

The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment

Observers Engagement Guide



Prepared by the INC Secretariat

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Introduction

This guide has been prepared to provide guidance on the modalities for observers' participation and engagement in the INC process. It serves as a resource for easy access of information and opportunities for observers, with useful links and relevant instructions before and during INC sessions.

Pursuant to United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) resolution 5/14 entitled "End plastic pollution: Towards an international legally binding instrument", the participation in the intergovernmental negotiating committee (INC) should be open to all States Members of the United Nations and members of United Nations specialized agencies, to regional economic integration organizations and to relevant observers, consistent with the applicable United Nations rules. In the same resolution, UNEA requested the Executive Director to facilitate the participation of, and close cooperation and coordination with, relevant regional and international instruments and initiatives and all relevant observers in the context of the mandate of the intergovernmental negotiating committee.

In line with resolution 5/14, and in accordance with the draft Rules of Procedure provisionally applied to the work of the INC, the INC Secretariat has been working to facilitate an inclusive and active engagement of observers in the INC process. A broad, transparent and inclusive process ensures that all voices are heard and equitably represented. Observers are important actors in supporting the successful achievement of the mandate of UNEA resolution 5/14 and contributing to the successful future implementation of the instrument.



1. Who are observers to the INC?

As per the draft Rules of Procedure provisionally applied to the INC, a “Member” means any State Member of the United Nations or Member of its specialized agencies or a regional economic integration organization participating in the work of the intergovernmental negotiating committee.

The modalities for participation of observers in the work of the INC are provided for in Rule 55 and Rule 56 of [the draft Rules of Procedure](#). These Rules defined the modalities for participation of UN specialized agencies, United Nations related organizations, multilateral environmental agreements, United Nations bodies and other intergovernmental organizations, as well as for the participation of Observers from non-governmental organizations.

IGO

The following accredited Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) are eligible to be observers in the INC process:

- Those with observer status with the United Nations [General Assembly](#) (UNGA).
- Those who have participated in the previous sessions of the [United Nations Environment Assembly](#) (UNEA) and the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR).
- Those accredited to participate in the meetings of the governing bodies of [Multilateral Environmental Agreements \(MEAs\)](#) and [regional environment conventions administered by UNEP](#).

UN Entities

Representatives of Specialized Agencies (FAO, ICAO, IFAD, ILO, IMF, IMO, ITU, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNWTO, UPU, World Bank, WHO, WIPO and WMO) and related organizations (which include CTBTO Preparatory Commission, IAEA, ICC, IOM, OPCW and WTO), as well as from UN Secretariat, funds, programmes, regional commissions, Secretariats of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements administered by UNEP and other UN entities.

NGO

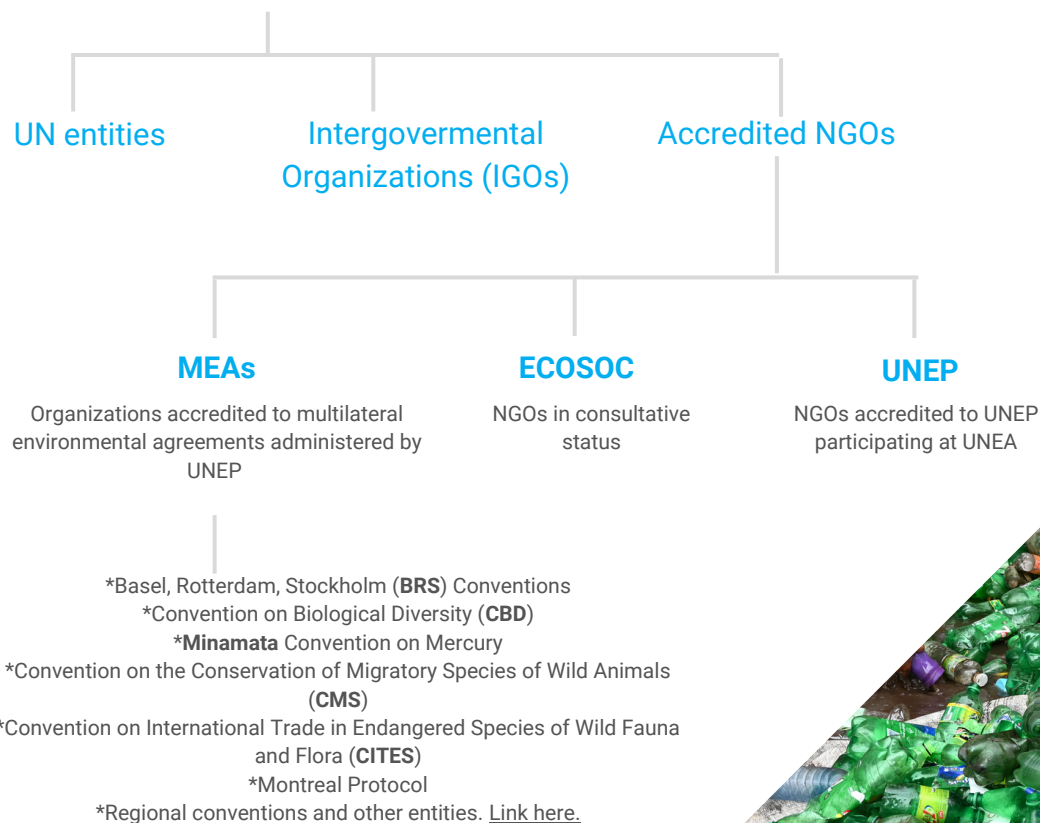
Accredited organizations that fall under the categories listed below can register to participate as observers in the INC process:

- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (**ECOSOC**) (Special, General or Roster consultative status). [List here](#).
- NGOs with observer status to the **United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA)**, UNEP and its subsidiary organs. [List here](#).
- Organizations accredited to the governing bodies of the [Multilateral Environmental Agreements \(MEAs\)](#) and [regional environment agreements administered by UNEP](#).

All observer representatives are **required to register through the online registration system [INDICO](#)** to participate as observers in the INC sessions.

Types of Observers

Different types of observer organizations in the INC sessions



2. Before each INC session

Registration

Registration for the INC sessions is free of charge. Accredited observer organisations are invited to register **up to five (5) representatives** through the online registration system INDICO by accessing the appropriate registration category under the registration tab on the INC webpage.

Regional, sectoral, and gender balance amongst representatives is highly encouraged. To ensure a rapid process of approval, please take note of the following requirements:

- Only one nomination letter with the organization's letterhead, containing the full names, functional titles, and professional affiliation of all the representatives to the session of the INC.
- A clear passport-size colour photograph (with white, grey, or neutral color background) of each representative.
- A clear image of the valid passport bio-data page of each representative.
- A participant must be at least 18 years old to attend an INC session.
- No registration will be accepted via email.

Observer organizations are highly encouraged to submit their registrations for INC sessions early and no later than the deadline provided in order to allow the secretariat time for the necessary review and verification process. No onsite registration for observer organizations is possible.

Once registration is approved, an automatic confirmation letter will be issued individually to each approved registrant, together with a UN event pass. This confirmation letter may be used to support the visa application process, as applicable.

For questions related to registration please contact:
unep-incplastic.registration@un.org



Photo:UNEP



Photo:UNEP

Travel support

The provision of funding support by the INC Secretariat for the participation of observers from non-governmental organizations is dependent on voluntary contributions from donors. For each session, the Secretariat will inform on the provision of funding support and respective guidelines.

Please be informed that only delegates with approved registration for INC sessions can apply for travel support.

Registration for an INC session and application for travel support are two separate processes. The funding, made available through voluntary contributions from donors, will cover, in accordance with the United Nations rules and regulations:

- Economy-class round-trip air tickets,
- Daily subsistence allowance (DSA), and
- Terminal expenses (transportation expenditures).

The applicant for financial support must include in the application the event ticket from the respective INC session, demonstrating that his or her registration has been approved.

Only participants from developing countries and from economies in transition are eligible for funding, with priority given to observers from Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). While making the selection, due regard will be given also to equitable geographic distribution, gender parity, and proven expertise on the subject matter. Priority will be given to participants from non-governmental organizations nominated on behalf of alliances, groups or coalitions. The INC Secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau of the INC, will ensure that the criteria listed above are followed.



Photo: IISD - Kiara Worth

Webinar series

In the lead up to the second and third sessions of the INC, the INC Secretariat, together with the INC Chair, has organized a series of [online technical webinars](#) to inform the negotiations. The webinars serve as an opportunity for observers to make presentations, share their comments, and ask questions related to the process. Recordings can be [found here](#).

The webinar series has been held over several consecutive weeks. The series included presentations from experts, followed by a questions and answers component (time permitting), others constituted briefing on upcoming INC sessions (e.g. working documents, organization of work), and dedicated webinars for observers to share information from their written submissions.

The webinars are not intended to prejudice any aspect of the negotiations of the INC. These technical webinars are merely intended to provide additional information to enrich the INC discussions. All the webinars are held in English only.

Observers are encouraged to visit the INC website for notifications of future webinars.



Written submissions

If decided by Members, observers may be invited to provide written submission to inform the INC process.

For instance, the INC at its second session requested the Secretariat to invite written submissions by Members of the committee and by observers on (a) elements not discussed at INC-2, such as principles and scope of the instrument, and (b) any potential areas for intersessional work compiled by the co-facilitators of the two contact groups, to inform the work of INC-3. More than 200 written submissions were shared by observers. The submissions serve, among other things, to inform the positions of Members, including any submissions to be made by them on the same matters.

Observers would be informed in advance of the guidelines and templates for any submission, would the Committee decide to invite for submissions in future INC sessions.



Photo: IISD - Kiara Worth

3. During INC sessions

Check-in/badge collection

An official INC badge is needed to access the premises of the sessions. For security reasons, all participants are requested to always wear their badges visibly.

As indicated in each invitation letter, due to the size of the existing meeting rooms and depending on the number of attendees to INC, the INC Secretariat may need to establish a system for access to the Plenary Hall and other meeting rooms. Delegations will be informed accordingly once the registration deadline closes. In addition, based on security and safety reasons, should the number of registrations exceed the limit of the venue, delegations will also be informed accordingly.

Once pre-registered online through **INDICO**, participants will receive a UN EVENT PASS via email, with a QR code. The presentation of the UN Event Pass and of a passport or valid identification card will be required to finalize the registration on-site and to collect the badge at the badging collection centre.



Photo: IISD - Kiara Worth

Room for Observers

To facilitate the engagement of observers during each INC session, the secretariat will endeavor to allocate a room for observers within the conference venue. This room can be used by organizations to have informal conversations and gather with fellow observers, including coalitions or alliances, to discuss relevant topics. Please note, this room is not dedicated for official events, but rather as an opportunity for observers to host informal meetings and conversations. The room is provided at no cost.

Prior to each session, registered observers will be notified on how to access the room, including its availability, general information, and/or restrictions.



Photo: IISD - Kiara Worth

Statements

During INC sessions, observers may have the opportunity to deliver statements on behalf of their organizations, coalitions, alliances, or groups. Please be reminded that observer interventions will be **welcomed by the Chair and the Co-facilitators, time permitting and consistent with applicable United Nations practice**. In Contact Groups, observers may also be invited by the co-facilitators to make interventions, time permitting. Such interventions may be reflected in the outcomes of the Group, if supported by one or more Members.

Seating for observers in Plenary and Contact Groups is available after Member seats have been allocated. Available seating for observers will be on a first come, first served basis. Therefore, observers are kindly requested to coordinate amongst themselves so that those who would like to speak are given priority to access the plenary floor to deliver their statement. For time efficiency, observers are encouraged to deliver joint statements on behalf of coalitions, groups, or alliances.



Photo: IISD - Kiara Worth

Dialogues

During INC sessions, observers may be invited to participate in a dialogue with the INC Secretariat and the Executive Director of UNEP. The goal of this conversation is to exchange on the INC process. The dialogue would be held within the conference venue and a notification would be sent in advance to all registered observers with further details.

In addition, staff supporting observers in the sessions will be available to assist participants with any questions or concerns that may arise during meetings.

Non-official events

On the sidelines of INC sessions, observers are actively engaged in planning and participating in events and activities related to plastic pollution. Please note, such events are not hosted by the INC Secretariat and are not included in the official agenda of each session.

Observers are welcome to self-organize and plan relevant events, meetings or activities from their respective portfolios. However, the **INC Secretariat is not in a position to facilitate logistical arrangements for such events or secure space within the conference venue.**

The Secretariat is not in a position to circulate invitations on behalf of observers. The Secretariat only circulates requests on behalf of members of the Committee.

Official side events

Members of the Committee and observer organizations accredited to INC are invited to participate in in-person side events that may be organized on the margins of each session.

Side events serve as an opportunity for delegates to discuss relevant topics and exchange with fellow participants. They provide a platform for interactive dialogue and conversation.

Observers may have the opportunity to co-organize side events during INC sessions. Prior to each session, observers will receive instructions and information on possible official side events. Organizations are encouraged to be attentive to open calls for expressions of interest.

Please note that the side events will be in person and in English only with no interpretation. More details on the logistical arrangements as well as the rooms assigned for the side events are available in the guidance note for each INC session. If needed, participants will be notified in advance of access limitations to the conference rooms. The Secretariat reserves the right to alter bookings, in consultation with the co-organizers, to make way for Contact Groups.





Photo: IISD - Kiara Worth

4. General queries

The INC Secretariat remains available to answer any questions and assist observers in the sessions, ensuring that each participant will have a fruitful experience.

You may wish to contact the secretariat directly by emailing:

unep-incplastic.secretariat@un.org

Code of conduct

The Code of Conduct: To Prevent Harassment, Including Sexual Harassment, at UN System Events is applicable to the INC sessions. It contains detailed information on prohibited conduct, complaints and investigation processes, as well as possible consequences in case of misbehaviour.

All participants are expected to get acquainted with the Code of Conduct and to behave with integrity and respect towards all participants attending or involved with any INC session.

Reporting: if you experience or witness a situation relevant to the Code of Conduct during an INC session, please report it to the relevant UN security personnel at the venue or contact the INC Secretariat as soon as possible.

[Learn more about the Code of Conduct on the link here.](#)

Useful links

- [INC Website](#)
- [Draft Rules of Procedure](#)
- [Registration Information](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Create a profile on INDICO](#)
- [Notifications on the INC process](#)
- [Webcast and livestream](#)

Accreditation links

- [Guidelines to apply for UNEP accreditation](#)
- [How To Apply For Consultative Status With ECOSOC?](#)
- [Observers to the Convention on Biological Diversity \(CBD\)](#)
- [Observers to the Minamata Convention on Mercury](#)
- [Admission of Observers to the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions](#)
- [Other Multilateral Environmental Agreements \(MEAs\) administered by UNEP](#)





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Photo: Connect4Climate - Kaia Rose