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First Face-to-Face Meeting of the Future of Global Environment Outlook (GEO) Steering committee

The Steering committee on the future of GEO and the Secretariat met in the Ministry of the Environment offices, Prague, Czech Republic from Oct. 31 – Nov. 1 2019 to achieve the following objectives:

1. Update Steering Committee members on the rationale and details of resolution UNEP/EA.4/RES.23 and lessons learned from the GEO process, in particular as it pertains to the preparation of GEO-4, GEO-5 and GEO-6.
2. Consider and approve the main issues to be reviewed in the options document;
3. Consider and approve the work plan and timeline for the preparation of the options document and for conducting the broad consultations on the future of GEO
4. Consider and approve the Terms of Reference for the work on the options document and the broad consultations

On these issues the Steering Committee decided:

- There is a need to consider the experiences from previous GEOs and other relevant assessment processes in developing future options. The Committee expanded on the issues document that will be used by the consultant to analyse, including:
  - defining the purpose of GEO;
  - whether GEO can fulfil new functions in the assessment landscape, such as the analysis of the gap between policy and action,
  - The different resourcing and staffing models for GEO going forward.
- The Steering Committee is very committed to improving the GEO process and presenting viable options and recommendations to UNEA-5.
- Consulting services will be utilized to produce the draft options document on the Future of GEO.
- A virtual peer review will be used to run the broad consultations with stakeholders and other assessment processes.
- Face-to face consultations with Member States will be conducted during the development of the options document and the Secretariat should strive to conduct the consultations in tandem with regional UNEA preparatory meetings. The feasibility of this approach will be explored by the Secretariat and discussed with the Steering Committee.
- Two additional face-to-face facilitated workshops by the steering committee will be needed; to ensure that all members of the Committee provide their expertise for the drafting of the options

paper (in March 2020), and also to ensure the Committee has a structured process for deciding on the recommended options that will be put forward to UNEA-5 (late 2020).

Rapporteur	**Signature**
Mr. Rafael Monge Vargas	RAFAEL VIRGILIO MONGE VARGAS Firmado digitalmente por RAFAEL VIRGILIO MONGE VARGAS Fecha: 2019.11.25 07:46:43 -06'00'

Day 1 Meeting Summary

The meeting opened with remarks from the Deputy Minister of Environment for the Czech Republic (Mr. Vladislav Smrž) and Jian Liu (Director, Science Division, UNEP), with both highlighting the importance of the meeting and wishing the meeting participants success in their work. A video message from the new Executive Director of UNEP, Inger Andersen, was also broadcast and well appreciated by the participants.

Jian Liu also reminded the Committee of their role as a subsidiary body of the United Nations Environment Assembly and their role in advising UNEA-5 on the options for the future of GEO.

The co-chairs of the Steering Committee, Suzan Alajjawi from the Supreme Council for Environment, Bahrain and Ivar Baste, Norwegian Environment Agency, welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the first face to face meeting and also thanked the deputy minister for the great hospitality in hosting this first meeting of the Committee.

Co-chair Ivar Baste, then requested the Secretariat to provide an overview of Resolution 23 (UNEP/EA.4/RES.23) as well as learnings from previous GEOs.

The Secretariat presented the key elements of resolution 23 with a detailed focus on the process for developing the options paper. Resolution 23 also requests the Secretariat to develop a data strategy to support the GEO and also convene other global assessments for discussions on how to achieve synergies across the assessments. Jian Liu then provided a brief on the ongoing work of the Adhoc Global Assessment Dialogue, the data strategy and other science policy processes in support of the commemoration of Stockholm +50 happening within the Secretariat.

Mr. Laszlo Pinter from the Central European University presented lessons learned from early GEO processes (GEO's 1, 2 and 3) as well as some learnings from the GEO-4 process. Ivar Baste, the co-chair also shared some of his learnings from the GEO-4 process. Laszlo shared the evolution of GEO from its first versions to the sixth in the series. In doing this Lazlo compared the management of the different processes, the scope and structure of the different GEOs and the product successes (based on the number of downloads, national and city-level GEOs produced, citations and use by policymakers). He shared the pros and cons for different approaches used in the GEO processes and compared these with other on-going global assessment processes. The main take away was that GEO is both a process and a product. It offers both regional and global perspectives that enhance learning by doing. He concluded that GEO has a global reach and the methodology has been copied more than 300 times at global, national and sub-national scales. The need to prioritize communication and strengthening the Secretariat were his advice to the Steering Committee.

Matthew Billot and Pierre Boileau presented the lessons learned from GEO 5 and 6 respectively (having been the Heads of these GEOs). Their presentations briefed the Steering Committee on the details, form and function of their respective GEOs. Funding, staffing and outreach were discussed in detail, with Ivar mentioning some caparisons with GEO 4. Committee members requested additional details about how the difficult financial situation was resolved. Pierre provided lessons learned from the GEO-6 process, focusing on the findings of the mid-term evaluation conducted by the independent evaluation office. In the mid-term evaluation most elements of the project were found to be either moderately satisfactory or

highly satisfactory. The only unsatisfactory element was financial management, and this was due to the difficult budget situation which required that UN Environment staff conduct resource mobilization activities at the same time as the main GEO report was being drafted.

Issues paper review and discussions

The issues paper was meant to identify the issues that the Committee would like the consultant or expert team preparing the options document to consider as the analysis is being conducted. During the discussion most of the issues identified by the Secretariat were expanded upon by the Committee to provide more detail on the specific elements that the Committee wished the consultant to investigate. A revised draft of the issues paper was produced overnight and considered on the second day of the meeting.

The Committee decided to amend the agenda by moving the discussion of the work plan before the discussion of the terms of reference before concluding the meeting with a final deep dive on the issues paper on the last day of the meeting.

Committee members discussed the issue paper paragraph by paragraph and provided edits in each. The edits were then used by the Secretariat to update the draft. Please see Annex 2 for the revised Issues Paper.

The committee's co-chairs then wrapped up the meeting and provided a short brief of the agenda for the next day. The meeting agenda for the following day was amended to ensure that another look on the issue paper would be possible after the discussion on the workplan and the terms of reference.

Day 2 Meeting Summary

The second day of the meeting started with a review of the previous day by the co-chairs of the committee and the deliberation on the expected outcomes for the day.

Future of GEO work plan and timeline discussion and approval

The committee amended the work plan to specify that the Committee preferred a consultant to be hired through a traditional procurement process to draft the options document. The Committee also requested that the consultant conduct two facilitated workshops with the Committee, one to ensure that their expertise was properly captured in the analysis of the various options the consultant would be assessing, and the second workshop to assist the Committee to come to decisions on the recommended options on the Future of GEO to be put forward to UNEA-5.

The Committee also recommended modifications to the timeline and budget for the Future of GEO initiative. Changes included: conducting virtual consultations with stakeholders and other assessment processes while ensuring Member States were consulted face-to-face. The Committee requested the Secretariat evaluate whether the face-to-face consultations could be conducted as a part of the regional UNEA preparatory meetings, to allow for potential savings on the budget.

The committee discussed in detail the organisation of the expected work for developing the options document with a direct focus on the requirements of resolution 23. They identified that the resolution clearly outlined three key aspects as outputs of the work, which are;

- The preparation of the options paper should be shared and discussed through an extensive consultation
- The consultation process has to be organised to involve member states, stakeholders and other assessment processes
- The final options document from the process above should be delivered to UNEA-5 to decide on the future form and function of GEO.

On the approach for preparing the options paper, the committee discussed in detail the three options presented by the Secretariat and agreed that the best option was to have a consultant, or a group of

consultants develop the options paper and conduct the consultations . This is based on a cost estimate that the three options would not have any substantial difference while the consultant option offers benefits in terms of independence of the views prepared by the consultant. This approach will likely also be reasonably time efficient, since it doesn't rely on Secretariat resources, except during the procurement phase. However, they agreed that it will be important for the consultant to tap into the expertise of the Committee members in developing the options document, therefore a proposal for two additional face to face meetings of the Committee was agreed upon. The March 2020 facilitated workshop will ensure that the expertise of the Committee members will be available to the consultant. One final facilitated meeting will be needed where the consultant will work with the committee to review the options and make recommendations for presentation at UNEA 5.

The Steering Committee agreed that the issues paper will be the basis of the consultant's investigations/study and that the consultant will be recruited through a traditional UN recruitment process to ensure the best quality and independence of the work.

The peer review of the options document will be performed virtually to reduce costs and allow a wider circulation of the draft for feedback. This peer review will be organized by the Secretariat, allowing for a wide range of stakeholders, experts from other assessment processes and Member States to input into the preparation of the options document.

On consultations with Member States, the Committee selected the possibility of having consultations in tandem with regional UNEA preparatory meetings. The feasibility of this option will be explored by the secretariat and reported back to the Steering Committee. The Committee noted the risk of not having relevant government experts in these meetings as a potential weakness, with some members feeling that this may not be considered a broad enough consultation process, as requested in the resolution.

The timeline of the whole process was then discussed, and edits made. The budget table was adjusted to reflect the option of using a consultancy with two face to face facilitated meetings, regional consultation meetings followed by production and layout of the final document.

The Committee also recommended that the draft options paper be presented to the Annual Sub-Committee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the UN Environment Programme at its late 2020 session (Oct. 19-23 2020). This presentation would prepare Member States for the eventual presentation of a resolution on the Future of GEO to be decided upon at UNEA-5.

Terms of Reference for the options paper discussion and approval;

The committee then discussed the terms of reference of the consultant in detail, including the skills that the consultant will need. It was agreed that the consultant will be expected to have adequate experience in conducting facilitated meetings and consolations and not just academic qualifications. The ultimate results of the work were also edited to include the potential regional consultations.

Issues paper final review and discussions;

The Committee then reviewed the revised issues paper that was provided to them between the first and second day of the meeting. The language in the issues paper was refined by the Committee to ensure it communicates well the focus areas of the analysis that the Committee wishes the consultant to assess.

Any Other Business

- The Secretariat presented a short item on the terms of reference of the Steering Committee members, to remind them of the expectations from UNEA.
- The second item on other business was a need for a signature block for meeting summaries for Mr. Rafael Monge Vargas (the rapporteur to the steering committee) to sign. It was agreed that moving forward all meeting summaries and outcomes documents will be physically signed by the rapporteur and uploaded to the website for anyone to access and follow the process.

Conclusions

The meeting's main objectives were fully achieved:

- The Steering Committee members was fully updated on the rationale and details of resolution UNEP/EA.4/RES.23 and lessons learned from the past GEO processes
- The issues paper was thoroughly discussed in the two days and the final edited version agreed as the main issues document to be considered for investigating the options of a future GEO. The Secretariat proposed an additional week of review following the meeting to allow for any additional written comments to be submitted by Committee members.
- The work plan and timeline for the preparation of the options document and for conducting the broad consultations on the future of GEO was considered, discussed and edited and agreed on to ensure a more realistic and detailed implementation for the consultation and eventual preparation of the options document.
- Detailed analysis of the Terms of Reference for the work on the options document and the broad consultations was achieved with the committee agreeing on the final version of the Terms of the reference of the consultant work after changes on the meetings' final day.

The meeting was adjourned at 16h30 on Nov. 1, 2019 with thanks from the Co-chairs to the Czech Republic for hosting the meeting and members for a very productive discussion.

Annex 1 –Participants List

First name	Last name	Affiliation	Nominated by
Charles	Lange	National Environment Management Authority (NEMA)	Kenya
Jerome	Sebadduka Lugumira	National Environment Management Authority (NEMA)	Uganda
Ambinintsoa Lucie	Noasilalaonomenjanahary	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development	Madagascar
Anna	Mampye	Ministry of Environment	South Africa
Apsara	Mendis	Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment	Sri Lanka
Keisuke (alternate)	Takahashi	Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES)	Japan
Najib	Saab	Arab Forum for Environment & Development (AFED)	Lebanon
Suzan	Alajjawi	Supreme Council for Environment, Bahrain	Bahrain
Marek	Haliniak	Ministry of the Environment, Poland	Poland
Nino	Gokhelashvili	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia	Georgia
Lukas	Pokonry	Ministry of Environment	Czech Republic
Teshia	Jn Baptiste	Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development	Saint Lucia
Marcos	Serrano	Ministry of Environment Chile	Chile
Rafael	Monge Vargas	Ministry of Environment and Energy	Costa Rica
Ryan	Assiu	Environmental Management Authority	Trinidad and Tobago
Celso	Moretti	Agricultural Research Corporation	Brazil
Toral	Patel-Weynand	US Forest Service	USA
Andrew	Stott	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs-UK	United Kingdom and Northern Ireland
Ivar Andreas	Baste	Norwegian Environment Agency	Norway
Sebastian	Jan Konig	Swiss Federal Office for the Environment,	Switzerland
Claudia	Kabel	German Environment Agency	Germany
Jock	Martin	European Environment Agency (EEA)	European Union
Cathy	Maguire	European Environment Agency (EEA)	European Union
Salla	Rantala	Finnish Environment Institute	Finland
Paul	Lucas	Environment Assessment Agency (PBL)	Netherlands
Mona	Westergaard	Ministry of Environment and Food	Denmark
Isaac	Dladla	Eswatini Environment Authority	Swaziland
James	Mathew	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate change, Government of India	India
Chatchai	Intatha	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Thailand	Thailand
Huang	YI	School of Environmental Sciences and Engineering, Peking University	China
Mery	Harutyunyan	Ministry of Environment	Armenia
Laszlo	Pinter	Central European University	Hungary
Paul	Lucas	PBL	Netherlands
Mira	Zovko	Ministry of Environment and Energy	Croatia
Ivana	Stojanovic	Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism	Montenegro
Jian	Liu	UN Environment Programme	Nairobi
Mathew	Billowt	UN Environment Programme	Geneva
Pierre	Boileau	UN Environment Programme	Nairobi
Franklin	Odhiambo	UN Environment Programme	Nairobi
Caroline	Mureithi	UN Environment Programme	Nairobi
Vladislav	Smrž	Deputy Minister at the Ministry of Environment of the Czech Republic	The Czech Republic

Apologies

Ouedraogo	Desire	Ministry of Environment, green economy and climate change	Burkina Faso
Shanna (alternate)	Emmanuel	Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development	Saint Lucia
Keri (alternate)	Holland	US Department of State	USA
Aliya	Shalabekova	Ministry of Energy	Kazakhstan
Chenouf	Nadia	Ministry of the Environment and Renewable Energy	Algeria
Christine Okae	Asare	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	Ghana
Marcel	Kok	Environment Assessment Agency (PBL)	Netherlands
Kazuhiko	Takeuchi	Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES)	Japan
Narges	Saffar	International Affairs & Conventions Center, Department of Environment	Iran (Islamic Republic of)

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Issues Document on the Future of GEO

I. Introduction and context

The 'Future of GEO' process, launched at UNEA-4 through UNEP/EA.4/RES.23 was initiated to develop various options for the future of the Global Environment Outlook (GEO). A Steering Committee of experts from Member States was constituted to develop these options and put forward its recommendations on the future of GEO to the fifth UN Environment Assembly in February 2021, taking into account the changes in purpose and approaches different GEOs have undergone.

This issues document is intended to assist the Committee and the expert(s) performing the work in identifying overarching issues and questions to be further analysed and considered during the process of developing the options paper. Based on the identified issues the Steering Committee will also develop and approve the annotated outline for the options paper which will be provided to the experts conducting the analytical portion of the work.

II. Matters arising out of lessons learned from previous GEOs

The Steering Committee and expert(s) have reflected on the lessons learned from the production of past GEOs and their associated products and processes, including those assessed in the terminal evaluation of GEO-5 and the medium-term review of the GEO-6 by UNEP's independent evaluation office[1]. The design of GEO-6 also benefited from learnings in the GEO-5 and GEO-4 processes which contributed to its features in terms of being a comprehensive, independent and expert-led process, guided by governments and scientific experts to ensure the policy relevance, legitimacy and scientific credibility of the process. The lessons learned from the review by the Committee can be grouped into the following categories:

[1]The midterm evaluation of GEO-6 is available at: https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/27332/01751_2018_mte_unep_global_speur_geo-6_final.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y,
While the terminal evaluation of GEO-5 can be found at:
https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/300/Terminal_evaluation_of_the_UNEP_project_Fifth_Global_Environmental_Outlook_Integrated_Environmental_Assessment.pdf?sequence=1

- The extensive scope of GEO and its integrated nature. This can be viewed as one of its' strengths but is also one of its challenges.:
    - The scope of the state and trends analysis, including the need to cover five major environmental themes (Air, Biodiversity, Oceans, Land and Freshwater).
    - The analysis of 12 cross-cutting issues and 2 common threads[2] (to align better with the Sustainable Development Goals).
    - The request by the advisory bodies to assess the effectiveness of the global policy response on the environment.
    - Managing the complexity and extent of the knowledge and information that needs to be analysed in a GEO.
- Lack of stable financing:
    - The secured budget at the start of the GEO-6 project covered mainly staffing costs and not activity costs;
    - A mid-course assessment of the funding needs for the GEO-6 identified a USD 4 million funding gap in the process;
    - When informed of this situation, the High-level Group and other Member States considered that GEO activities should be covered under core funding (Environment Fund and Regular Budget), since GEO is a product of the core mandate of the UN Environment Programme.
    - Member States had explicitly stated in the resolution requesting GEO (UNEP/EA.1/RES.4) that the GEO should be produced 'within the existing Programme of Work and Budget'.
- A small support team within the Secretariat:
    - Relatively junior staff were assigned to the project at the beginning and a steep learning curve was needed to ensure everyone contributed effectively to the project;
    - The Secretariat managed nearly 150 authors and 80 advisory body members, requiring extensive communication and management of difficult issues as the process evolved;
    - New methodologies needed to be developed to respond to the requests of Member States, in particular to assess policy effectiveness and to ensure a policy-relevant outlook was produced;

III. Overarching issues to be analysed and considered in developing options

UNEP is mandated to keep the world environment situation under review[3]. An options document should map out and analyse processes and outline options that will contribute to achieving this mandate for upcoming GEOs.

First a high-level understanding of where GEO sits in the science-policy interface is needed by considering these additional points:

- What does the current science-policy interface landscape look like and where does GEO fit in?
- How is this applied to understanding the human development / environment nexus – what is GEOs role?
- How can GEO help policymakers understand cross scale (e.g. geographical scale – global to regional or vice versa) interactions (e.g. exporting of environmental impacts)

[2] In GEO these cross-cutting issues were: human health, environmental disasters, gender, education, urbanization, climate change, polar regions and mountains, chemicals, waste and wastewater, resource use, energy, food systems. In addition, 2 common threads where also included in the analysis, namely: economics and equity.

[3] UN General Assembly resolution 2997 (1972).

- Timeframes for the analysis (baselines and outlooks), how to use models and scenarios, what timeframes are appropriate for GEO?

Next the mapping and analysis process for the options must consider the following key questions (sub-headings i – iv below).

i. <u>The function of GEO</u>

- Where does GEO fit within the overall environmental assessment landscape (i.e. how does it relate to other assessments from IPCC, IPBES, IRP)? What is unique about GEO? How is GEO differentiated from other assessment? How does GEO effectively utilize the outcomes of the other assessment?
- What is the role of GEO in the science-policy interface and in policy planning and implementation? What is the role of GEO in promoting sustainable development?
- To what extent should the GEO respond to the target framework, which is based on internationally agreed environmental goals?
- What are the data gaps in the analysis that GEO undertakes and where are the weaknesses in the synthesis of data and information?
- What is the current and desired overarching purpose of the GEO and what is the theory of change for GEO (can it close the gap in the science-policy interface by - using knowledge to inform policy - leading to action and also - speeding up production of new knowledge?)
- What other elements of the science-policy interface could GEO support or interact with, for example: capacity building, policy support, knowledge generation, enhanced interoperability of data (e.g. linkage to Environment LIVE or the World Environment Situation Room etc.)?
- What should the temporal dimension/ frequency for producing GEOs be? Is every five years appropriate? Does the GEO inform UNEA and the development of resolutions? For example: GEO could be produced in the years between UNEAs to allow the findings to be used for the development of resolutions. Then key messages can be taken up through the UNEA / GA processes. Either four or two year cycles could be considered, or are other timing options realistic (e.g. GEO information in real-time). How does the availability of new data and knowledge generation (e.g. research literature or modelling) affect this?
- Who are the key target audiences/stakeholder groups for the GEO and how do they use GEO[4], and how can we make sure their needs are met? How effective is GEO for UNEA environment ministers due to its integrated approach (environment, transport, energy, food, health etc)? We know integrated approaches worked in the context of Agenda 2030 (SDGs). Should the GEO messages be different for different target audiences / stakeholder groups? Is there a need to translate findings into a broader economic and social context?
- To what extent does GEO integrate other dimensions of sustainability (i.e. economic / social)? Could GEO provide better information that is relevant to other sectors beyond environment?
- What policy processes related to the environmental dimension of sustainable development (including MEAs) can GEO inform and link with?

ii. <u>Development process of GEO</u>

- GEO is currently designed to produce policy-relevant, politically legitimate and scientifically credible information, but the process has not been fully codified.

[4] In each of these points, the consultant is expected to perform a high-level analysis of the issue, using a range of different data sources. A detailed analysis of these issues should not be required to develop a viable set of options.

- What should the process for producing future GEOs be? What should the roles of individual scientists, experts, scientific institutions, stakeholders and governments or member states be?
- What is the appropriate team size and level of expertise required to produce an assessment like the GEO (including Secretariat, author teams, advisory bodies, supporting fellows, peer reviewers, review editors, etc.)?
- How can GEO leverage other assessment processes or other types of expertise within UNEP and other UN agencies?
- Should the scope of GEO remain the same or be different going forward, and how could a scoping process best be undertaken? Should the scoping process for the assessment include all sectors of relevance to the environment and what are the governance implications? What structures, processes, codifications (procedures) and administrative (governance) arrangements are needed to achieve the desired function and form?
- What financial arrangements are required to support the production of GEO? What level of resources should be used for development of different sections of the report (i.e. state and trends vs outlooks)?

iii. **Outputs of GEO (e.g. the final products)**

- What was the cost efficiency of producing GEO (scope here includes previous GEOs as well)?
- Based on the desired purpose and function of GEO, what are the best products[5] to ensure that GEO fulfils this function?
- How can GEO take advantage of new presentation and data platforms in order to enhance continuity as well as its relevance and usefulness to policy makers, and other target audiences / stakeholder groups?
- What is the best form of GEO to fulfill the roles in capacity building, policy support, and knowledge generation (i.e. the other aspects of the science-policy interface)?
- How can GEO evolve strategically so that its impact among the key target audiences / stakeholder groups is maximized?

iv. Uptake and use of GEOs

- What is the available evidence on the level of awareness and / or perception of the GEO and the uptake and impacts of the GEO key findings across different target audiences?
- What are the most appropriate methods and tools to enhance the uptake and use of GEO. This could include communication approaches and capacity building activities and other activities or products that are targeted to specific audiences?
- How do we expect different stakeholders and actors to use GEO?

IV. Stable financing for future GEOs

Stable financing is required for a successful assessment to be produced. For the different options, the financing questions below should be looked at:

- How are other assessment processes staffed and resourced? What are the optimum staffing and resourcing levels for the different options considered?
- What are the funding requirements for the key process steps of GEO? (to match resources to realistic options). What should the principles and approaches for costing and budgeting GEO be?

[5] The various products of GEO currently include the main report, its' accompanying Summary for Policymakers, communications products and other associated products (e.g. GEO for Youth, GEO for Cities, GEO for Business) to communicate to specific audiences.

- What type of funding model(s) would best fit for the options considered? For example:
    - The Environment-under-Review sub-programme could be better resourced from the core budget (EF & RB)
    - A dedicated an amount of EF could be provided
    - A Trust fund from EF could be established– with the work programme and funds agreed by Member States (i.e. similar to IPCC)
- In addition to stable financing, should GEO have a dedicated governing body, appropriate staff expertise, permanent advisory bodies, a capacity building program, continuous outreach, advocacy, technical support to Member States? How will this affect the funding and structure of GEO?

V. Potential additional roles for GEO

Other assessment processes have particular boundaries, but GEO may have more flexibility to consider additional linkage and cross-cutting issues while exploring new ways of providing information to policymakers. For example: While some assessment reports focus on assessing the state and drivers behind environmental change, others, assess how these changes can be addressed by Member States and other actors. The Steering Committee and the experts conducting the work should reflect on the role of GEO in addressing new issues such as:

- Presenting and analysing options of what policymakers can do to achieve particularly, the internationally agreed environmental goals.
- Considering how GEO can help enhance environmental governance.
- Linkages with SDGs. Environmental economic and social problems are closely inter-related. There are synergies and trade-off across the social, economic and environmental SDGs. Could GEO also assess economic and social aspect of SDGs to advance the best environmental options?
- Can GEO assist Member States in the implementation of the SDGs?
- Why does the gap between policy and action exist? What are the main barriers to action that Member States face? Can GEO be used to assess this?
- To what extent should GEO focus on policy and knowledge gaps?
- There are likely to be more assessments on transformational change and nexus issues in the future - what is GEOs' role?
- What is the value of GEOs integrated approach? i.e. can GEO do more to analyse options that address multiple policy challenges?
- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for 'Transforming Our World'. Is there a role for GEO in assessing the transformational challenge at hand? How does this feedback into the function and form of GEO? Could GEO propose innovative ways to achieve transformative change, for example: by analysing the gap between sustainable futures presented in the SDGs, Paris agreement, and post 2020 framework, and back casting?
- How can GEO best be linked to other assessments (e.g. the Global Sustainable Development Report) which address the economic, social and environmental dimensions of these complex problems?
- How can GEO avoid duplication with other assessments?
- What other issues should future GEO's consider?