



Contact Groups: Roles, Responsibilities and Procedures

May 2020

This document complements Congress Document CGR-2020-1.7/2 of 11 March 2020 listed [here](#).

Definition & context

A group formed during negotiations to reach consensus on an issue proving particularly contentious is called a **contact group**¹. In IUCN, contact groups are usually organized during World Conservation Congresses, and specifically, at the time of the Members' Assembly to facilitate discussion and agreement around the text of particular motions² before their vote by IUCN Members in plenary.

Unless otherwise determined, contact groups are open to all Members attending the Members' Assembly, representatives of National and Regional committees holding a Member's proxy, Commission experts and Secretariat staff. However, different roles and responsibilities are assigned to these different groups during contact group sessions (see below).

Each contact group session is allotted a particular time to meet (ranging from 1 to 2 hours and in certain cases, more) and sessions are publicly announced.

Who can take part in contact groups?

All delegates taking part in contact groups are expected to behave in a courteous and respectful way. Open discussion and differing points of view are always welcome but impolite or undiplomatic behaviour is not tolerated.

¹ Glossary of Terms for Negotiators of Multilateral Environmental Agreements. UNEP, January 2007. Page 26.

² In accordance with Rule 48, a motion means a draft in writing of any decision which the World Congress is requested to take. Such motion may take the form of a resolution, recommendation, expression of opinion or proposal. Resolutions are directed to IUCN itself. Recommendations are directed to third parties, and may deal with any matter of importance to the objectives of IUCN.



Roles & Responsibilities

Facilitator / Chair: Facilitators of contact groups are Member delegates, technical experts from Commissions, members of Committees who are appointed by the Congress Resolutions Committee³ to act as facilitators/chairs during contact groups' discussions. The facilitators are expected to remain neutral throughout the discussions and steer the debate towards consensus. They will act with respect when moderating the discussions to ensure optimal participation and a good, collegial debate.

Members: representatives from IUCN Members attending the Members' Assembly are invited to take part in contact groups to debate around motions and agree on the final text of motions before they are put to the vote by all Members eligible to vote in plenary.

Representatives of recognized **IUCN National and Regional Committees** can also participate in contact groups in a technical advisory and support capacity.

Commissions: Representatives of IUCN Commissions can take part in contact groups in a technical and advisory capacity. At times, representatives of IUCN Members might ask for technical experts from Commissions to participate in contact groups to act as their advisors. In these cases, the Facilitator/Chair should be alerted before the start of the contact group session.

Given that the Contact groups are primarily for IUCN Members, the number of representatives from the Commissions and Committees should be kept to a minimum with speaking restricted preferably to only one designated representative per Commission and National or Regional Committee.

Secretariat staff: Secretariat staff can participate in contact groups in a technical and advisory role only and provided they uphold the highest standard of scientific/technical rigour and are free from undue influence.

Participation of Secretariat staff might be restricted for large contact groups when space is limited (and priority must be given to participation from Members) or when the Facilitator and the Resolutions Committee so decide prompted by requests from Members (to restrict numbers, because of confidentiality, etc.).

The above rules apply to all Secretariat staff **to the exception of** those staff with particular roles during contact groups. These include:

³ The Motions Working Group becomes the Resolutions Committee at Congress.



- **Secretariat Motions Team** – Staff who are part of the Secretariat Motions Team are allowed to take part in contact groups as support staff. This includes the Motions Coordinator, the members of the Core Motions Team and the Motion managers.

Motion managers- each motion scheduled to be discussed at contact groups will have a designated Motion Manager. Motion Managers are Secretariat staff who have been selected to track the changes in the text of particular motion(s) assigned to them from the start of the discussion until final agreement of Members at contact group sessions. They will keep track of all the versions of the text and ensure that the discussion is well captured. They will work closely with and support the Facilitator.

Motion managers should remain neutral throughout the discussions, provide advice around text suggestions only when requested by the Facilitator, and be respectful and courteous.

- **Designated technical staff** – It is possible that for particular motions, Secretariat staff might be called to be present at contact group discussions to ensure that the resulting text is in line with IUCN's programmatic and technical work. Designated technical staff might include Global or Regional Directors and other staff. To the extent possible, Facilitators will be alerted beforehand of the presence of these staff so they can rely on their expertise and advice in the course of the debate.

Observers / Others: Facilitators may allow observers to stay in the room if there is no objection from any of the IUCN Members represented in the contact group. Participation of observers including representatives from the media, general public or others is thus normally not expected at contact groups. This is to allow for IUCN Members to freely express themselves on motions' subjects which might be of a controversial nature.

Standard Procedures

- The time and place of contact groups will be publicly announced – website, screens onsite, Congress app - with sufficient time in advance.
- Contact groups will be scheduled for a duration of 60 to 90 minutes during the lunch break or in the evenings during the Members' Assembly from 12 to 15 January 2021. There is a possibility that contact groups be hosted during the Forum (evenings) and early in the morning before the plenary of the Member's Assembly starts.



- Normally only one motion is discussed per contact group session. However, there might be cases (mostly when motions deal with similar subjects) when the text of one or more 'additional' motions is brought into the discussion at a particular contact group.
- Each contact group will be assigned a Facilitator/Chair. Facilitators will be nominated by the Resolutions Committee and act as the moderators for the discussion aiming at concluding with an agreed text at the end of the session. They will be supported by Secretariat staff, in particular, the designated Motion Manager.
- At the beginning of the session, the Facilitator will ask that representatives of Members be preferably seated in front of the room to facilitate their interaction and participation.
- The Motion Manager will project the text of the motion on the screen and track changes as the discussion evolves.
- In cases when more than one contact group session is needed for a particular motion, the Motion Manager will ensure having the latest version of the text projected on the screen and all previous versions of the motion saved and accessible in case of need.
- At least one technical expert – from the Secretariat or Commissions – will also be present at the contact group session to ensure that scientific and technical rigour is maintained throughout the discussions. Ideally, Facilitators would have been introduced to technical experts beforehand.
- Proper balance between NGO and Government participation is encouraged in contact groups and Facilitators should strive to ensure this.
- Facilitators are expected to exert maximum efforts to reach a consensus text for submission to a decision by Members' Assembly taking into account minority views.
- Amendments to motions shall be transmitted to the Congress Resolutions Committee or in the case of motions for which a contact group has been established to the relevant contact group.
- The Facilitator should endeavour to end discussions within the allocated time. Should this not be possible, the Facilitator may request for another room and time to be attributed to the group. If this is not possible, the participants may meet in another venue provided that the Facilitator records any changes agreed by the participants and communicates these to the Motions Coordinator. Note that Motion Managers will



normally not be available to track discussions taking place in unallocated venues at unscheduled times.

- In exceptional circumstances, the Resolutions Committee can contact the Facilitator of a contact group for clarification after a contact group has ended. The Resolutions Committee will ultimately decide which motions are ready to be put to the vote in plenary.
- By the end of the contact group, the Facilitator must briefly wrap up the discussion and provide participants with a “status report” mentioning whether the discussion is concluded and the resulting text of the motion can be processed by the Documentation Team (i.e. translated and published) and then voted upon in plenary; or whether there is a need for further discussion.