

# General guidelines for representatives of non-governmental organizations accredited at the United Nations Office at Geneva

## Introduction

The United Nations recognizes the importance of [partnering](#) with civil society, because in doing so civil society advances the United Nations' ideals and helps support the work of the Organization. Civil society organizations (hereafter referred to as NGOs) have been an integral part of the United Nations ecosystem from the outset.

Since the adoption of [the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) in 2015, the role of NGOs as partners to the United Nations has become even more significant. The UN system relies on their expertise and active engagement across different sectors including education, health, poverty eradication, human rights, gender equality and indigenous issues. In [Our Common Agenda](#), the Secretary-General called for **a more inclusive multilateralism**, which entails the inclusion of a diverse range of actors beyond States and increased cooperation with civil society.

The United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) supports the UN global efforts to promote, expand and strengthen the role of NGOs, in particular of those in **consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**, a status that enables NGOs to engage in multiple ways with the UN, including:

- To designate official representatives to UNOG who will be issued NGO ground pass by UNOG.
- To participate in events, international conferences and other activities of the UN, and make written and/or oral statements at these events.
- To organize side events and have opportunities to network and explore possible partnerships and joint ventures with various stakeholders.
- To arrange informal discussions on matters of special interest to groups or organizations.
- To access UNOG press documentation and library services.

As different UN entities may have different modalities for NGO participation, for more specific and detailed information on how to engage with various UN mechanisms, please refer to the respective organizing Secretariat (e.g. [OHCHR](#) for the [Human Rights Council](#), WHO for the [World Health Assembly](#)).

The terms of these guidelines apply to all holders of NGO Grounds passes issued by UNOG. UNOG reserves the right to deny or withdraw accreditation of NGO representatives whose activities run counter to the principles of the UN Charter, who act in a way inconsistent with the principles of the Organization, who abuse their privileges or put their accreditation to improper use.

## 1. General provisions

- 1.1. To encourage and facilitate the effective participation of civil society, and to promote a harmonious atmosphere supportive of discussions at intergovernmental meetings, UNOG has prepared guidelines for appropriate conduct at the Palais des Nations. These guidelines outline the rules and regulations which are applicable at UNOG. **They are not exhaustive and UNOG can review them at any time.**

- 1.2. The dignity of the Organization must be safeguarded at all times on UN premises. All relevant activities must be in line with the Organization's objectives, purposes and principles, as outlined in the Charter of the United Nations.
- 1.3. All visitors, including representatives of NGOs, are expected to display a courteous approach while on UNOG premises. Aggressive behavior, verbal or physical intimidation, threatening statements or gestures, any form of sexual harassment as well as racism and racial discrimination are prohibited within the UN premises and will not be tolerated. Please refer to the "[Code of Conduct To Prevent Harassment, Including Sexual Harassment, at UN system events](#)" which applies to all participants at events at the Palais des Nations.

## 2. **Etiquette, safety and security**

- 2.1. NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC can access the UN premises in Geneva. The practical information pertaining to directions and access is available on the "[Practical Information](#)" page of the UN Geneva website.
- 2.2. All persons entering the United Nations premises shall cooperate and comply with requests and instructions from United Nations officials and security staff, regarding the access and the use of facilities, and conduct on the premises. Representatives of NGOs may be subjected to **security scrutiny**. In special circumstances, i.e., a high-level security event, access to some areas may be restricted.
- 2.3. As at other UN duty stations, it is required to dress in a way that respects the professional working environment of the United Nations. UNOG Security reserves the right to deny entry or remove from the premises anyone not dressed appropriately.
- 2.4. Ground passes shall be worn visibly at all times. To obtain annual and temporary [accreditation and grounds passes](#) granting access to UN premises in Geneva, please refer to the above-mentioned website.
- 2.5. Any form of accreditation is specific to an individual representative and **non-transferable**. Any individual attempting to access as – or facilitating the access of a – non-accredited individual using the pass of an accredited delegate will result in temporary or permanent suspension of access. UNOG Grounds passes are issued strictly for access and identification at UNOG premises; use for other purposes, including outside UN premises, may result in temporary or permanent suspension of access.
- 2.6. **Identity documents** required to collect a Grounds pass include valid passports issued by a Member State or Permanent Observer State; travel documents recognized by the UN, and national identity cards issued by a Schengen State. National identity cards of other countries and driving licenses will not be accepted. **Fraud and related activity** in connection with identification documents, authentication features, and information will be sanctioned.
- 2.7. **Rallies and/or demonstrations** of any kind are not permitted on UNOG premises, and/or grounds.
- 2.8. The UNOG Security and Safety Service and the NGO Liaison Unit reserve the right to suspend or withdraw accreditation of NGO representatives (1) who violate the ground rules on access, (2) whose activities run counter to the principles of the Charter of the

United Nations, (3) who abuse the privileges derived from consultative status with ECOSOC or (4) act in a way which is not consistent with the principles of the Organization.

### **3. Use of the United Nations name and emblem, and representation of the consultative status with ECOSOC**

3.1. **The flags and any officially recognized symbols of the United Nations and of its Member States shall not be treated with disrespect.**

3.2. The use of the United Nations **name and emblem** is reserved for the official purposes of the Organization, and it cannot be used for commercial purposes in accordance with the General Assembly resolution 92(I) of 7 December 1946. The use of the **United Nations emblem** on non-official documents and publications, including social media posts and NGO material (stationery, business cards, websites, meeting banners, cars, office buildings, etc.) is therefore expressly prohibited.

3.3. The **United Nations flag** may not be displayed in meeting rooms where NGOs organize events, except with the authorization of the Secretary-General or his authorized representative.

3.4. NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC are not considered part of the United Nations system. As such, they are not representatives or staff of the United Nations, nor are they authorized to enter into business arrangements on behalf of the Organization or misuse the United Nations' name or logo for endorsement of an NGO's activities in any way. NGO representatives must not use titles that may lead to confusion about the nature of the association between them and/or their organization and the United Nations. Consultative status does not entitle NGOs to any diplomatic privileges, such as those afforded to UN staff members. **Misrepresentation of consultative relationship** can result in adverse consequences for the NGO, including being reported to the NGO Committee of ECOSOC and, ultimately, suspension or withdrawal of the consultative status by ECOSOC.

3.5. If NGOs wish to display their organization's consultative status on their letterhead or signature, the following statement is to be used: "Organization in (Category of status) with the Economic and Social Council since (year status granted)".

### **4. Use of premises, conference rooms and related facilities**

4.1. Meeting and conference facilities and services at UNOG are intended primarily for meetings and conferences listed in the official UN Calendar of Conferences approved by the General Assembly. Subject to availability, UNOG premises and services may be made available for conferences and meetings of NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC. Specific instructions and procedures for requesting, organizing and conducting meetings or conferences in meeting and conference rooms at the Palais des Nations are available on the [UN Geneva website](#).

4.2. The UNOG premises shall be used only for the official business of the United Nations and for activities that are in line with the United Nations purposes and objectives, and that are **strictly non-commercial**. Commercial activities, such as charging entrance and/or enrolment fees for participation in NGO events, sale of NGO materials and publication, sale of NGO-branded souvenirs etc. are therefore not authorized in the Palais des Nations.

- 4.3. NGOs cannot act as sponsors for other entities, regardless of their status.
- 4.4. NGOs are only authorized to participate in the organization of cultural and special events under the patronage of a Permanent Mission to UNOG, or through a UN Agency.

## **5. Information materials and media coverage**

- 5.1. UN premises may not be used for press conferences or interviews by NGO representatives. NGOs may, however, seek to arrange their press briefings, and the dissemination of press releases and media advisories, through the Association of Correspondents Accredited to the United Nations ([ACANU](#)).
- 5.2. Only professional journalists working for bona fide media organizations may be accredited by the UNOG Information Service to cover activities taking place at the United Nations Office at Geneva, as per [UNOG guidelines on media access to the Palais des Nations](#). The information channels of NGOs (newsletters, magazines, YouTube channels, podcasts, etc.) are not regarded as bona fide media for accreditation purposes.
- 5.3. The use of professional photographic equipment or other professional filming or recording equipment by NGO representatives is not permitted at UNOG, unless explicitly authorized.
- If an NGO is an authorized meeting organizer at UNOG, filming and photography is permitted inside the allocated conference room only.
  - Accredited NGOs may make recordings during NGO side events with prior approval from the organizing NGO. Photographs and videos must not disturb the viewing angle of the delegates or disturb the progress of the meeting.
  - NGOs cannot take pictures and film outside the conference room or elsewhere in the Palais des Nations with a professional intent.
- 5.4. Only United Nations conference officers may distribute materials in official meeting rooms.
- NGO materials (leaflets, publications, boards, banners, etc.) relevant to the work of an ongoing UN session may be displayed only on the tables or/and boards clearly marked for this purpose in designated areas. Materials should clearly indicate the logo and full name of the NGO.
  - In the room where the NGO side-event takes place, NGOs can distribute documentation exclusively with the agreement of the NGO organizing the event.
  - Once the materials displayed have expired or the meeting is over, it is the responsibility of the NGO to remove them accordingly.
- 5.5. Publishing, distributing, or disseminating material or information containing defamatory, abusive, or offensive language or images is not permitted on United Nations premises.

The NGO Liaison Unit in the Office of the Director-General is the focal point for matters on relations between the United Nations and civil society in Geneva and remains at the disposal of NGOs who require more details on any of the above-mentioned points. You can contact the NGO Liaison Unit at + 41 (0)22 917 13 04 or via the email address: [unog.ngo@un.org](mailto:unog.ngo@un.org).

*NGO Liaison Unit  
United Nations Office at Geneva  
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