

**28th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention
Geneva, 2-4 July 2024**

Promotion of the principles of the Aarhus Convention in international forums

***Stakeholder engagement in global and regional follow-up and review of the
2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals***

Update by the secretariat (18 June 2024)

I. Global level, with particular focus on the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

1. The 2024 session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF, New York, 8-17 July 2024), the UN's central platform for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the global level, maintains the traditionally broad involvement of stakeholders. Considerable participation rights were granted to stakeholders by the General Assembly in order to harness the knowledge, initiatives, advocacy, monitoring and implementation activities of stakeholders for the benefit of the HLPF process. Stakeholders may participate, intervene, submit various inputs and organize related events, such as side events.¹

2. The main channel facilitating the broad participation of civil society in global sustainable development-related UN processes are the *Major Groups and other Stakeholders*, a recognized civil society network that is steering civil society engagement and involvement on these issues. The activities are coordinated by a [*Major Groups and other Stakeholders Coordination Mechanism*](#), which now comprises 21 stakeholder groups (compared to nine stakeholder groups initially identified in Agenda 21 in 1992). Additional stakeholders such as older persons, local communities, migrants and persons with disabilities have been gradually included to ensure a broad and inclusive approach.

3. Moreover, to further coordination and dialogue, the ECOSOC President has been holding virtual informal meetings with Major Groups and Other Stakeholders on a monthly basis since the 2022 HLPF session.

4. Against this background, representatives of the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGoS) will participate as lead discussants in various sessions of the 2024 HLPF, including the Townhall meeting and the sessions on Financing for Development; Science, Technology and Innovation; SDGs 1, 2, 13, and 16; Small Island Developing States; Local action; African countries, LDCs and LLDCs; Middle-income countries; and Messages from the regions.² The important function of lead discussants is to intervene at the outset of the interactive segment to raise relevant issues and help kick off discussions.

5. In addition, and in line with the standing practice, the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders will have the opportunity to conceptualize and organize a dedicated official plenary session on Friday, 12 July 2024, entitled "*Perspectives from major groups and other stakeholders: Partnerships for transformative and urgent*

¹ The participation rights are in particular enshrined in General Assembly resolution [A/RES/67/290](#) on the "*Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development*", paragraph 15.

² See HLPF programme at: <https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/2024%20HLPF%20and%20ECOSOC%20HLS%20Programme.pdf>

actions". The focus of this session will be on identifying opportunities for stakeholders to implement the SDG Summit Political Declaration and strengthening engagement of MGoS to overcome the impacts of crises and resume SDG progress.

6. The Major Groups and Other Stakeholders as well as NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC also have the possibility to speak in the joint general debate of the HLPF, time permitting.

7. In terms of written contributions, the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders provide inputs in the form of executive summaries of their position papers to the HLPF presented as a note by the Secretariat entitled "[Discussion papers on the theme of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, submitted by major groups and other stakeholders](#)". The Major Groups and Other Stakeholders may also provide written inputs in the form of [full position papers](#) to the HLPF.

8. Regarding practical constraint, civil society organizations have noted challenges with financial support for travel and the visa process, making it difficult for civil society representatives to attend the HLPF.

9. In addition to the global review of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs at the HLPF, another major high-level event taking place in 2024 is the Summit of the Future (New York, 22-23 September 2024), which generally aims at improving international cooperation to tackle existing and emerging challenges. One of the five pillars of the envisaged outcome document, the Pact for the Future, refers to sustainable development and financing for development.

10. Stakeholders from across the full spectrum of society have been involved in the preparatory process of the Summit of the Future to complement intergovernmental consultations and ensure diverse voices and perspectives, in particular through:

- Stakeholder Consultations on the zero draft of the Pact for the Future, held in December 2023 and in February, April and May 2024;
- Written Inputs to the preparation of and feedback on the Zero Draft
- Organization of a UN Civil Society Conference (Nairobi, 9-10 May 2024), with focus on the Summit of the Future.

11. As youth and future generations is another pillar of the Summit of the Future, much emphasis is being put on the involvement of young people in the preparatory process and the Summit itself. To generate additional opportunities for the engagement of all actors, the Summit will be preceded by Action Days on 20-21 September 2024. The Action Days will kick off with a dedicated, youth-led afternoon on Friday, 20 September to build momentum and prepare their contribution to the formal Summit.

II. Regional level: Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region

12. At the regional level, the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs takes place in the framework of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region (RFSD).³ In addition to its intergovernmental character, the RFSD has a well-established practice for non-governmental actors to

³ See <https://regionalforum.unece.org/>.

widely contribute to and participate in the meeting, which is also stipulated in its mandate.⁴ In line with the previous practice, opportunities for stakeholder participation were maintained in the 2024 session of the RFSD (Geneva, 13-14 March 2024), despite capacity and funding constraints for civil society.

13. Civil society organizations coordinated their inputs and participation in the 2024 Regional Forum through a dedicated Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism (RCEM). The Regional Forum was preceded by a one-day self-organized [civil society consultation](#) on 12 March 2024. The key messages from the preparatory civil society consultation were shared by a civil society speaker at the RFSD's plenary session.⁵

14. In addition, a preparatory [youth process](#) was held in cooperation with the Major Group for Children and Youth. The [key messages](#) from youth were also shared in the plenary session.

15. Representatives from civil society and youth as well as the private sector (mostly in cooperation with the UN Global Compact) were invited to participate in all peer learning round tables on the SDGs under in-depth review, which are SDGs 1, 2, 13, 16 and 17 in 2024.

⁴ Commission decision D (70) as contained in [E/2023/37-E/ECE/1503](#).

⁵ The statement is available at: <https://regionalforum.unece.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/2024%20RFSD%20RCEM%20high-level%20policy%20segment%20intervention.pdf>