

**Climate Action Network**  
**CAN Charter**  
**Our Network Rules and Governance Principles**  
**Amended Version as approved by**  
**the CAN International General Assembly**  
**March 2021**

**INTRODUCTION**

This document aims to provide clarity and set rules for the way the CAN global network is organized and works. It should be used as a guide to define how members, Nodes and CAN International best work together with the ultimate aim to bring the change we need.

**A. DESCRIPTION, VISION AND MISSION**

1. CAN is a global network of non-government not for profit member organizations from all over the world committed to combating harmful climate change and advancing climate justice and equity. This network is based on trust, transparency, democracy, and inclusiveness and should hold itself accountable for this.
2. CAN members are primarily engaged through National and Regional Nodes, but also engage, together with the Nodes at the international level through CAN International. While Nodes are fully responsible for the actions taking place in their country or region, CAN International ensures coordination at the international level and facilitates and implements international cooperation between Nodes, members and its Secretariat. The global CAN network encompasses all activities in the name of CAN, by National Nodes, Regional Nodes and by CAN International. CAN International Association E.V. is a legal organisation established to create a secretariat that coordinates activities of CAN Nodes and their members at the international level. In terms of governance, each Node should have its own governance structure that is fully and autonomously accountable for the activities within its Node. This autonomy does not exclude that in cases (and only in those cases) where certain activities of a given Node are in breach of the CAN Charter and the CAN Code of Conduct, that the CAN International Board, per its discretion and when possible in cooperation with the relevant Node(s), may take up the role of dispute resolution agency and may request the CAN International Secretariat to assess and if feasible resolve the issue, and/or appoint an arbitrator or set up other relevant avenues to help the Board in resolving the dispute. In case of failure of mediation, the issue will be brought to the General Assembly for final decision.
3. CAN is led by the power of its members aimed at creating change, at national and regional level through its National and Regional Nodes, and at the global level through CAN International. CAN sees itself as a bottom-up network, that is driven by its members. In support of this, CAN International as well as the CAN Nodes may establish to support and coordinate the activities of its members.
4. CAN notes that life on earth is under severe threat from catastrophic climate change, which is being caused by humans through our constant production of greenhouse gases. CAN as a network faces this threat with the common concern of its members all over the world.
5. The vision of CAN is a world striving actively towards and achieving the protection of the global climate in a manner which promotes equity and social justice between peoples, sustainable development of all communities, and protection of the global environment. CAN unites to work towards

this vision.

6. CAN's mission is to support and empower civil society organizations to influence the design and development of an effective global strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and ensure its implementation at international, national and local levels in the promotion of equity and sustainable development.

7. The objectives of CAN are:

- a) To prevent dangerous climate change through awareness and capacity building of governments and citizens worldwide;
- b) To protect the global climate from dangerous human interference;
- c) To be the conscience of the world concerning issues of climate change;
- d) To promote the protection of the global climate from dangerous human interference; and so to facilitate the radical transformation in the way we use resources, the land and energy;
- e) To prioritize sustainable development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs;
- f) To inspire government, business, community, and individual action to this effect;
- g) To develop an objective understanding of climate change and its causes, and share this information with all people, especially all members;
- h) To organize, support, inspire and coordinate its members to take effective action on climate change, either as one global voice, or in the regions where members operate.

8. The Strategies of CAN include:

- a) Active participation in the international climate change negotiations and all other relevant fora;
- b) Raising awareness and pushing issues onto the global agenda to influence the climate change decision-making process;
- c) Placing new climate change, equity and sustainable development issues on the global agenda;
- d) Contributing to the establishment of global, regional, national and local climate change agendas through mobilizing a genuinely inclusive civil society process at all levels;
- e) Promoting a nuclear free future;
- f) Ensuring the gains at the global level are translated into concrete benefits at the national and local level, and are implemented effectively and work to benefit of poor people and countries;
- g) Facilitating a process for developing campaigns and negotiating strategies at the global level;
- h) Holding global institutions and the private sector accountable for their actions and ensuring they respond to social and environmental concerns;
- i) Developing and disseminating knowledge that is crucial to addressing the trans-national challenges of climate change;
- j) Addressing the participatory gap through the creation of inclusive processes.

9. The Primary activities of CAN are:

- a) Information sharing;
- b) Capacity Building;
- c) Lobbying on common positions;
- d) Coordination of media messages;
- e) Coordination of research efforts;
- f) Cooperation with other NGO groupings;
- g) Mobilization of public support and awareness;
- h) Any other activities which would promote the CAN objectives.

## **B. CAN MEMBERS**

10. All non-profit organizations, including community based organisations, that do not represent

government nor industry interests and which actively promote ambitious climate action and sustainable development, are eligible to become members of CAN and may apply to do so.

11. By applying for membership the applicant organisation declares that it will respect and apply the rules of this Charter, support the vision, mission and activities of CAN, and bind itself to the CAN Code of Conduct.

12. Applicant organizations must apply for membership with the relevant National or Regional Node where the applicant is active. In case there is no Node covering the applicant's work area, or in case the applicant's work area covers several different Nodes, the applicant may apply to become a member of CAN International. In some cases applicant organisations (in particular development NGOs) may work in multiple countries or regions but have their governance and/or advocacy activities mainly based in one country or region. In those cases the applicant should apply with the relevant National or Regional Nodes as determined by their governance. Nodes (including CAN International), when rejecting an application on this basis, will refer the applicant to the correct Node.

13. Organisations with offices that are active in multiple Nodes are strongly encouraged to apply and engage both with CAN International for their coordinating office and with all the national and regional nodes their offices are active in.

14. All Nodes as well as CAN International have their own procedures for accepting, suspending, expelling and resigning of members. These procedures, while different, should all guarantee principles of trust, inclusiveness and transparency, need to be fully in line with all the principle of this Charter, and should be available on the respective Nodes' and/or CAN International's website. For Nodes where such processes are not available, the CAN International rules should be followed.

15. All Nodes may establish specific membership categories, including the categories for observer members.

16. By becoming a member of a CAN National or Regional Node, whatever the category of membership, the organisation will not only have access to the relevant membership services and engagement opportunities of this specific Node but also to those offered by CAN International. Nodes will regularly inform both new and existing members of the services and engagement opportunities offered by CAN International. Similarly, members of National Nodes should have access to the membership services and engagement opportunities of the Regional Node the National Node is member of. Nodes can also decide to provide access to a number of their membership services to members of other Nodes and/or CAN International, if they wish to do so, and depending on their own provisions. All Nodes are free to decide this independently.

17. In case an application is refused by a National or Regional Node, or by CAN International, and irrespective of any appeal procedures that may be offered by the relevant Node, the applicant may apply with a different Node or with CAN International, guided by paragraph 11 above, but must include in its application the reasons why it is submitting a new application and why its previous application was rejected.

### **C. NATIONAL AND REGIONAL NODES**

18. A National Node is an association of CAN Members in a particular country. A Regional Node is an association of CAN Members, and/or CAN National Nodes, in a group of countries on an international basis. The name of any Node must adequately reflect the country/countries it represents.

19. Nodes are formed to enable members to increase their capacity to reach our common objectives and bring the change that is needed.

20. Any National or Regional Node will strive to match the minimum requirement for Node status listed in the "*Building Effective CAN Nodes*" policy. The CAN International Secretariat will, where possible, support Nodes in reaching both the minimum requirements as well as the criteria for effective Nodes, and will provide the CAN International General Assembly an annual update of the Nodes' status in reaching the different requirements. The ambition is for every Node to be an effective one. The Nodes are requested to provide all necessary information to the Secretariat well in time for this.

21. All Nodes are expected to subscribe to the provisions of this Charter, the CAN Code of Conduct and the "*Our CAN Values*" Statement, and must act on the basis of trust, inclusiveness, transparency and be accountable for this.

22. Any group of CAN members and/or organisations eligible for CAN membership can propose to establish a new National or Regional Node. Applications for establishing new Nodes must be addressed to the CAN International General Assembly and must include an overview of the proposed members of the Node (at least three), a clear strategy on how the minimum requirements for Nodes will be reached, and how the Node aims to reach the criteria for effective Nodes. The CAN International General Assembly will decide on the acceptance of new Nodes, after consulting the relevant CAN members and Nodes active in the relevant country/region on the acceptance of the new Node.

23. The CAN International General Assembly can suspend or cancel the use of the CAN name and/or logo by National or Regional Nodes, in case of breaches to the principles of this Charter, the Code of Conduct of CAN and the minimum requirements for Nodes. Any complaints about such breaches should be first raised within the Node. If no resolution can be found the CAN International Secretariat should be informed which then raises the issue with the CAN International Board. If no resolution can be found, the issue will be brought to the General Assembly.

24. In principle, any new Regional Node must include all existing National and Regional Nodes based in its territory. And any new National Node must become a member of the existing Regional Node covering its territory.

25. Once accepted the Node may carry out activities under the name of CAN. The CAN International Secretariat keeps a list of all accepted Nodes which should be available on its website.

26. The CAN International General Assembly keeps track of the demarcation of the different Nodes, identifies the countries or regions that are not covered by CAN Nodes, and together with the CAN International Secretariat develops a strategy on what to do with the countries and regions not covered. Similarly, the CAN International General Assembly may adopt a vision and strategy on how to further develop the Nodes, which may include, while respecting Nodes' autonomy, a vision on the potential needs to merge or split Nodes, and/or establish new Nodes.

27. The CAN International General Assembly must consider whether any application to establish a new Node impacts the agreed demarcation of the geographical extent of existing Nodes, and in the case of such an impact agreement must be sought first with the existing Nodes before the proposal can be considered.

28. A National or Regional Node will strive to create its own legal entity, raise its own funds, and conduct the activities it determines for the purposes of furthering the CAN vision, mission and activities in their country or region. All National and Regional Nodes shall have a proper governing body based on principles of inclusiveness, transparency and accountability.

29. National and Regional Nodes are free to set up their own rules and codes of conduct but such rules should not be in conflict with the provisions of this Charter, the CAN Code of Conduct and the "*Our CAN*"

*Values*" Statement.

30. Each National or Regional Node governing body is accountable to its members. In the event of a failure of this accountability, the members may report this to the CAN International Board, which may take appropriate action.

31. Each National or Regional Node must appoint a Coordinator or co-coordinators, recognizing that Nodes may designate different titles to these roles, taking into consideration geographic and gender equity.

32. The National or Regional Node may set the rules for the appointment, rotation, terms of reference, and activities of the Node Coordinator.

33. The National or Regional Node may also decide to appoint a Node focal point for its relationship with CAN International which can be the same or a different person than the Node Coordinator.

34. National and Regional Nodes may decide to set up a Node secretariat with its own staff, objectives and work programme.

35. The CAN International Secretariat will, funding permitted, organise an annual meeting bringing together representatives of the International Secretariat and the Node focal points. This meeting aims to:

- provide a platform for Nodes to discuss cooperation and coordination;
- support Nodes in their further development;
- strengthen the cooperation between Nodes and CAN International;
- initiate, further develop and evaluate joint projects between Nodes and with CAN International.

#### **D. CAN INTERNATIONAL**

36. Members of National and Regional Nodes work together in the global CAN network to engage in global climate politics. These activities are supported by the CAN International Secretariat, which also supports the functioning and coordination of the National and Regional Nodes. CAN International has its own legal status, its own governance structure, and its own members which include all of the National and Regional Nodes of the CAN network.

37. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in this Charter, the CAN International Board must fulfil the function of dispute resolution agency within the CAN network, including within the Nodes of organization within CAN. In the case of a dispute arising and not adequately provided for in this Charter, the CAN International Board must attempt to resolve the dispute, and CAN members agree to this role by the International Board. The CAN International Board may appoint one or more of its members to act as an intervener in disputes, or may appoint an independent third party to do so. All dispute resolution procedures will be designed by the CAN International Board, and will in all cases include an attempt at mediation. Arbitration of a dispute may only occur if the parties to the dispute agree to do so and can agree to an arbitrator, who may be a CAN International Board member. In the case of arbitration, the decisions of the arbitration will be final and binding. In all other cases where mediation has failed and arbitration is not agreed to, the matter will be referred to the next CAN International General Assembly for a final and binding decision.

#### **E. GOVERNANCE**

38. CAN is a member-driven democratic network that seeks the largest possible cooperation amongst its members. The governance of the network is the responsibility of all CAN members. Both CAN

International and all National and Regional Nodes need to ensure they are governed in a transparent, inclusive and democratic way that allows all members to contribute to the decision-making processes. This includes ensuring that the General Assembly or any other form of members' meeting of each node remains the highest decision-making body of the node.

39. The respective General Assemblies of each of the Nodes and of CAN International should, autonomously, elect and give a mandate to a Board of Directors or a Steering Committee to ensure a more permanent governance in between General Assembly meetings. The election of the Board of Directors or Steering Committee shall be inclusive and transparent and their composition should reflect a balanced representation of genders, regions and interests.

40. The General Assembly of CAN International shall serve as the General Assembly of the CAN Network. Unless otherwise decided by the General Assembly, the CAN International Board of Directors shall serve as the Board of Directors of the CAN Network and fulfil the functions assigned to the Board in this Charter. The relevant provisions governing CAN International General Assembly and the CAN International Board of Directors with regards to the frequency, invitation, composition, quorum, mandate, nominations, election, decision-making, and so forth, as contained in the CAN International Statutes shall apply *mutatis mutandis*.

#### **F. CAN POSITIONS, STATEMENTS AND STRATEGIES**

41. A statement refers to a letter or a position statement for open publication. Nodes are free to make statements of their own. However both Nodes and CAN statements shall be respectful to the work of other Nodes. In seeking to achieve such goal, cooperation and consultation, among Nodes and CAN, as relevant, shall be sought for statements that may impact the work of other Nodes and/or CAN in all international, multilateral, regional, cross-national, and other processes and moment as appropriate. If a statement is relevant for multiple Nodes, preference should be given to joint or global statements.

42. Each Node has its own rules for deciding on its positions, which should be available to all its members. For all Nodes, the same principles of striving for consensus, inclusiveness, transparency and accountability apply.

43. CAN positions and statements should reflect the opinions of all Nodes and members. This also implies all relevant members and Nodes make an effort to engage in these processes.

44. Statements of members or Nodes should not be in contradiction with CAN positions. Therefore, all members or Nodes should strive to ensure that their views are reflected in CAN positions on this basis, and CAN positions should take positions of members and Nodes into account.

45. In the case of a Node releasing a statement which is made in the name of CAN, but which is in conflict with an already existing position of CAN or another Node of CAN, the CAN International Board may take the necessary steps to resolve the issues.

46. International CAN positions are developed in a transparent process involving interested CAN members and Nodes through the relevant structures, and supported by the CAN International Secretariat.

47. International CAN positions should be adopted by consensus of all Node and CAN International members, with consensus being reached if only a small minority disagrees. The relevant Working Group coordinators and the CAN International Secretariat will ensure the assessment of whether dissenting views form a small minority.

48. Any member of CAN International or of a CAN Node that has duly participated in the position development process can request to have its disagreement to a CAN position or specific elements of the

position mentioned as a footnote in the position statement. If a CAN Node formally disagrees with a CAN Statement, then the Statement cannot be adopted.

49. The CAN International secretariat may propose, establish and support working groups, task forces, coordination groups and other relevant structures. Each of these structures should have clear terms of references which articulate how members and Nodes can participate and be represented. These structures must function on the basis of legitimacy, inclusiveness, transparency, trust and accountability.

## **G. FUNDRAISING**

50. All National and Regional Nodes as well as CAN International are encouraged to raise funds to ensure they can function independently and in line with the needs and expectations of their members.

51. Funds raised by CAN International shall, depending on the conditions of the funder, and the needs of the CAN International Secretariat to provide the basic services it is expected to provide, be utilized both to fund the activities of CAN International and of the Nodes that need financial support to ensure CAN is a truly global network with adequate participation from NGOs from the South.

52. CAN International, Nodes and potentially members are encouraged to engage in funding and/or (joint) fundraising activities that can support the strengthening of all Nodes and in particular those from developing countries.

53. Any funding to assist members or Nodes may be distributed on the following conditions:

- a) The allocation of funds is based on clear, transparent and inclusive processes;
- b) The allocation has been approved by the CAN International Board as part of the general budget approval;
- c) The member or Node commits to proper regular reporting on the spending of these funds;
- d) the Node meets or is in the process of meeting the minimum requirement for Node status.

54. In the allocation of funds, special consideration will be given to members and Nodes which are short of funding to enable them to fully participate in the work of the CAN network.

55. The CAN International secretariat will regularly provide the General Assembly with an overview of funding streams, within or outside of joint projects that it manages, from CAN International to Nodes and members, as well as from Nodes to Nodes and from Nodes to CAN International. For Node to Node funding, Nodes will be urged to inform the CAN International Secretariat so that it can provide said overview.

56. Decisions on the sourcing, administration, and distribution of funds are to be made by the CAN International Secretariat under the guidance of the CAN International Board, which includes but is not limited to budget approval.

57. CAN Nodes will be free to raise funds in the name of CAN.

58. Such fundraising activities should, where relevant and possible, be coordinated between all the relevant Nodes and CAN International, to avoid competition and increase the overall chances of success. Nodes and CAN International are requested to inform the Node where a funder is hosted of their intention to make an application, in order to avoid competing demands and potentially sharing experiences to improve the application.

59. All funds raised under the name of CAN shall, to the extent that funding and resources allow, be subject to an annual audit based on generally accepted accounting principles.

## H. VALUES, CODE OF CONDUCT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

60. In accordance with CAN International's mission, we are committed to mobilize our efforts to meaningful climate action and climate justice while adhering to the following fundamental values that underpin the mission and objectives of CAN and its members. We therefore commit ourselves to:

- a) Participatory, accountable and transparent decision-making;
- b) Ensuring that the Network remains true to its vision, mission and objectives, which prioritizes communities, people, and the planet;
- c) Mutual respect, cooperation, collaboration and networking internally and with other organizations around issues of mutual concern;
- d) Reject all forms of racism, sexism and any other form of discriminatory and unjust behaviour.

61. CAN recognizes that all individuals who are contributing to realizing CAN's vision and mission have a right that this work takes place in an environment that is free of harassment, sexual harassment, bullying and other similar harmful behaviour. The General Assembly shall adopt policies to give effect to this provision and shall review, and if needed revise, these policies periodically. All organs, Nodes, members of CAN, as well as their representatives, and officers and staff of CAN are responsible for ensuring the implementation of the policies.

62. CAN has adopted a series of policies forming a "Code of Conduct" for its members, Nodes, as well as a number of the organs, roles and offices described in this Charter, which shall be made available to members on the CAN website.

63. As an international network of organizations, we recognize the importance of establishing and maintaining appropriate and effective bodies that will govern the internal functioning of our Network at the global, regional, national, and sub-national levels. To this end we will:

- a) Ensure the global CAN Network has a clear vision, mission, objectives and policies, and adheres to them;
- b) Ensure all governance structures reflect the diversity of our network, including but not limited to race, age and gender as well as the various target constituencies of the Network, with regard to both their composition and their geographic spread.

64. Our commitment to promote participatory, accountable and transparent decision making is enshrined in this code of conduct. Whilst not a binding obligation on members, we aim to:

- a) Develop mechanisms to enable all our members to be involved in planning programs that directly affect them;
- b) Provide opportunities for regular evaluations and updating of programs;
- c) Hold General Assemblies with full, open and accurate disclosure of relevant information concerning goals, programs, finances and governance of the Network;
- d) Hold regular strategic planning sessions to which all CAN members are invited to contribute;
- e) Provide clear and transparent accounting on financial matters to the broader membership.

65. All Member organisations, Nodes, Staff and Board members of the CAN network are committed to the CAN "*Code of Conduct*".

66. All CAN members, Nodes, the Secretariat, Board, and individuals within the CAN Network are subject to the "Code of Conduct." Serious breaches of the Code include but are not limited to:

- a) Actions taken against the Network, including but not limited to:
  - (i) Misrepresenting the Network and its positions; and
  - (ii) Causing reputational damage to CAN;
- b) Deceptive actions and practices, including but not limited to:
  - (i) Fraud or corruption; and
  - (ii) Financial embezzlement;
- (c) Actions taken in disrespect to other CAN members, Nodes, and other bodies, including but

not limited to:

- (i) Publicly and actively undermining CAN positions, decision-making processes, and shared values; and
  - (ii) Failure to fulfil duties to report and be held accountable to the CAN International Board, Secretariat, Nodes or other offices as appropriate;
  - (iii) Failure to make important decisions accessible and transparent to members; and
- d) Actions taken against fellow community members in the Network, including but not limited to:

- (i) Actions reflecting racism, bullying, sexual harassment and harassment, and any other form of discrimination, which CAN takes extremely seriously as consistent with CAN's relevant policies; and
- (ii) Actions that are violent in nature, including through communication and any other forms of violence.

67. Breaches by members or Nodes may result in disciplinary action, which may, in the most serious cases, include the expulsion of members or Nodes from the CAN Network. Nodes should adopt policies for addressing member discipline, sanctioning and redress for breaches by their members. CAN International shall similarly adopt a policy for addressing discipline, sanctioning and redress for breaches by any CAN nodes, CAN International member, or member of a CAN node in a context of work falling under the purview of CAN International.

#### **CHANGES TO THIS CHARTER**

68. This Charter may be amended or terminated by the General Assembly of CAN International.