

Standard Operating Procedure SOPs

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Maintained by/Author: COB/SC

Title: **Participants' management for meetings of the COPs and subsidiary bodies**

Description: Procedures or steps taken in the management of participants for meetings of the conferences of the parties (COPs), the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG), the Implementation and Compliance Committee (ICC), the Chemical Review Committee (CRC) and the Persistent Organic Pollutants Review Committee (POPRC)

Actors:

1. Executive Secretary (for RC meetings: Executive Secretaries)
2. COB Branch Chief
3. Conference Services Manager
4. COP/Subsidiary body coordinator(s)¹ (For RC meetings: Rome RC coordinator and Geneva RC coordinator)
5. Meeting coordinator(s)
6. Administrative officer
7. Certifying officer (travel)
8. Legal officer(s)
9. Participants' management focal point
10. Meeting services' assistant(s)
11. Logistics focal point²
12. Contacts database operator
13. UN Finance/UNEP/Operations Service Centre (OSC)

Steps:

I. Nomination process

A. Invitation letters and notification to observers

1. About 7 months in advance of meetings of the COPs and OEWG, and 4.5 months in advance of meetings of the ICC, CRC and POPRC, the COP/subsidiary body coordinator(s) provides the participants' management focal point with the draft invitation letters and supporting documents (i.e. provisional agendas, model of credentials for meetings of the COPs, information note for participants, list of invitees to meetings of subsidiary bodies, etc.), that have been prepared in consultation with relevant actors, as

¹ For the purpose of this SOP, for POPRC and CRC, the POPRC/CRC process coordinators serve as the subsidiary body coordinator.

² For meetings to take place in FAO headquarters in Rome, a logistics focal point should be assigned both in Rome and in Geneva. The logistics focal point in Rome will have the lead in carrying out the work required. The logistics focal point in Geneva will provide support.

appropriate. The participants' management focal point reviews, edits and formats the draft invitation letters and information note for participants and prepares the registration forms.

2. The participants' management focal point agrees with the COP/subsidiary body coordinator(s) on the modifications made and obtains clearance from the COB Branch Chief and the Executive Secretary(ies) on the draft invitation letters and supporting documents. Clearances are obtained on paper copies which are circulated using a routing slip. The use of the Executive Secretary(ies) electronic signature is usually requested during this step.

3. Once cleared by the Executive Secretary(ies), the participants' management focal point liaises with the COP/subsidiary body coordinator(s) who makes the necessary arrangements with UNON Conference Services for the translation of the invitation letters and supporting documents, if required³. The provisional agendas for COPs, OEWG and POPRC meetings are translated beforehand by UNON Conference Services and follow a separate process described in the SOP#02 on *"Pres-session working documents for the meetings of the conferences of the parties and the subsidiary bodies"*. Once all documents are available in the relevant languages, the participants' management contact point provides the final invitation letters and related documents to the contacts database operator together with send-out instructions.

4. The contacts database operator personalizes the invitation letters, inserts the Executive Secretary(ies) electronic signature and sends the letters out in a bulk e-mail according to instructions, with a copy to all relevant actors.

5. For observers⁴, a general notification (not personalized, English only) and a specific registration form are prepared following the same process as described in steps 1 and 2 above.⁵ The participants' management contact point provides the final versions of both documents to the contacts database operator together with send-out instructions. The notification is also posted on the website by the relevant COP/Subsidiary body coordinator(s).

6. In parallel, the legal officer prepares and transmits to the participants' management focal point and the contacts database operator updated lists of previously admitted observers for each Convention. The contacts database operator uses the lists of previously admitted observers provided by the legal

³ Invitation letters for CRC and ICC are prepared in English only. If the invitation letters and supporting documents only contain minor modifications compared to the invitation letters prepared for previous meetings, translation will be handled by the internal translation services (see SOP on "Requesting and processing all translation work done in house and by freelance translators" (title to be confirmed)). If the letters and supporting documents have been modified substantially, these will be sent to UNON Conference Services for translation.

⁴ This step only applies to meetings of the COPs and OEWG. For meetings of the POPRC and CRC, observers are informed that the meeting announcement and page have been posted on the website.

⁵ For Regional Centres, an invitation letter is prepared in English only and sent-out to the directors of the Regional Centres, following the same process of the invitation letters described in steps 1-4 above.

officer for the send out of the general notification and registration form for observers.

Note: For CRC members invited to CRC meetings to take place in FAO headquarters in Rome, this process is done by the Rome based RC Secretariat.

B. Official nominations and registrations of observers

7. About 5.5 months in advance of meetings of the COPs and OEWG, and 3.5 months in advance of meetings of the ICC, CRC and POPRC, the participants' management focal point, with the support of the meeting services' assistant(s), if necessary, coordinates the screening process of official nominations⁶ received from party and non-party representatives, members, experts, observers and other meeting participants.

8. The screening process includes verifying if nominations have been received through the official channels (i.e. Basel Convention focal point, Rotterdam/Stockholm Conventions official contact point, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, permanent mission, as appropriate) and meet all requirements, requesting clarification or additional information if necessary, and communicating with nominees and responding to their queries. For ICC, POPRC and CRC meetings, the participants' management focal point sends, if applicable reminders to the members of the committees when the deadline for nominations has expired, and sets a new deadline. Once the screening process has been completed, the participants' management focal point categorizes the nomination status of the participants for classification purposes in the contacts database, based on the registration data (party, non-party, experts, members, observers) as well as requests for financial support from participants from developing-country and countries with economies in transition, in conformity with UN/UNEP rules and procedures as well as BRS financial rules. For any queries regarding official nominations and registrations of observers, the participants' management focal point will seek the guidance of the relevant actor(s).

9. The participants' management focal point provides to the contacts database operator the nomination status and categorization of registrations' received, as well as the status of funding of the participants who records the information into the contacts database.

10. The participants' management focal point also receives the registration forms transmitted by observers⁷. The screening process for

⁶ For POPRC and CRC meetings to take place in FAO headquarters in Rome, the screening process of participants is shared with the Rome based RC Secretariat. COB is responsible for the coordination and the registration process of observers and Others (Government observers, NGOs, IGOs, UN Organizations) and for following up, in cooperation with the legal officer and the subsidiary body coordinator(s), with registrations after the completion of the admission process of observers. The Rome-based RC Secretariat is responsible for the coordination and the registration process of members and experts in cooperation with the subsidiary body coordinator(s).

⁷ For ICC meetings, communication with observers is managed by the subsidiary body coordinator who informs the participants' management focal point of such expected participation.

observers involves verification by the participants' management focal point that the body or agency has previously been admitted as an observer, based on the lists provided by the legal officer.

- For those observers that do not need to complete the procedure for admission of observers⁸, the participants' management focal point proceeds with registration of the meeting participant(s) in the relevant category.
- For those observers that do need to complete the admission process, the participants' management focal point transmits a standard response informing of the procedure to be followed, using template text provided by and with copy to the legal officer⁹.

11. With respect to observers that may raise questions regarding the admission procedure, participation in the meeting or other legal issues, the participants' management focal point refers the registrations received or other questions raised to the legal officer for further action.

C. Approval of participants eligible for financial assistance for COPs and OEWG meetings only¹⁰

12. About 4 months before the start of the meetings of the COPs and the OEWG, the participants' management focal point, in cooperation with the contacts database operator, compiles lists of confirmed¹¹ and pending¹² participants who are eligible for financial assistance and sends them to the COP/subsidiary body coordinator(s), who, in consultation with the COB Branch Chief, and the Administrative officer prepares a funding recommendation to the Executive Secretary. The Administrative officer ensures that the estimates are correct and that funding is available and consistent with the recommendation to the Executive Secretary. These lists indicate, among others, if the participant requesting financial assistance is from a least developed country (LDC) or a small-island developing state

⁸ Previously admitted observers or entities represented as observers in accordance with rule 6 of the rules of procedure for the respective Conference of the Parties, i.e., are the United Nations and its specialized agencies, the International Atomic Energy Agency and any State not party to the Convention and (Basel Convention) any political and/or economic integration organization not party to the Convention, and (Stockholm Convention) any entity operating the mechanism referred to in Article 13(6) of the Convention.

⁹ See SOP#25 on "Admission of observers to meetings of Conventions' bodies and management of Secretariat relationships with observers for further information on the admissions procedures".

¹⁰ For ICC, POPRC and CRC the participants' management focal point, in cooperation with the contacts database operator, may be requested by the subsidiary body coordinator(s) after the nomination deadline, to compile a list of participants, which includes an indication for requests for funding, in order to prepare a funding recommendation to the Executive Secretary in consultation with the COB Branch Chief, and the Administrative officer.

¹¹ Participants nominated through the official channel.

¹² Participants who have not been officially nominated through their governments yet: i.e. participants who submit their registration forms to the Secretariat without an official nomination letter.

(SIDS) and/or is a COP/OEWG Bureau member and, if applicable, the priority set by parties for their delegations. The procedure should give priority to LDCs and SIDS and thereafter, aim at ensuring adequate representation of all eligible parties. It should continue to be guided by established BRS financial rules (procedures for the allocation of funding from the voluntary trust funds for the facilitation of participation of parties in meetings of the conferences of the parties adopted in decisions BC-10/28, RC-5/1 and SC-5/2).

13. The COP/subsidiary body coordinator(s) submits the recommended participants' lists eligible for funding through the Administrative officer to the Executive Secretary for approval.

14. Once approved by the Executive Secretary, the COP/subsidiary body coordinator(s) informs the participants' management focal point who sends the final lists and instructions on the process of approved funded participants by e-mail to the meeting services assistant(s), with a copy to all relevant actors.

D. Confirmation letters¹³

15. The participants' management focal point prepares, in consultation with the conference services manager, the COP/subsidiary body coordinator(s) and other relevant actors as necessary, the draft confirmation letter template for the funded and non-funded participants¹⁴, for registered observers and the relevant supporting document(s) for those participants that have been confirmed through the nomination/registration process described above, or that have been approved as eligible for financial assistance. The confirmation letters serve as an official document from the Secretariat for participants to make their visa applications and any other required travel documents and are thus sent 2.5 months in advance of the meetings.

16. The participants' management focal point obtains clearance on the template confirmation letters and supporting document(s) from the COB Branch Chief, and the Executive Secretary(ies). The clearance is obtained on paper copies which are circulated using a routing slip. The use of the Executive Secretary(ies) electronic signature is usually requested during this step. Supporting document(s) are also included for information.

17. Once cleared by the Executive Secretary(ies), the participants' management focal point sends the template confirmation letters and relevant attachment(s) to the contacts database operator, together with send-out instructions.

¹³ For POPRC and CRC members attending the POPRC and CRC meetings taking place in FAO headquarters in Rome, the preparation and send out of confirmation letters is done by the Rome based RC Secretariat.

¹⁴ Confirmation letters and supporting document(s) include, as appropriate, standard information on support for travel and participation and itineraries, daily subsistence allowance, UN rules and regulations, and cancellation policy for funded participants, and on logistics and information for participants, visas and other practical information, contact details for additional information, paperless meeting and credentials for parties to the conventions (meetings of the conferences of the parties only).

18. The contacts database operator personalizes the confirmation letters, inserts the Executive Secretary(ies) electronic signature and sends the letters out in a bulk e-mail according to instructions, with a copy to all relevant actors.

II. Travel arrangements for funded participants¹⁵

A. Processing air-ticket cost estimates and itineraries

19. About 6 months in advance of meetings of the COPs and OEWG, and between 4 and 5 months in advance of other subsidiary body meetings (if requested by the subsidiary body coordinator), the participants' management focal point provides the necessary information and requests the travel agency to prepare ticket cost estimates based on economy class air-tickets at the most economical rate applicable.

20. Upon receipt of the estimated cost of air-tickets from the travel agency, the participants' management focal point finalizes the travel cost estimate by including the total DSA costs by country for the duration of the meeting and terminal expenses, and sends it to the Administrative officer with a copy to the conference services manager, the COB Branch Chief and COP/ subsidiary body coordinator(s) for information¹⁶.

21. About 4 months in advance of meetings of the COPs and OEWG, and about 3 months in advance of other subsidiary body meetings, the meeting services assistant(s) verifies existing information, creates or enters required information for funded participants in UMOJA (i.e. index numbers, ID event order, etc.).

22. The meeting services assistant(s) prepares and sends a travel control table to the travel agency, together with copies of passports, and requests booking of itineraries for all funded participants.

23. About 3.5 months to 1 month in advance of meetings of the COPs and OEWG, and about 3 months to 1 month in advance of other subsidiary body meetings, the meeting services assistant(s), verifies the itineraries received from the travel agency, and sends a communication¹⁷ and the proposed itineraries by email, with a copy to the participants' management focal point, to each approved funded participant who is requested to confirm the itinerary within a set deadline (usually one week). Upon request from participants, their confirmation letters and itineraries may be sent by e-mail to the embassy/consulate of their respective countries to facilitate the process of issuance of their visas to participate in the meeting.

¹⁵ For POPRC and CRC members attending the POPRC and CRC meetings to take place in FAO headquarters in Rome, travel arrangements for funded participants are done by Rome based RC Secretariat.

¹⁶ The COP/ subsidiary body coordinator(s) ensures that the pre-approval form for financial requests (*BRS form for pre-approval of financial commitments*) has been duly completed and signed by the COB Branch Chief, the Administrative officer and the Executive Secretary.

¹⁷ The communication includes a reminder about the UN rules and regulations and policies applied in BRS to facilitate servicing of meetings.

B. Processing travel requests, air-tickets and travel roster

24. Once the itineraries have been confirmed by the participant, the meeting services assistant(s) raises a travel request in UMOJA for each funded participant and prepares a travel advance for invited experts, if required.
25. The meeting services assistant(s) sends the travel requests to the certifying officer for certification and then to UNEP/OSC for approval.
26. Once approved, the travel agency issues the tickets and sends the e-tickets to the meeting services assistant(s) involved in the preparation of meetings. The purchase of the ticket should happen 21 days before the travel date.
27. The meeting services assistant(s) sends the e-tickets with a copy to the participants' management focal point to each respective funded participant and provides relevant information related to their travel.
28. About 1 month in advance of meetings of the COPs and OEWS, and about 3 weeks in advance of other subsidiary body meetings, the participants' management focal point, with the support from the meeting services assistant(s), prepares the travel roster for the payment of the daily subsistence allowance (DSA) to the funded participants, and sends it to the certifying officer for approval, together with the copy of the passports of the meeting participants for the preparation of the financial cable.

C. Arrangements for and distribution of DSA

29. The Administrative officer is responsible for making the necessary arrangements in advance of the meeting for DSA payment. The Administrative officer, with the support from the meeting services assistant(s), supervises the distribution of DSA to funded participants at the meeting venue. The DSA is usually distributed on the first day of the meeting. For meetings held in Rome, the payment of DSA is coordinated with the Rome based RC Secretariat, and for meetings held in other locations, the Administrative officer is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for actual DSA payment.

D. Reconciliation of the travel roster

30. Maximum 2 weeks after the COPs and subsidiary body meetings, the meeting services assistant(s) coordinates the reconciliation of the travel roster, in consultation with the participants' management focal point. This involves collecting and processing travel claim forms from participants and collecting cheques of no-show participants and any other unused cheques, cash or value cash cards. Such unspent money is returned to the Administrative officer, together with the signed travel roster, boarding passes and the copy of the passports. The meeting services assistant(s) also prepares expense reports in UMOJA for each participant.

III. List of participants

31. About 1 month in advance of the COPs and subsidiary body meetings, once the official nominations have been processed and entered into the

registration database, the contacts database operator prepares a preliminary draft list of participants based on the format used for previous meetings and using data extracted from the contacts database which is reviewed by the participants' management focal point and cleared by the legal officer and the conference services manager. The preliminary draft list is sent to the COB Branch Chief, the conference services manager, the legal officer, COP/subsidiary body coordinator(s) and related staff, and is made available on the shared drive for information. For meetings of the COPs, statistics are produced during the pre-registration process and announced at BRS all staff meetings.

32. During the meetings of the COPs and subsidiary bodies, the contacts database operator updates the draft list of participants according to participants' modifications made during registration to the meeting, sends it the legal officer for review and clearance, and provides regular statistics to the conference services manager. The list of participants is updated accordingly and as necessary.

33. After the meetings of the COPs and subsidiary bodies, the contacts database operator prepares the final list of participants and submits it to the COP/subsidiary body coordinator(s) for review and finalization according to the pre-session information documents process,¹⁸ including clearance by the legal officer, with a copy to the conference services manager and the participants' focal point. The final version of the list is posted on the website as an information document.

IV. Registration during meetings and credentials

A. Registration service and room set up during meetings of the COPs and OEWG in Geneva

34. On the first day of meetings of the COPs and the OEWG held in Geneva, the conference services manager coordinates the registration process for all participants, with the support from the participants' management focal point, and all staff assigned to the registration team.

35. Participants register at the registration desk, check their contact details in the registration folders prepared in advance, sign and correct their contact details, if necessary. Delegates may also provide the delegation order (e.g. head of delegation, alternate head of delegation, etc.). Any updates to contact details are communicated to the contacts database operator who updates the contacts database accordingly. The contacts database operator liaises with the legal officer for any changes affecting contact details of the conventions' official contact points.

36. If during the meetings, the registration desk receives a request to participate in the meetings from a body or entity that needs to complete the observer admissions' procedure and has yet to do so, the participants' management focal point contacts the legal officer for further action.

¹⁸ See SOP#03 on "In house processing of pre-session information documents (in English only) for meetings of the conferences of the parties and the subsidiary bodies"

37. Security identification badges¹⁹ through UNOG Security Office for meetings in Geneva are issued to participants upon arrival at the meetings and upon completion of the relevant registration procedure. Meeting participants collect their security identification badges at the registration desks upon presentation of one of the identification documents issued by a government recognised by the United Nations²⁰.

38. The set up of the room and production of name plates for delegations is managed by UNON Conference Services.

Note: For meetings in Rome or other locations, alternative arrangements may apply as appropriate.

B. Registration service and room set up during subsidiary body meetings in Geneva or elsewhere (excluding POPRC/CRC if these meetings take place in Rome)

39. The process of registration of subsidiary bodies' meetings in Geneva follows the same process as described in steps 34, to 36 above.

40. The set up of the room, required equipment for the production of badges for participants and production of name plates is coordinated by the logistics focal point, as requested by the subsidiary body coordinator(s) and/or the meeting coordinator(s) and using the list of participants provided by the contacts database operator.

41. If the meeting is organized by a partner organization/regional centre outside of Geneva, the name plates and badges may also be prepared by the logistics focal point and hand carried by the Secretariat staff members attending the meeting. Alternatively the name plates and badges can be prepared by the partner organization/regional centre.

Note: For POPRC and CRC meetings to take place in FAO headquarters in Rome, the registration process and access to the premises follow the FAO rules and regulations and is handled by the Rome based RC Secretariat.

C. Secretariat support with the review of credentials before and during meetings of the COPs²¹

42. About 4 months in advance of the meetings, the legal officer informs the participants' management focal point of any change to the approach for the preparation of the reports on credentials. This information is also posted on the conventions' websites and communicated to parties in the invitation letters.

¹⁹ Categories of badges to be issued are developed in advance of the meeting. The conference services manager, the legal officer and the subsidiary body and/or meeting coordinator(s) agree on the category of badges to be issued. The conference services manager subsequently liaises with UNOG security for finalization.

²⁰ Valid national passport; Valid picture identification card, in Latin alphabets; Valid picture "residency" card, in latin alphabets; or Valid picture drivers licence, in Latin alphabets.

²¹ This section pertains to the Secretariat internal processes. It complements the SOP on credentials which is directed to the attention of Parties.

43. Before the opening of the meetings, the participants' management focal point receives and collects credentials (copies and original) from parties. The participants' management focal point undertakes an initial review of the credentials received, liaises as necessary with the legal officer, and seeks clarifications as needed from parties if credentials do not appear to meet the requirements set out in the rules of procedure.

44. Two days preceding the opening of the meetings, the participants' management focal point submits the credentials received in advance of the meetings to the legal officer for review and clearance.

45. The participants' management focal point checks the party status of the State/organization that submitted credentials and if delegates who are listed in the credentials are pre-registered. If not, the contacts database operator is informed and the contacts database updated accordingly.

46. For credentials issued in Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish, the participants' management focal point checks with UNON translators (during the meetings) or staff in the Secretariat who speak those languages to verify whether these meet the requirements set out in the rules of procedure and for which COP meeting(s) they are issued.

47. The participants' management focal point prepares a credentials' tracking document which is used to report to the legal officer on the status of credentials and statistics during the meetings of the COPs, and that includes the following information:

- List of and total number of parties to each Convention at the time of the opening of the meetings;
- Credentials received organized by party and by Convention;
- Specification as to whether credentials received are originals or copies;
- Identification of and total number of parties present at the meeting that did not submit credentials and whether they submitted any kind of document instead (i.e. Note Verbale),
- Specification as to whether credentials received appear to be in order or not, and if not, for what reason;
- Confirmation that parties having submitted credentials are present at the meeting;
- Quorum for opening the meeting and for debate (2/3 for BC, 1/3 for RC and SC);
- Quorum for adopting decisions (2/3 for BC, RC and SC).

48. At the time of the consideration of the agenda items on credentials, the legal officer reminds the COPs of the relevant rules of procedure and of the approach that the Bureaux have agreed to take when preparing their respective report on credentials. This information will clarify the form in which and deadline by which the credentials are to be submitted to the Secretariat²².

²² Based on the practice followed during the 2015 COPs, the "ultimate" deadline for submission of credentials is Wednesday 1pm of the second week of the meeting.

49. On the first day of the meetings of the COPs, the participants management focal point collects, reviews and files original or copies of credentials provided by delegates. Clarifications may be asked from the delegates if unclear or incomplete information is provided so as to ensure that valid credentials are submitted as early as possible. If legal issues are involved, the participants' management focal point informs the legal officer, thereof, as soon as possible, who will then advise on or take further action (e.g. bilateral consultations). The credentials' tracking document is kept up to date by the participants' management focal point.

50. On the fourth day of the meetings of the COPs²³, the participants' management focal point submits the credentials' tracking document to the legal officer with a copy to the meeting coordinator(s), COP coordinator(s) and conference services manager and provides the first provisional statistics as well as a short status. Originals and paper copies of credentials are also provided to the legal officer at this stage. The legal officer reviews and clears the credentials received and information provided. Unless otherwise decided, the legal officer reports to the Bureaux on the status of credentials received at their meeting on the next day.

51. The participants' management focal point then provides regular updates and statistics to the legal officer, who reviews and clears additional credentials received and informs as appropriate the members of the Bureaux. As needed, the legal officer makes an announcement in plenary to remind parties to submit their credentials.

52. The participants' management focal point provides the final updates, statistics and the most updated version of the credentials' tracking document to the legal officer as soon as possible, subsequently to the deadline for the submission of credentials for review and clearance²⁴.

53. In addition, the participants' management focal point prepares a draft report on credentials for the meeting of the COPs to each respective Convention and sends all reports to the legal officer for final review and clearance, with a copy to the meeting coordinator(s), COP coordinator(s) and conference services manager. The legal officer obtains clearance from the Executive Secretary (or both Executive Secretaries for the meeting of the COP to the Rotterdam Convention), who signs the final versions of each report and then, presents each report to the Bureau of the respective COP for adoption²⁵. The reports on credentials are presented to the COPs for adoption before the meetings enter into "decision making mode" i.e. usually, no later than at the beginning of the morning session on the last day of the meetings.

²³ The deadlines set out in the SOP are based on previous practice and the assumption that there that back-to-back BRS COPs are held over a two-week period.

²⁴ Based on the practice followed during the 2015 COPs, this step is taken on Wednesday at 6pm of the second week of the meeting.

²⁵ Based on the practice followed during the 2015 COPs, this step is taken is on Thursday morning of the second week of the meeting.

54. Should parties submit credentials subsequently to the adoption of the reports on credentials, the legal officer will seek guidance from the relevant Bureaux or, if impracticable, the relevant Presidents on inclusion in an updated version of the relevant report(s) on credentials. Such updates are then brought to the attention of the COP(s) for adoption.

Document revision history

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