

11 principles for civil society engagement in UNEP and other processes, as presented to the 16th Working Group of the parties to the Aarhus Convention on 20th June 2013, by Gita Parihar, Head of Legal, Friends of the Earth

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The Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum supports the following Principles on Stakeholder Participation in UNEP in order to promote UNEP's mandate and improve its effectiveness in light of Rio + 20, including paragraph 88(h) of The Future We Want.

Principles on Stakeholder Participation in UNEP

Principle 1. Major Groups and stakeholders¹ (hereinafter stakeholders) shall have the right to full and effective participation in all activities including planning, agenda setting, decision and policy-making, implementation, and evaluation activities and processes of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Principle 2. UNEP shall provide timely and easy access to all information and documents, including negotiating documents, needed by stakeholders to participate fully, and shall proactively disseminate information relevant to its activities in a comprehensible and easily accessible form and timely manner.

Principle 3. Full participation shall include:

- a. Access to all UNEP meetings, processes and bodies (including through the final stages of decision-making) at all levels, such as, inter alia, UNEP's governing body, intersessional committees, bureaus, ministerial-level meetings, and drafting and contact groups, Friends of the Chair, etc.;
- b. Speaking rights in all meetings, as a rule with the same opportunities as governments to express views and opinions; and
- c. The right to submit documents equivalent to Member States.

Principle 4. Governments shall facilitate full participation by stakeholders, such as by including stakeholders in preparing for and follow-up to UNEP meetings and on national delegations to UNEP meetings.

Principle 5. Full participation shall mean participation by all stakeholders representing interests that might be affected by UNEP's activities and processes, including elements of civil society outside the major groups and on a regional or local basis. Particular attention shall be paid to facilitating participation of those stakeholders that have least opportunities and access to participate.

¹ This document does not prejudge the issue of the future format of Major Groups and stakeholders representation in UNEP.

- Principle 6. Stakeholders shall have the right of self-organization, including selection of their respective representatives.
- Principle 7. New rules and practices regarding participation and transparency at UNEP shall encourage continuous improvement and innovation, prevent regression with respect to either current formal and informal practices at UNEP, and respect internationally agreed principles and rights, such as the human rights to participate in decision-making and to access to information.
- Principle 8. UNEP and the governance structures it creates (for example, under paragraph 88(h) of the Future We Want), including those involving stakeholder participation, shall be accountable with respect to ensuring that UNEP's participation and transparency policies and standards are sufficient to achieve full and effective participation and transparency and are fully implemented, and shall develop effective mechanisms in this regard.
- Principle 9. UNEP shall create and maintain an organizational structure and resources to support full participation by all stakeholders and provide sufficient resources to facilitate such participation, including external capacity building, funding of participation, and internal personnel.
- Principle 10. UNEP's efforts to achieve full participation and transparency shall be a model for UNEP's programmatic activities, such as consideration of global and/or regional instruments on Principle 10.
- Principle 11. In accordance with these Principles on Stakeholders Participation in UNEP, any decision impacting opportunities for stakeholders to participate in UNEP processes shall be developed and adopted in full participation with stakeholders.