



NGO Participation Arrangements at the UN and in Other Agencies of the UN System

Introduction.....	2
United Nations Organizations: Consultative relationships with ECOSOC.....	3
International Labour Organization (ILO).....	3
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).....	4
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).....	5
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).....	5
United Nations International Children’s Education Fund (UNICEF).....	6
World Health Organization (WHO).....	6
UNAIDS.....	7
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).....	7
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).....	8
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).....	8
World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).....	9
World Trade Organisation (WTO).....	9
Conclusion.....	10

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Introduction

The United Nations has served since its creation as the main international arena for intergovernmental discussions on common concerns and collective responses. In addition, the decision making process within the UN has steadily opened to other non-state actors. Today thousands of Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) participate vitally in major UN conferences and in the UN system, as active participants, and not just as observers. Civil society has become both a source of knowledge and expertise and a potential partner in the decision-making process.

The history of the UN-NGO relations has shown that NGOs have successfully advocated for major policy shifts in many areas. The participation of NGOs is initially based on the UN Charter provisions under Article 71. In particular, the latest review and updating of ECOSOC legislation dealing with NGO consultative status, ECOSOC resolution 1996/31, opens up new possibilities for national and regional NGOs to acquire consultative status with ECOSOC. It also enables the UN system to build upon the innovative and dynamic approaches and continue to strengthen participation arrangements in the decision making process with the view that the voice of NGOs should be heard.

The higher and stronger involvement of NGOs has increased the need to establish measures to strengthen and develop several mechanisms for cooperation with NGOs within the UN system. New forms of management and governance of UN entities are also emerging to involve the participation of NGOs. In addition, several UN agencies are currently exploring new approaches for the greater involvement of NGOs in their governance arrangements and are developing information disclosure policies with inputs from NGOs.

This report covers NGO participation and cooperation with ECOSOC, with five agencies, programmes and funds directly related to the UN (UNCTAD, UNDP, UNEP, UNHCR, UNICEF), five specialized agencies (FAO, ILO, UNESCO, WHO, World Bank) and the joint UNAIDS program. The cooperation with NGOs can be formal or informal, operational and field-oriented or more focused on policy-making, etc.

This report intends to feed the reflection within the ITU to explore means to widen and make more meaningful the access of NGOs to the organization and its structure and to the decision-making processes - ways that would actually strengthen and also transcend the actual framework of the ITU arrangements for non-State actors participation.

United Nations Organizations: Consultative relationships with ECOSOC

Basic text: ECOSOC resolution 1996/31.

The main entry door to the United Nations for the NGO community is ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31 making formal arrangements to implement the provisions of Article 71 of the UN Charter. It formalizes the consultative relationship between NGOs and the UN Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies, essentially the UN substantive commissions (Commission on Human Rights, Commission on the Status of Women, Commission on Sustainable Development, and Commission on Science and Technology for Development, among others). When granted the ECOSOC status (accreditation), NGOs can designate representatives to UN meetings (registration).

The resolution provides the framework for obtaining consultative status allowing NGOs to participate in the work of the UN. The consultative status is granted after the approval of ECOSOC, on the recommendation of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, composed by 19 elected ECOSOC Member States.

ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31 provides consultation mechanism in accordance with the level of relevance of the activities of the NGO applying for the Status with the work of the United Nations.

- The general consultative status (§ 22) is granted to NGOs that are concerned with most of the activities of the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies and which are broadly representative of major segments of society at the international level. NGOs in general consultative status can take the floor during meetings of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies, circulate written relevant documents not exceeding 2,000 words and propose to the Council Committee on NGOs to request the Secretary-General to place items in the provisional agenda of the Council.
- The special consultative status (§ 23) is granted to organisations having special competence, and which are concerned with only a few of the fields of activity covered by the Council and its subsidiary bodies. They are allowed to circulate written documents relevant to the issue at stake not exceeding 500 words to ECOSOC and 2,000 words to subsidiary bodies. They are also allowed to make oral statements before subsidiary bodies of interest for their field of activities.
- The inclusion on a Roster List (§ 24) is open to non-governmental organisations able to make occasional and useful contributions to the work of the Council or its subsidiary bodies within their competence. Resolution 1996/31 also established a bridge for NGOs granted consultative status before any other specialised agency or subsidiary body of the United Nations since those NGOs can also be registered on the Roster List. NGOs on the Roster can provide the Economic and Social Council with written statements when invited to do so by the UN Secretary General.

The resolution also identifies conditions for being granted the ECOSOC consultative status and arrangements for suspension and withdrawal of the status. In addition, NGOs must submit a quadrennial performance report on their activities with the UN.

International Labour Organization (ILO)

As a tripartite organization, the ILO collaborates with non-governmental organizations, integrates sectors of civil society into its structure and maintains a comprehensive relationship with the non-governmental sector, which involves the following:

1. The integration of non-governmental social partners in the identity of the Organization itself;

The individual employers' and workers' representatives at the Conference organize themselves into an Employers' and a Workers' Group and (every three years) into an Employers' and Workers' Electoral College which elects the Employer and Worker members respectively of the ILO Governing Body. The Employers' and Workers' groups of the Governing Body nominate the employers' and workers' representatives on the Organization's various consultative bodies. The ILO decision-making process is based on the full involvement of Government, Employers' and Workers' representatives. Numerous international labour Conventions and Recommendations adopted by the International Labour Conference provide for member States to operate procedures that ensure the effective consultation of workers' and employers' organizations or representatives of employers and workers on all matters concerning the activities of the International Labour Organization. A national level consultation complement those established at the international level. The ILO promotes the development of independent employers' and workers'

organizations and provides training and advisory services to those organizations.

2. According consultative status to non-governmental international organizations that meet certain criteria

Three different categories of international non-governmental organizations have been established:

- The first includes general or regional consultative status. International NGOs with an important interest in a wide range of ILO's activities are granted with this status. Standing arrangements have been made for the participation of those enjoying general consultative status in all ILO meetings, and in regional meetings for those with regional consultative status.
 - A second category is the Special List of Non-Governmental International Organizations. It was set up by the ILO Governing Body in 1956 with a view to establishing working relations with international NGOs other than employers' and workers' organizations. The participation of NGOs in this category depends on their demonstrated interest on ILO's programme of meetings and activities. There are currently more than 150 NGOs on the Special List, covering a wide variety of fields, such as the promotion of human rights, poverty alleviation, social security, professional rehabilitation, gender issues, youth matters, etc.
 - In a third category, the ILO Governing Body extends invitations to international NGOs which meet certain established criteria to attend different ILO meetings for which they have demonstrated a particular interest. To be represented at a session of the International Labour Conference or at other ILO meetings, NGOs require an invitation.
3. Collaboration at the operational level with a variety of international, national and local organizations.

Along with the relationships with its non-governmental social partners and international NGOs in the various categories described above, the ILO collaborates at the operational level with many other local, national and regional civil society organizations.

To select such organizations for development cooperation, preference is usually given to those with relatively long experience in the geographical area or thematic field, and to those which have the trust of the identified beneficiaries and can relate to other social actors. They can perform tasks and undertake activities subcontracted to them by the ILO, and they can also be recipients of aid and technical assistance provided by the ILO. Among the ILO technical cooperation programmes with active non-governmental sector involvement, there are those dealing with the elimination of child labour, poverty alleviation and informal-sector initiatives, and employment creation through the promotion of enterprise development, particularly at the small and micro-enterprise levels.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

Basic text: TDB Decision 43 (VII)

UNCTAD set up both formal and informal mechanisms for Civil Society participation in its activities. Formal relationships with civil society are governed by UNCTAD Trade and Development Board decision (TDB) 43 (VII), dated 1968 and based on Rule 77 of its rules and procedures. UNCTAD provides a formal consultative status, shaped into three categories, following the ECOSOC model of consultative status.

International non-governmental organisations, which have activities and a basic interest in most of the activities of the TDB, are placed in the **general category** and may attend all the sessions of the TDB, Commission and other subsidiary bodies. International non-governmental organisations, which have a special competence, are in the **special category** and can attend and observe the work of the Trade and Development Board and of the Commissions and other subsidiary body of concern to them. The TDB Bureau is in charge of approving the attribution of UNCTAD consultative status, in light of the recommendation and explanatory notes submitted by the secretariat. NGOs in general and special status receive notifications and documentation regarding conferences and meetings, and their representatives are entitled to observe the meetings of intergovernmental bodies, circulate written documentation and make oral statement on issues included in the agenda of the meeting before Member States.

National NGOs, which are considered to bring a relevant contribution to the activities of UNCTAD, are inscribed in a **Register** by the UNCTAD Secretary General after due consultation with the representatives of the Member State concerned. They receive UNCTAD documentation on a regular basis.

In addition, UNCTAD XI outcome document called upon the TDB to organise half-day thematic informal hearings with non-state actors, including NGOs, to express their views before the Board. The outcome of the hearings is a summary submitted as an input into the discussions of the Board.

A wider range of NGOs and civil society entities are nevertheless called to participate in the quadrennial ministerial conferences of UNCTAD. 385 NGOs were represented at UNCTAD XI inter-ministerial meeting in Sao Paolo (2004).

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

UNDP has a long and extensive history of partnership with non-governmental organizations extending over 30 years. In the early years of engagement UNDP partnerships with CSOs were primarily for implementation of projects and delivery of services. In 1990 with the launch of the Human Development Report, whose inspiration was drawn in large part from civil society, UNDP partnerships with CSOs increased. Today partnership with civil society is centrally important to UNDP.

UNDP counts among its potential CSO partners intermediary NGOs, cooperatives, service organizations, community-based organizations (CBOs), indigenous peoples' organizations (IPOs), youth and women's organizations, academic institutions, and religious organizations.

In its efforts to strengthen its policies and procedural methods to collaborate more effectively with Civil Society, UNDP has created the CSO Division, as a part of the Bureau for Resources and Strategic Partnerships (BRSP). The Division provides programme support and guidance to country offices to strengthen their capacity to work with CSOs. In close collaboration with the Bureau for Development Policy (BDP) and the regional bureaux, the division also supports strategic processes of civic engagement at local, regional, and global levels. The CSO Division is composed of:

- A **CSO Advisory Committee** to the Administrator, established in May 2000. The committee is composed of civil society policy leaders from around the world, provides ongoing advice and strategic guidance to the Administrator and senior UNDP management on future policy directions.
- **Regional and National mechanisms**; UNDP counts on CSO advisors at regional and national levels to foster a process of policy dialogue and advice with the resident coordinators and senior management in country offices. The CSO Division has also supported the establishment of regional expert networks of CSOs to provide quality policy advice, training, research support and exchange of best practices.
- A **CSOs Advisory team**. It has been set up by the CSO Division in coordination with civil society focal points in regional and substantive bureaux and CSO advisors in UNDP regional centres in the field. This global 'virtual' network serves as a forum for dialogue and advice on strengthening strategic civil society engagement with UNDP.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Basic text:

- Rules for Civil Society engagement at the Governing Council
- Directive on Criteria for NGO accreditation as observers to the Governing Council of UNEP and its subsidiary bodies

The United Nations Environment Programme has enjoyed a special relationship with civil society in tackling environmental issues. Indeed, the Stockholm Conference on Human Environment, which led to the creation of UNEP in 1972, owed much to the enthusiasm, dedication and commitment of NGOs. Most of the multilateral environmental agreements (Basel Convention, Montreal Protocol, Biodiversity and Climate Change Conventions, etc) were developed thanks to the lobbying efforts of NGOs.

In order to participate in UNEP's Governing Council and its Special Sessions, Civil Society organizations must first be accredited with UNEP. In order to be accredited, the organization must fulfil the obligatory criteria which include but are not limited to: proof of interest in the field of environment, proof of non-profit making status, including documents of incorporation of the entity as well as other documents produced and distributed by the organization. Once accreditation is granted, the civil society organization is granted observer status to the Governing Council, which thus permits the organization to make oral statements, upon request of the President or Chairman, and

submit written statements to the Council on matters within the scope of their activities.

The Governing Council meets once biennially on the odd-numbered years. Once the full accreditation process is completed, the Civil Society Organization will be able to send a representative to the Governing Council meetings and the Special Sessions. NGOs applying for observer status to the Governing Council are asked whether they have consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The Governing Council then applies the relevant sections of the guidelines regarding the arrangements for consultation for NGOs.

United Nations International Children’s Education Fund (UNICEF)

Presently there are 191 international NGOs that have consultative status with UNICEF. Consultative status is considered through the consultative status granted by ECOSOC and if this has not formerly been established with special consultative status for other NGOs. This consultative status allows NGOs and other Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) the opportunity to interact with the UNICEF secretariat as well as the right to present their views to the Executive Board. There are three principal methods of involvement for accredited NGOs and CSOs: participation in meetings, oral statements, and written statements.

Firstly, consultative status permits for participation in Executive Board meetings, in accordance with Article 50, para. 2 and Annex to the rules of the Executive Board on Participation of Non-Members of the UNICEF Board Meetings, Section 2 c) specifically. Secondly, under the authority of their governing body and with the approval of the office of the Secretary of Executive Board, CSOs in consultative status with UNICEF are permitted to submit written statements to the Executive Board. Finally, by prior arrangement with the President of the Executive Board, CSOs with Consultative Status may be called upon to address the board.

The World Health Organization (WHO)

Basic text: WHO Constitution Art 71
Principles Governing Relations with Nongovernmental Organizations

The WHO is able to make arrangements for consultation and cooperation with NGOs to carry-out its international health work as is presented in Article 71 of the WHO Constitution. The WHO has two forms of relations with NGOs, formal and informal. Formal relations between the WHO and NGOs, known as official relations, are available only to the NGOs that meet the criteria outlined in their “Principles Governing Relations with Nongovernmental Organizations” whereas all other relations, including working relations, are considered unofficial. Official relations status with the WHO begins slowly through mutually benefiting acts and a long-term and closer relationship is formed between the two parties. The principles specify the objectives of WHO’s collaboration with NGOs and provides the framework within which WHO and national, regional and international NGOs may collaborate. Admission of NGOs into official relations status can only be decided by the Executive Board.

The criteria for admission into official relations with WHO include: the main area of competence of the NGO shall fall within the purview of WHO and its aims and activities shall fall in conformity with the spirit, purposes and principles of the Constitution of WHO, normally be international in its structure and/or scope, NGOs with a federated structure. An NGO must have a minimum of at least two years of working relations before an application may be submitted for admission into official relations status.

Once official relations have been conferred upon an NGO, many privileges are bestowed upon the NGO. Firstly, NGOs have the right to appoint a representative, without the right of vote, to participate in WHO’s meetings or in those of the committees and conferences convened under its authority, under certain conditions listed in the Principles. Secondly, NGOs are allowed access to non-confidential documentation and other such documentation as the Director-General may see fit. Finally, NGOs are allowed the right to submit a memorandum to the Director-General, who would determine the nature and scope of the circulation. Similar privileges are normally accorded to national/regional NGOs having working relations with WHO regional offices.

UNAIDS

Basic text: Appendix II of the UNAIDS and Nongovernmental Organizations Guidelines

The involvement of civil society in UNAIDS work has been particularly important in dealing with the HIV/AIDS pandemic. NGOs are beneficial to the work of UNAIDS through their experience, their best practice, and their ability to implement programs and disseminate information.

In order to promote this important involvement, UNAIDS seeks partnerships with organizations that work with the less formally organized parts of society but with whom UNAIDS has difficulty working with itself.

UNAIDS has been one of the first UN agencies to include participation of civil society on its Programme Coordinating Board (PCB), which is the main governing body of UNAIDS and is composed of 22 representatives of member states. In addition, five seats on the PCB are reserved for NGO delegates, two of which are from developed countries and three of which are from developing countries. The PCB also has an open policy of allowing observers from other NGOs to attend meetings and have the right to intervention in those meetings. The five NGO delegates to the PCB are able to have a direct interaction with other NGOs during the session.

The NGO Delegation—also known as the NGO Liaison Committee—has participated in the work of the PCB since its first meeting in July 1995. Originally the NGO Delegation was asked to review and modify the terms of reference for its work. It has also periodically had the task of assessing the continued usefulness of the delegation on the PCB and to determine the method of replacing representatives in current vacancies. All of the general tasks and methods of function of NGO participation in UNAIDS can be found in Appendix II of the UNAIDS and Nongovernmental Organizations Guidelines available on their website.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Within the UNHCR, **consultations** are held with NGOs for three days during the week prior to the annual session of UNHCR's Executive Committee. It involves dialogue on a wide variety of subjects of interest to NGOs and UNHCR. In addition, NGOs that register at the plenary session of the Executive Committee are invited as **observers** to meetings of the Standing Committee during the following year. One **joint NGO statement** per agenda item could also be made. Several **information meetings** involving NGOs are held in Geneva throughout the year on specific themes or country situations.

The relationship between UNHCR and NGOs is either on an operational or an implementation basis.

UNHCR has an **operational partnership** with some 500 NGOs. These operational partners support UNHCR's work in such areas as emergency relief and resettlement. UNHCR works with bonafide organizations, national or international, that share a non-political mandate. UNHCR **criteria for selection** of an NGO working partner include: To be legally registered at the locations of its headquarters and/or in the country where they are operating; to have the authority to operate a bank account and the ability to maintain separate accounts for any expenditures incurred on behalf of UNHCR; to be able to demonstrate financial reliability by producing official audit statements. Additionally, the NGO must have established a working relationship with the government that allows them to operate within the country concerned.

UNHCR and NGO collaboration in **project implementation** is governed by agreements that establish common responsibilities. Concerning the **criteria**, UNHCR gives priority to cooperation with indigenous NGOs or international NGOs with local affiliates. UNHCR favours working with NGOs that have ongoing programmes in the country. NGOs interested in working with UNHCR as implementing partners sign a formal project agreement spelling out specific responsibilities. The basic conditions for partnership which must be met involve strict financial and accountability requirements including audit certification. Also, UNHCR rules and procedures must be followed. Additional **criteria** include the NGO's quality of service, rapid response, local experience, contribution of resources, continuity of staff, previous experience working with UNHCR, and phase-out potential.

The UNHCR maintains an **NGO Coordination Unit**, which is a focal point for all general policy issues concerning NGO's.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Basic text: Directives concerning UNESCO's relations with non-governmental organizations

The relationship between UNESCO and NGOs consist of two main types, formal and operational, which are outlined in the "Directives concerning UNESCO's relations with non-governmental organizations". Requests for any official status may be submitted to the Committee of NGOs of the Executive Board.

To maintain **formal relations** with UNESCO an organization shall qualify as non-governmental as well as non-profit-making. There are several **conditions** which must be fulfilled, such as: Engagement in activities of UNESCO's competence, conformity with UNESCO principles; active at the international level; a regular active and international membership (groups and/or persons); a recognized legal status; an established headquarter; democratically adopted statutes; existing and active for at least four years.

Formal relations can be established within two distinct categories: Consultative and associate relations. Applicants for the **consultative relations** must prove their ability to supply UNESCO, at its request, with competent advice on questions coming within their purview and to contribute effectively by their activities to the implementation of UNESCO's programme.

Associate relations, which are reserved for a small number of umbrella NGOs, will additionally be invited by the Director-General to advise him regularly on the preparation and execution of UNESCO's programme and to participate in UNESCO's activities.

The relationship is established for a renewable period of six years.

UNESCO may cooperate with any non-governmental organization in a type of relations known as "**operational relations**". These are designed for a much broader selection of organizations and will be maintained on a more flexible basis, with less focus on administrative and procedural formalities. These relations are intended to benefit from that organization's operational capacities in the field and its networks for the dissemination of information. NGOs wishing to establish operational relations must be either of an international nature that only partially meets the conditions for the establishment of formal relations or a national, local or field nature and being able to provide the operational capacity for the cooperation.

UNESCO also cooperates on an **informal basis** with other NGOs.

Every three years an **International NGO Conference** involving NGOs in formal and operational relations is held to discuss programmes as well as issues arising from UNESCO/NGO cooperation. The conference elects a president and an NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee which cooperates with the Director-General in following up appropriate decisions taken at the General Conference.

Responsibility for UNESCO/NGO cooperation lies with the Section of International Non-governmental Organizations and Foundations, which is also secretariat of the NGO Committee of the Executive Board. The section coordinates NGO-related activities of other divisions and programmes and is responsible for overseeing, monitoring and coordinating UNESCO's institutional relations with NGOs, including financial matters. It is also responsible for administering the system and procedures for establishing relations with UNESCO.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Basic text: FAO Policy and Strategy for Cooperation with Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organizations

The FAO has a long history of cooperation with civil society based on direct relations. Working with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) increases the effectiveness and quality of FAO's work in agriculture and the fight against hunger. Through dialogue and consultation with CSOs, FAO ensures that its decision-making, policies and scientific research reflect the interests of all sectors of society. The principles underlying FAO's partnerships with NGOs or CSOs actors are based on the *FAO Policy and Strategy for Cooperation with Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organizations*. The document outlines strategies and priorities for action, defines formal status and other forms of collaboration, and provides the guiding principles of CSO collaboration, which need to be in congruence with FAO's mandate, mutual interests and objectives, transparency, accountability.

CSOs work with FAO in a number of ways: in technical areas such as sustainable agriculture, gender and environment; in institutional areas such as representation and legislation and in capacity-building, advocacy and technical support.

The **formal status** of CSOs with FAO can be obtained through an official process of application and approval; this gives them mandated participation in FAO Governing Bodies and Technical Committees as observers. Over 200

International Non Governmental Organizations (INGOs) have this formal status.

Formal status is not a prerequisite for partnership with FAO. In the field, FAO works with CSOs, particularly farmers, fishers and herders groups, to ensure that its projects and programmes have a real impact on local communities. CSOs also collaborate with FAO in normative activities, sharing information and raising awareness at national, regional and global levels. Finally, civil society attendance of FAO Committees, Commissions, Technical Meetings and Regional Conferences does not depend on application for or granting of formal status.

World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

Since its beginning, WIPO has cooperated with NGOs working in the field of intellectual property. NGOs can obtain an observer status within WIPO; over 180 NGOs (both national and international) currently have this status at WIPO. The procedure for obtaining observer status involves submitting a written request to the WIPO Secretariat and providing information about the NGO and its relation with WIPO work. NGOs with observer status are automatically invited to participate in all WIPO meetings, including technical meetings which deal with issues of substantive intellectual property law, such as the Standing Committee on the Law of Patents (SCP) and the Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights (SCCR). NGOs play an increasingly active and important role in debates surrounding the setting of intellectual property standards at the international level.

World Trade Organisation (WTO)

Basic text: General Council Decision WT/L/162

The NGO involvement in the WTO is recognised by the Marrakech Agreement establishing the WTO. Article V § 2 provides "the General Council may make appropriate arrangements for consultation and cooperation with non-governmental organizations concerned with matters related to those of the WTO". The WTO elaborated formal guidelines to organize the relations with civil society and non-governmental organizations. General Council decision WT/L/162 adopted on 18 July 1996 lays down several principles to arrange relations with NGOs. This decision clearly recalls that due to the special character of the WTO as a legally binding intergovernmental treaty of rights and obligations among its Members and a forum for negotiations at the intergovernmental level, it is not possible for NGOs to be directly involved in the official work of the organisation.

While rejecting formal NGO participation, this decision recommends that closer consultation and cooperation with NGOs be met through appropriate processes at the national level. At the international level, interactions are encouraged through documents availability and various means of informal exchanges on an ad-hoc basis. On that basis, main opportunities for NGOs to interact with the WTO include:

- Participation in symposia on specific WTO-related issues: Since 1996 a number of symposia have been arranged by the Secretariat on an informal basis. This provided a direct opportunity for NGOs to discuss with representatives of WTO Member States specific issues of interest to civil society.
- NGOs can submit substantial analysis papers to the WTO Secretariat. The list of NGO position papers received by the Secretariat is circulated among Member States for information and interested delegations can consult these submissions.
- NGOs are allowed to participate in the WTO Ministerial Conferences. Arrangements include arrangements for NGO applications to register and the right to attend the Plenary Sessions of the Conference.
- The WTO Secretariat has the practice of responding to requests for general information and briefings about the Organization.

Since 1998, the WTO Secretariat has provided regular briefings for NGOs. It also established a special NGO Section on the WTO web site with specific information for civil society, as well as an NGO Contact Point within the External Relations Division.

Conclusion

ITU's openness to non State actors has been fully recognised by the ITU arrangements on specific sector membership category for non state actors including private sector entities and non for profit organisations. However, within the realm of the UN system, the ITU is the only agency in which participation of non state actors is granted provided that they pay a financial contribution for their membership. Sector members and associate members gain participation in ITU meetings, the right to prepare and discuss recommendations, organisation and co-sponsorship of seminars and workshops, training facilities and access to ITU analytical and official documentation.

Therefore, the ITU is seen by many NGOs and non-for-profit agencies as functioning as a corporate-like institution as regards its arrangements for non State actor participation, as opposed to traditional ways of participatory arrangements and NGO consultations for NGOs in all other international organisations. The technical and very specific aspect of the work of ITU is often raised to justify the specific nature of ITU relationship with non State actors. However, other intergovernmental organisations dealing with such specialised issues, such as WIPO, nonetheless provide a free and more open consultative mechanism with NGOs.

Free access to documentation published and provided by the ITU is therefore one of the essential prerequisites for more openness of ITU towards the global civil society. More open participation and attendance for NGOs and academics institutions in thematic workshops and seminars were also raised as essential elements for better ITU inclusiveness. All international organisations, including WTO, whose openness to NGOs is still highly criticised, set up information exchange devices and documentation availability. The use of on-line facilities would prevent any higher cost in making documentation available for external partners interested in the activities and analyses of the ITU.

In addition, several options should be further considered as regards how to better involve NGO expertise in the work of the ITU. One could be to develop some participation / consultation arrangement for NGOs or academic institutions, in additional and in complement to the existing membership categories, on the model developed within the ILO. Another one could be to fully acknowledge the role of NGO and civil society entities in the development of telecommunication infrastructures, while taking into account the reality of the NGO community which is in general not able to pay the very high financial contribution requested for membership.

Therefore, free membership to ITU-D for NGO development partners as well as documents availability were both suggested to the ITU Council Working Group on WSIS open consultation on ITU reform on 1st February 2006. Further consideration to existing arrangements within other institutions within the UN system will feed this on-going reflection within the ITU governing structures.