

Work plan for the Ad hoc Global Assessments Dialogue

Overview and context

The Ad hoc Global Assessment dialogue is a participant-led forum for exchange of information on global assessments within the UN system. The Dialogue is coordinated by UNEP's Science Division under the auspices of the Chief Scientist. Its main purpose is to identify areas of synergy across different assessment processes to maximize the usefulness of these scientific assessments for policy makers.

Several UN Environment Assembly resolutions could be relevant to the work of the Ad hoc Global Assessments Dialogue (see Annex 3). The most directly relevant of these is:

Resolution EA.4/23 – *“Requests the Executive Director to continue to **promote greater coherence and coordination of global assessments undertaken within the United Nations system** and in cooperation with relevant international bodies and the secretariats of the multilateral environmental agreements.”*

and

*“Also requests the Executive Director to **prepare a proposal for science-policy input on the global environment**, in consultation with Member States and making use of contributions from relevant stakeholders, in commemoration of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme, in line with the recommendation of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm from 5 to 16 June 1972;”*

In addition, UNGA resolution 73/333 invites multilateral environmental agreements and their scientific and technical bodies to coordinate in a number of ways (see Annex 4). The most relevant of these is:

Substantive recommendation 12 – *“Encourage the governing bodies of multilateral environmental agreements and **scientific, technical and technological bodies to exchange information and experiences, including with a view to considering the streamlining of reporting and/or monitoring processes”***

Finally, SGD goal 17 recognizes the integrated nature of sustainable development and works to:

*“**Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development”**.*

Given the breadth and depth of requests from Member States for work on science for decision-making (the science-policy interface) the challenge will be to limit the work of the Ad hoc Global Assessments Dialogue to manageable and realizable objectives.

Proposals for work plan elements

Given the virtual nature of the UN's assessment work in the coming years, it is proposed that the AGAD take on two main work items:

1. Continue the dialogue calls on a quarterly basis focusing on specific synergy items such as assessment schedules, glossaries, modelling, peer reviews, etc. – each quarterly call would focus on a specific area of potential synergy and AGAD participants would be requested to provide

overview presentations of their efforts in each of these areas to see if potential synergies can be found and acted upon.

2. Provide individual expertise for the development of the science-policy input to the commemoration of the 1972 Conference on the Human Environment and the creation of UNEP in that same year (EA.4/RES.23). Advice would be sought from AGAD participants, acting in their individual professional capacity, and not representing the views of their different organizations, governing bodies or management structures, throughout 2021 would be sought on specific areas of the UNEP@50 report and AGAD participants, acting in their individual professional capacity and would be invited to contribute to the internal and external reviews of the report.

Topics and timing of quarterly calls

3 additional calls of the AGAD are scheduled for 2021, likely in April, July and October. Each of these calls will focus on a specific synergy item. These are proposed to be:

1. **Mapping the production schedule and major activities of global assessments:** To increase potential collaboration across assessments it will be useful for all AGAD participants to have a mapping of the production schedule of major assessment products and the main activities that are proposed by each assessment process in the near to mid-term. Each assessment process Secretariat will be invited to provide relevant information before the call and the full mapping will be discussed during the call.
2. **Terminology and glossaries:** ensuring clear and consistent communication of science is a key goal of all assessment processes. This helps increase understanding of science within the policy community. Although joint glossaries are not likely possible across all the AGAD processes, a central database of accepted definitions could be maintained by AGAD to allow participants to query and select from this source when compiling their assessment products. AGAD participants will be invited to provide access to their current list of accepted definitions and the call will discuss the best way to create the central database.
3. **Modelling and scenarios:** communicating possible futures to decision makers is one of the most challenging tasks of any assessment. Sometimes quantitative modelling and scenario analysis is possible and other times only narrative analysis is possible. Different efforts have been made to increase synergies across assessments, but this still remains a challenging area. AGAD participants will be invited to present on their current modelling and scenario approach and the group will discuss possible additional efforts to create synergies.

Contributions to the UNEP@50 initiative

Much of the science-policy work that UNEP has undertaken over the past 50 years has focused on supporting Member States in various different multilateral environmental processes. Since environmental problems are usually problems of collective action, a sound, scientific understanding of the environmental challenges we face is needed to encourage collective action to solve these problems. The UNEP@50 effort will provide an overview of the evolution of the science-policy interface over the last 50 years, looking at its successes and challenges. In addition, a forward-looking assessment will look

at how the science-policy interface on the environment should evolve over the next 30-50 years to best serve Member States and help achieve the ambitious environmental objectives they are setting.

AGAD participants, acting in their individual professional capacity, will be invited to provide support in two main areas:

1. **Validating the historical narrative produced by UNEP and its partners.** UNEP intends to build a team of expert authors from different assessment processes to compile the historical narrative, but a thorough review of this information will be needed to ensure factual accuracy. AGAD participants would be invited, in their individual professional capacity, through normal peer review processes and a final fact check review, to help ensure the accuracy of the historical perspectives report.
2. **Visions and pathways for the science-policy interface:** Given the challenges in achieving broad environmental goals over the last 50 years, there are certainly gaps in the science-policy interface that could be filled. AGAD participants have extensive experience and history to draw from to develop a forward-looking perspective for UNEP's science-policy interface. Through a series of structured interviews and workshops, AGAD participants may be asked to participate, acting in their individual professional capacity, would be invited to provide their views and thoughts on how the science-policy interface could be improved in the future.

More detailed proposals for each of these work items would be developed so that AGAD participants could better understand the time and intellectual commitment that is being requested. AGAD participants would contribute their expertise in their individual professional capacity and would not be representing the views of their different organizations, governing bodies or management structures. Input on each of these items would be invited from both the Secretariats of the assessment processes and, through the secretariat, the co-chairs of each assessment processes or other relevant body, as appropriate. Depending on the governance structure of each assessment process, additional experts may be invited to contribute to the discussions and reviews.

Conclusion

The work of the Ad hoc Global Assessment Dialogue (AGAD) was reinitiated in October 2020 with the goal of achieving greater synergy and collaboration across different global assessment processes. Since each global assessment process has its own governance structure, the discussions of the AGAD are informal in nature and non-binding on the organizations, governing bodies or management structures of any of its participants. Individual AGAD participants contribute to the Dialogue in their professional capacities and are not necessarily representing the views of their Secretariats or the Member States who participate in their governance structures.

The work of the AGAD has been encouraged by Member States through various resolutions and the inherent expertise of the participants in the Dialogue can assist other assessment processes in a number of areas. For this reason AGAD participants are invited to periodically engage in collaborative work that could eventually benefit other assessment processes. For 2021 it is proposed that the two main areas of focus will be (1) continuing to identify and build synergies and areas of collaboration, and (2) ensuring that the science-policy input (the UNEP@50 report) to the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Conference on the Human Environment and the creation of UNEP is legitimate, credible and salient to the proceedings.

Annex 1: AGAD participants as of March, 2021

Assessment process	Name	Role and Affiliation
IRP	Maria Jose Baptista	Programme Officer/UNEP
	Merlyn Van Voore	Head of Secretariat/UNEP
	Janez Potocnik	Co-chair IRP
	EmmaneLe Locard	Assistant of Merlyn/UNEP
	Julia Okatz	Assistant of Mr. Potocnik
UNCCD/GLO	Sasha Alexander	Head, Global Land Outlook
	Barron Joseph Orr	Lead Scientist UNCCD
	Nichole Barger	UNCCD Science Policy interface co-chair
	Graham von Maltitz	
	Anna Luise	
GWMO II	Daniel Ternald	Coordinator of the GWMO
	Keith Alverson	Director of IETC/UNEP
	Aditi Ramola	ISWA - co-chair
IPBES	Simone Schiele	Head of Work Programme/IPBES
	Anne Larigauderie	Executive Secretary/IPBES
	Luthando Dziba	IPBES MEP co-chair
	Marie Stenseke	IPBES MEP co-chair
IPCC	Ermira Fida	Deputy Secretary/IPCC
	Joelle Fernandez	Administrative Assistant & Assistant to the Secretary
	Valérie Masson-Delmotte	Co-Chair of Working Group I
	Panmao Zhai	Co-Chair of Working Group I
	Hans-Otto Pörtner	Co-Chair of Working Group II
	Debra Roberts	Co-Chair of Working Group II
	Priyadarshi Shukla	Co-Chair of Working Group III
	Jim Skea	Co-Chair of Working Group III
	Kiyoto Tanabe	Co-Chair of the TFI
	Eduardo Calvo	Co-Chair of the TFI
GBO	David Cooper	Deputy Executive Secretary/CBD
	Jillian Campbell	Head, Biodiversity Indicators
GCO II	Monika MacDevette	Director, Chemicals and Waste Division/UNEP
	Tessa Goverse	Subprogramme Coordinator, Chemicals and Waste/UNEP
SYR	Edoardo Zandri	Synthesis Report Secretariat/ UNEP
	Rachel Kosse	Synthesis Report Secretariat/ UNEP
	Brigitte Ohanga	Synthesis Report Secretariat/ UNEP
	Bob Watson	Chair, Scientific Advisory Panel
	Ivar Baste	Coordinating Lead Author
GSDR	Stephanie Rambler	Coordinator of GSDR
	Imme Scholz	GSDR 2023 co-chair
	John Agard	GSDR 2023 co-chair
Human Development Report	Heriberto Tapia	Senior Researcher/Policy Specialist/UNDP
	Pedro Conceicao	Director, Human Development Report Office, UNDP
UNEP Chief Scientist	Andrea Hinwood	Chief Scientist, UNEP
	Geoffrey Oloo	Assistant to the Chief Scientist, UNEP
UNEP Science Division	Jian Liu	Director, UNEP Science Division
	Jing Zheng	Office of the Director of UNEP Science Division
	Harsha Dave	Office of the Director of UNEP Science Division
Global Environment Outlook	Pierre Boileau	Head, Global Environment Outlook
	Adele Roccatò	AGAD Coordinator, UNEP

Annex 2: Terms of Reference for the Ad hoc Global Assessment Dialogue Participants

Participants of the Ad hoc Global Assessment Dialogue will be invited to:

- Participate in the Dialogue as individual experts, who represent their own views and not those of their respective organizations, governing bodies or management structures and affiliations;
- Participate in dialogues calls on a quarterly basis focusing on specific synergy items, as specified in the work plan and provide comments or overview presentations of their efforts in each of these areas to see if potential synergies can be found and acted upon;
- Explore potential areas of synergy across assessments, as determined through the agreed AGAD work plan and as requested by Member States;
- Where appropriate, review and provide comments and suggestions to the science-policy input to the commemoration of the 1972 Conference on the Human Environment and the creation of UNEP in that same year (EA.4/RES.23);
- Develop communication products that can inform Member States on the progress of the Dialogue;
- Seek out opportunities to collaborate on outreach activities related to the findings of the various assessments and the outputs of the Dialogue;
- Seek out opportunities to share lessons learned with other AGAD participants, when conducting assessments.

The work of the Ad hoc Global Assessment Dialogue is coordinated by the Science Division of UNEP under the auspices of UNEP's Chief Scientist. Participants include the co-chairs of each of the assessment processes, supported by their respective Secretariat's. The decisions of the participants in the Dialogue will be made on a consensus basis,

The terms of reference for the Ad hoc Global Assessment Dialogue will be periodically reviewed to ensure it is still relevant.

Annex 3: UNEA resolutions that are relevant to the work of the AGAD

Resolution EA.4/1 – *“Requests the Executive Director to take into account the outcomes of the analysis provided by the International Resource Panel, the Global Environment Outlook, the Global Chemicals Outlook, the Global Waste Management Outlook, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and other global assessments **when carrying out activities under the programme of work and when implementing earlier resolutions** related to the broader nexus of production and the efficient use and sustainable management of resources”*

Resolution EA.4/4 – *“Encourages Member States, partners, the private sector, research institutions, academia and other stakeholders to **intensify research and development and knowledge-sharing for the uptake, upscaling and replication of sustainable business practices** moving towards sustainable consumption and production, such as resource efficiency, the circular economy, sustainable materials management and the “3Rs” (reduce, reuse, recycle) “*

Resolution EA.4/5 – Requests the Executive Director to **prepare a compilation of best practice**, building on the work of the United Nations regional commissions and other United Nations bodies, **drawing on existing initiatives and identifying knowledge gaps**, to assist Member States in promoting and strengthening the sustainability of their infrastructure, and to submit that report to the Environment Assembly at its fifth session.

Resolution EA.4/6 - **Promoting collaboration among relevant scientific mechanisms to facilitate access to scientific data and information in order to disseminate sound scientific practices**, such as guidelines for the sampling and analysis of marine macroplastics and microplastics, and to improve the policy relevance of research;

Annex 4: Substantive recommendations from UNGA resolution 73/333

*“invite the **scientific community to further its work on interconnected and cross-cutting issues by sharing information among the leading scientific, technical and technological bodies** that inform the work of multilateral environmental agreements and environmental processes, and encourage the scientific, technical and technological bodies to strengthen cooperation among themselves.”*

*“invite the governing bodies of the multilateral environmental agreements, while preserving their independence and respective mandates, to **increase their efforts to promote policy coherence across environmental instruments at all relevant levels** and to consider identifying and addressing implementation challenges in their regimes, with a view to strengthening implementation at the national and international levels;”*

*“Invite the governing bodies and secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements to **enhance cooperation and collaboration among themselves within the scope of their respective mandates**, as well as between themselves and the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Environment Assembly, building on work already done”*