

Model governance practices for integrating civil society in UN institutional frameworks for sustainable development (IFSD)

Background: The Major Group system for integration of civil society into intergovernmental processes began with Agenda 21 at the 1992 UNCED conference. Major Groups have become institutionalized in the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) over the 20 years since 1992. In the Rio+20 debate and negotiations, Major Groups were active and recognized by member states as vital to the post Rio and post 2015 sustainable development agenda. In most scenarios for the future institutional framework for sustainable development in the, the Major Group system is expected to continue in some form. Despite the institutionalization of Major Groups, there are still limitations on Civil Society participation, including a lack of authorized ongoing engagement with both the Bureau of member states, the UN Secretariat and with high level panels and roundtables which guide and frame negotiations and policy decisions of member states.

A precedent for post-Rio civil society governance practices: In the past three years there has been a development in one part of the UN system, where member states have authorized ongoing engagement of civil society with the Bureau, Secretariat and High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) in one body of the UN system. In 2009 the reform of the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Committee on World Food Security (CFS) led to a significant and robust engagement by civil society in the deliberations of a UN body approved by member states in that body. The new reformed Committee on World Food Security (CFS) includes a Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) authorized in 2010. The CSM is a self-selecting representative body with a coordinating committee. The coordinating committee meets with the CFS Bureau at regular meetings of the Bureau, with also includes the CFS Secretariat at FAO. In addition, the creation of an ongoing High Level Panel of Experts, bringing in other UN agencies, and international organizations also has representation by members of the CSM.

Practices that should be included in post-Rio governance mechanisms: The three levels of multilateral engagement, between member states, civil society and the UN system can be summarized in the following way. Member states' customary organization of a Bureau supported by a UN secretariat is the conventional structure for UN bodies. The future of the Major Group system, with its Organising Partners (MGOPs) should be authorized to work with both the Secretariat and Bureau, indeed being a constituted advisory body to the Bureau without decision making authority. Establishment of an ongoing High Level Political Forum (HPLF) to succeed the CSD requires such authorization to bring well prepared inputs from Major Groups and Civil Society to the many thematic and sectoral issues of sustainable development.

Recommended Action: MG/CSO representatives engaged in the HPLF and SDG negotiations should ask for member state authorization for robust engagement for Major Group and Civil Society representation with both the UN Secretariat and the HPLF Bureau with the purpose of framing issues and debate amongst member states with *prior and ongoing inclusion* of major inputs from MG/CSOs.