



**Channels for NGO Participation in
International Organizations**

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The following précis provides an overview of the different ways in which non-governmental organizations (NGOs) gain involvement in international organizations. The headings represent different “channels” for participation, under which real-life examples are grouped. Annex A contains listings by various international organizations, elucidating (in their own words) their methods for civil society engagement.

1. Advisory Committee / Steering Committee set up by an institution

Committees typically consist of experts and high-level representatives from civil society organizations. They consult on specific policy issues. Some examples are:

ECOSOC’s Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues – 16 expert members participate in their individual capacity, half appointed by council based on nominations from NGOs, half selected by council based on nominations from member states. Reports directly to the Council and advises on issues as they related to indigenous communities.

UNDP CSO Advisory Committee to the Administrator – sets the context for policy partnerships with civil society. Composed of international al civil policy leaders who provide advice to administrator and senior management.

UN Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters;

IFAD Consultation Steering Committee;

UN Department of Public Information (DPI) NGO advisory committee;

Office for the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Inter-Agency Standing Committee – an interagency coordination structure that includes the leaders of five NGOs, heads of the UN humanitarian agencies, representatives of the World Bank and UNDP. IASC meets every three months to make policy recommendations on humanitarian issues and emergencies

NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee – Elected by NGO International Conference, responsible for permanent coordination of NGO cooperation. Based at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.

UN Commission for Sustainable Development: Ad Hoc Coordinating Committee: NGO Steering Committee to facilitate involvement of NGOs at the annual sessions

2. Dedicated Unit within the IGO

A mechanism created to disseminate information and to foster dialogue with NGOs.

UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service(NGLS): mobilizes and administers resources for Southern NGO participation in conferences

UNEP Civil Society and NGO unit in the Division of Policy Development and Law (DPDL)

UNESCO Independent Evaluation Office: maintains contacts with active and involved NGOS

UNCTAD Civil Society Outreach Unit (CSO): liaison between UNCTAD and NGO

World Bank Civil Society Engagement Staff: Civil Society Country Staff working at the country level, Civil society Group (CSG) working at the Regional and Departmental Level, and Civil Society Team (CST) working at the Global Level to institute coordination via strategy, provide advice to senior management, research and dissemination.

3. CSO Advisors in national delegations

Representatives from CSOs may be included on a national delegation to an international conference. They may advise delegates from their government or conduct negotiations.

Sectoral Advisory Groups on International Trade, Canada. Comprised of senior business executives, non-governmental organizations and academics. Members are appointed for a

two-year renewable term by the Minister for International Trade to whom they provide confidential advice on matters pertaining to the Government of Canada's trade policy agenda. Active in negotiation of the FTAA.

4. Participation in Official Conferences to draft a treaty

International Organization can give NGOs an opportunity to participate (not necessarily in a negotiating role) in official conference to draft a treaty.

International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) 1992, involvement in the Ottawa Convention to Ban Anti-Personnel Landmines
Jubilee 2000 initiative on debt relief
Citizens against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment

5. Preparatory Committees for International Conferences

International organizations can give NGOs an opportunity to participate in preparatory committees for an international conference.

Rio Earth Summit 1992, Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development 2002; OAS Special Committee on the Inter-American Summits Management CEGCI, UNCED two-year preparatory process
NGOs were formally involved in the planning of the "Education for All" Conference

6. Presentations to Officials in special sessions

IGOs may hold special sessions to hear presentations from NGOs.

General Assembly on sub-Saharan Africa 1986
UNESCO General Conference, certain UNESCO meetings
WTO: Symposia arranged by Secretariat for NGOs on specific issues of interest to civil society, informal opportunity for NGO discussion with representatives from WTO member countries.
IMF: Meetings, seminars and consultations with IMF staff and Executive Directors are consultative in scope
UNESCO Civil Society Dialogues: organized jointly with the World bank
G8 informally receives delegations (FIM and Forum Civil G8 2006)
UN Security Council Arrria Formula Meetings: An informal, ad hoc and flexible meeting whereby CSOs can bring relevant information to the members of the Security Council who organize the meeting. The meeting is closed, there are no written records kept, and other Security Council members do not have to attend nor agree on the individuals consulted. Meetings are chaired by the delegation who invites the CSO guests. Guests are generally provided with interpretation and announced by the Secretariat.

7. Membership in International Organization

An international organization can include NGOs as members

IUCN, International Commission for Scientific Exploration of the Mediterranean Sea. In 2000, ICANN's At-Large Directors were elected via internet based global election.

8. Civil Society Representation on Executive Board

Joint UNAIDS Program Coordinating Board (PCB) serves as UNAIDS governing body. Represented are countries, IGO co-sponsors, and NGOs.

9. NGO Forums

NGO forums exert influence on the evolution of policies, standards, guidelines. IGOs may participate in, attend, or hear advice from NGO Forums.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees
Online Forums are used to increase communications and visibility of NGOs and stakeholders
UNESCO.org sub-portal “UNESCO Communities”
UN Industrial Development Organization CSO/NGO Resource Centre: Forum for all participating CSOs; internet node for collection/dissemination of information; virtual marketplace with business/technology opportunities; online knowledge base for sharing CSOs experiences.

10. Regular / Scheduled Consultative Meetings between CSOs and IGOs

IFAD Consultation Forum takes place every two years.
UNESCO NGO International Conference takes place every two years.
UNHCR, Approx 200 representatives from over 150 organizations attend the consultation;
UNEP annual Global Civil Society Forum (GSCF): main entry point for civil society participation at governance level
UN Department of Public Information: Annual DPI-NGO meeting is the largest UN-NGO exchange through which DPI informs NGOs about UNS work and provides opportunities for interaction with UN staff.
Regional Consultations – UNESCO, held at regular intervals in different regions to examine the state of cooperation with UNESCO, discuss programmes, regional priorities and promote development of regional cooperative networks

11. CSO Attendance in IGO Meetings

NGO Attendance at Council Meetings: NGOs may obtain travel grants to participate in council meetings. I.e. Global Environmental Facility (GEF)

Participation in annual sessions of Board, Commissions, and Expert Meetings: UN Conference on Trade and Development

Formal access to inter-governmental meetings

International Organizations may allow CSOs formal access to their meetings. The extent of access can vary depending on the “consultative status” assigned. Ability to access particular meetings, propose agenda items, speak in the conference, have access to written materials, and circulate written materials may vary. Who selects the NGOs and the criteria for selection also varies.

NGO participation in the procedure for taking evidence

Amicus Curiae Briefings - NGOs may submit amicus curiae briefs and in some cases participate in oral hearings (European Court of Human Rights, Inter-American Court of Human Rights) of cooperation with UNESCO) to discuss programmes, regional
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Comparative Tables of NGO Participation

2. NGO Participation in International Judicial and Quasi Judicial Proceedings

	WTO Dispute Settlement Mechanism	UN Human Rights Committee	European Court of Human Rights	Submissions on Enforcement Matters under NAAEC	World Bank
Complaints from individuals and NGOs	NO "WTO dispute settlement is not open to WTO observers, other international organizations, non-governmental organizations, local governments or private persons. The dispute settlement mechanism is essentially an inter-governmental forum." ¹	Individuals may complain about a violation of which they themselves are a victim once all domestic remedies have been exhausted	NGOs may complain about a violation of which they themselves are a victim once all domestic remedies have been exhausted	NGOs may make a submission alleging a failure by a Party to enforce its own laws.	NGOs may denounce a failure by the World Bank to enforce its own policy and procedures
NGO participation in the procedure for taking evidence	Panel may seek information from any relevant source. NGOs may submit amicus curiae briefs	NGOs may submit the evidence to the Committee	NGOs may submit amicus curiae briefs and in some cases participate in oral hearings	Interested NGOs may submit relevant information to the Secretariat	The inspection Panel may request information from NGOs

Tables adapted from: International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development. "Accreditation Schemes and Other Arrangements for Public Participation in International Fora." November, 1999.

¹ http://www.wto.org/English/thewto_e/whatis_e/eol/e/wto08/wto8_62.htm

Annex A

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO):

Provisions for NGO/CSO participation in the FAO are based on measures reached during the fifth session of the FAO annual Conference, as amended by Resolution No. 74/51 of the sixth session of the Conference, Resolution No. 37/53 of the seventh session and Resolution No. 39/57 of the ninth session. The

International Monetary Fund (IMF):

When the IMF began to engage with NGOs/CSOs in the 1980s it was usually at the global level as a response to the economic and social justice advocacy efforts of these groups. Such engagement remains central to IMF-NGO/CSO relations today.

The IMF is committed to:

Transparency in Dialogue with NGOs/CSOs is an important channel for communication.
Fostering a culture of Listening and Learning. NGOs/CSOs can highlight important issues, offer information to supplement official data and provide insights that may differ from the perspectives of IMF members and governmental officials.
Strengthening country ownership over policies is seen as essential to successful stabilization and

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD):

In 2004 at UNCTAD's Conference in São Paulo, Brazil, member states agreed that better integration of NGOs/CSOs, the private sector and academia into the work of UNCTAD would benefit both UNCTAD and its member states. UNCTAD has pursued a policy that allows cooperation with civil society actors by setting up formal and informal mechanisms for their participation in the activities of UNCTAD, including participation in conferences, workshops and seminars, producing co-publications, information-sharing and policy analysis through formal and informal exchange of ideas and implementation of technical cooperation programmes.

UNCTAD believes that cooperation with civil society can help organizations enhance their advocacy role

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO):

UNESCO functions due to a synergetic relationship between diverse stakeholders that together form an international community. These communities include governments; National Commissions; Parliamentarians and NGOs/CSOs. Together, they promote UNESCO's ideals and values around the world, at the local, national and international level. The UNESCO.ORG subportal "UNESCO Communities" offers these stakeholders a forum to enhance communication and increase their visibility.

UNESCO maintains official relations with approximately 335 NGOs/CSOs as well as the 21 foundations with established official relations in order to mobilize public opinion on the ground, notably in isolated or precarious regions in the world and to promote greater consideration of the geographic and cultural diversity of the nongovernmental community. They also act as relays for the implementation of UNESCO programmes. Comprised of people of all ages and nationalities from every walk of life, some 3600 UNESCO Associations, Centres and Clubs help spread UNESCO's ideals and give visibility to the values promoted by UNESCO within local communities.

In 1995 UNESCO's member states adopted a set of new Directives concerning UNESCO's relations with non-governmental organizations. The purpose of these Directives is to create the necessary conditions for a partnership that will ensure that UNESCO, in the preparation and execution of its programme, benefits from the broadest possible support from NGOs/CSOs with recognized capacity for reflection and mobilization on the ground. These Directives are also designed to encourage the emergence of non-governmental organizations in areas of the world where they are weak or isolated, with the aim of better taking into account the geographical and cultural diversity of the non-governmental community.

Relations between UNESCO and NGOs are essentially intellectual and moral. They take different forms:

Exchange of information and documentation on questions of common interest. Consultations on

Formal relations - Aimed at sustained cooperation with UNESCO in its fields of competence both upstream and downstream from the Organization's programming and priorities. Admission is granted to international professional NGOs that are widely representative and expert in their field of activity, and are recognized as having a genuinely international structure and membership. Formal relations are themselves sub-divided into two types, consultative or associate, depending on the role and structure of the NGO itself. The Executive Board, which is one of UNESCO's governing bodies, and more precisely its Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, annually decides on requests for admission to one or the other type of relations, as well as on the development of such relations, on the basis of recommendations made by the Director-General.

On the national level, non-governmental organizations (including foundations and similar institutions) wishing to collaborate with UNESCO have two main partners to which they can refer:

National Commissions - are national cooperative bodies set up by each Member State to act as a liaison body for all matters of concern to UNESCO. Their task is to involve in the work of the Organization all the different ministerial departments, se

Strengthening institutional management, in order to facilitate transparent and meaningful communication between civil society and UNEP.

Engagement at the policy level to take into account civil society expertise and views at the intergovernmental level.

Engagement at the programmatic level, to involve civil society in UNEP's implementation of its work programme.

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT):

UN-HABITAT has worked to develop closer relationships with civil society, parliamentarians, and the private sector around the world and within the United Nations system. UN-HABITAT now has links with 11 categories of Habitat Agenda partners in Africa, Asia and th8n Sett

questionnaires on support institutions (Guidelines for the Formulation of Integrated Programmes, Appendix to DGA/11). These questionnaires are a valuable tool to assess the capacity of potential counterparts and the needs of institutions.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC):

NGOs/CSOs are important partners with UNODC in carrying out its global mandates. NGOs/CSOs, in consultative status with the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), are systematically invited as observers to participate in the regular meetings of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND). Over the years, NGOs/CSOs have provided valuable contributions in the elaboration of major documents and subsequent decisions of the United Nations related to drug control. Recently, NGOs/CSOs participated in a survey posted on the web site about the future direction and priorities of UNODC. (See summary of NGO responses).

UNODC's dealings with NGOs/CSOs are guided by mandates from the international community. The Twentieth Special Session of the General Assembly on the World Drug Problem, held in October 1998, adopted a landmark political declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction. In conjunction with the adoption of these principles, NGOs/CSOs have been called upon to contribute to the goal of building a society free of drug abuse, emphasizing and facilitating healthy and innovative alternatives to illicit drug

First, it facilitates dialogue and partnership between civil society and governments by providing resources, training, technical support, and often playing a convening role. That type of engagement can be best seen in the process of formulation of the country poverty reduction strategies (PRSPs).

Second, the Bank dialogues and consults with CSOs/NGOs on issues, policies and programs, by listening to their perspectives and inviting suggestions. These interactions vary from consultations on global policies,

most recent scientific/professional journal, if any
project/research evaluation reports, if any

The information, which should be transmitted either to CSI or the appropriate WHO regional office, is shared with relevant technical departments. Where appropriate, NGOs/CSOs are put into contact with interested departments to explore the possibility of informal exchanges

The Civil Society Initiative (CSI) fosters relations between WHO and nongovernmental and civil society organizations and is responsible for the administration of formal relations as set out in the Principles

World Trade Organization (WTO):

Although NGOs have been interested in the GATT since its inception in 1947, the period since the creation of the WTO has vividly demonstrated that the multilateral trading system is being scrutinized by public opinion like never before.

When Ministers adopted the Marrakesh Agreement they also decided to include a specific reference to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Article V:2. On 18 July 1996 the General Council further clarified the framework for relations with NGOs by adopting a set of guidelines (WT/L/162) that “recognizes the role NGOs can play to increase the awareness of the public in respect of WTO activities.” These guidelines are instrumental for both Members and the WTO Secretariat in maintaining an informal and positive dialogue with the various components of