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May 5, 2020

**'Future of GEO' Steering Committee Meeting Summary,
April 23, 2020**

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

- Introduce and discuss the proposed updated plans for the consultations and preparation of the options document on the future of the GEO process. This included; modalities for submission of the options document and associated recommendations by the Steering Committee to UNEA-5 and Plans for Virtual Consultations on the draft 'options paper on the future of GEO'
- Update the Steering Committee on the progress made on the preparation of the options document on the future of the GEO process after the first workshop of the Steering Committee
- Discuss the detailed Workplan prepared by the Consultancy team on the preparation of the Options Paper
- Discuss the way forward on the future planning calls and interaction of the Steering Committee members with the consultancy team and the Secretariat
- Any other business

On these agenda items the Steering Committee decided:

- There is need to alert Member States in advance that this consultation will be coming up around the summer period for their anticipation and planning. This will ensure that the consultations are inclusive and no one is left out. There is need to strategise and ensure that members states who are not represented in the Steering Committee are involved and consulted during this period. Future planning meetings of the Steering Committee should consider how to best stimulate response from the consultation process.
- Since the resolution tasks the Steering Committee with final submission of the options paper and recommendation on the future of GEO to UNEA, there is need to allow a window after the one week feedback window by member states at the UNEP Annual Subcommittee Meeting for the Steering Committee to finalise and approve the final documents for submission to UNEA. Such a meeting will be suitable for the period between October 23rd and November 6th 2020

- The Steering Committee will have an agenda item on the category of ‘assessment custodians’ its future meeting to define the category since it is not defined in the resolution. This will be done before the start of the consultations process to identify the scope of this category and advice on the type of feedback needed from them. This will be done in collaboration with the consultancy team and the Secretariat.
- The draft work-plan should be edited to include periods where the Steering Committee will review the drafts (both first and second) before signoff for the start of the consultation and official submission at UNEA-5 respectively.

<u>Rapporteur</u>	<u>Signature</u>
Mr. Rafael Monge Vargas	

Summary of the meeting

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

Discussion on the proposed updated plans for the consultations and preparation of the options document on the future of the GEO process;

Modalities for submission of the options document and associated recommendations by the steering committee to UNEA-5

The meeting started with a presentation from the Secretariat on the expectations for submitting the options paper on the future of Geo to UNEA five. The presentation highlighted the key dates and formats of the documents to be submitted.

Three documents will be submitted, the analytical foundation for the 'options paper on the future of GEO'. This will be a detailed and technical report, prepared only in the English language. An information document of (3-4 pages) will also be presented for UNEA. This will be a summary analysis of the impacts of the various options, and the recommendations by the Steering Committee. This information document will be translated in all 6 UN languages. The final document will be a draft resolution on the future of GEO (one page). This should also be prepared and submitted through the formal UNEP SGB channels by one or more Member States in the Steering Committee, outlining the decision(s) suggested for consideration by all Member States at UNEA-5. The draft resolution will only be in English language.

The Secretariat highlighted that UNEA regulations require document to be submitted by November 6th 2020 for consideration at UNEA-5. Co-chairs of the Steering Committee are also expected to present the work of the Steering Committee at the UNEP Annual Subcommittee Meeting of October 12-16, 2020. Member states will therefore be allowed upto October 23rd 2020 to comment on the findings and recommendations of the Steering Committee on the Future of GEO options paper and allow the Secretariat, Co-chairs and the Consultants to consider their feedback and finalise the documents for UNEA. For the draft to be presented at the Annual Subcommittee Meeting of mid October 2020, the draft has to be share with the subcommittee by September 17th, 2020. This is four weeks prior to the meeting.

The Steering Committee appreciated the Secretariat for the effort in developing this detailed timeline for their information. It further noted that the proposed one month consultation period will spread over the short summer month for regions like Europe therefore there is need to alert Member States in advance that this consultation will be coming up around that time for their planning. This will ensure that the consultations are inclusive and no one is left out. The Steering Committee also suggested sharing contacts of the Steering Committee members with respective Members States in their regions as a strategy to ensure that those Member States that are not represented in the Steering Committee can reach out to them and feel connected as part of the process.

On the timeline the Steering Committee noted that the resolution tasks the Committee with final submission of the options paper and recommendation on the future of GEO to UNEA, therefore there is need to allow a window after the one week feedback period by Member States at the Annual Subcommittee Meeting for Steering Committee members to finalise and approve the final documents for submission to UNEA-5. The Steering Committee therefore enquired on the possibility of having

a final Committee meeting to finalise and approve their work between the October 23rd and November 6th period.

Steering Committee members also sort to clarify if there is plan to share the draft with the CPR members citing previous experiences that we may have comments from Member States through that modality. The Secretariat clarified that it continually briefs the CPR on the progress of the work on the future of GEO options paper and that the mid October Annual Subcommittee Meeting will be an opportunity to get feedback on the content of the options paper from Members States. It was noted that this will be a strategic opportunity for gathering feedback from the CPR on a document that is in its advanced stage.

On this issue it was decided that the Secretariat will work with the Consultants to assess the possibility of including periods where the Steering Committee will review the drafts before signoffs. It was noted that the two periods i.e. before consultations and the official submission to UNEA-5 are very critical to involve the full committee for their comments and signoffs.

Plan for Virtual Consultations on the draft 'options paper on the future of GEO'

On this issue, the Secretariat presented to the Steering Committee the alternative plane for the consultation process after considering the challenges posed on the initial plan by the current global health pandemic. The alternative plan proposed is to have the full consultation with Member States, stakeholders and Custodians of other global environmental assessment processes done virtually for one month in the period of 15th June to 15th July 2020 with a possibility for a one-week extension in case there is need. The Secretariat will utilise its expertise and technology in conducting intergovernmental reviews for its assessments for this consultation process. Formal invitations to provide feedback will be shared by UNEP with all stakeholders, including the draft options paper as an attachment, possibly combined with a short questionnaire to ensure that the consultation process is timely, secure, transparently managed and focused on the key priorities. This approach will also improve timeliness and save costs. The consolidation, analysis and synthesis of results will be conducted by the consultants in the period from July 22th to August 14th, 2020. A second revised draft of the options paper, including the results of the feedback received in the 'questionnaire' will be presented by the Consultants to the Steering Committee for their consideration not later than August 14th, 2020. This will allow for the Steering Committee preparation in conducting their second workshop in the period from August 15th to September 4th, 2020.

The Steering Committee thanked the Secretariat for the elaborate alternate plan for the consultation. It however sort for clarifications on the definition of the 'custodians of other global environmental assessment processes' category as identified in the resolution. The Secretariat noted that this can be interpreted in different ways however there is need to assess the type of global assessments that GEO can learn from, institution and partners that have worked on previous GEOs and individual experts that have been part of GEO or have the potential to be involved in a GEO.

On this issue it was decided that the Steering Committee will have this as an item for their discussion in the future meeting before the start of the consultations process to identify the scope of this category and advice on the type of feedback needed from them. This will be done in collaboration with the consultancy team and the Secretariat. The Steering Committee further noted that with its second workshop planned for the period of August 15th to September 4th, 2020 and in

view of the plan to receive the second order draft of the options paper by the 14th August 2020, it will be reasonable to allow time for Steering Committee members to review the draft before the workshop. The Secretariat noted that this is an important observation but it will be discussed with the Steering Committee again, the host of the meeting (in case of a face to face meeting) and the consultancy team for a decision. The Secretariat further noted that the government of Switzerland still has the offer to host the Steering Committee on the table and this will be reviewed as the COVID-19 pandemic situation evolves.

Sebastian König representing Switzerland on the Committee updated the Steering Committee that this offer by Switzerland was still on the table and they will be considering the new time period proposed for this meeting and revert back.

In the end Steering Committee members emphasised the need for allowing them adequate time to familiarise with each version of the options document and commenting to allow for their signoff. This was noted by the Secretariat as a valid concern and proposed for detailed discussions on it in Agenda number 4.

Steering Committee members then agreed to switch the sequence of the agenda of the day and start with agenda number three (3) on the detailed Workplan prepared by the Consultancy team before discussing the agenda on the progress made by the team of consultants since the first workshop of the Committee.

Discussion on the detailed Workplan prepared by the Consultancy team on the preparation of the Options Paper

On this issue the consultancy team presented the detailed workplan they had prepared with observations that it had addressed the request from the Steering Committee in previous meetings where the committee had requested more frequent interaction and involvement in the drafting process of the options paper. The consultancy team is multitasking at the moment working on the mapping papers to be delivered on May 8th 2020 and preparing for the start of the drafting of the options paper itself. The consultant highlighted that in the next monthly call (planned for May), the consultant will update the Steering Committee on the progress of drafting and seek guidance on issues that may need Steering Committee's decision in the drafting stage as well as the preparation for consultations. The list of strategic questions and the questionnaires will also be shared with the Committee for feedback before the start of the consultations.

The consultants noted that they are planning to do interviews that were in their initial proposal and they are developing guidelines on this to share with the Steering Committee for discussion. They are working on formulating the approach and the list of interviewees and get done with the preparation by June 26th. This will allow them to take into account the input from the interviews together with the consultation responses at the end of the consultations.

The consultant further noted that the date for the second workshop will be valuable for them since they need more time to address the comments from the workshop and allow the revision, signoff and submission on September 17th.

The Steering Committee noted that this work plan is a living document and will be adjusted by the committee as it sees fit to effectively steer the process. The committee also noted that its meetings should be strategically positioned to ensure that the Steering Committee members can

signoff the options paper as well make key decision like those needed for interviews and the modalities of consultations.

The Steering Committee highlighted the need to have it see the draft before the start of the consultation. It was noted that this is not reflected in the detailed work plan of the consultants. The planned Steering Committee monthly call is scheduled for June 21st the date which the consultation period will have already started. The committee therefore enquired on the possibility of having the meeting earlier to allow for discussions and eventual signoff by the proposed June 10th. The committee also suggested the possibility of providing written comments on the draft before its meeting.

The Secretariat further enquired on the development of the interviews. It noted that the sample size will determine the time needed. The issue of the turnaround threshold of the questionnaire was raised with the Steering Committee observing that this may delay the process if not properly strategized.

In response the Consultant noted that it has been working on the modalities put in place by the Steering Committee in their formation where the material has to pass through the Steering Committee co-chairs and the secretariat and get a signoff at that level before they are shared to the full committee. The consultant can however share the first draft of the paper on 27th may with the full Steering Committee other than just the co-chairs and Secretariat if they see it as a necessity.

On the sample size for the interviews the consultant noted that the team has a lead person and set protocols for the interviews and it will be discussing with the committee the timeframes and thresholds. The interviewing process will be highly selective because of the limited time in the workplan. Steering Committee members will be updated on these advancements and the agenda discussed in the following meeting.

On this issue the Steering Committee decided there is need to have enough time and a meeting to discuss and signoff the document before the consultation. The Consultant will therefore consider revising the workplan around the finalisation of the draft planned for May 27th 2020 and the start of the consultations and plan accordingly for Steering Committee members input and signoff.

Update and discussions on the progress made on the preparation of the options document on the future of the GEO process after the first workshop of the Steering Committee

In presenting this item the Consultant thanked the Steering Committee for sending in their written comments besides attending the virtual workshop. Generally the request from the Committee to go into more details on aspects of the outline had been observed and worked on. The consultant noted that they had taken detailed notes in the workshop together with their specific comments send in written form. The consultancy team then clustered all the comments and sought answers for each of them. From this exercise the consultants made changes in the outline paper. In some responses there were divergent views for some aspects of the outline eg capacity building being primary while other responses indicated that this was secondary. The Consultants will therefore be making judgement calls on such divergent views.

The consultant further noted that some big changes had included the use of 'principals' and 'scenarios'. These have now been rephrased to reflect advice and inputs from the Steering Committee during the workshop. The consultant further noted that they have not yet received feedback on what the 'must-haves' scenarios are for the future of GEO and requested the Steering Committee that the window is still open should they wish to comment on that aspect. The consultant

highlighted that the team will be starting to draft in early May and welcomed the Committee to send any further comments on the revised outline.

On this issue the Committee advised the consultant to consider all comments given by the Steering Committee on this.

Discussion on the way forward on the future planning calls and interaction of the Committee members with the consultancy team and the Secretariat

The Secretariat informed the Steering Committee that it had been using doodle poll to schedule planning calls of the whole committee. The meetings so far have happened on the third week of the month mostly on a Thursday. With the condensed timeline, it has become challenging to schedule the meetings in this manner and with the proposal by the Steering Committee to have more engagement in this critical phase of the preparation of the options paper the Secretariat enquired on what the Steering Committee thinks about predetermining the planning meetings of the Steering Committee and a possibility of other ad hoc meetings of the full Committee to discuss specific issues as they arise.

The Steering Committee noted that the Consultant and the Secretariat will consider the comments and update the timeline then share with the Steering Committee. The Committee further requested on the possibility of having all documents in a central place for Steering Committee members' access. On this the Secretariat noted that there is an account on the Community of Practice where all documents by the Steering Committee should be kept and accessed. This will be updated in the coming days and the Steering Committee given access again.

On this issue the Steering Committee agreed that it was good to have its planning meetings predetermined and ad hoc meetings scheduled through consideration of their Doodle.

Any other business

- The Secretariat reminded the Steering Committee the need to observe 'house rules' set up at the start of the Future of GEO process work where it was decided that Steering Committee members would not 'copy all' members when responding on personal communications. The Secretariat reminded the Committee that whenever there is no need to inform everyone, Committee members should respond to the sender alone.
- With thanks from Jian Liu (Director science division-UNEP) and having no other issues for discussion the meeting was adjourned at 17h42min (EAT 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 and the Consultant will revise the detailed work plan document considering the Steering Committee's feedback from this call and share with the whole Committee
- The Steering Committee will continue to send their comments (if any) on the revised outline by the consultant team upto early May when the drafting process with start.
- The Secretariat will update the community of practice and ensure all documents are accessible then share the details with the Steering Committee for them to access all documents in one place.
- The Steering Committee will continue to send their ideas of the forms of GEO to be considered at any point in the process. Most Steering Committee members have not sent such suggestion to the Consultants.

List of Participants

First name	Last name	Affiliation	Nominated by
Keisuke (alternate)	Takahashi	Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES)	Japan
Suzan	Alajjawi	Supreme Council for Environment, Bahrain	Bahrain
Toral	Patel-Weynand	US Forest Service	USA
Salla	Rantala	Finnish Environment Institute	Finland
Mira	Zovko	Ministry of Environment and Energy	Croatia
Nino	Gokhelashvili	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia	Georgia
Rafael	Monge Vargas	Ministry of Environment and Energy	Costa Rica
Ryan	Assiu	Environmental Management Authority	Trinidad and Tobago
Sebastian	Jan Konig	Swiss Federal Office for the Environment,	Switzerland
Claudia	Kabel	German Environment Agency	Germany
Narges	Saffar	International Affairs & Conventions Center, Department of Environment	Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Marcel	Kok	Environment Assessment Agency (PBL)	The Netherlands
Lynn	Wagner	Future of GEO Consultant	Consultant
Dr. Laszlo	Pinter	Future of GEO Consultant	Consultant
Apsara	Mendis	Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment	Sri Lanka
Teshia	Jn Baptiste	Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development	Saint Lucia
Ivar Andreas	Baste	Norwegian Environment Agency	Norway
Huang	Yi	Peking University	China
Mery	Harutyunyan	Ministry of Environment	Armenia
Ivana	Stojanovic	Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism	Montenegro
Keri (alternate)	Holland	US Department of State	USA
Jerome	Sebadduka Lugumira	National Environment Management Authority (NEMA)	Uganda
Marek	Haliniak	Ministry of the Environment, Poland	Poland
Cathy (alternate)	Maguire	European Environment Agency (EEA)	European Union
Ambinintsoa Lucie	Noasilalaonomenjanahary	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development	Madagascar
Chatchai	Intatha	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Thailand	Thailand
Charles	Lange	National Environment Management Authority (NEMA)	Kenya

Marcos	Serrano	Ministry of Environment Chile	Chile
Najib	Saab	Arab Forum for Environment & Development (AFED)	Lebanon
Mona	Westergaard	Ministry of Environment and Food	Denmark
Garry	Kass	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs-UK	United Kingdom and Northern Ireland

Apologies

First name	Last name	Affiliation	Nominated by
Ouedraogo	Desire	Ministry of Environment, green economy and climate change	Burkina Faso
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
Jock	Martin	European Environment Agency (EEA)	European Union
Paul (alternate)	Lucas	Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL)	The Netherlands
Celso	Moretti	Agricultural Research Corporation	Brazil
Shanna (alternate)	Emmanuel	Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development	Saint Lucia
Anna	Mampye	Ministry of Environment	South Africa
Carlos (Alternate)	Cordero Vega	Ministry of Environment and Energy	Costa Rica
Kazuhiko	Takeuchi	Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES)	Japan
Isaac	Dladla	Eswatini Environment Authority	Swaziland
Andrew	Stott	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs-UK	United Kingdom and Northern Ireland