

Our Ref: UNEA/GEOSC/pb/3

Feb 24, 2020

**‘Future of GEO’ Steering Committee Meeting Summary,
January 28, 2020**

Important Note: In order to make our calls more efficient and effective, Steering Committee members are encouraged to keep their verbal interventions to a maximum of 3 minutes each. Members are encouraged to mute their telephone lines when they are not speaking, to minimize background noise.

The Steering Committee on the Future of GEO met at its fifth virtual call to discuss progress and plan next steps for the future advancement of the process. Agenda items included:

- Review the procurement process for the options paper on the Future of GEO
- Discuss the different options for conducting broad consultations on the options paper considering pros, cons, budget situation and carbon emissions, then decide on the preferred option
- Discuss the planned Steering Committee facilitated workshops and consultation options
- Any other business

On these agenda items the Steering Committee decided:

- The co-chairs should be contacted immediately for an emergency meeting should the two (2) bidders fail in their evaluation for the consultancy of the Future of GEO options paper development. The successful consultant should be invited to the Committee’s virtual call at the end of February.
- A six-meeting option is the most appropriate for achieving the broad consultation requested in the resolution while considering the geopolitics of different regions. These consultations have the potential of being less costly and produce fewer carbon emissions, since the traveling distance for the participants will be shortened significantly.
- The planned facilitated workshop of the Committee in Trinidad and Tobago should proceed as planned, with the Secretariat moving with speed to plan the travel and logistics of the relevant Committee members. The Secretariat should ensure availability of virtual participation for those Committee members with difficulties traveling to Port of Spain.
- The Second facilitated workshop of the Steering Committee should take place in Geneva Switzerland in the third week of September 2020 and will be sponsored by the Swiss Government.

Rapporteur	Signature
Mr. Rafael Monge Vargas	

Summary of the meeting

The meeting was chaired by the co-chairs of the Steering Committee.

Update on the membership of the Steering Committee

The meeting started with an update from the Secretariat on the latest changes on the Steering Committee membership. Lukas Pokorny; the Steering Committee member from the Czech Republic had to leave the group and the Czech Republic will not replace him. The Secretariat has sent a letter to the Eastern European Group from the Committee of Permanent Representatives (Nairobi) to request another nomination from the region to complement the Steering Committee membership.

The Secretariat and the co-chairs thanked Mr Pokorny and the Czech Republic for its valuable contribution to the Committee and its generosity in hosting the first meeting in Prague last year.

Review of the procurement process

The Secretariat reminded the Committee that the expression of interest was completed in December 2019, with 21 expressions of interest. A source selection plan (essential for the request for proposals) was then sent out around 15th of December 2019 and UNEP requested bids to be sent back by mid-January 2020

The Secretariat was satisfied with how the procurement process had gone (based on past UN procurement processes) and was asked by one of the bidders to extend the deadline by one week because of the holiday period. The deadline was extended by one week, as requested, and closed on 22nd of January 2020.

From this process two (2) bids have been received with one arriving after the deadline. The Secretariat is verifying with the procurement office if the second bid can still be included. The Secretariat believes it is important to have the second bid included in the process and has asked the procurement office to make the exception to allow that. The Secretariat hasn't seen the bids yet and is preparing to evaluate them by end of the week, following a confirmation from the procurement office for allowing the second bid.

A three (3) member's team has been constituted by the Secretariat to evaluate the bids and they have an understanding of the technical proposal evaluation criteria. Following the evaluation of the technical bids, the procurement officer will open the financial bids. A combination of the two evaluations will lead to a successful bidder. Contract negotiation will then follow and is expected to take 1-2 weeks. The selected bidder is therefore expected around mid-February 2020. At that point the Secretariat will be allowed to reveal the successful bidder to the Committee. Before that the Secretariat is not able to divulge anything about the bids in case that might influence the process in any way.

The Committee noted that the number of bidders was very small compared to those that expressed interest and sought an explanation from the Secretariat. The Secretariat acknowledged that was a valid concern and that the process of developing the expected options paper is a very complex one and one that most bidders may not be familiar with. This may have influenced the bidder's decisions. The expression of interest is also not designed to provide asufficient detail on

the expected tasks. The size and scope of the work shared after the expression of interest may have discouraged some bidders. The Secretariat therefore reminded the Committee that this is a specialized task and therefore there is a limited pool of expertise available.

The Committee then raised a concern on the danger that the two bidders may not meet the threshold set by them in the evaluation, hence they may fail the bidding process and this would affect the Future of GEO process. On this the Secretariat assured the Steering Committee that the procurement officer had set the criteria for both technical and financial bids on which the three evaluators will base their judgement on. It noted the risk of the two bidders failing in the evaluation but will need to wait for the evaluation of the technical bids.

The Committee then sought to clarify that it will be able to start working with the consultant around mid-February if successful. The Secretariat re-assured the Committee that was still the plan. An initial call with the consultant to discuss the timeline and the Prague-meeting outcomes will be the starting point. The Secretariat will strive to have the consultant in the Steering Committee call at the end of February to allow for interaction with the Committee before the face to face workshop.

In the concluding discussion on this matter, the co-chairs requested for an emergency call between them and the Secretariat to discuss the way forward if both bidders fail in the evaluation. The Committee then sought to be assured that the material for the March meeting will still be shared in the agreed timeframe and that the timeline for the development of this options paper is still on track. On this the Secretariat assured the Committee that two-weeks advance delivery of large documents will be met since the consultant will have about a month to develop a good draft of the options paper, an agenda for the meeting and the approach for the consultations (including virtual participation).

Broad consultation options discussion

The meeting options document has now been updated to reflect last minute changes, like replacing the Bogota, Colombia meeting with Lima, Peru as the preferred location, since Peru will be holding a workshop on conducting their own National GEO and this can be a back to back meeting with the Future of GEO consultations.

The Secretariat briefed the Committee that there four (4) different options were discussed for the consultation process with UNEP's science-policy officers in the respective regions. These options include and eight meeting option (8), six meeting option (6), five meeting option (5) and one meeting (1) option for consultations. These options have been tabulated with assumptions that at least two-thirds of the region's countries will attend the consultations in person. The costs for sponsoring one participant from each developing country and their Daily Subsistence Allowance (DSA) costed and provided for the Committee's consideration. Carbon emissions to and from the meeting location have also been estimated and, to ensure reduced costs, only one co-chair/vice -chair will attend a consultation meeting with two (2) members of the Secretariat. All dates are still tentative because the exact availability of meeting facilities is not confirmed yet.

The Eight-meeting option;

- Latin America and the Caribbean; The recommendation is for two (2) separate meetings in the region because the issues affecting South America and the Caribbean are different. A

location change has been proposed, moving the meeting from Bogota, Colombia to Lima, Peru to allow for a back to back meeting with their own national GEO meeting. This meeting may have the support of the government for meeting space and hospitality.

- The other meeting in the area is proposed for Kingston, Jamaica where UNEP has a national office and can use the facilities there.
- The North America consultations are recommended for Washington DC with representatives from Canada flying to Washington. This will be fairly inexpensive since the Secretariat will incur almost no cost if the US government hosts the consultations in one of its meeting rooms.
- European Union consultations are proposed for Brussels, Belgium with little costs expected since delegates will already be there. The only expense will be for a co-chair and two (2) Secretariat staff travel.
- For Eastern Europe and the Balkans (and potentially Central Asian countries), Istanbul Turkey is the proposed location for the consultations. This is an ideal location because of the flights going in and out of the location from the region. UNEP Europe office may also have some funds secured to support this consultation.
- Africa consultations are proposed for Kampala in Uganda with the Committee vicechair Jerome Lugumira looking into the government hosting the region's consultations.
- West Asia regional consultations are proposed for Manama, Bahrain and the Committee's co-chair, Suzan Alajjawi, is looking into the possibility of the ministry hosting the consultations there.
- Asia Pacific consultations are proposed for Bangkok, Thailand. UNEP has good facilities in the location for holding such meetings. September will however be a busy time for the facilities to host such a meeting, therefore July is proposed as the best month. For this region costings still have to be adjusted since participation of the Pacific islands will likely mean higher flights costs.

The six-meeting proposal would combine South American countries with the Caribbean and North America countries into a single meeting in Lima, Peru. All other meetings will remain as proposed. This option saves money and carbon emissions through reduced meeting costs and travel.

The five-meeting option would combine European Union countries with Eastern Europe and the Balkans, and potentially Central Asia Countries in a meeting in Istanbul, Turkey. This would require the European delegates to travel to Istanbul. Though this is not a cost that the Secretariat will incur, it is a cost to participating countries.

A one-meeting consultation option would require every country to travel to Nairobi, Kenya. It is the most expensive and carbon-intensive option because of the need for simultaneous interpretation and the hotel costs in Nairobi are quite high. This may also not be considered as a broad enough consultation process as stated in the resolution. Travel costs and DSA for developing countries are also high in Nairobi. The total carbon footprint will also be highest for this meeting. Carbon emissions are lower for regional consultation meetings because of shorter distance travelled.

- The Committee sought further clarification on their participation in the proposed regional consultations. The Secretariat noted that the regional consultations were meant for Member States to come and express their views on the options paper. It further noted that some Member States may decide to send their Steering Committee members to the regional consultation meetings, although the Steering Committee members will have had an opportunity at the facilitated workshop to input into the options paper development. Countries will decide who to send to the consultations. The consultant producing the options paper will present the results of the analysis at the consultation sessions. In addition, one co-chair or vice -chair will represent the Steering Committee in each meeting to minimize costs.
- The issue of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union was raised and clarity requested by the Committee on whether the United Kingdom will be included in the Western Europe group. The Secretariat noted this change and suggested to accommodate all countries from Western Europe in the Brussels meeting option.
- The Committee requested an update on the Secretariat's financial position and preparedness in organising these consultation meetings. This update would inform their decision on the most feasible option. The Secretariat noted that since this was the start of the fiscal year it is putting in requests to receive the anticipated level of funding, and the Steering Committee decision on its preferred option will inform these fund requests. UNEP's budget committee will be convened soon and the Secretariat is looking to receive initial funding to start planning the consultations. It noted that the UNEP budget allocation is done in tranches and the Secretariat expects to be planning ahead on how to best use the funding. The Secretariat will therefore look to the decision of the Committee on the preferred meeting option to inform its request for budget allocation.
- The Steering Committee noted that the unpredictability of funding may derail the process. The Secretariat highlighted that it had proposed the options with that in mind including providing options with reduced costs and proposing other options for the upcoming Steering Committee face to face workshop. A Paris and Vienna meeting option for the second Steering Committee face to face meeting was then proposed to the Committee.
- The Committee asked remote participation for the consultations. The Secretariat highlighted that it will ensure GoTo meeting virtual participation for all the consultation meetings and the ability to facilitate these virtual sessions was included in the selection of the consultant. The Committee however noted that some regions may have difficulty in virtual participation for the regional consultation and face to face participation was the likely better for these countries.

On this issue it was decided that the Secretariat will look into a fall back plan of ensuring the selected option is implemented even if budgets were restricted. This will ensure that the consultations are conducted (even remotely) rather than skipping a regional consultation. It was therefore agreed that the Steering Committee would re-evaluate the possibility of remote participation in other regions as a back-up plan should the financial situation not allow for full face-to-face meetings. This will be further discussed in future Steering Committee meetings.

The Steering Committee voted the six-meeting option as their most preferred option after considering, not only the cost and carbon emissions of other options, but also the objectives stipulated in the mandate of having a broad enough consultation process.

Steering Committee facilitated workshop and consultation options

A presentation on the two proposed face to face meetings was provided by the Secretariat. The presentation contained a proposal for consideration of Vienna and Paris as options for the facilitated Steering Committee workshop in March including the costs of the participation of the 24 developing countries in those meetings.

- Sebastian König representing Switzerland on the Committee highlighted that Switzerland was interested in hosting the second facilitated workshop meeting. It was also noted that the timings of having the meeting back to back with the annual subcommittee meeting of the CPR in October. The second facilitated workshop should happen earlier to allow the consultant to finalise the options paper after the Committee concludes its work. The Committee thanked Switzerland for the generous offer and noted the importance of the timing of the meeting raised.
- The Committee noted the difficulty of accessibility of the Port of Spain for the March facilitated workshop. It, however, also noted that the meetings are anchored across the world and it is an honour to be hosted by a member country. It noted that with the availability of remote participation technology, Steering Committee members will have a productive meeting.
- On the timings of the second facilitated workshop, the Secretariat noted that it needs to submit any document to the Subcommittee for consideration at least three weeks (3) in advance. This means that the third week of September would be a good time for the meeting in Geneva.

On this issue therefore the Committee agreed that the meeting in Trinidad will continue as planned and the second facilitated workshop would be hosted by Switzerland in the third week of September. The Trinidad meeting will also allow for remote participation of the Steering Committee members who will not be able to participate in person.

Any other business

- The Secretariat noted the Steering Committee greenlight to proceed with the preparation of the Trinidad meeting. It will proceed immediately with travel and logistical preparation for all those who are UNEP-sponsored. To reduce the cost of travel, however, those with visas that can travel through the US should indicate this to the Secretariat immediately. Travelling through the US will likely be cheaper.
- Shanna Emmanuel, an alternate for Teshia Baptiste, should be included in the Trinidad meeting participation. She will be attending as an alternate to represent Saint Lucia
- Having no other issues for discussion the meeting was adjourned at 16h09min (Nairobi time)

Action items

- The Secretariat will prepare a written summary of the meeting and share the link to the recording of the call.
- The Secretariat will organize an emergency call with the Steering Committee co-chairs should the two bidders fail the evaluation.
- The consultant should be invited to the next virtual meeting of the Steering Committee at the end of February.
- The Secretariat will organize a call with Ryan Assui, to move forward with the planning of the Trinidad meeting.
- The Secretariat will send out invitation letters and other logistical information to the Steering Committee members immediately, to proceed with their meeting preparations and visa processes.

List of Participants

First name	Last name	Affiliation	Nominated by
Anna	Mampye	Ministry of Environment	South Africa
Cathy (alternate)	Maguire	European Environment Agency (EEA)	European Union
Mona	Westergaard	Ministry of Environment and Food	Denmark
Keisuke (alternate)	Takahashi	Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES)	Japan
Najib	Saab	Arab Forum for Environment & Development (AFED)	Lebanon
Suzan	Alajjawi	Supreme Council for Environment, Bahrain	Bahrain
Marcos	Serrano	Ministry of Environment Chile	Chile
Toral	Patel-Weynand	US Forest Service	USA
Ivar Andreas	Baste	Norwegian Environment Agency	Norway
Salla	Rantala	Finnish Environment Institute	Finland
Huang	Yi	Peking University	China
Mira	Zovko	Ministry of Environment and Energy	Croatia
Shanna (alternate)	Emmanuel	Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development	Saint Lucia
Charles	Lange	National Environment Management Authority (NEMA)	Kenya
Marek	Haliniak	Ministry of the Environment, Poland	Poland
Nino	Gokhelašvili	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia	Georgia
Teshia	Jn Baptiste	Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development	Saint Lucia
Rafael	Monge Vargas	Ministry of Environment and Energy	Costa Rica
Carlos	Cordero Vega	Ministry of Environment and Energy	Costa Rica
Ryan	Assiu	Environmental Management Authority	Trinidad and Tobago
Celso	Moretti	Agricultural Research Corporation	Brazil
Andrew	Stott	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs-UK	United Kingdom and Northern Ireland
Sebastian	Jan Konig	Swiss Federal Office for the Environment,	Switzerland
Claudia	Kabel	German Environment Agency	Germany

Apologies

First name	Last name	Affiliation	Nominated by
Chatchai	Intatha	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Thailand	Thailand
Ambinintsoa Lucie	Noasilalaonomenjanahary	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development	Madagascar
Kazuhiko	Takeuchi	Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES)	Japan
Narges	Saffar	International Affairs & Conventions Center, Department of Environment	Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Lukas	Pokorny	Ministry of Environment	Czech Republic
Marcel	Kok	Environment Assessment Agency (PBL)	The Netherlands
Ouedraogo	Desire	Ministry of Environment, green economy and climate change	Burkina Faso
Isaac	Dladla	Eswatini Environment Authority	Swaziland
Nadia	Chenouf	Ministry of the Environment and Renewable Energy	Algeria
Christine Okae	Asare	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	Ghana

James	Mathew	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate change, Government of India	India
Aliya	Shalabekova	Ministry of Energy	Kazakhstan
Mery	Harutyunyan	Ministry of Environment	Armenia
Jock	Martin	European Environment Agency (EEA)	European Union
Ivana	Stojanovic	Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism	Montenegro
Keri (alternate)	Holland	US Department of State	USA
Paul (alternate)	Lucas	Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL)	The Netherlands
Jerome	Sebadduka Lugumira	National Environment Management Authority (NEMA)	Uganda
Apsara	Mendis	Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment	Sri Lanka