



**United Nations**  
Climate Change Secretariat

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Secrétariat sur les changements climatiques

Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention  
Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on Pollutant Release  
and Transfer Registers  
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Dear Chair of the Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention,

Thank you for the opportunity to inform the Parties to the Aarhus Convention, through you, of the experiences gained and lessons learned from COP 21/CMP 11 and preparations for COP 22/CMP 12 regarding observer engagement.

COP 21 was extraordinary in many ways and was a major success on many levels:

It began with the exemplary engagement of stakeholders by the French Government as the incoming Presidency initiated in 2014, including the public consultation on the design of the climate village, les espaces Générations climat, and regular consultations with various stakeholder groups in Paris and elsewhere on concrete substantive issues. The French Presidency tirelessly engaged UNFCCC Parties throughout the year with clear and resolute commitment to open, transparent, and inclusive management of negotiations. We also witnessed extraordinary solidarity and support by observers and Parties to the people of France and the Government, in response to the tragic terrorist attacks, throughout the year, including the conference. Even without that unique situation that should never have happened and should never happen again, years-long efforts by all UNFCCC Parties, non-Party stakeholders, and the secretariat towards a universal agreement were creating an irreversible tide that culminated in the strong determination of the Parties to cut a deal in December.

The conference scale itself was also extraordinary: it was the largest UN climate conference ever held with 30,000 participants (Parties, observers and media) and additional 7,400 technical and support staff; the largest group of world leaders ever to gather under one roof on one day with 150 Parties represented, of which 142 by Heads of State/Government, delivering statements at the Leaders' Event.

Other lessons learned are: having the climate village, the Climate Generations Areas, adjacent to the venue, lead to an immense success with more than 100,000 entries that engaged the public and the conference participants throughout the two weeks; secretariat's two-year strategy for registration deadlines which comprised setting the registration deadlines in consultation with observers and training observers for strict compliance of deadlines for two years. Compliance training was a lesson learned from COP 15 where observers expected the secretariat to grant exceptions for missing deadlines. The acclimatization to strict deadlines over two years went well. There was also no major queuing or a



technical collapse in issuing nearly 40,000 badges. We also thank all observers for meeting the deadlines of course.

Even though demonstrations are normally not allowed within the UN premises, and despite the highest security alert surrounding the conference venue, the UNFCCC secretariat and UN Department of Security and Safety facilitated more than 150 NGO demonstrations after Leaders' Event held on the first day of the Conference. We also had extraordinary cooperation from observers which helped our facilitation as the security conditions were extremely tense and fragile. We would like to also commend extraordinary cooperation of the national security authorities in the second week that enabled actions outside the UN perimeters even though it was by law not permissible.

On a more practical side, the audio/video connection from the plenary hall to three additional meeting rooms facilitated better observer access/viewing of the proceedings in the plenary. The secretariat also revamped web pages as Info Hub, concentrating status of negotiations, protocol, and access information in one place.

As for the access issue, the room sizes remain a challenge that should be looked into. Since UNFCCC COPs are unparalleled in terms of annual participation of observers, room sizes are chronically inadequate. Where budget allows, the aforementioned connection of audio/video signals to overflow rooms was requested by the secretariat and provided by the host Government. Another issue that arose in Le Bourget was that a Co-Chair of a subsidiary body that was drafting the Paris Agreement announced in October that informal consultations would be open in December, which did not happen, upsetting many NGOs. The reason provided was that this occurred in order to respect the draft rules of procedure being applied.

One last extraordinary aspect of COP 21 is its outcomes; in addition to good news such as a reference to 1.5 degrees Celsius, for the first time in a COP decision the efforts by non-Party stakeholders in climate action on mitigation and adaptation were recognized and the COP invited them to scale up such efforts. As far as observer engagement is concerned, it is a new era that opens opportunities for vertical and horizontal cooperation in the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

In this context, it is important to commend the EU for its efforts during the UNFCCC conference held in Bonn in May of this year. The EU pushed forward non-Party stakeholder engagement in the implementation of national climate plans (NDCs – nationally determined contributions in UNFCCC jargon). In the same discussions, developing countries also called for avoiding conflict of interest. It is important to safeguard inclusive stakeholder engagement when everyone's climate action is required.

As for COP 22, while the venue conditions are similar to those in Lima, which is to say that all facilities must be built from scratch, the Government of Morocco has a legion of strong stakeholder engagement poles such as a civil society engagement team, headed by the President of the National Human Rights Council, a civil society organization itself, the public-private partnership pole headed by the Director General of the National Agency for the Development of Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency, the side event pole headed by the Director of Partnerships, Communication and Cooperation at the Ministry Delegate in charge of the Environment, and the Scientific Committee headed by the President of the Moroccan Economic, Social and Environmental Council. The Government already announced an impressive series of engagement activities for stakeholders from now until COP 22/CMP 12.

These are some of the many important experiences gained and lessons learned and a preview of the preparations for COP 22/CMP 12. The UNFCCC secretariat will be happy to receive written questions if there are any.



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Thank you again for the opportunity and I wish you all fruitful discussions.

Yours sincerely,

Megumi Endo  
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