

A Primer on United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)

What is UNGA and why is UNGA important?

World leaders gather once a year at United Nations. During this week important top-to-top meetings take place. And more importantly, businesses, associations, nonprofits and NGO's hold meetings on the margins of UNGA with government and nongovernment officials. These meetings on the sidelines are of strategic importance for advocacy on specific topics of interest.

United Nations Structure & Annual Session Start Date

The regular annual session opens on Tuesday of the 3rd week of September and runs for one year. The first regular session opened in 1946. The UN Charter establishes six principal organs: the [General Assembly](#) (GA), the [Security Council](#), the [Economic and Social Council](#) (ECOSOC), the [Trusteeship Council](#), the [International Court of Justice](#) and the [UN Secretariat](#). See respective [press releases](#). General Assembly is the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. The Assembly has a leading role in the process of standard-setting and the codification of international law.

Key Resources

- [UNGA Delegate Handbook](#)
- [UNGA Meeting Schedule](#)
- [UNGA Daily Summaries](#)
- [UN TV Live Web Streaming Schedule](#)
- [All UNGA Concurrent Events and Links](#)

UN & Businesses, Associations, Nonprofits NGOs

United Nations are only governments. All non-governmental stakeholders must engage with the UN through a very regimented [protocol](#). Un assigns the task of [engaging non-governmental stakeholders](#) to UNDESA (Department of Economic and Social Affairs).

UN's "Major Groups": 9 Sectors

Women, Children and Youth, Indigenous Peoples, Non-Governmental Organizations, Local Authorities, Workers and Trade Unions, [Business and Industry](#), Scientific and Technological Community, Farmers. SDG's are a major area of engagement between UN, businesses and NGO's.

UN Global Compact

The UN Global Compact enjoys the [support](#) of the United Nations General Assembly (GA). GA recognizes UN Global Compact, we aim to mobilize a global movement of sustainable companies and stakeholders to:

1. Do business responsibly by aligning their strategies and operations with [Ten Principles](#) on human rights, labor, environment and anti-corruption; and



2. Take strategic actions to advance [broader societal goals](#), such as [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#), with an emphasis on collaboration and innovation.

GA says “the UN Global Compact Office continues to play with regard to strengthening the capacity of the United Nations to partner strategically with the private sector.” Strategic partnerships are the nexus to engage! Review the current [UNGC Strategy](#), [partnerships](#), and [roadmaps](#).

How can business, associations, nonprofits and NGOs participate?




There are several organizations that have “[convening power](#)” at UNGA. They are mostly nonprofits or think tanks. Countries also have convening power at events they schedule at UNGA. Attendance in all is by invitation only. Generally, for associations, nonprofits, and NGOs one must be a member to request one of the coveted spots. In case of country-organized events, access can be sought through the embassy of that country in the U.S. or in other countries. It is important to note that a country’s U.S. Embassy and its UN delegation take a leading role in organizing this diplomatic visit with the Head of State, many ministers, and other notable politicians in the delegation. Embassies are always keen on scheduling important meetings with CEO’s in NYC during UNGA.

Create an UNGA agenda for your organization

Set key objectives for your engagements at UNGA early on. Then identify senior officers attending. Heads of State tend to want to visit with CEO’s of companies investing or exploring investments in their countries.

UNGA activities in order of increasing importance

Attending events and networking

-  Joining an event as a panelist or a keynote speaker
-  Sponsoring an event to highlight an important topic
-  Organizing CEO and Head-of-State private meetings

UNGA objectives in above activities:

- Business and public policy intelligence gathering
- Your org alignment with chosen themes of each UNGA
- Building better reputation and brand for your org
- Convene a multilateral group around your topic. Continue to engage policymakers in their country.
- Advocate for policy or regulations in various fora
- Attend your country’s sponsored events and use its facilitation services to engage and advocate

How UNGA annual themes are chosen?

UNGA themes are finalized after a [consultation process](#) starting in March and ending in the High Level Political Forum [HPLF](#) of United Nations held mid-July.

March	Regional Fora, SDG Input, ECOSOC Input
April	Add’l Consultations, Events Portal Opens

May	HPLF SDG Thematic Review
June	Ministerial Declarations Review
July	Ministerial & SDG Themes Approved
September	3 rd Tuesday UNGA Begins

Pre-UNGA Prep

- March/April - create a team of your organization’s beneficiary / sponsor, communications, and government affairs. Establish a topic or theme of interest that you will pursue. Assure it is tied to an SDG and is on UN list and of interest.
- May - Secure funding. Reserve NYC rooms. Identify vendor you’ll work with to organize event.
- June - Vendor will organize all logistics. You’ll have to identify format: Panel? Virtual? Hybrid? Speech?
- July - Put a “run of Show” together with goals for each segment, invitees, scope, even Q&A guide
- August - Secure moderators. Circulate content. Review.

Post UNGA Follow up

1. Send a thank you note to panelists on your letterhead. Ask how to redirect questions to them.
2. Send a thank you for attending email to attendees
3. Attach a freebie or provide helpful links.
4. Ask your country teams to reach to attendees from those countries for follow up and offer support.
5. Use proper UN protocols and channels to reach out to members of the UN system for any follow up.
6. 5 months from now is March and discussions of next year’s UNGA begins. Track the discussions.



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