

Committee of Permanent Representatives  
Subcommittee Meeting  
Tuesday 14 July 2020  
9:00 – 12:00  
Online Meeting

**Background Document for Agenda Item 4: Update on the consultation process of the  
Future of Global Environment Outlook**

This document serves as a background document for agenda item 4: Update on the consultation process of the Future of Global Environment Outlook. It presents an update on the upcoming peer review and consultation process of the Future of Global Environment Outlook (GEO), including preparations for the online consultation sessions (webinars), and the current status of the Options Paper for the Future of GEO.

Member States are invited to provide guidance on the peer review/consultation process, as well as inform the Secretariat of their preferred way of communicating with government experts.

# Member States, Stakeholders and other experts of global environmental assessment processes consultations on Future of GEO

## Introduction

In accordance with resolution 23 of the fourth UN Environment Assembly (UNEP/EA.4/RES.23) a Steering Committee of 36 experts from Member States was formed to oversee and manage the production of an options paper and conduct broad consultations on the Future of the Global Environment Outlook.

Considering the current and projected implications of the global COVID19 Pandemic for the organization of travel and face-to-face meetings in the coming months, UNEP with the approval of the Steering Committee overseeing the future of GEO work, switched to a virtual consultation plan for member states, stakeholders and assessment experts. This document outlines how the planned virtual consultations could be implemented. The plan aims to ensure that the process of consultations with Member States, stakeholders and experts from other global environmental assessments, focusing on the scope and objectives of the future GEO process, is as broad and inclusive as possible, while conducted entirely in a virtual manner.

## Background and Mandate for Consultations

Paragraph 6 of the above Resolution “*Requests the Executive Director, in accordance with UNEP’s mandate to keep the world environmental situation under review, to prioritize within the Programme of Work and Budget, the preparation of an options document for the future of the GEO process in broad consultation with Member States, stakeholders and other global environmental assessment processes, focusing on the scope and objectives of the GEO process. The options document process and consultation will be overseen and managed by a Steering Committee to be established under the auspices of UNEA and pursuant to Terms of Reference and the nomination process as annexed herein...*”

## Preparations for the Consultation.

Based on the advice from the Steering Committee, the options paper has been split into a background document which reviews and analyses the assessment landscape, combined with a summary of the issues to be consulted upon, prepared by the co-chairs of the Steering Committee. The consultation process of the background paper and the co-chairs summary will be guided by three main principles;

- The best possible scientific and technical advice should be considered in the background paper and the co-chairs summary to ensure the final options paper is as comprehensive as possible.
- A wide distribution process for the draft background paper and the co-chairs summary, ensuring representation of global assessments experts, Member states and stakeholders from developing and developed countries and countries with economies in transition.
- The consultation process should be objective, open and transparent.

To help ensure this, the Secretariat is already advancing with plans for a four-week consultation period, tentatively from August 18<sup>th</sup> to September 18<sup>th</sup>. This will happen in several ways to obtain both written and oral inputs on the background paper and the co-chairs summary. The background paper with its accompanying annexes will be posted on a password protected consultations website along with the co-

chairs summary to allow secure access to all intended groups. The Secretariat will manage the receipt of the input received to ensure all comments are collated before sharing with the consultancy team and the Steering Committee at the end of the four weeks, for their consideration. An image of the proposed consultation website is provided in Annex 1.

During the consultation period (four weeks), the consultancy team will also conduct six webinars (see proposed agenda in Annex 2). These are designed to complement the written commenting process and will enable an interaction with the consultancy team and select members of the Steering Committee to obtain more overarching comments on the main issues from the background paper and the co-chairs summary. In the webinar, strategic questions similar to the following may be asked:

1. In your view, what is the key function/purpose of GEO?
2. What is the place of GEO in the current landscape of global environmental assessments? What is GEO's place in the current science-policy interface? What is GEO's place in the Multilateral Environmental Agreement landscape?
3. How should GEO be governed?
4. What should be the main products of GEO?
5. Among the tentative proposed building blocks for future GEOs, in your view which are the most important?
6. Are there other roles for GEO within the science-policy interface? How could GEO play these roles?
7. According to your interpretation, what does UNEA expect from GEO?

The program of webinars will run as presented in the agenda in Annex 2. These webinars will be designed to cover three groups of time zones. Written submissions will also be conducted in parallel to the webinars to ensure that experts, stakeholders and member states unable to attend the webinars can still provide answers to these strategic questions.

### *Member States Consultation*

The Secretariat has already sought advice on the process of reaching out to Member States through its Governance Affairs office. Member States will be invited through their UNEP delegations and alerted at the start of the consultation process.

### *Stakeholders*

All Major Groups and Stakeholders' organizations [accredited](#) with the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) will be invited to comment on the draft options paper. The Future of GEO process has already started to register the interest of these organizations before the start of the review.

### *Global environmental assessment experts*

The Secretariat has reached out to experts from previous GEOs and other major global assessments (e.g. IPCC, IPBES, etc.) to alert them of the upcoming consultations on the background paper and the co-chairs summary. This list entails co-chairs of the major assessments, selected authors, their advisory groups and Secretariat teams. An effort is being made to reach out to other UN Agencies that have flagship reports related to the areas covered by GEO.

Before the start of the consultation period the Secretariat will conduct an orientation webinar to prepare all participants for this task. In the online meeting, guidelines will be presented to ensure smooth operations and to clarify any questions before the consultations.

# Annex 1

## Secure Consultations website

UN Environment   World Environment Situation Room   Languages   Wangi   Login   Search...

FUTURE OF GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT OUTLOOK (GEO)

Log In

Username : \*

Password : \*

[Login](#)

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## Annex 2

### Future of GEO Stakeholder Consultation Online Webinars

#### Meeting Objectives:

- To convene interested parties to share the highlights of the Draft Options Paper and key questions of focus for this consultation;
- To provide a forum for questions and answers regarding the Draft Options paper and the questions;
- To introduce and facilitate the gathering of feedback from Member States, Stakeholders and Experts on the Draft Options Paper and the set of strategic questions;

#### Timing:

- Two dates (TBC): Three 90-minute webinars held on each date for three time zones.

#### Participants:

- Up to 151 participants per call maximum.

Time	Section	Content	Speaker/ Facilitator
-30 min	<b>Open the GoTo platform room for any set up.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open the room for organizers and speakers to test audio/video, polling tool, etc.</li> </ul>	
-15 min	<b>Open the GoTo platform to the public</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants can join up to 15 min prior to the workshop. Have a holding slide that provides start time, instructions on how to ask questions, and where to write (in chat – privately) in case of technical questions.</li> <li>• Have someone there that can handle connectivity issues from UNEP Team.</li> </ul>	
00:00	<i>Section 1</i> <b>Welcome and Opening</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connectivity buffer (5 min)</li> <li>• Secretariat welcome, <b>Name, Organization</b> (2 min)</li> <li>• Co-Chair welcome, <b>NAME, Organization</b> (2 min)</li> <li>• Objectives of the webinar, schedule, how to participate (slide), <b>Gillian Martin Mehers, Bright Green Learning</b> (2 min)</li> <li>• Testing of the polling tool, and introductions – show slide on how to get onto Polleverywhere prior to questions and answers. Test a few question types and use it to get a sense of who is participating. Share results on screen. Share how Q&amp;A will work during the presentations – e.g. how to vote up a question to be asked to the panel (10 min)</li> </ul>	Host  Co-Chair  Gillian Martin Mehers  Laszlo Pinter  Jill Jaeger  Klaus Jacob
00:20	<i>Section 2</i> <b>Future of GEO Options Paper: Overview, Scenarios, and Key Considerations for Stakeholders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to the speakers and the 8 strategic questions that form the basis for the consultation – not in detail at this point. Note: 1) That we will take the Q&amp;A <u>first</u> from the polling tool, then we will go to the chat. 2) We encourage people to use the online form with the 8 questions to provide substantive input and will put a link to it in the chat. People can put reflections on the questions in the chat and we will save that as well.) <b>Gillian Martin Mehers, Bright Green Learning</b> (3 min)</li> <li>• Paste the link to the 8 questions in the chat and ask people to open it now if they want to follow along. Note that this form will remain open after this event.</li> <li>• Launch the Q&amp;A question on polleverywhere (Gillian)</li> <li>• <b>Speaker 1:</b> Introduction to the Future of GEO process thus far (very briefly) and overview of the Options Paper, <b>Dr. Laszlo Pinter, Lead, Consulting Team CEU/IISD</b> (10 min)</li> <li>• <b>Speaker 2:</b> Review of the 7 strategic questions and the information being sought, <b>Dr. Jill Jaeger, Consulting Team</b> (10 min)             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In your view, what is the key function/purpose of GEO?</li> <li>2. What is the place of GEO in the current landscape of global environmental assessments? What is GEO's place in the current science-policy interface? What is GEO's place in the Multilateral Environmental Agreement landscape?</li> <li>3. How should GEO be governed?</li> <li>4. What should be the main products of GEO?</li> <li>5. Among the tentative proposed building blocks for future GEOs, in your view which are the most important?</li> <li>6. Are there other roles for GEO within the science-policy interface? How could GEO play these roles?</li> <li>7. According to your interpretation, what does UNEA expect from GEO?</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	Laszlo Pinter  Jill Jaeger  Gillian Martin Mehers

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator – take top 3 questions from polling tool for answers by speakers (note either can answer). (15 min)</li> <li>• Facilitator – Open the floor for final questions – using the polling tool to start with the next 3 questions. Then if the questions do not have a lot of support, ask for raised hands and invite people to unmute their microphones to ask (Note: It would be useful to have a WhatsApp group set up with UNEP and the team to identify those with raised hands to call on in the limited time). (25 min)</li> </ul>	
01:25	<i>Section 3</i> <b>How to Contribute Further and Closing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on how to contribute additional comments (slide with website and timeframe for contributions), Facilitator (2 min)</li> <li>• Paste the link to the form with the 8 questions again into the chat.</li> <li>• Thanks, and closing of the online webinar, <b>Co-Chair</b> (2 min)</li> </ul>	Co-Chair  Gillian Martin Meher
01:30	<i>End of the Online Webinar</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close room.</li> </ul>	