UN environment

GEO MATTERS

GEO 6 GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT OUTLOOK

HEALTHY PLANET HEALTHY PEOPLE

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## Developing a Technical Summary of the Sixth Global Environment Outlook

*By Joyeeta Gupta and Paul Ekins (Co-Chairs of the sixth edition of the Global Environment Outlook)*

The sixth Global Environment Outlook has been in development since early 2017 and will be published by March 2019. This global assessment focuses more on proposing solutions to our environmental challenges rather than the environmental impacts themselves. As the co-chairs of the process, we want to ensure that this assessment has the most significant impact possible and we have made some important suggestions to try to make this happen. These include:

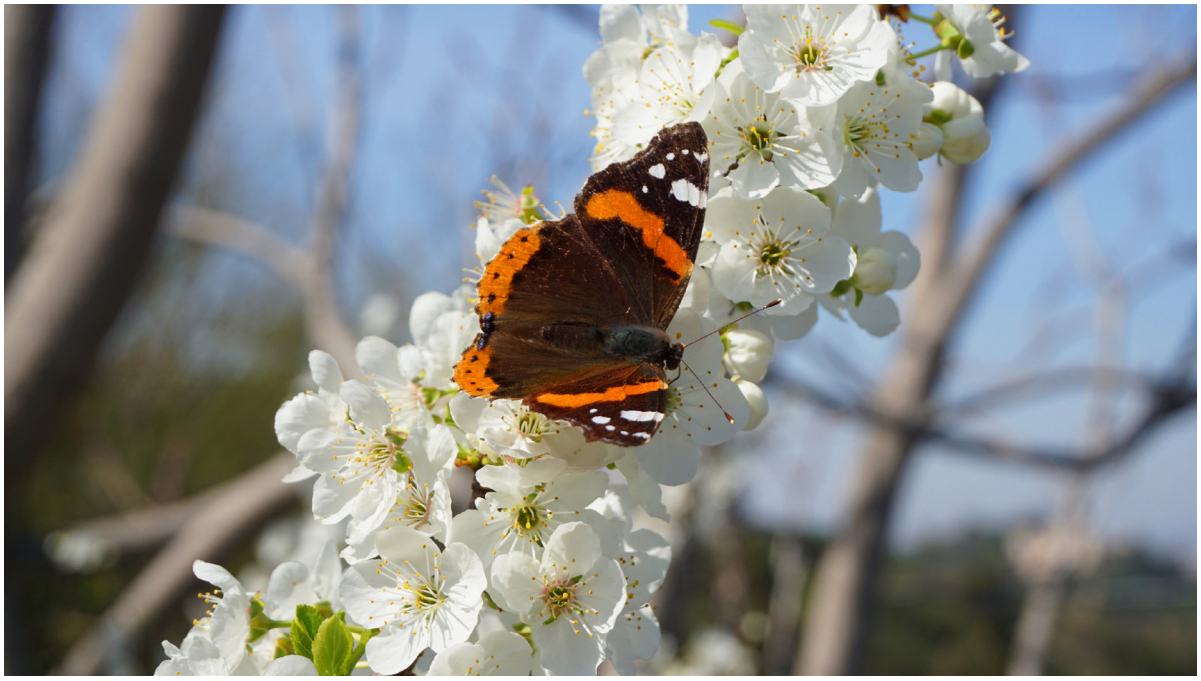
- The Global Environment Outlook report will be divided equally across the subject areas of
  - reporting on the state of the environment,
  - assessing our policy response and its effectiveness, and finally,
  - examining possible environmental futures and the main pathways to achieving them.

- We intend the report to have a Technical Summary of about 50 pages, which provides the main findings of the assessment in a concise and easy to use format. This should allow policy analysts and researchers to use these findings more efficiently in the analysis that they conduct for environmental decision makers.

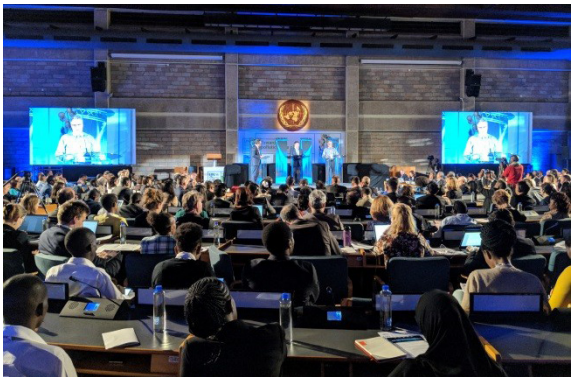
- We would like the Global Environment Outlook to be published by a scientific press and publisher. We feel this will increase the reach of the report within the scientific research and education community, allowing the document to have a more significant impact.

Of course, each of these innovations to the Global Environment Outlook process and the report itself will require outstanding work by the author teams, the main advisory bodies to the assessment and the UN Environment Secretariat. However, we believe these changes will increase the prestige of the publication, its reach across different user communities and will help the Global Environment Outlook complement the other global assessments that will also be published around the same time. It is important to us that all the hard work that goes into producing this assessment reaches the highest number of people and helps lead to real change.

We hope that these changes will help you, as readers and users, access and understand these findings more easily and apply them to your daily work and your daily lives in a concrete way. We will continue to try to find new ways to present the information in the assessment in innovative ways that reach out and grab your attention. It is the only way that the Global Environment Outlook can help move forward the environmental transformation that we need.



## Science-Policy-Business Forum



The first UN Science-Policy-Business Forum took place on the 2nd and 3rd of December 2017 right before the third edition of the United Nations Environment Assembly. The high expectations around this crucial event for the future of our environment have been satisfied with the engagement of more than 700 participants, including 300 Scientists and Academics, 168 Top Business Personalities and CEOs, 130 Civil Society Representatives and several Government representatives. The forum aimed to strengthen the broader interface between science, policy, business and society by building consensus around critical issues and by tearing down traditional barriers between these sectors. In line with the theme chosen for the United Nations Environment Assembly, the forum focused on shedding lights on green solutions to address the global pollution threat and to identify and promote opportunities to grow green technology markets, driven by advances in science and technology, empowering policies and innovative financing. A series of side events tackling water and air pollution, circular economy, food security and new technologies around the energy sector have been successfully organized.

Some of the key findings of the forum concern:

- the key role of big data, which requests a significant investment in science and capacity building in the majority of the world to bridge the gap that inequality has left us with;
- the enormous potential of the business communities, which hold the key to green solutions with innovative technical know-how and the ability to scale up through green investment and green supply chains;

In support of the Science-Policy-Business forum, a Steering committee has also been created that is supposed to shape the environmental agenda and inform the Member States during the United Nations Environmental Assemblies.

UN Environment will continue facilitating the Forum and make efforts to make it the most influential annual event advocating for a radical new approach to the Environment.

## Know an Expert: Global Environment Outlook Fellow Profile

Carol Zastavniouk from Canada is one of the Fellows of the sixth edition of the Global Environment Outlook, contributing mainly to the Biodiversity thematic and policy chapters. She completed her combined Arts and Science Bachelor's degree in Environment at McGill University with a focus on ecology and an M.Sc. Biology at Concordia University in Montreal, studying the effects of habitat fragmentation on brook trout in Newfoundland. Her introduction to ecological research started by working in primatology conservation and mammalogy/parasitology laboratories.

Carol has recently started working as an aquatics biologist at the environmental consulting firm Golder Associates in Calgary, learning about the interplays between Canada's energy industry and its government's environmental policies, and applying ecological assessment and monitoring techniques to protect Canadian wildlife. She is also passionate about the maintenance and creation of green space and wildlife corridors alongside human spaces. Carol is excited to learn from the Global Environment Outlook process and work alongside world-renowned environment experts. She hopes the final document will help world leaders to shape a better future for the earth.

## Protecting wildlife: Successful conservation stories from around the world

*by Simone Targettiferri*

Imagine being a mother or father and being asked by your kids about tigers, lions, pandas and rhinos….. and imagine finding the words to tell them that these animals do not exist anymore in forests and grasslands around the world.

How would you feel?

As a human being and young professional at UN Environment, I do not want to face this!

For this reason, and due to my deep admiration, interest and respect for our incredible wildlife, I decided a long time ago to use the opportunity in my many travels to visit extraordinary conservation programmes around the world, to meet the exemplary people behind them and to share these experiences with my network.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List that assesses the conservation status of some existing species is the most important platform to consult when it comes to endangered species. Biodiversity is declining with more than 79,800 species registered in the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List, and more than 23,000 threatened with extinction, including 41% of amphibians, 34% of conifers, 33% of reef-building corals, 25% of mammals and 13% of birds (International Union for Conservation of Nature 2017). On the other side, positive stories exist, such as the downlisting (i.e., improvement) of some species over the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List categories scale, due to conservation efforts.

The reclassification of central Africa's Eastern Gorilla as critically endangered follows a population decline of more than 70% in the last two decades due to habitat destruction and poaching. From 1980, the governments of Rwanda, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, in collaboration with the international community, invested enormous resources for the conservation of the Virunga mountain gorillas, both using conventional conservation measures such as ranger patrols and law enforcement, and more extreme approaches of continuous monitoring and in situ veterinary care. Due to these efforts, the world population of mountain gorillas is now estimated to be 880. Visiting the Volcanoes National Park in 2015 and facing the beauty of these free and joyful gorillas represented a unique and magical experience. The following year I had the chance to travel to Namibia and visit the Cheetah Conservation Fund in Otjiwarongo. In this area, the main threat to these animals is represented by human-wildlife conflict. Over 90 percent of cheetahs live outside protected management areas, meaning that they live alongside human communities. Most of these are commercial and communal farming communities raising cows, sheep, and goats. During the 1980s, livestock and game farmers halved the Namibian cheetah population, indiscriminately removing nearly 10,000 cheetahs. That is why in 1990, the Cheetah Conservation Fund was funded by Dr. Laurie Marker who developed Human-Wildlife mitigation programs, called Future Farmers of Africa that, along with parallel conservation projects is strengthening the human-wildlife co-existence and helping the race against the extinction. Meeting Dr. Marker, learning about their educational and research programme and spending one entire day interacting with these animals showed me the real value of human engagement in making a difference in conservation.

This year I have had the opportunity to travel to China and meet the Giant Pandas at the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding. Although the International Union for Conservation of Nature warns that climate change will threaten more than a third of the species' bamboo habitat in the next 80 years, Giant Pandas moved off the endangered list and the species is now listed as vulnerable thanks to years of targeted conservation efforts that have preserved its forest habitat, giving them back their space and making food available to them. There are no exact figures for the numbers of cubs, but estimates bring the total number of giant pandas to 2,060, of which 1,864 are adults.

Finally, a few months ago, I went to the Ol Pejeta Conservancy, Kenya, where I met Sudan a 44-year-old rhino and one of the last Northern White Rhinoceros. The northern white rhinoceros is one of two subspecies of existing white rhinoceros, together with the southern white rhino. Formerly, this rhinoceros was found in parts of northwestern Uganda, southern Chad, southern South Sudan, the eastern part of the Central African Republic, and northeast of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. His number one threat is the human being. One kilo of his horn is worth up to $60,000 in some parts of the world where it is believed to have healing properties. Poachers reduced the population from 500 to 8 between 1970 and 2010. Now, in 2017, the northern white rhinos are 3 in the whole world. Since 2009, Sudan has been enclosed in a special compound, controlled 24 hours a day by armed guardians with two other females of the same species, with scientists hoping for procreation. Despite the efforts, no other northern white rhino was born. In 2011, the International Union for Conservation agreed to consider the subspecies as "critically endangered (possibly extinct in freedom)." If it is confirmed, its extinction in the wild will be declared, despite the efforts that the Ol Pejeta Conservancy has made for its reintroduction. Currently, there are no longer any specimens in captivity.


These exciting experiences gave me the hope that we can make the difference in preserving our wildlife and natural resources. To be part of this change, I decided to attend training on Economic Tools for Conservation at the University of California, Berkeley last summer. We have an opportunity and an obligation to act, for this generation and the future ones; we cannot miss it.