

**Research and Independent Non-Governmental Organizations (RINGOs)
Civil Society Constituency to the UNFCCC**

CONSTITUENCY BYLAWS

May 16, 2023

ARTICLE I

Introduction

1. The Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) approved the creation of the Research and Independent Non-Governmental Organization constituency (RINGO) at COP 9 in 2003. The RINGO constituency has continuously provided input into the UNFCCC negotiations since that time. These bylaws set out rules and procedures that govern the operations of the RINGO constituency. Additional policies can be found on the RINGO website.
2. The RINGO constituency was formed to represent officially admitted observer organizations of the UNFCCC negotiations process that are engaged in research, teaching, and other knowledge, practice, or theory-based activities relating to any aspect of climate change. RINGO also promotes effective research-based outreach and capacity building relating to climate change for all stakeholders.
3. The RINGO constituency was created with the understanding that it would not operate as an advocacy constituency. Members represent a wide range of views on many subjects. The RINGO constituency welcomes the diverse views, expertise, and experience of its members. Members may engage in advocacy in their individual capacities, but the RINGO constituency does not take positions about current issues under negotiations, except to ask parties to ground their discussions and decisions in sound science, encompassing various disciplinary approaches.

ARTICLE II

Purpose and Mission of RINGO

1. The mission of RINGO is to highlight the role of sound social and natural science, law, humanities, and other approaches that increase understanding of climate change and how to address it. RINGO informs, builds capacities of parties and other stakeholders involved in UNFCCC negotiations, and promotes networking among the members of our civil society constituency. We do this by acting as a liaison between the UNFCCC secretariat and our members; conducting constituency coordination meetings during COP and SB sessions; developing materials and webinars about how to engage with COP processes; posting notes about what has happened in various negotiating sessions; connecting members to opportunities to attend constituted body meetings and other UNFCCC events; appointing members to various positions, task forces, and other opportunities for engagement in the UNFCCC process; and presenting official statements and submissions at UNFCCC meetings. RINGO also promotes stronger links between climate research and policy by encouraging researchers to improve communication about climate change to educators, policy makers, and the public.

ARTICLE III Membership

1. **Organizations.** Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) applying to be approved as a UNFCCC observer organization must choose to affiliate with one of the current UNFCCC civil society constituencies. Approved observer organizations that choose to affiliate with RINGO are considered to be organizational members of the RINGO constituency. Organizational members that are deemed to jeopardize the constituency status of the RINGO can be formally excluded by the Steering Committee (SC).
2. **Individuals.** Individuals who are employed by, formally affiliated with, or are currently a student at, a RINGO member organization are regarded as RINGO members. In addition, individuals who attend a UNFCCC meeting with a badge from a RINGO member organization are regarded as RINGO members for the duration of that meeting. Privileges, such as the distribution of tickets to limited-access events, may be limited to individual members. Individual members that are deemed to jeopardize the constituency status of the RINGOs can be formally excluded by the SC.

ARTICLE IV Leadership

1. RINGO has no financial resources and is organized and run by volunteer members through Constituency Focal Points (CFPs) and a Steering Committee (SC).
2. **Focal Points.** The RINGO CFPs are individual RINGO members serving as the official liaisons between the constituency and the UNFCCC secretariat. There should be at least two CFPs who are elected by the SC. They serve until they resign or the SC withdraws their mandate. When a CFP resigns, the SC will recruit and select a new CFP who is able to fill the requirements of the role

CFPs' responsibilities include:

- a) *Leadership.* The CFPs serve as the leaders of the RINGO constituency and are *ex officio* members and leaders of its SC.
- b) *Representation.* The CFPs are the primary representatives of RINGO.
- c) *Liaison to UNFCCC Secretariat.* The CFPs are the primary point of connection between RINGO and the UNFCCC Secretariat. They represent RINGO at meetings with the Secretariat and other UNFCCC officials, or appoint other members to represent RINGO in their place.
- d) *Selection for attendance of RINGO representatives at meetings with limited attendance during UNFCCC negotiation sessions.* The CFPs coordinate the selection of individual RINGO members to attend meetings with limited attendance called by the Secretariat, its Subsidiary and Constituted Bodies, the COP Presidency, or other groups.
- e) *Communications with members.* The CFPs maintain a RINGO website and listserv, and keep members informed about communications from the Secretariat and other groups.

- f) *Authorities.* The CFPs may:
 - a. Delegate tasks to SC members or to individual RINGO members who do not serve on the SC.
 - b. Work with other SC members to create and appoint people to other executive positions as needed.

3. ***Steering Committee.*** The SC works with the CFPs to guide the constituency.

- a) *Number of members.* The SC shall include no fewer than 8 and no more than 15 individual RINGO members. Current members of the SC may decide when new members should be added.
- b) *Duties of members.* SC members are required to attend a majority of all SC meetings and serve on at least one committee/thematic group. All members of the SC will take turns keeping notes of SC meetings, rotating this duty each meeting through the 12 SC members.
- c) *Term length.* SC members shall serve for a term of 5 years. Members may be reappointed for subsequent terms by a majority of the other current SC members. SC members may resign before their term ends.
- d) *Recruitment and selection methods.* The Steering Committee may decide to add new members at will, not to exceed 15 total members, at any given time. The SC shall determine the method of selection when new SC members are sought. A majority of current SC members must approve the method of selection, as well as the selection of individuals to be invited to join the SC. In recruiting new applicants, the SC will promote diversity in geographic regions, areas of expertise, and gender. Efforts will be made to recruit researchers affiliated with the Global South.
- e) *Emeritus members.*
 - a. *Selection.* Current and former members who have served at least 5 years on the SC may be elected to emeritus status by a majority vote of current SC members, not including the member under consideration.
 - b. *Privileges and Responsibilities.* Emeritus members may attend SC meetings, serve as chair or member of a standing or ad hoc committee, and conduct other RINGO work. The presence of emeritus members does not count in determining a quorum, and emeritus members do not vote on SC issues.
 - c. *Restrictions and Removal.* The SC may restrict the work done by individual emeritus members with a majority vote. Emeritus status may be ended by a two-thirds majority of current SC members.
- f) *Removal.* A member may be removed from the SC, with or without cause, by a majority vote of the other current SC members. Voting may be done in person, virtually, by email, or by a combination of methods.
- g) *Responsibilities include:*
 - a. *Appointments to special positions.* From time to time, RINGO is asked by the UNFCCC Secretariat to appoint people to specific positions with Constituted Bodies. These appointees serve in their individual capacities, unless authorized to speak on

behalf of RINGO. Examples include the CTCN AB representative, an appointment to the Technical Examination Process on Adaptation, and membership on TEC task forces. The SC will choose people for these positions. The SC may ask for self-nominations or may recruit an individual to fill a position. SC members must recuse themselves from decisions about a position for which the member has applied.

- b. *Appointments for selected speaking opportunities.* The SC may authorize individual members to make interventions during negotiation sessions, task forces, expert dialogues, thematic days, and other events for which constituency representatives are sought by the UNFCCC Secretariat or other entities involved in the UNFCCC process.
 - c. *Creation of committees.* The SC has the authority to create standing and *ad hoc* committees to address issues the SC considers to be needed or desired. The standing committees are listed and described in Article V.1 below. SC members will serve as committee chairs, who will periodically report committee activities to the full SC. Non-SC member individual RINGOs may be invited to serve on committees.
 - d. *Recognition of thematic groups.* The SC has the authority to recognize the creation of thematic groups. Unlike committees, which are created by the SC to conduct its work, thematic groups emerge from RINGO members' interests and are formally recognized by the SC when coordinators volunteer to lead them. Thematic groups report to the SC via the SC-appointed Thematic Group Liaison. Thematic groups are described in Article V.2 below.
 - e. *Managing access limitations at the UNFCCC negotiations.* The SC defines approaches to manage access limitations (tickets or ration coupons issued by the Secretariat or other entities managing the UNFCCC negotiation process). These approaches shall take into account the relevance of the individual member and/or organizational member for the process to which access is limited. The approach shall be transparently communicated by appropriate means. These can include oral announcements at daily RINGO meetings, information through the email listserv, or the RINGO website.
 - f. *Excluding members.* The SC may exclude organizational and individual members from RINGO membership by a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority SC vote under the following conditions:
 - a. disruption of the UNFCCC negotiations process, or,
 - b. formal stripping of their right to participate in the UNFCCC process, or
 - c. repeated advocacy linked to RINGO-related activities.
4. **SC Meetings.** In addition to the coordination meetings led by the SC at COPs and SBs, the SC holds meetings inter-sessionally to conduct RINGO's work.
- a. *Frequency.* The SC holds monthly virtual meetings and conducts business per an agenda distributed at least two days in advance. The SC retains the right to cancel some of these meetings.
 - b. *Quorum.* A majority of current SC members constitutes a quorum. A quorum is not required to hold a SC meeting, but a quorum is required for any votes to be taken at meetings.
 - c. *Sub-group Meetings.* SC members may hold informal meetings with other SC members to discuss matters of interest, including the work of various standing and *ad hoc* committees and thematic groups.

- d. *Decisions.* Where possible, the SC will strive to make decisions by consensus of those attending the meeting. Where consensus cannot be reached, the SC may decide on an alternate decision-making process, such as a majority vote.

ARTICLE V

Standing Committees and Thematic Groups

1. ***Standing Committees.*** RINGO maintains the following standing committees:
 - a. RINGO members engaged in committee service will do so in their individual capacity.
 - b. ***Statements Committee.*** The RINGO Statements Committee is responsible for coordinating the preparation and delivery of statements during the official UNFCCC COP and SB meetings.
 - i. ***Tasks.*** The Statements Committee will solicit input from members, select statement topics and focus, appoint drafting committees, review previous RINGO statements, edit draft statements, approve final statements, and choose presenters. The Statements Committee will encourage drafting committees to consider input received, so as to include the views of members unable to attend meetings in person, particularly members who live in the Global South. Submission of a topic does not guarantee that it will be included in RINGO statements.
 - ii. ***Membership.*** The Statements Committee consists of both SC members and other individual RINGO members interested in RINGO statements.
 - iii. ***Leadership.*** Two SC members will serve as co-chairs of the Statements Committee, preferably with at least one co-chair on-site at the COPs and SBs. Other SC members may also serve on the committee, either on an ongoing basis or for specific meetings. The Statements Committee Co-Chairs may request review and approval of statement texts by the whole SC.
 - iv. ***Non Advocacy.*** RINGO was created as a non-advocacy constituency, and does not take positions about current issues under negotiation, except to advocate for decisions grounded in sound science and to call for support for strong outreach and capacity building. Members may individually engage in advocacy, but their personal views should not be included in constituency statements. RINGO statements will adhere to its non-advocacy mission.
 - c. ***Governance and Recruitment Committee.*** This committee will periodically review the governance of RINGO per these bylaws, and revise as needed. It will also ensure that the SC is prepared to lead RINGO by recruiting new members with appropriate knowledge and skills. Two SC members will serve as co-chairs of this committee.
 - d. ***Constituted Body Nominations Committee.*** This committee may be implemented if the CFPs no longer serve this function. The committee will coordinate RINGO nominations to Constituted Body meetings. Responsibilities include soliciting member applications and coordinating the selection of representatives by the SC. SC members applying to attend a meeting shall recuse themselves from the selection process. Two SC members will serve as co-chairs of this committee.
 - e. ***Thematic Groups Liaison.*** Two SC members will serve as the liaison between the RINGO thematic groups and the SC. This liaison will periodically consult with all thematic group coordinators, receive brief reports of their thematic group's activities at least twice a year, and share this information with the SC.

- f. Website and Communications Committee. Two SC members will lead this committee. Responsibilities include updating website content, ongoing maintenance, preSB and COP enhancements, and regular overall review that the website is fit for purpose.
- 2. **Thematic Groups**. Thematic groups share knowledge, best practices, research ideas, and other resources on a chosen topic. They also promote networking among interested RINGO members.
 - a. *Organizational Process*. The SC approves requests for thematic groups made by individual or organizational RINGO members. Any RINGO member wishing to start a new thematic group must submit a written proposal to the CFPs. Once a new thematic group and its leaders have been approved, the CFPs will send a RINGO listserv message describing the new group and inviting RINGOs to join it.
 - b. *Leadership*. The SC approves a coordinator for each approved thematic group. Approved coordinators will be people who are familiar with the RINGO mission, bylaws, and website, and UNFCCC processes, and have expertise in the theme and purpose of the group. Thematic group coordinators need not be members of the SC.
 - c. *Representation*. The coordinator and members of thematic groups do not speak for RINGO unless the SC has authorized representation for a specific purpose.
 - d. *Meetings*. Thematic groups are expected to hold at least two online or in-person meetings a year. The SC may discontinue a group that does not hold meetings.
 - e. *Reports*. Coordinators will share a brief report of thematic group activities at least twice a year, usually before the SB and the COP. These reports are submitted to the SC member serving as the Thematic Group Liaison.
 - f. *Non-advocacy*. Thematic groups are not intended to engage in advocacy for particular issues under negotiation, including the promotion of specific areas for research or negotiation. The SC may close down thematic groups if they are seen as promoting advocacy, become inactive, or act in ways inconsistent with the RINGO mission..

Article VI

RINGO Meetings

- 1. **COP and SB Meetings**. RINGO holds regular coordination meetings during the official UNFCCC COP and SB meetings.
 - a. *Purposes*. RINGO meetings are intended to keep attendees informed about what is happening throughout the negotiating process. They also provide opportunities for networking and sharing of ideas, experiences, and opinions.
 - b. *Leadership*. RINGO meetings are run by SC members or their designated representatives.
 - c. *Who may attend*. RINGOs meetings are intended primarily for people affiliated with RINGO member organizations. Other interested parties are invited to attend, but may be excluded at the discretion of the SC. Any SC members attending the meeting may, at their discretion, ask a disruptive attendee to leave.

Article VII

Amendments

- 1. These bylaws may be altered, amended, repealed, or replaced only by a majority vote of the current members of the SC. All amendments to these bylaws will take immediate effect unless otherwise specified in the amendments.

