

BONN: CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION

June 2011

Civil society has an essential role to play in the UNFCCC negotiations. The civil society participation workshop in Bonn is a chance to strengthen the rules and their implementation for COP17 in Durban.

Effective civil society participation increases legitimacy and strengthens outcomes

- Civil society provides an extremely valuable technical and political resource, especially for countries with severely limited capacity.
- Civil society plays a pivotal role in holding governments and institutions to account for decisions that affect the lives and livelihoods of people around the world.
- Civil society plays a central role in raising the profile of issues under negotiation, leading to greater public awareness and legitimacy.

Civil society participation in the UNFCCC is severely restricted

- The participation of civil society organizations, including climate justice, indigenous peoples, youth, gender and faith-based organizations, have been effectively side-lined throughout the negotiations.
- During the 2009 Copenhagen climate talks, NGOs were barred, or their access was severely restricted, from the main venue under the excuse of 'security'.
- Public actions and statements have been consistently censored by the UNFCCC Secretariat.
- Negotiations on key issues are often held in closed session with no participation from civil society and access to negotiations documents is restricted to Parties.
- Opportunities to speak in negotiations are infrequent and often limited to a minute.

Business must not be privileged over real people if Durban is to be a democratic conference

- Civil society wants to make current mechanisms effective, while business is trying to introduce new ones, such as 'advisory panels'.
- By concentrating on new mechanisms, current ones can be left unchanged while the UNFCCC still claims to involve stakeholders.
- Civil society is integral in achieving a science- and equity-based outcome at the 2011 Durban climate conference but to do so it needs effective means of participation.

Key Demands:

- The rights of participation embodied in the Aarhus Convention, the Convention on Biodiversity and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Human Rights Council are a model that should be followed in the UNFCCC.
- All negotiations should be held in open session with full participation, including the opportunity to intervene in the discussions. Negotiations in new UNFCCC processes, like the design of the Green Climate Fund, should also be fully open to civil society.
- Civil society should have the right to intervene in all sessions and be an integral part of the conversation.
- Censorship of civil society views in public action and materials must end - Civil society must have the right to hold governments and institutions to account publicly for decisions that affect the lives and livelihoods of the world's people.
- Documents and proposals should be made immediately available, while civil society submissions should also be included online in official documentation.
- Rules and dispute resolution around actions should be transparent and acknowledge the important role actions play in holding parties, agencies and institutions to account.
- A fund to allow civil society participants from developing countries to travel to negotiations and be heard must be established.

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JS - Asia/Pacific Movement on Debt and Development

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