

## **UN Environment Input**

### **Submission for the forthcoming report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 32/31 on civil society space.**

Civil Society engagement is a crucial aspect of the work of UN Environment and we are constantly working on improving the different ways Major Groups and Stakeholders can be involved and on ensuring that their valuable inputs can be incorporated in our work accordingly.

The Rio+20 outcome document “The Future We Want” in its paragraph 88(h), invites UN Environment 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 UN Environment Programme Governing Council at its First Universal session in February 2013 adopted the Decision 27/2 on institutional arrangements which requests, in its paragraph 7: Mechanisms for Stakeholder Engagement in UN Environment Programme

“Decides 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 [...]”

UN Environment today, has one of the most progressive approaches to Stakeholder Engagement within the United Nations. Respecting the inter-governmental nature of the decision making process, representatives of stakeholders accredited to UN Environment may participate and intervene (also in written form) in all public sessions of the United Nations Environment Assembly and its subsidiary organs such as the Committee of Permanent Representatives and have access to the same documentation as Member States.

Through annual regional meetings of civil-society organisations, organized by UN Environment’s Regional Offices, it is being ensured that regional perspectives are taken into account.

Prior to each session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum takes place, giving an opportunity to non-governmental stakeholders to exchange views, coordinate and to prepare their inputs to the Assembly.

UN Environment’s Civil Society Unit, together with Civil Society Focal Points in Divisions and Regional Offices provides pro-active support to stakeholders, inter alia by managing accreditation requests, providing information and expertise, facilitating of meetings, maintaining regular communication with all relevant stakeholders, as well as providing financial support for travel and capacity building initiatives and seminars.

More information about modalities for stakeholder engagement at UN Environment is available at:

<https://goo.gl/ae6SRJ>.

Another important way of engagement is through the **Access-to-Information-Policy**

The Executive Director established an interim Access-to-Information Policy on 6 June 2014. Having undertaken a process of its review, including input from representatives of Civil Society, the Executive Director established the final Policy on January 28, 2016.

With the new Access-to-Information Policy, any information in the custody of UN Environment, in particular information concerning the work of UN Environment in accordance with its mandate given by the General Assembly in resolution 2997 (XXVII) and other relevant resolutions (such as resolutions 47/190, S-19/2 and 66/288), including environmental information generated and maintained through programmes of UN Environment, is available to the public, in the absence of a compelling reason for confidentiality in line with the exceptions listed in the Policy.

Given the clear, open and transparent nature of the policy, since entering in force, UN Environment has granted access to information and to date, the organization has not had any request for recourse. Overall it can be said that UN Environment has a state-of-the-art Access-to-Information Policy in place that represents one of the best practices within the United Nations System.

More information on the Access-to-Information Policy is available at: <http://www.unep.org/about/policies-strategies/access-info>.