

Outcome Report of the Negotiation of the Summary for Policy Makers of the 6th Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6), 21-24 January 2019

The negotiation of the Summary for Policy Makers (SPM) of the Sixth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6) convened from 21-24 January 2019 at the UN Environment headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. The intergovernmental meeting had a record number of 95 countries which is an increase from the 56 countries that attended a similar negotiation meeting for the fifth Global Environment Outlook in Gwanju city, Republic of South Korea in 2012. In total, the meeting was attended by 251 participants, including 1 observer mission, 22 representatives of countries without representation in Nairobi and 26 participants from major groups and stakeholders.

During the four-day meeting, delegates discussed the SPM and negotiated and amended text resulting in a final document that was agreed on the last day of the meeting. The intergovernmental meeting considered the second order draft of the Summary for Policy Makers which was developed at a meeting convened by the High-level Intergovernmental and Stakeholders Advisory Group on 24-27, September 2018 Cancún, Mexico. The final document will be presented for endorsement at the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-4) which will be held from 11-15 March 2019. This endorsement is expected to raise the profile of the sixth edition of the Global Environment Outlook.



Group Photo at the opening of the conference

Photo by IISD/ENB | Mike Muzurakis

The meeting heard opening statements from the High-Level Group co-chair Mr. Paolo Soprano, introductory remarks from the acting Executive Director of UN Environment Ms. Joyce Msuya, and His Excellency Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Forestry of Kenya, Keriako Tobiko. The meeting heard opening statements from the regional groups and Member States. The meeting was opened by Jorge Laguna-Celis, from the Secretariat of Governing Bodies and Stakeholders, UN Environment. Paolo Soprano, Co-Chair of the High-level Intergovernmental and Stakeholders Advisory Group from Italy outlined the context in which the GEO-6 SPM was produced by explaining:

- The origin of the GEO reports;
- GEO's role as a UN Environment "flagship report";
- The United Nations Environment Assembly mandates for GEO-6;
- The GEO-6 working structure, peer review process, advisory bodies;
- The Summary for Policy Makers work programme.

Acting Executive Director at UN Environment, Joyce Msuya, characterized the sixth Global Environment Outlook report as one of the most important products at UN Environment, that represents the very best of science and partnership for the environment. Joyce went further to note that unlike previous GEO reports, the GEO-6 report considered policies that may help make a key difference in future outcomes. Keriako Tobiko, the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Forestry of Kenya, mentioned that the outcome of the meeting will form a critical basis for discussions at the fourth United Nations Environment Assembly. He also highlighted the disconnects that exist between policy, science, and action. He urged decision makers to incorporate science into policies. He also called for translating policy into tangible, concrete, and measurable actions on the ground. He lauded the Global Environment Outlook authors for incorporating traditional knowledge, thus strengthening the link between science and traditional knowledge.



From the left; Joyce Msuya, Acting Executive Director UN Environment and Keriako Tobiko, Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Forestry, Kenya.

Photo by IISD/ENB | Mike Muzurakis

The meeting structure included a Bureau which comprised of co-chairs, vice-chairs and a rapporteur. Delegates elected the bureau by acclamation. Members of the bureau were:

- Paolo Soprano, (HLG Co-chair, Italy) for the Western Europe and Others group (WEOG);
- Edgar Gutiérrez, (HLG Member, Costa Rica) for the Group of Latin America and Caribbean (GRULAC) countries;
- Marek Garzdecki, (Poland) for Central and Eastern Europe (CEE);
- Aziza Geleta Dessalegn, (Ethiopia) for the African Group, also serving as Rapporteur.

The Asia-Pacific Group did not provide a nominee. The co-chairs outlined the Bureau's proposed work plan for the week. Delegates then went ahead and adopted the provisional agenda (UNEP/GEO-6/SPM/1.1) without amendment.

Comments for the draft Summary for Policy Makers were submitted and incorporated before the meeting. Member states were invited to provide further written and oral comments on the draft Summary for Policy Makers. The comments were then compiled by the Secretariat to facilitate delegates' review of the text that was done on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis. The GEO-6 Assessment Co-Chairs Prof. Joyeeta Gupta and Prof. Paul Ekins provided clarifications on whether text submissions from member states were in line with the underlying GEO-6 report.

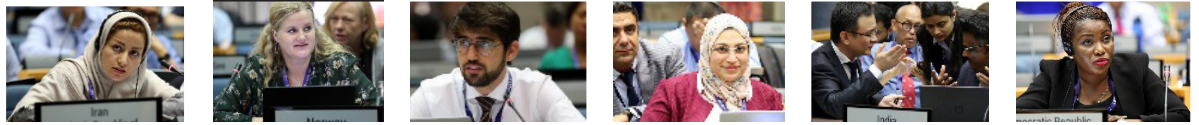


From the left; Prof. Joyeeta Gupta and Prof. Paul Ekins

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Several countries from those in attendance expressed their gratitude to the GEO-6 authors and experts for the great work done to produce the sixth edition of the Global Environment Outlook report. Countries such as the European Union, with Norway, noted that the Summary for Policy Makers will be instrumental for furthering discussions at the fourth United Nations Environmental Assembly. South Africa, noted that the report will help provide best available responses to achieve environmental goals, including the SDGs. Palestine called for taking note of the environmental- and resource-related challenges faced by people in occupied territories. China supported the work towards ensuring the report's endorsement at the fourth United Nations Environment Assembly.



Delegates during the meeting

Photo by IISD/ENB | Mike Muzuraki

The United States of America called for a stronger focus on data and science informing policy, pointing to the need for clarity in the section on air pollution. The Russian Federation noted the importance of the endorsement of the GEO-6 report and Summary for Policy Makers by the fourth United Nations Environment Assembly. Costa Rica lauded the scientific legitimacy of the GEO-6 report, particularly in support of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Japan mentioned that the scientific narrative is well presented. The UK suggested provision of definitions for certain statements of level of confidence. The Democratic Republic of the Congo suggested that a statement on the contribution of peatlands to carbon storage notes that most peatlands in the Congo Basin remain pristine. The Netherlands raised questions about some of the graphics used in the draft SPM, noting, for example, that the timeline used in one graphic did not match the timeline used in the related text. Kenya said the SPM should call for investment into biodiversity awareness-raising campaigns. For more country comments, please click [here](#).



GEO-6 Authors at the meeting

Photo by IISD/ENB | Mike Muzuraki

On Thursday evening, a two-page document was introduced containing key messages drawn from the SPM. The delegates agreed that the redrafting of the two-pager to be done by the Co-Chairs with the support of the Bureau, GEO-6 Secretariat, and High-level Intergovernmental and Stakeholders Advisory Group. They would prepare a Co-Chairs' Summary to be circulated to the fourth United Nations Environment Assembly alongside the GEO-6 report and SPM. The delegates adopted the report of the meeting, which was presented orally by meeting rapporteur Aziza Geleta Dessalegn from Ethiopia.

During the closing session, several delegations thanked the Bureau, High-level Intergovernmental and Stakeholders Advisory Group and GEO-6 authors for their work in ensuring the Summary for Policy Maker's adoption. In his closing remarks, Jian Liu, UN Environment Chief Scientist, thanked delegates for all their work in approving the SPM. The meeting was declared closed at 10.20pm on Thursday, 24 January 2019.



