

Our Ref: UNEA/GEOSC/pb/10

June 22, 2020

**‘Future of GEO’ Steering Committee Meeting Summary,
June 10, 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 tenth virtual call to discuss progress and plan next steps for the advancement of the process. Agenda items included:

1. Review of the current draft of the options paper.
2. Discuss the timelines to UNEA-5
3. Discuss Plan B and Plan C for delivery to UNEA-5
4. Any Other Business

On these agenda items the Steering Committee decided:

- The Consultant should be allowed one more week to further work on the options paper draft before submitting for Steering Committee’s review starting on 17th June. The Secretariat should work with the consultancy team to correct weakness in the draft and in doing so it should be direct with the team of consultants on where changes should be made.
- The future of GEO plan should still focus on plan A at this stage and try to achieve all the milestones identified in it. The Committee will assess the process and decide if plan B is should be considered after receive the draft of the options paper.

Rapporteur	Signature
Mr. Rafael Monge Vargas	

Summary of the meeting

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

The meeting started by the co-chairs of the Steering Committee noting that it was an unfortunate situation that after several interactions with the consultant, the draft was not what the Steering Committee had hoped for. The timeline has also been tight for delivery of the first draft of the options paper. The co-chairs stressed to the Steering Committee that as previously agreed in the committee, the Secretariat was to propose or to present any drafts to the bureau of the Steering Committee before documents are shared with the wider Steering Committee and in this case, the bureau had received the document from the Secretariat prior to the decision but had agreed with the secretariat that the draft is not in good enough quality for Steering Committee review. The bureau had then agreed to allow the Secretariat to work with the consultant more and correct the document for the Steering Committee inputs. Major changes included shortening the document, misrepresentation and lack of methodology. It has turned difficult for the consultancy team to reach that level of quality and therefore the bureau has decided to circulate the draft as it is to the Steering Committee for information and to allow for an honest and transparent discussion on the situation. The Secretariat has engaged the team of consultants the last one week and conducted webinars to fill in the gaps and redirect the process. The webinars included one on the costing exercise and on the methodology and analysis aspects of the options paper.

The current draft therefore needs more time to readjust and shortened to a level that will benefit from the Steering Committee's inputs. The paper has to be redesigned to a concise and focused paper agreed on in Prague. The Secretariat will have to work closely with the consultants to ensure this redirect. This was initially not anticipated but with the current situation a more focused and honest approach will have to be implemented to have the appropriate draft.

On this issue the Secretariat highlighted its disappointment on the situation. The document had initially been shared as a 90-page draft and after a week of working with the consultants the draft was still the same length. Additionally, the methodology was not yet clear to give sight on how the different integrated options were arrived at. Webinar summaries have been shared with the Steering Committee for transparency. There is therefore need for more work and the Secretariat will have to work with the consultancy more closely to ensure the draft is redirected. In working with the consultants, the Secretariat would like to have a multicriteria analysis done in the document to explain more clearly how the options are selected and which ones might be more highly ranked than other options. A costing exercise is also essential. This was part of the terms of reference of the consultancy and was intended to ensure costing of all the proposed options, so that the Steering Committee and UNEA would have that as a basis for their decision on the Options for a future GEO. Both are not provided in the first draft. After the webinars in the last one week, the consultant has provided spreadsheets on those two elements, but they're in very early stages.

On this issue the Steering Committee members that had a chance to look at the draft felt the lack of objectivity in the assessment of the options. The committee also highlighted the need of having a clear and concise document for their review and eventual consultation. However, it was noted

that the longer document should not be lost and the material in it should be properly annexed for reference. An analysis of the options and a clear presentation of their integration should form the basis of the document intended for review and consultation. This will help in making the decision in a precise manner.

The Steering Committee appreciated the webinar summaries shared for transparency and acknowledged the efforts by the Secretariat and bureau to correct the document. There is some analysis in the draft but need to be focused and well presented. Analysis of the assessments landscape will help identify if a future GEO can focus on themes like health and provide support for NGOs or if that is already being done and GEO will be duplicating. This analysis is currently missing from the draft. A caution was however raised on the need to make sure that some of the ideas reflected in the Bonn meeting which set the stage for cohesive thinking are considered. Emerging issues such as the human health perspective and the pandemic perspective may be short term and a future of GEO process may again be needed after them. There is therefore need to think long term and ensure that this process' outcome is long-lasting.

On this issue the Steering Committee decided that the consult should focus on producing a short document intended for their review and consultation process. The material in the longer report should not be lost and should be properly kept incase needed. The Secretariat should be straight with the consultant and work with the team to redirect the draft to the desirable state.

On the revised timeline

The co-chairs of the Steering Committee presented the revised timelines for production of the options paper with plan A proposal requesting for an additional one week for the Secretariat to further work with the consultancy team and redirect the draft before the start of the Steering Committee review on 17th June. The review period of the Committee will be conducted as per the previously approved modality and will entail a two-round review before signoff for consultation. Plan B of the timeline will replace the intended submission of the options paper to the CPR one month before the annual subcommittee meeting in October to a progress report submission on the options paper. This will help gain some time to further advance the draft during that period and ensure the document is properly developed for UNEA. The progress report can focus on the main integrated options that the Steering Committee will have identified where the CPR can give their thoughts on. In the final plan, (plan C) the Secretariat will assess the progress of the consultancy team and advice the bureau when they feel it will not be possible for the consultancy to achieve the delivery of the options paper. In this case, the consultancy contract will be terminated, and the Secretariat will take on board the production of the options paper. The derailed descriptions of the plans proposed are as below;

Updated Plan A

- The Steering Committee to allow the consultancy one more week to get the draft right. The Secretaries will work with the consultancy team to re-direct the draft. (from June 10-16)

- The Steering Committee review to start on 17th June and continue until June 30th and will follow the previously approved modality of review i.e. a two round review process before agreement on a no objection basis.
- The second two-day review would be from July 6-7, to allow the consultant a few days to integrate the comments from the first review period. The 'adoption on a no objection basis' would happen from July 8-9.
- A planning call of the Steering Committee to be held on July 1st or 2nd to assess the status of the draft options paper
- A six-week's consultation period will be conducted (from June 13-Aug. 28) after which the consultancy will consider all inputs to revise the draft for the second workshop of the Steering Committee.
- The second workshop of the Steering Committee would happen on September 7th-8th after which the consultancy will revise the draft further and seek Steering Committee' approval for submission of the draft options paper by Sept. 14 to the UNEP Secretariat of the Governing Bodies for consideration by the Annual subcommittee meeting of the CPR by 14th September (four weeks before the actual CPR meeting), at its Oct. 12th session.

Proposed Plan B

- After receiving a draft after the July 13 – Aug. 25 consultation period, and consideration of the scope and type of comments, the Steering Committee allows the consultancy time to consider all comments and further advance the document with the help of the Secretariat and the Steering Committee before holding the second workshop of the Committee in or around September 28 – 29.
- Instead of delivering the Options paper to the CPR one month in advance, an interim document (perhaps summary of options) will be delivered to the CPR in preparation for a presentation in the week of October 12. This will allow more time for work between the consultancy, Secretariat and Steering Committee to refine the options document and paper. The final options paper will then likely be delivered mid-November for submission to UNEA-5.

Proposed Plan C

- In this Plan, the Secretariat will work with the consultancy team and assess the progress up to end of July. If the Secretariat is not satisfied by the progress, the Bureau will be advised and the Steering Committee will be informed for a decision on whether the consultancy contract should be terminated and the task of producing the options paper taken over by the Secretariat from Aug. 6th.

On this issue the Steering Committee was concerned about sharing the draft with the CPR in advance because this might risk early negotiations on the draft options. In Prague the Steering Committee decided that the options would be presented to the open-ended CPR scheduled for the week of October 12 in its near final form to allow for some inputs by CPR members on the final recommended options. Now, certainly the Steering Committee could have a follow up call in end of

October or early November to consider the feedback from CPR and perhaps change the list of final recommended options. But the intent of the September 14 facilitated workshop of the Steering Committee was for the committee to come up with its final set of recommended options that would then be considered in the open-ended CPR.

The Steering Committee sort further clarity on the resolution's language about the role of the CPR for this work. In response the Secretariat stated that the CPR's role so far had been to approve the membership of the Steering Committee. The Secretariat has briefed the CPR severally on the progress of the future of GEO work. Once the Steering Committee was established, there was no further mention of involvement of the CPR in the resolution. However, in Prague, the Steering Committee thought that this annual subcommittee of the CPR was a very important opportunity to present the findings of the study on the options paper. The outcome of this interaction with the CPR is yet to be defined. The Steering Committee emphasized the need to ensure that whatever will be presented to the CPR is as close as possible to the final document for UNEA. This will help avoid any shocks in the resolution discussions. It is important for the consultation and review process to be conducted properly and ensure the outcome further advances the draft and helps the Steering Committee to decide on feasible options of a GEO. The format of the consultation will be discussed in the next planning call of the Steering Committee to ensure that the guiding questions to be used in the consultations will help achieve the objective of the consultation exercise.

On the Second workshop of the Steering Committee, Sebastian Jan Konig, member of the Committee from Switzerland informed the Steering Committee that the government of Switzerland is still considering the option to host the workshop. The government of Switzerland will continue to monitor the global health pandemic situation and in consultation with the Secretariat, they will consider the options for the second workshop. On this, both the Steering Committee and the Secretariat is grateful for the kind gesture from Switzerland.

On this item the Steering Committee agreed to go with plan A. It is important to stick to the initial plan and try to achieve all the milestones that were initially planned for. The Secretariat will therefore work for one more week with the team of consultants to further ensure that a draft is shared for Steering Committee review beginning 17th June. In the next planning call of the Steering Committee, the committee will further evaluate the status of the draft and consider plan B if necessary.

Any other business

Preparations for the Steering Committee calls and sharing of documents

The Steering Committee received meeting documents for this meeting within a very short timeframe for the meeting. The Committee emphasized on the need to receive document early enough to ensure productive deliberation on the calls. This had been agreed on at the formulation of the Steering Committee. Short documents can be shared within a week's timeframe to the call while large documents should be circulated to the Steering Committee early enough to ensure consultations and preparation of committee members before the call. On this issue the Secretariat noted that the documents had been shared on a very short notice, however it clarified that these documents have been shared with the committee for its information because the draft is not well advanced to warrant Steering Committee's review. The Secretariat has had challenges with the planning of the Steering Committee calls and preparation of documents because of the absence of the head of GEO programme at the start of the year away on sick leave. The situation is changing now and the requirement for allowing adequate time for Steering Committee's preparation on documents will be observed moving forward. The Secretariat will send out a doodle poll to decide on the appropriate date and time for the next Steering Committee planning meeting.

Having no other issues for discussion the meeting was adjourned at 16h37min (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 will send doodles for the next planning call of the Steering Committee. This will also ensure the Committee is ready for their next planning call.

List of Participants

First name	Last name	Affiliation	Nominated by
Sebastian	Jan Konig	Swiss Federal Office for the Environment,	Switzerland
Narges	Saffar	International Affairs & Conventions Center, Department of Environment	Iran (Islamic Republic of)
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
Teshia	Jn Baptiste	Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development	Saint Lucia
Shanna (alternate)	Emmanuel	Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development	Saint Lucia
Kazuhiko	Takeuchi	Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES)	Japan
Ambinintso a Lucie	Noasilalaonomenjanahary	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development	Madagascar
Charles	Lange	National Environment Management Authority (NEMA)	Kenya
Marcos	Serrano	Ministry of Environment Chile	Chile
Mona	Westergaard	Ministry of Environment and Food	Denmark
Andrew	Stott	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs-UK	United Kingdom and Northern Ireland
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
Claudia	Kabel	German Environment Agency	Germany
Marcel	Kok	Environment Assessment Agency (PBL)	The Netherlands
Ivar Andreas	Baste	Norwegian Environment Agency	Norway

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
Carlos (Alternate)	Cordero Vega	Ministry of Environment and Energy	Costa Rica
Isaac	Dladla	Eswatini Environment Authority	Swaziland
Najib	Saab	Arab Forum for Environment & Development (AFED)	Lebanon
Chatchai	Intatha	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Thailand	Thailand
Keri (alternate)	Holland	US Department of State	USA
Ryan	Assiu	Environmental Management Authority	Trinidad and Tobago
Rafael	Monge Vargas	Ministry of Environment and Energy	Costa Rica
Apsara	Mendis	Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment	Sri Lanka
Huang	Yi	Peking University	China

Mery	Harutyunyan	Ministry of Environment	Armenia
Ivana	Stojanovic	Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism	Montenegro
Garry	Kass	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs-UK	United Kingdom and Northern Ireland
Anna	Mampye	Ministry of Environment	South Africa