

## Integrating the economic and equity dimensions into the Global Environment Outlook

The sixth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6), of which we are co-chairs, is the first to appear after the adoption by the global community of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs). As economic and social, rather than natural, scientists, we feel it important that this Global Environment Outlook should fully incorporate the economic and social dimensions that run through the 2030 Agenda, thereby producing a truly holistic analysis of the environmental challenges that we face, and aligning the Global Environment Outlook with the recently-agreed global policy targets in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. How to achieve this was the subject of considerable discussion at the second authors' meeting of the Global Environment Outlook in Bangkok, Thailand (22-26 May 2017).

As most readers of this newsletter will know, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the successor to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Agenda intends to complete the work of the Millennium Development Goals but in a more holistic and integrated way. The Sustainable Development Agenda aims to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all. While the Global Environment Outlook is an important source of information on how to protect the planet, it hasn't usually discussed how the choice of measures to protect the planet may impact poverty and inequality thereby hampering prosperity for all. For this to happen, a different approach to the analysis is needed.

At the second authors' meeting, we consulted with the authors and also the co-chairs of the Scientific Advisory Panel to assess whether this environmental report could and should be expanded to include the economic and equity dimensions of environmental protection. These issues had already been discussed and agreed at the Intergovernmental and Multi-stakeholder meeting at the beginning of the Global Environmental Outlook process in Berlin (21-23 October 2014) through the inclusion of *economic development and culture and society* as subject areas to be assessed as part of the Global Environment Outlook. Therefore it became clear at the Bangkok meeting that authors should begin considering how to include these in their text as they conducted their environmental analysis.

As a group, it was decided that the common threads of the economic dimension (economic component) and the *equity dimension* (social component) should be included throughout the analysis and not analyzed as stand-alone subject areas. It was felt that this approach would better represent the integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Agenda and would allow for more comprehensive consideration of these issues as the analysis moves forward. In particular, as the policy chapters of the Global Environment Outlook are being crafted, the economic and equity dimensions will facilitate the inclusion of more integrated and systemic policy approaches which can achieve multiple objectives for the environment, economy and society as a whole.

In collaboration with the UN Environment Secretariat, additional expert authors in these areas have been recruited to complement the expertise of the current author teams. We expect that by integrating these new authors into the drafting process, the common threads will begin to appear more strongly in each of the chapters and help contribute to a more policy-relevant assessment, with findings that are more useful, in the long run, for policy makers. While this approach is certainly new to the Global Environment Outlook process, we feel that countries need an innovative assessment and new types of analysis if they are to achieve their ambitious environmental, economic and social goals.



## GEO-6: The Focus on the Policy Effectiveness Section

The Global GEO-6 process has moved into a new critical phase. While the State & Trends section has been submitted to the external review process, the focus of the GEO is now in the second section: the Policies, goals, objectives and environmental governance.

In this part of the Assessment, the four Coordinating Lead Authors (CLAs), supported by the expertise of the Lead Authors have been asked to review the policy responses and governance frameworks most commonly adopted in the different thematic areas and considered by the Thematic and Cross Cutting authors in State and Trends. They would then analyse their effectiveness against specific identified criteria and contextualize these policy clusters through some specific case studies.

The primary objective of this section is to provide key messages to decision makers on how to design, implement and monitor effective policies through assessing common trends of (in) effectiveness among policy clusters and case studies provided by the thematic authors.

The Subject matter experts, identified among the thematic and cross cutting authors, are currently working closely with the Policy thematic experts and supported by the UN Environment Chapter Coordinators, to identify the main policy clusters and governance frameworks and provide interesting case studies backed up by enough evidence. In parallel, the Coordinating Lead Authors (CLAs) are finalizing the development of a semi-quantitative methodology to assess policy effectiveness. For the Coordinating Lead Authors to develop a strong section, Policy authors will be required to analyse the material produced by the thematic authors deeply, integrate it with some literature review and, finally, proceed to an expert's elicitation process with the broader GEO community.

The first order draft of this section is expected to be delivered and discussed during the next global authors' meeting which will take place in Guangzhou, China from the 9-13 October 2017.

## GEO-6 Outreach Event in Bangkok



*Cityscape in the middle of Bangkok, Thailand*

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Following the successful [outreach event](#) organized during the first GEO-6 Global authors' meeting held at the European Space Agency, in Italy last February, the Secretariat reconfirmed the importance of positioning the GEO process into a broader geopolitical context.

Hosted by the Thai Government, the Outreach event took place at the Foreign Correspondents Club, in Bangkok in the presence of around 70 participants representing a broad range of stakeholders; from the private sector to non-governmental organizations, from academia to international and national media representatives.

The second GEO-6 outreach event: "[SMARTER, GREENER, CLEANER?](#)" has been strategically focused on the Asia-Pacific region, considered as the fastest growing region in a world already threatened by unsustainable consumption patterns and alarming depletion of natural resources.





The two moderators invited the distinguished panellists to [rethink the economic risk and opportunity in the face of environmental challenges and extreme events in world's most populous region](#) keeping in mind that, without climate-oriented, greener development policies, over a hundred million people in Asia-Pacific could find themselves in extreme poverty by 2030. This would wipe out poverty reduction gains achieved over the last decade.

UN Environment's Chief Scientist, Jian Liu, opened the panel discussion by illustrating the main environmental threats affecting our society and, in particular, the Asia-Pacific region. The regional state and trends deepened by Peter King, co-chair of the Regional GEO, who presented the key findings of the recently released Assessment. The unsustainable pathway we have undertaken produces direct negative impacts on natural resources, affecting indirectly, the survival of many animal and plant species. Jane Smart, Global Director of International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN's) Biodiversity Conservation Group, presented this current and constant menace, highlighting the key initiative International Union for Conservation of Nature is putting in place in collaboration with private sector. She also raised the attention on the need to consider both the physical environment and the living environment. On this same line Prof. Joyeeta Gupta, Co-chair of the Global GEO-6, focused on the right to develop and the price to pay regarding wealth, equity, gender, security. The Sustainable Development Goals offer a unique occasion to redefine the concept of development and make it more equitable.

The second session of the panel discussion focused on the Economic side of sustainable development. Prof. Paul Ekins, Co-chair of the Global GEO-6, provided some insights on the economics of keeping the world under 2°C and the cost-effectiveness of investing in a sustainable future. James Donovan, Chief Executive Officer of ADEC Innovations highlighted the critical role of private sector in achieving the sustainable development goals and the role of taking decisions informed by evidence. Following this intervention, Mr. Martin Rueegg, Chief Executive Officer of AXA Insurance, deepened the critical role of insurance companies in achieving sustainability and the importance of managing direct environmental impact and the cost of inaction. Achieving sustainability requires a significant contribution from new technologies and investments for innovation. Mr. Surendra Shrestha, Vice President of the Asian Institute of Technology, raised this concern and talked about the vital role of education for a real sustainable development. Finally, Maria Jesus Iraola, a GEO Fellow from Uruguay, embodied the voice of the Youth community and presented some key initiatives highlighting the active engagement coming from the new generations for a sustainable future.

The animated debate at the end of the panel discussions confirmed the keen interest of participants in the GEO process and in strengthening the multi-stakeholders dialogue and partnership to achieve a sustainable future. Click [here](#) for the video.

## Second Order Review

The second order review of the first nine chapters of the Global Environment Outlook is underway and expected to run through to the 15 September 2017. The second order review involves nominated experts from the governments, experts from our database that were nominated back in 2015 for this purpose as well as experts across United Nations agencies and collaboration centers. This review is therefore expected to be the right period to turn the drafts into high-quality documents that will then advance to a third order draft. Comments from the current review will aim at assessing the scientific integrity of the draft as well as policy relevance. These valuable comments will be addressed by authors at the third global authors meeting at Guangzhou in China. The incorporation of the review comments will be facilitated by twenty review editors and two lead review editors who will be present at the meeting.



Urban landscape of Guangzhou, China

## Know an Expert: Global Environment Outlook Author Profile



Dr. Dronin's background is in classical physical geography, but his participation in different international projects has determined his evolution from landscape study to interdisciplinary research of the impact of environmental changes on social and economic processes and, further, to policy analysis. Presently, he is the Chief of Laboratory of Global and Regional Geoecology at the Geography Department of the Moscow State University (MSU) named after M.V. Lomonosov. He has fifteen years of teaching experience both at the graduate and undergraduate levels at the Moscow State University. He has gained extended experience of working in multicultural academic contexts

both in the Europe and the USA. For three years in a row (2005-2007) he acted as the Director of the International Summer School "Environment and Development: Policies for Our Sustainable Future" for faculty from more than dozen universities and institutes of Central and Eastern Europe as well as republics of the Former Soviet Union. The result of this international collaboration was some innovative courses developed by participants on the issues of environmental risks, sustainable development and management strategies.

Throughout this period he has been combining his academic work with more policy oriented activities, such as participation in many international environmental reports - Fourth Pan-European Assessment Report (2007) and the UN Environment's Global Environmental Outlook (GEO-2, 3, 4, 5, and 6). In the Global Environment Outlook report series, he started out as a contributing author and became co-chair of the Pan-European Global Environment Regional Assessment Report (GEO-6). This unique experience has not only emphasized his understanding of importance (and complexity!) of interdisciplinary policy approach in tackling environmental challenges and making the transition to resource efficient economies but also provided better vision as well as possibilities to make a comparative analysis of policy interventions and best (and not so successful) practices worldwide. In addition to his academic and research activities he gives public lectures, TV, newspaper and radio interviews and participates in public forums to share his expertise in the area of climate change, green economy and sustainable policies.

### Cross cultural marriage in Kenya

By Brigitte Ohanga

As an old nursery rhyme we sang in kindergarten goes, " Simon Makonde was born on a Monday, christened on a Tuesday, got married on a Wednesday..... and so we began the journey as we embarked on to secure a bride for my brother. We travel to the plains of Lake Nakuru National park where the bride-to-be parents reside. This ceremony is known as "Kuhanda ithigi" or "Ayiye" (Stating intentions). Gifts of food stuff and various tokens are given to the girl's parents as one does not visit their new in-laws empty handed.

With songs, dance and ululation we were welcomed into the homestead. We were then invited to share a meal which was immediately followed by introduction of parents and family members. The groom-to-be was then requested to identify himself and state the reason for this visit. After he had indicated that he had identified a girl from the home who he wanted for his wife, all the girls from that home were nicely covered and paraded in front of him to identify his bride-to-be. Woe unto him if he picked the wrong one as he would have been fined heavily, but he was lucky and managed to identify his bride without difficulty. Songs and ululations accompanied the uncovering of the bride-to-be, thereby declaring that she was no longer available. We now look forward to the next visit in a months' time where the elders from the groom's family will go and pay the dowry or bride price.



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