

Our Ref: UNEA/GEOSC/pb/3

March 19, 2020

**'Future of GEO' Steering Committee Meeting Summary,
March 11, 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 seventh virtual call to discuss progress and plan next steps for the future advancement of the process. Agenda items included:

- Update the Steering Committee on the cancelation of the Trinidad and Tobago workshop on the Future of GEO
- Discuss the way forward in the advancement of the development of the Options Paper in the face of the evolving global COVID 19 pandemic
- Any other business

On these agenda items the Steering Committee decided:

- The Steering Committee workshop planned for 26-27th March 2020 will continue a planned but happen virtually. The Consultants will facilitate the workshop with the main intention of the workshop remaining what was envisaged for the Trinidad and Tobago face to face Steering Committee workshop.
- The Consultant team will develop a detailed timeline on the process up to May. This will include key milestones and regular Steering Committee meetings to direct the process as requested in the mandate
- The Secretariat will prepare a document and present to the Steering Committee an alternative to the six face to face meetings planned for Members States consultations considering a possibility of the persistent global crisis and travel restrictions.

Rapporteur	Signature
Mr. Rafael Monge Vargas	

Summary of the meeting

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

Update the Steering Committee on the cancelation of the Trinidad and Tobago workshop

The meeting started with an update from the Secretariat on the recent cancelation of the Steering Committee's workshop that was scheduled to happen in the end of the month of March 2020. The secretariat highlighted that it had taken the decision based on close monitoring and assessing of the evolving COVID 19 pandemic and with consultation with regional offices. The restrictions effected by some countries as a strategy to control the spread of the disease had also affected travel of most of the Steering Committee members to effectively get to the Port of Spain. The Secretariat assured the Steering Committee that the decision to cancel the workshop had considered their safety and wellbeing together with that of the UNEP personnel responsible for the meeting. The meeting had therefore been effectively cancelled and not postponed since it was not possible to evaluate the situation perfectly at the time to plan for the future. This Steering Committee meeting had been called on short notice to assess the options and find the way of proceeding with the process without the face to face workshop. Steering Committee members with issues on the cancelation were to contact the Secretariat and their concerns addressed on case by case modality.

The Secretariat and the co-chairs thanked Mr Ryan Assui and the government of Trinidad and Tobago for the generous gesture of intending to host the second meeting of the Steering Committee and expressed their gratitude in their flexibility to allow this cancelation in the wake of the ongoing health crisis.

Discussion on the way forward in the advancement of the development of the Options Paper

The consultants presented to the Steering Committee the plan that they proposed for the advancement of the process. The proposal was to continue with the workshop as planned for Trinidad and Tobago but virtually. GoTo meeting platform would be used for the virtual workshop of the Steering Committee. The objectives of the workshop would remain the same as for the proposed face to face workshop with the main aim being to get feedback from the Steering Committee on the draft Options Paper. They committed to developing a draft of the annotated outline of the paper and avail it to the Steering Committee before the end of the following week for comments before the virtual meeting. They also proposed to have google drive platform used for storage of documents to allow for simultaneous commenting and editing and avoidance of version control issues. Because of the varied time zones of the Steering Committee members the consultants proposed to have the virtual workshop split to two identical workshops and conducted in two different days using the same format and style to accommodate for participation of the Steering Committee members from both diverse of the time zones. The workshop would be facilitated by the consultants and they would develop and share with the Steering Committee the detailed agenda and how the use of technology would work.

The consultants also highlighted that they would produce a detailed timeline on how they would be proceeding up to the first planned Member States consultation planned for May in Lima Peru. This would help the Steering Committee better evaluate their progress and advice with clear milestones on when the Steering Committee would be meeting virtually. The objective for the Steering Committee virtual meeting would be clearly stated in the timeline for productive meetings and

effective planning. The Secretariat then reiterated how the focus was to maintain the Steering Committee plan and ensure continuation for the next few weeks. Meanwhile the Secretariat would start to assess the alternatives for the six planned Member States consultations planned from May and have the ready scenario in case the pandemic persists.

On this issue the Steering Committee thanked the consultancy team and the Secretariat for switching to the virtual mode quickly to ensure that the progress of the development of the Options Paper was not derailed. It requested for more regular meetings to enable them take stock of the progress being made as per their mandate. The Committee shared their experience in conducting virtual workshops highlighting the need to have both virtual meetings and online tasks for the Committee to ensure effectiveness. They reckoned that the challenges of having virtual meetings are different from face to face meetings and mechanism to ensure their effectiveness should be explored by the consultants.

The Committee highlighted the importance and urgency of starting to consider an alternative plan for the regional consultations aimed for Member States consultations in the light of the current health crisis and travel restrictions. On the modalities of the virtual workshop the Steering Committee suggested having the two proposed days for the virtual workshop time zones bridged by a task “homework” where the Committee members would work together online on an aspect of the option paper.

It was therefore decided that the Secretariat will prepare an alternative plan for the Member States consultations in view of an impossible face to face consultation possibility. The consultant would prepare a detailed timeline upto May and share with the Steering Committee. The Consultant would also draft an annotated outline of the options paper and share with the Steering Committee in the coming week for their feedback and preparation of the workshop scheduled for 26-27 May 2020.

Any other business

- The Steering Committee enquired about the modalities of operating moving forward with the question on if documents will be shared upfront for the Committee to comment. The Consultants committed to share the agenda draft and the annotated outline to the Committee for feedback before the workshop. The Secretariat would develop a document on plan B for the Member States consultations and share with the Committee before Easter holidays for their feedback.
- Having no other issues for discussion the meeting was adjourned at 16h04min (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 prepare a document on the alternative plan for the member states consultations in view of an impossible face to face consultation.
- The Consultant to prepare a detailed timeline upto May showing all milestones expected
- The Consultant to draft an annotated outline of the Options Paper and share with the Steering Committee in the coming week for their feedback and preparation of the workshop scheduled for 26-27 May 2020
- The Consultants to produce a virtual workshop plan for the Steering Committee workshop considering the need for short interval sessions opportunities for the Committee to work on something together virtually.

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	Gokheshvili	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia	Georgia
Rafael	Monge Vargas	Ministry of Environment and Energy	Costa Rica
Carlos (Alternate)	Cordero Vega	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
Kazuhiko	Takeuchi	Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES)	Japan
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
Gillian	Martin Mehers	Future of GEO Consultant	Consultant
Isaac	Dladla	Eswatini Environment Authority	Swaziland
Apsara	Mendis	Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment	Sri Lanka
Andrew	Stott	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs-UK	United Kingdom and Northern Ireland
Teshia	Jn Baptiste	Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development	Saint Lucia
Ivar Andreas	Baste	Norwegian Environment Agency	Norway

Apologies

First name	Last name	Affiliation	Nominated by
Huang	Yi	Peking University	China
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
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

Celso	Moretti	Agricultural Research Corporation	Brazil
Marek	Haliniak	Ministry of the Environment, Poland	Poland
Shanna (alternate)	Emmanuel	Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development	Saint Lucia
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
Anna	Mampye	Ministry of Environment	South Africa
Mona	Westergaard	Ministry of Environment and Food	Denmark