must come from organizations accredited to UN Environment. They normally serve a two-year term – or until the next Regional Meeting – and participate as observers on the Major Groups Facilitating Committee.

Regional Facilitators are expected to adhere to the Code of Conduct presented above in the section on the Major Groups Facilitating Committee. They may use the title: **“Regional Facilitators of Major Groups and Stakeholders, Name of the Region.”**

In addition:

- Regional Facilitators play a purely facilitating and expert role and have no mandate to represent their region or Major Groups and Stakeholders from their region.
- They may present agreed positions emerging from Regional Consultative Meetings as well as from other consultation mechanisms developed during their period.
- They are specifically selected to ensure agreed Major Groups and Stakeholders' regional views are

presented to the United Nations Environment Assembly and its subsidiary organs, as well as in other meetings that may be convened.

In the absence of positions agreed among Major Groups from a specific region, Regional Facilitators are not entitled to make official statements on behalf of their regions.