



Inception Meeting of Global Environment Outlook (GEO) for Cities

The Co-Chairs and Advisory Committee of the GEO for Cities publication met in Arendal from May 13-14, 2019 to:

1. Prepare a draft annotated outline of the GEO for Cities document including structure, main themes and conceptual approach;
2. Confirm the draft work plan of the GEO for Cities, including the timeline, anticipated impact, outcomes, project design, risks and mitigation measures;
3. Suggest a prospective authors list from different institutions, considering gender and geographic balance, for the secretariat to prepare invitations for.

On these issues the co-chairs and advisory committee decided:

- The theme of GEO for Cities will be ‘Healthy Cities, Healthy People’;
- The GEO for Cities is planned to launch in October 2020 during Convention on Biological Diversity Conference of the Parties in China;
- The Secretariat should revise the timeline to match the final launch data;
- The Secretariat should develop an author list including all the nominations recommended and share this with Advisory Committee for further suggestions;
- The Advisory Committee will be included in the internal review period of the GEO for Cities document;
- More outreach should be considered during the year of the document development process;
- The next call meeting with all the Advisory Committee could happen during the second week of June;
- The next face-to-face meeting involving all the Advisory committee members will be the second authors meeting at the World Urban Forum in February 2020.

Meeting Summary

Day 1

The Co-Chairs of GEO for Cities gave a warm welcome and thanked everyone for participating in the

Inception Meeting. After thanking Grid Arendal for hosting this meeting, the Secretariat made a presentation on the findings of GEO-6, including drivers of environmental change, state of environment, outlook for the future, changing the path we are on, the way forward and emphasized that achieving transformative policies should be the key point of our project. Following this presentation, the Co-Chairs gave an overview on the urban components from the GEO-6, showing which environmental issues in GEO-6 are relevant to cities. Air pollution seems to be the most important issue and has the most data; freshwater is also a hot issue. But for other issues like biodiversity, more information should be discussed in GEO for Cities.

The Advisory Committee then discussed the target audience: although local government plays the main role in city issues, national governments could also be considered. Also, GEO for Cities should be different from other assessments. More attention could be focused on biodiversity issues since most assessments focus more on climate change. Planetary boundaries, infrastructure development, changes of social behaviours, economic growth, inequality are all the drivers of environment issues in cities and could be focused on since GEO-6 couldn't address these in great detail. The co-chairs then led a brainstorming session on target audiences (cities and local government, national governments, national-municipal associations, development banks, donors, service providers, etc.), the approach for developing the GEO for Cities (communication, training packages, convince technical staff in the government, go straight to the mayor), scope/niche (making the case, health linkages, big opportunities - small window, dialogue with different sectors, migration, livelihoods, cities efficiency, etc.).

The group then spent the afternoon focusing on drafting the annotated outline. The Secretariat clarified that we are not conducting another assessment. The GEO for Cities will be based on the GEO-6 and we should summarize the findings of the main assessment as much as possible. It was agreed that the summary of GEO-6 findings would be the first part of the report and some deeper analysis on certain issues could be added as new information. Discussion then focused on regional uniqueness and how to deal with city typology issues. The idea of having an independent chapter talking about regional uniqueness was changed since the definition of regional uniqueness can be contested. For the pathway to healthy cities, the Secretariat proposed to focus on the 3 systems including: food, energy and waste, following the focus areas in the outlook section of GEO-6. The Advisory Committee suggested that the water system should be added as well. Based on the discussion, a draft comprised of four main components was developed:

- What environmental issues in GEO-6 which are relevant to cities?
- Urban lens analysis: What are different city contexts that could affect their strategy for responding?
- What are the environmental endpoints that cities need to reach?
- How will cities show leadership beyond their own boundaries and mandates? (Pathways to get there)

It was decided further discussion on the annotated outline would continue the next day and the co-chairs would work on a clean version for the second day's meeting.

Day 2

The co-chair provided a revised version of the annotated outline based on the first day's discussion. More sub-sections were added to each chapter, following the discussions from the previous day. After drafting together with Advisory Committee, the chapter structure was confirmed as follows:

1. Introduction
2. Environment issues relevant for cities
3. Urban dynamics relevant for environmental action
4. Transformative vision for Healthy Cities, Planet and People
5. Pathways and responses for big, bold city action

When drafting the annotated outline, some authors were recommended in certain sections. In addition, the Secretariat had received author lists from all the members in Advisory Committee during the meeting. When the list was compiled the authors, list numbered around 70. Also, the length of each section was discussed, and it was agreed that the final document will be about 60-70 pages.

The group then discussed on outreach efforts and the timeline to develop the report. The Advisory Committee suggested that GEO for Cities could be launched in October 2020 during Convention on Biodiversity Diversity (CBD) Conference of the Parties and the timeline for producing GEO for Cities would extend a little bit longer following this schedule. The first authors meeting would move to late August 2019 to have more time for selecting the authors. More outreach should be considered in parallel to other global events in the following year (i.e. WUF 2020). It was agreed that Advisory Committee would be involved in the internal review period and join the second authors meeting. The Secretariat agreed to address all the comments on the timeline and share a revised timeline after the meeting.

Conclusions

The meeting's main objectives were fully achieved:

- The draft annotated outline was redrafted by the Co-Chairs and Advisory Committee, the structure and main points are now clear. Some guidance for authors will be added to the annotated outline by the Secretariat and this will be shared with the Advisory Committee.
- The revised timeline was confirmed after the discussion and the new version will be shared after the meeting.
- A suggested authors list including around 70 people was well received. The Secretariat will compile the full list with complete information and share with the group for further decision.

Annex 1 –Participants List

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