What are Major Groups?

Agenda 21 formalized the concept of Major Groups by recognizing nine sectors of civil society as the main channels through which groups of citizens can organize and contribute to policy and implementation of international efforts to achieve sustainable development.

Thus, the United Nations established the nine Major Groups at the 1992 Earth Summit, the first UN Conference on Environment and Development, after recognizing that sustainable development cannot be achieved by governments alone. These Major Groups are as follows:

- Women
- Children and Youth
- Indigenous Peoples
- Non-governmental Organizations
- Local Authorities
- Workers and Trade Unions
- Business and Industry
- Scientific and Technological Community
- Farmers

More details on the Major Groups and their Organizing Partners can be found here.

What are other stakeholders?

Other stakeholders are those who are not part of any of the abovementioned Major Groups, but also play an important role in organizing and contributing to policy and implementation of international efforts to achieve sustainable development. Their active involvement in all United Nations processes related to sustainable development is enshrined in the Rio+20 outcome document “The Future We Want”:

§43. (...) Sustainable development requires the meaningful involvement and active participation of (...) all major groups (...), as well as other stakeholders, including local communities, volunteer groups and foundations, migrants and families, as well as older persons and persons with disabilities.

Stakeholders vary depending on the Rio+20 follow-up processes. For the SIDS conference they represent NGOs from the SIDS countries.

SID$S$ Steering Committee

In keeping the process as open and transparent as possible, a steering committee representing Major Groups and other Stakeholders, as well as regional representatives from each of the SIDS regions has been convened through a nomination and selection process that has been successful in past events. The role of the steering committee is first and foremost to ensure broad and inclusive
participation of civil society organizations in the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders Pre-Conference Forum (28 August), and the SIDS 2014 Conference (1-4 September). The steering committee is tasked with identifying regional needs, increasing outreach and awareness of the Pre-Conference and Conference, supporting discussions on the partnership themes and engaging in Social Media dialogues to facilitate the inclusion of as many constituents as possible. More details on the steering committee can be found here.

What is accreditation?

Accreditation is the process by which NGOs are formally vetted by UN Member States and granted access to official meetings, ad-hoc processes and major conferences and summits. Organizations which are in consultation with ECOSOC and those which have participated in the previous SIDS conference (Mauritius and Barbados) are eligible to register their representatives online. Other relevant stakeholder organizations that meet criteria set forth by the General Assembly had until 12 May to submit an application.

How can I participate?

Modalities for the SIDS Conference and its preparatory process are outlined in General Assembly resolution A/C2/68/L67. Participation is open to representatives of accredited organizations, and all participants are required to register in advance online. A special accreditation process for those who do not have either ECOSOC accreditation or previous accreditation from SIDS processes in Barbados or Mauritius has been developed. The deadline for applications to this special accreditation process has now passed, the results of which will be shared after the final Preparatory Committee meeting (PrepCom) and will be published here.

The modalities of participation are still being finalized, however, Major Groups and other Stakeholders participation may include attending the plenary session of the Conference (subject to limitations on room capacity), participating in the multi-stakeholder partnership dialogues, organizing side events, launching new partnerships for SIDS, and holding informal bilateral meetings with governments.

The preparatory process is taking place at UN Headquarters throughout the first half of 2014. The final PrepCom will be held between 23-27 June in New York. See here for registration.

The Conference itself will be held in Apia, Samoa from 1 to 4 September 2014, and will be preceded by Pre-Conference activities from 28 to 30 August 2014.

Pre-Conference Events

Registration for the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders Forum is now open to those organizations that already have proper accreditation. Details on registration can be found here. A series of other Pre-Conference events have also been planned, and can be found online.

Is there funding for civil society?

Funding is available for a limited number of representatives from Major Groups and each SIDS region. The steering committee is currently in the nomination process. Please contact the
an appropriate member of the steering committee should you be interested in being nominated. The steering committee will handle all nominations.

**How do I organize side events at the Conference?**

A programme of special events, including briefings, seminars, workshops and panel discussions on issues related to the sustainable development of SIDS, will be organized daily in the margins of the Conference and its preparatory process. Guidelines for organizing side events are available [here](#). All proposals must be submitted before 31 of May 2014.

**How do I organize parallel events at the Conference?**

Stakeholders will have the opportunity to organize parallel events outside the Faleata Sports Complex in select locations in Apia. The parallel events will be coordinated and managed by the Government of Samoa in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The online [Parallel Event Request Form](#) must be filled out by interested stakeholders. All proposals must be submitted before 30 June 2014. Please refer to this [link](#) for further information.

**How do I get a visa?**

Visas will be granted free of charge to all participants upon arrival, provided that:

- You have a valid return or onward ticket;
- Your passport remains valid six (6) months from intended departure date from Samoa.

Please also check the entry or transit permit requirements for transit countries at their nearest Embassy or Consulate. Transit countries immediate to Samoa are New Zealand (Auckland), Australia (Sydney, Brisbane), Fiji (Nadi), and USA (Los Angeles, Hawaii and American Samoa).

**How do I reserve accommodation?**

A centralized accommodation booking system is available [here](#). A “Booking Process” document is attached as a useful guide for booking accommodation on-line.

Deadline for online registration for hotels is 30 June 2014 for people to be assured of their preferred booking. After this date, whatever hotel rooms left are for late-comers. It could be the most expensive, most far away in terms of travel distance etc.

**How do I participate if I am a business?**

The SIDS conference adheres to the structure of Major Groups that was outlined in Agenda 21. Private sector entities must be members of accredited organizations (for example, International Chamber of Commerce or World Business Council on Sustainable Development both members of the temporary coalition of business and industry under the Business Action for Sustainable Development) to pre-register online for the Conference and its preparatory meetings. You may query the database of accredited organizations (please refer to topic “What is accreditation?” above), but you would be advised to contact the Major Groups organizing partners for the Business and Industry sector for more information.
How do I participate if I am a representative of local authorities?

The SIDS conference adheres to the structure of Major Groups that was outlined in Agenda 21. UN accreditation for local authorities, such as mayors, municipal leaders and other authorities at the sub-national level, must be members of accredited organizations (for example, collective unions such as ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability or United Cities and Local Governments, the two organizing partner organizations for the Local Authorities sector) in order to pre-register online for the Conference. You may query the database of accredited organizations (please refer to topic “What is accreditation?” above), but you would be advised to contact the Major Groups organizing partners for the Local Authorities sector.

Information on youth participation

The UN defines 'youth' as persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions used by Member States. 'Children' are considered to be persons under the age of 14.

For the purposes of UN conferences and meetings, only individuals over the age of 16 may hold a UN grounds pass. Participants under 16 years of age may participate in UN conferences and meetings, though only with a designated chaperone. Both participant and chaperone must be registered online through an accredited organization.

The Major Group for Children and Youth seeks to coordinate global preparations for the SIDS Conference and strengthen the voice of its constituents at the intergovernmental level. Young people interested in participating should link up with the organizing partners for Children and Youth as soon as possible in order to receive important information and updates pertaining to the Conference and its preparatory process.

Information for journalists and other media representatives

Media accreditation is strictly reserved for members of the press: print, photo, radio, television, film, news agencies, and online media who represent a bona fide media organization. Full guidelines are available through the UN Media Accreditation and Liaison Unit.