

REDD+ for the Guiana Shield

Background document for developing a

Side Event Proposal for COP21

Context

The first Regional Dialogue Meeting of the *REDD+ for the Guiana Shield* project will take place in Paramaribo, Suriname on 24-25 June 2015. One of the objectives of the meeting is to plan how to share key results of the project with external audiences. This includes preparations for a technical side event that could possibly be organized in Paris, France during the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) in December 2015.

A side event proposal for COP21 will be a concrete output of the Regional Dialogue Meeting. This background document explains the procedures and criteria set up by the UNFCCC secretariat for such a proposal.

Purpose of side events at UNFCCC

Side events have been held at COPs throughout the history of UNFCCC with the overall objective to benefit participants attending the session. They have grown to be seen as an integral part of the UNFCCC process, increasing the legitimacy of the climate negotiations by bringing different voices and perspectives to the more constrained formal negotiations.

The general purpose of side events are to enable knowledge sharing, capacity building, networking and exploration of actionable options for meeting the climate challenge. Well-promoted side events may attract an audience of highly qualified delegates and media producers that it would be very difficult and expensive to bring together in another setting.

Content of side event proposal

Any side event proposal submitted to the UNFCCC secretariat for consideration needs to contain the following information:

- **Title:** max 100 characters including spaces (any characters exceeding this limit will be automatically cut off);
- **Theme:** max 300 characters including spaces (any characters exceeding this limit will be automatically cut off);
- **Preferred date and time:** in case of successful application, the secretariat will consider this preference to the extent possible;
- **Anticipated number of attendees:** considered by the secretariat for appropriate room size;
- **Contact person on-site:** name, e-mail and mobile number;
- **Additional comments:** if applicable, please provide more information such as background information, co-organizers, speakers, presentations, restrictions regarding date and time.

How to submit a side event proposal

UNFCCC has created a Side events and Exhibits Online Registration System (SEORS) through which all applications need to be formally submitted: https://seors.unfccc.int/seors?session_id=COP21.

It is only possible for organizations or Parties that are officially accredited to the UNFCCC to submit a side event proposal. This means that the proposal cannot be sent in the name of the project itself, but through our eligible partners with valid UNFCCC accreditation.

The online system will be open for a limited time, from Tuesday 30 June at 9am Central European Time (CET) until Friday 3 July 2015 at 5pm CET.

Process:

1. Create a personal account on the SEORS website through to submit the application;
2. Log in to your personal account;
3. Enter application details;
4. Request authorization from your National Focal Point (NFP) in case of Party applicants, or Designated Contact Point (DCP) in case of observer organization, to confirm that you are accredited = eligible to apply;
5. Communicate with the UNFCCC secretariat;
6. If you get a slot, confirm or decline it;
7. Upload attachments about your side event to the UNFCCC website through SEORS.

More details on each of these steps are available on the SEORS website.

Selection criteria

There is no guarantee that a side event proposal will be accepted. Sometimes the number of applications is very high and the UNFCCC secretariat needs to make a selection for the most appropriate applications. The following criteria are taken into account:

1. Only one application per Party/observer organization can be accepted if the number of applications exceeds the number of available slots;
2. **Joint applications submitted by more than one Party/observer organization together are prioritized;**
3. Applications from NGOs in Non-Annex I countries;
4. Assessment of relevance of the side event theme to the issues under discussion/negotiation at the particular session;
5. Balance among observer constituencies;
6. Balance among topic themes;
7. The fact that presentations and relevant documents are uploaded onto the SEORS account.

What is offered by UNFCCC

If the side event proposal is accepted and formally included in the UNFCCC program, there is no fee for organizing the side event. A room inside the conference centre will be allocated for a specified time slot during one of the conference days. The duration of the side event is 90 minutes.

For deciding how to allocate the side events, the UNFCCC secretariat applies the following criteria:

1. Feasibility and expressed preference for certain dates;
2. Avoidance of thematic overlaps per time slot;
3. Alignment of similar themes in the same room;
4. Room size matched with expected participation level.

The title, time and room for the side event will be announced in the UNFCCC program, but organizers are advised to also promote their event by themselves through other channels to increase the audience.

Side event rooms are equipped with a computer, a projector, a screen, internet access, microphones at the podium and a hand held microphone for Q&A sessions. Some additional supplies may be provided by the host government, more details on this will be available before the event.

Organizers of side events who need additional equipment or supplies can rent this on a commercial basis from official service providers. Contact details will be posted on the UNFCCC website as soon as they are available.

Catering for the side event is optional and not provided automatically. It can only be arranged by an official caterer for the COP for which contact details will be available on the UNFCCC website. Catering must be provided only outside the side event rooms and organizers are responsible to ensure that no food or drinks are brought into the room.

The UNFCCC secretariat reserves the right to reschedule or cancel side events at any time if necessary in the interest of the negotiating process. Access to attend the side event is limited to accredited participants with a conference badge.

Resources for reading more

- UNFCCC guidelines for side events: <https://seors.unfccc.int/seors>
- Frequently asked questions: https://seors.unfccc.int/seors/seors/pdf/side_events_faq.pdf
- Academic paper about the role of side events at UNFCCC, recommended by the UNFCCC secretariat: <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:225250/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- COP21 host country website: <http://www.cop21.gouv.fr/en>