



Briefing note on a reconciled version of scheduling, planning and budget for GEO-6

Summary of HLG Discussion

HLG members met on June 22, 2016 to consider options for the timing and delivery of GEO-6 given the change in date for UNEA-3, now tentatively scheduled for December, 2017. The main concerns expressed and guidance provided were:

- Delivery of a complete GEO-6 by UNEA-3 is seen as less realistic, given previous HLG and SAP guidance on emphasizing quality over speed of delivery. An option where GEO-6 is delivered in two volumes would allow meeting of the UNEA-3 delivery requirement and also deliver a more comprehensive second volume for UNEA-4.
- Volume 1 of GEO-6 would include an assessment of the state of the environment, including the policy response and an assessment of the SDG baselines (**Part A**), with policy pathways to reach SDGs and IAEGs by 2030 (**Part B**).
- Volume 2 would include a refreshed **Part A** (State and Trends with new regional data and an update of regional summaries) combined with a full **Part B** (Policy Effectiveness across thematic areas and SDGs) and a **Part C** (Outlooks), drawing from new innovative approaches to outlooks and an Outlooks Expert Community.

This Briefing Note provides the main components of a revised schedule, plan and budget for GEO-6 based on the HLG's guidance.

Decision-making steps

Following agreement by HLG on the format and timing of the GEO-6, in June 2016, it is proposed that a letter be sent to all member states informing them of what will be presented at UNEA-3 and UNEA-4 and giving early sight of an amendment to UNEA1/4 that would include a revision to the date of delivery of an endorsed SPM. The letter would also highlight the delivery of the GEO-6 Volume 2 assessment no later than 2019 and of taking note of GEO 6 Volume 1 at UNEA-3.

Rationale for the revised/reconciled scenario

By reconciling the key elements of the 3 previously proposed scenarios, GEO-6 will achieve the following:

- Produce key elements of GEO-6 (**Parts A and B**) relating to the main environmental thematic areas and SDG baseline environmental indicators at UNEA-3 in line with UNEA 1/4 of 'no later than 2018' and UNEA 2/5;
- Provide an assessment of the policy pathways to reach SDGs and IAEGs, as part of UNEP's role in delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda, at UNEA-3;
- Form an Outlooks Expert Community to promote innovative thinking for outlooks in GEO-6 and future GEOs;
- Allow full implementation of UNEP's new Integrated Environmental Assessment Guidelines in GEO-6 by UNEA-4;
- Be consistent with the HLG and SAP guidance to ensure the highest quality at each stage of the development of GEO-6;

Reconciled Scenario: Delivery of GEO-6 Global Assessment in two volumes: Part A and Part B at UNEA-3 (Volume 1) and full GEO-6 Global Assessment at UNEA-4 (Volume 2)

Output 1: GEO-6 Volume 1, with complete Part A (based on regional assessments) and Part B (SDG and IAEG pathways) with Summary of Key Findings and Policy Messages (not SPM). The expectation is that UNEA-3 will 'note' that Volume 1 and the Summary have been provided and that the timeline for delivery of the full GEO-6 and the SPM will be changed to 'no later than 2019' (this will require an amendment to UNEA resolution 1/4).



Output 2: GEO-6 Volume 2, with complete and refreshed Part A, full Part B and innovative Part C with a negotiated Summary for Policy Makers (SPM). The expectation is that UNEA-4 will 'endorse' GEO-6 and its SPM.

i) **Parts A and B** (delivered for UNEA-3) covering the themes of Air, Land, Water and Biota and key inter-linkages as set out in the HLG meeting in May 2016, based on a refreshed set of Regional Summaries, and making best use of the results and assessments of international panels, bodies and intergovernmental processes in line with UNEA Res 1/4¹. Part A would include the state and trends as well as the relevant policy response. Part B would assess the policy pathways to reach the SDGs and IAEGs by 2030.

ii) Convene an Outlooks Expert Community, which would work to develop internationally agreed Outlooks methods for assessing pathways toward Sustainable Development: beginning in 2017, a new global partnership for developing integrated outlooks would be established drawing on expertise from the natural and social sciences, regional and national institutions and the private sector;

iii) **Parts A and B** refreshed (delivered for UNEA-4) produced through regional environmental information and statistics meetings planned under the activities to support UNEA Res 2/5 for SDG follow-up and review,

iv) **Part C Outlooks** (delivered for UNEA-4) a fully developed Part C Outlooks analysis, including cross-cutting issues and inter-linkages and insights into the transformative pathways needed to deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement and other major political commitments.

Timing:

v) A review draft of **Part A and modified Part B (Volume 1)** would need to be ready by June 2017; with a Stage 1 and Stage 2 peer review processes of 6 weeks each and sufficient time for authors to respond.

vi) The Summary of Key Findings and Policy Messages for **Volume 1** would be drafted by authors and reviewed by HLG members in late 2017.

vii) The refreshed **Part A and full Part B** would need to be ready at the latest by December 2017, as input to the **Part C Outlooks**; data for this refresh would come from the regional networks and would not require a new round of full Regional Assessments;

viii) A review draft of **Part C Outlooks** would need to be ready by July 2018;

ix) The SPM: **Volume 2** would need to be submitted in November 2018 for negotiation at the OECP in February 2019 for endorsement at UNEA-4 (expected May/June 2019);

Funding:

x) An immediate funding shortfall of approximately \$400k exists for hosting the first global authors and HLG/SAP face to face meeting in October, 2017. All regular budget and extra-budgetary resources that were available have been applied to the completion of the regional GEOs, the additional round of regional workshops in March, 2016 and the meetings of the HLG and SAP/authors in May and June. If this shortfall is not addressed, then only one authors meeting, for producing **Volume 1**, will be possible (Q1 of 2017).

xi) Core funds would however become available, from two biennium of funding (i.e. 2016-17 and 2018-19), which would contribute to production the **Part C Outlooks** and refresh of **Parts A and B**. Anticipated core funds would need to be compared to budgeted activities to determine if more funds are necessary;

Pros:

- Meets the requirement for a global GEO-6 (**Part A and Part B**) to be delivered no later than 2018 with Summary of Key Findings and Policy Message 'noted' by UNEA-3;

¹ UNEA Res 1/4 para 9. *Also requests* the Executive Director to consult with all United Nations Environment Programme regions regarding their priorities to be taken up in the global assessment;

UNEA Res 1/4 para 10. *Further requests* the Executive Director, within the existing programme of work, to contribute to the dissemination and outreach of the findings of relevant scientific panels, bodies and processes under the auspices of intergovernmental organizations in order to amplify diffusion among policymakers and the public to the maximum possible extent;



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- Situates GEO-6 as the global source of information and policy pathways for the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda (SDGs) and IAEGs follow-up and review;
- Provides a new and innovative GEO-6 (**Part C**) and SPM to be endorsed by UNEA-4;
- Would ensure continuous momentum (an 'evergreen' GEO) for the environmental dimension of Agenda 2030 and other major environmental agreements;
- Delivery of GEO-6 could be synchronized with the HLPF/ECOSOC Heads of State considerations of follow-up and review of the SDGs;
- Funds for developing new **Part C Outlooks** would benefit from core funds from the 2018-19 biennium.

Cons:

- Requires a change to UNEA resolution 1/4 at UNEA-3;
- Would increase the overall budget commitment needed for GEO.
- More complex production, requiring member states to agree, through written procedure, to accept delivery of **Volume 1** with a Summary of Key Findings and Policy Messages in 2017 followed by **Volume 2** and the negotiated SPM in 2019;
- Would also require HLG/member states to decide how to cover the resources required for the first global authors meeting in October, 2016.