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Item 5 of the provisional agenda\*\*

**International environmental policy and governance issues**

**Progress in the implementation of resolution 4/23 on keeping  
the world environment under review: feasibility study on the  
financial, administrative and collaborative consequences of the  
recommended options and approaches for the future of the  
Global Environment Outlook**

**Note by the secretariat**

1. Following up on its interim report to the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme at the online meeting of its fifth session (UNEP/EA.5/24), the steering committee on the future of the Global Environment Outlook conducted a feasibility study on the financial, administrative and collaborative consequences of the options for the future of the Global Environment Outlook proposed in the interim report.
2. The feasibility study is an extension of the steering committee's work under Environment Assembly resolution 4/23, entitled "Keeping the world environment under review: enhancing the United Nations Environment Programme science-policy interface and endorsement of the Global Environment Outlook". It is aimed at making further progress in the implementation of the resolutions and decisions of the Environment Assembly, including on the future of the Global Environment Outlook, in accordance with the outcome message of the online meeting of the fifth session of the Assembly (UNEP/EA.5/25, annex II).
3. The feasibility study prepared by the steering committee, which is set out in the annex to the present note, examines the costs and administrative complexities associated with the governance and implementation alternatives and the assessment options identified by the steering committee. The annex is presented without formal editing.

\* In accordance with the decisions taken by the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its meeting held on 8 October 2020 and by the bureaux of the United Nations Environment Assembly and the Committee of Permanent Representatives at their joint meeting held on 1 December 2020, the fifth session of the Environment Assembly was adjourned on 23 February 2021 and is expected to resume as an in-person meeting in February 2022.

\*\* UNEP/EA.5/1/Rev.2.

## Annex

# Feasibility study on the financial, administrative and collaborative consequences of the options for the future of the Global Environment Outlook\*

## 1 Overview and context

The United Nations Environment Assembly initiated, in its Resolution 4/23<sup>1</sup>, an intergovernmental consultative process to propose options for the future of the Global Environment Outlook (GEO). An options document which includes an assessment of the impact of the various options and recommendations, is to be submitted to the Environment Assembly for consideration at its resumed fifth session (UNEA 5.2) in 2022 to inform a decision on the future form and function of GEO.

The United Nations Environment Programme mandate and the place of GEO in the science-policy interface is summarised in part II of the Future of GEO Steering Committees interim report<sup>2</sup> to UNEA 5.1 and its accompanying background document<sup>3</sup>. The analysis of the results from the consultation in 2020 annexed to the interim report showed that **the continuation of the GEO process was favoured by an overwhelming majority of Member States (114 out of 116 responses, or 98%), assessment experts (96%) and stakeholders (94%).**

This feasibility study builds on and complements the interim report and accompanying background document. It will serve as an input to the final report on options and approaches for the future of GEO by the Steering Committee to UNEA 5.2.

The study is structured as follows. Firstly, it provides an overall approach to and criteria for the design of the future GEO within UNEP's mandate. The identification of options and recommendations has been informed by 7 key criteria presented in part III of the interim report and set out in section 2.3 below. This is followed by considerations on the need for procedures agreed by Member States for the intergovernmental expert led GEO assessment process (section 2). Next, the approach for assessing the financial, administrative and collaborative functions of future GEOs is set out (section 3) and applied to the governance and implementation structure alternatives proposed by the Steering Committee (section 4). This is followed by an assessment of the financial and administrative consequences of the three different assessment options and the capacity-building, knowledge generation and policy-making support services (section 5). Finally, the feasibility study briefly explores any synergies, pros and cons associated with the different options and alternatives (section 6).

## 2 Overall approaches to the design of the future GEO as proposed by the Steering Committee

Keeping the world environmental situation under review is a key mandate for UNEP. Doing this effectively and efficiently in today's context requires a well-defined approach and process supported by a well-designed governance and implementation structure. Such an approach needs to be based on a clear objective. The Steering Committee suggested the following **objective for the GEO process** in its interim report (with minor edits):

*The objective of GEO is to keep the world environmental situation and outlook under review in order to periodically inform and support action by UN Member States, stakeholders and other actors, while strengthening UNEP's science-policy interface.*

After significant deliberations, both in the preparation of the interim report and this feasibility study, the Steering Committee has developed a **schematic of the overall GEO process and how the proposed alternatives, options and suggestions fit within it** (Figure 1). The schematic presents the GEO as an intergovernmental and expert-led assessment process under the purview of UNEA situated in UNEP's science policy interface. The GEO process draws from an evidence base that includes the following elements:

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\* The annex has not been formally edited.

<sup>1</sup> Available at <http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/28486/K1901170.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>

<sup>2</sup> Available at <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/34993/Doc24K2002774-2.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

<sup>3</sup> Available at <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/34954/INF18%20UNEP-%20UNEA5%20INF18.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

- a) The Global Environmental Data Strategy requested under Resolution 4/23, which is still in development, but which is expected to have a significant supporting function for assessments.
- b) The World Environment Situation Room, which has been a key supporting element for assessment processes in the past but is expected to expand and deepen its support for assessments in the future.
- c) Elements of knowledge generation within and outside UNEP, including the Global Environmental Monitoring System (GEMS), the SDG indicators and statistics work, as well as key partnerships with the GLOBE and GRID networks.
- d) The collection of UNEP-led and UN-led assessments that collate, analyse and assess specific environmental issues, such as climate change (IPCC), biodiversity (IPBES), resource extraction and use (IRP) and chemicals and waste management.
- e) The body of peer reviewed literature on the environment which helps fill gaps and provide the latest scientific understanding on many of these issues.

The schematic reflects the proposal that the GEO process takes place in accordance with agreed procedures as further detailed and analysed in section 2.2 below. The schematic presents two alternative approaches to governance, budgeting and implementation structures that are further described and analysed in section 4.1 below.

Finally, the schematic presents options and suggestions related to the implementation of GEOs mutually supportive functions which comprise the assessment function and the provision of support to agreed needs in capacity building, knowledge generation and policy making. A new development compared to the interim report is that the service-oriented approach (Option 3 in the interim report) is no longer considered as an independent option, but as a set of enabling and enhancing service-oriented suggestions that would go along with all options under the assessment function. It should be noted that the assessment options are not necessarily mutually exclusive either, and that they could be conducted individually or in combination. The Steering Committee considered that this reconfigured approach better reflected the current and envisaged future practices in the GEO assessment process. This change from the previous interim report findings is consistent with UNEP’s science-policy interface and with the science-policy interfaces of other assessment processes (e.g. IPBES, IPCC). The options and suggestions are further described and analysed in section 5 below.

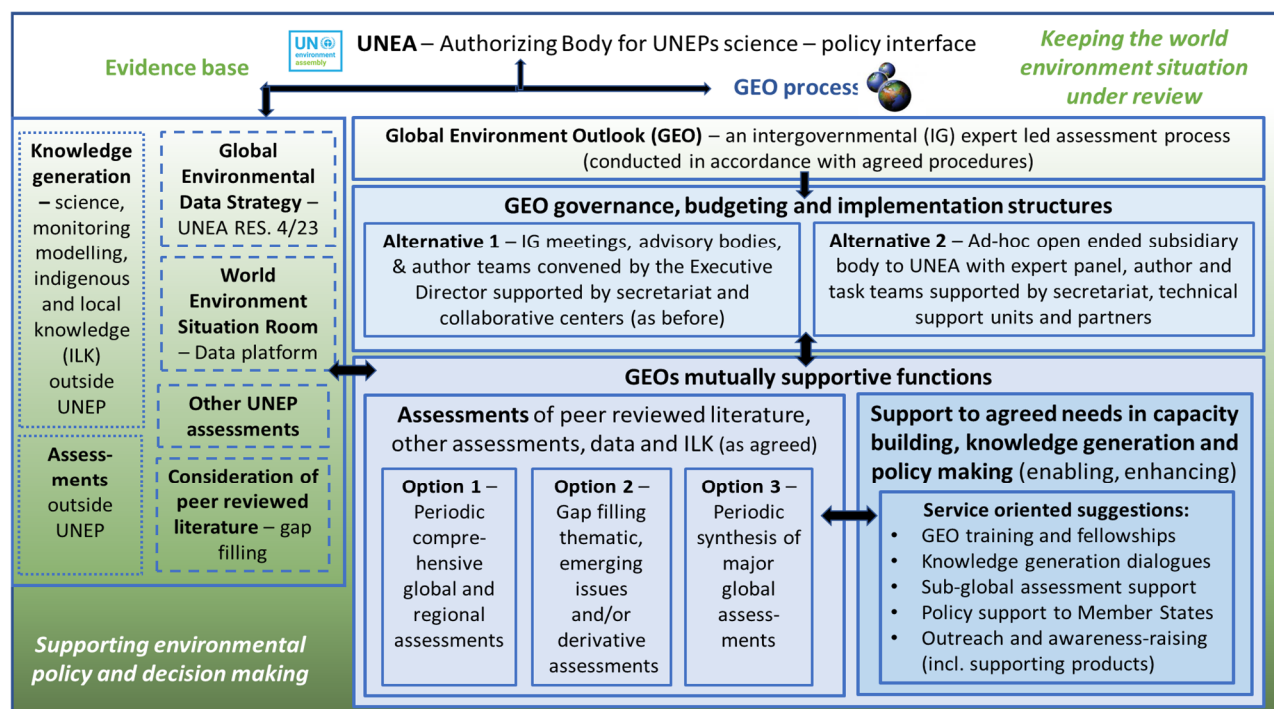


Figure 1: Schematic of alternatives, options and suggestions for the future of GEO as an intergovernmental and expert-led assessment process under the purview of UNEA situated in the science policy interface.

## 2.1 Criteria for analysing the design of the future GEO

The identification of options and recommendations has been informed by 7 key criteria presented in part III of the interim report and set out below:

- (a) Mandate consistency and comparability across editions of GEO.
- (b) The relevance (or salience) of GEO in terms of responding flexibly to the needs of Member States and stakeholders, for example on improving the effectiveness of environmental policy.

- (c) The legitimacy of GEO as an assessment accepted by Member States and stakeholders as authoritative, through unbiased, representative and defensible procedures that are balanced with regard to geography and gender.
- (d) The credibility of GEO as a robust and rigorous assessment based on scientifically accepted methods and analysis from multiple sources.
- (e) The accessibility of GEO, meaning that its outputs and the underlying knowledge base and environmental data are accessible by Member States and stakeholders to support policymaking, decision-making and strengthening of the science-policy interface.
- (f) The added value of GEO, in terms of ensuring that it responds to the UNEP mandate, and that it avoids duplication with other global assessment processes, while addressing interlinkages and cross-cutting issues and identifying gaps and emerging issues.
- (g) The overall feasibility of GEO, including continuity of operations for the periodic production of the report, in terms of the implications for administrative, financial and collaborative structures and other initiatives in the UNEP science-policy interface.

## 2.2 Development of procedures agreed by Member States for the intergovernmental and expert led GEO assessment process

The Steering Committee noted in its interim report that the United Nations Environment Assembly is responsible for overall oversight and governance of the GEO process and can establish the procedures and subsidiary governance and implementation structures that it deems necessary. As part of the GEO process, UNEA may wish to establish a flexible set of procedures, agreed upon by Member States, based on experience from past GEO processes and other relevant processes. The development of such procedures was generally favoured in the 2020 consultation.

*The objectives of such a set of procedures would be to ensure relevance, legitimacy and credibility in the GEO process and to balance its different mutually supportive functions, taking full advantage of the opportunities of digital meetings, work platforms and technologies.*

The procedures would be tailored to the governance and implementation structure and the options and approaches for GEO chosen by UNEA. The elements of the GEO process to be considered in the procedures are set out in Table 1 but may vary somewhat depending on the approach chosen by UNEA.

*Table 1: Key steps in the intergovernmental expert led GEO assessment process*

<p>(a) <b>Planning and budgeting.</b> The GEO process would identify and prioritize global environmental issues of concern to be addressed on the basis of input provided by Member States and stakeholders. This would inform the development of a rolling work plan and budget adopted (endorsed paragraph by paragraph) by Member States for assessments and support to agreed needs in capacity building, knowledge generation and policy making.</p>
<p>(b) <b>Scoping of assessments</b> would be initiated by Member States based on a short pre-scoping document. The detailed scoping document would be drafted by independent experts and be adopted (endorsed paragraph by paragraph) by Member States in dialogue with experts and in the presence of stakeholder observers. The document would determine the timing, the geographic and thematic coverage, user needs, target audience, the outline, evidence base, and associated functions (capacity building, knowledge generation and policy support), the size of the author team and the detailed budget. The scoping document would serve as a basis for a decision by Member States on whether to initiate the assessment or not.</p>
<p>(c) <b>The nomination and selection of experts.</b> Geographic, disciplinary and gender balanced assessment author teams and expert task forces for other deliverables are selected through a credible process, preferably by a scientific oversight body. Experts would be selected on the basis of their merits from within nominations from Member States and relevant stakeholders.</p>
<p>(d) <b>Assessments of the state of knowledge</b> are undertaken by a gender, disciplinary and geographically balanced team of independent experts acting in their personal capacity. They undertake a collective and iterative review, synthesis, analysis, critical evaluation and judgement of policy relevance and confidence levels of available knowledge from peer reviewed scientific literature and other relevant knowledge sources and knowledge systems. Assessment drafts are subject to review, consultation and clearance as outlined below. They are published as scientifically referenced chapters of the full reports under the name of the authors. They consist of several chapters, which present the state of knowledge accompanied by confidence level statements and a Summary for Policymakers (SPM). The SPM highlights key messages and findings with confidence statements and references to the analysis in the relevant chapters of the full report.</p>
<p>(e) <b>Review and consultations.</b> The draft assessment chapters would normally be subject to two rounds of expert peer review and the Summary for Policymakers (SPM) subject to one such round. Both documents would be subject</p>

to one round of review by governments and stakeholders. The review of the SPM may also involve consultations with Member States and stakeholder observers.

(f) **Avoidance of conflicts of interest and treatment of errors.** Measures would ensure the disclosure and avoidance of “conflict of interest” whereby an individual could: either significantly impair the individual’s objectivity in carrying out his or her duties and responsibilities for the GEO; or create an unfair advantage for any person or organization. Measures would also ensure that possible errors in assessment reports are investigated and rectified in a timely manner.

(g) **Clearance processes** The Summary for Policymakers would be developed by a subset of authors of the assessment, published in their name and be *approved* by Member States (endorsed line by line) in dialogue with these authors and in the presence of stakeholder observers. The full assessment report would be *accepted* by Member States (it signifies that the material has not been subjected to detailed discussion and agreement by Member States, but that it nevertheless presents a comprehensive and balanced view of the subject matter). Other deliverables such as full synthesis reports, strategies, plans, guides and tools would be cleared through *adoption* by Member States (endorsed paragraph by paragraph).

The recommended key steps of the GEO process in Table 1 are contingent upon the establishment of agreed unbiased, representative and defensible procedures that are balanced with regard to geography and gender. The steps are key to meeting the criteria for the design of the future GEO in the following manner:

- a) **Mandate consistency:** the steps in the process would be similar to earlier comprehensive GEO assessments ensuring consistency and comparability across editions of GEO and be fully consistent with the mandate of UNEA.
- f) **The relevance (or salience) of GEO:** the planning and budgeting, the scoping, the review and the clearance steps would ensure the relevance (or salience) of GEO in terms of responding flexibly to the needs of Member States and stakeholders, for example on improving the effectiveness of environmental policy.
- g) **The legitimacy of GEO:** the planning and budgeting, the scoping, the review and the clearance steps would ensure that the GEO assessment is accepted by Member States and stakeholders as authoritative.
- h) **The credibility of GEO:** the scoping, selection of experts, and assessment steps would ensure that the GEO is a robust and rigorous assessment based on scientifically accepted methods and analysis from multiple sources.
- i) **The accessibility of GEO:** the steps in the process would ensure that the GEO outputs and the underlying knowledge base and environmental data are accessible by Member States and stakeholders to support policymaking, decision-making and strengthening of the science-policy interface.
- j) **The added value of GEO:** the steps in the process would help ensure that the GEO responds to the UNEP mandate, avoids duplication with other global assessment processes, while addressing interlinkages, cross-cutting issues and identifying gaps.
- k) **The overall feasibility of GEO:** the steps in the process would ensure the continuity of operations for the periodic production of the report and collaboration with other structures and initiatives in the UNEP science-policy interface. The process is key for long term planning and ensuring the predictability in funding for the GEO process which is critically important for stability of the process and vital for ensuring the above-mentioned returns.

UNEA may wish to initiate and frame a process for the development of such procedures. The Steering Committee has compiled an initial draft of a possible set of intergovernmental expert-led scientific assessment procedures for the future GEO. The draft is based on current GEO practices, agreed procedures in IPCC and IPBES and the proposed approaches for the design of the future GEO process. The procedural philosophy, structure, and key elements are consistent with those of IPCC and IPBES, in anticipation of facilitating future cooperation between the three assessment processes.

The existing draft could be used as a basis for further consideration once amended to reflect UNEA’s decision on the future form and function of GEO. Further development of the draft would require detailed consideration by representatives of Member States with expertise in these matters, including review and consideration by a dedicated intergovernmental meeting.

The financial, administrative and collaborative consequences of the preparation of draft procedures for consideration by Member States is considered moderate, given that a first draft is available which builds on existing intergovernmental practices and agreed language. However, as there would be costs associated with a review and associated intergovernmental meetings of Member State experts for the consideration of the procedures. As such, UNEA may wish to task the governance and implementation structure of a future GEO with their further development. Such considerations could be undertaken alongside other tasks and could therefore be incorporated into costs associated with the governance and implementation structure (see section 4 below). Member states may need one or two meetings to

reach agreement on the GEO procedures. This could potentially delay the next GEO-cycle unless Member States decided to proceed with the process for instance guided by a preliminary version of the procedures in the interim.

### **3 Approach to assessing the financial, administrative and collaborative consequences of the approaches for the design of GEO**

#### **3.1 Investments and return**

Assessing the overall feasibility of GEO (Criterion (g) in section 2.3) requires that the different alternatives, options and suggestions for the Future of GEO are assessed for their administrative, financial and collaborative consequences, including potential benefits and implications. The Future of GEO Steering Committee has reviewed different approaches for costing and analysing these elements and has drawn on the experience of the recent GEO-6 assessment process. The approach used in the feasibility study is set out below.

Typically, the largest cost elements for producing intergovernmental expert led assessments are:

- a) salaries for Secretariat staff;
- b) disbursements to cover intergovernmental and expert meetings; and
- c) costs for substantive and expert support during the assessment process.

It should be noted that the above investments typically result in the following immediate types of administrative benefits and returns:

- a) Investments in the expert process generate pro-bono in-kind contributions from a large number of experts, government representatives and potentially also from partner institutions contributing directly to the assessment process. These in-kind contributions have been estimated to be of the same order of magnitude as the direct costs of the assessment process, providing an immediate return on the initial investments.
- b) Investments in ensuring credibility, relevance and legitimacy in the GEO processes enhances dialogues among science and policy communities on issues vital for the substantive and political role UNEA is playing as the authoritative voice for the world's environment. This return is critical for UNEAs standing in the international environmental governance architecture.
- c) Investments in policy relevant assessment products and processes promote knowledge generation and support actions for the transition to a sustainable future. Such a transition is critically dependent on enhanced knowledge and understanding of how society can restore and respect Earth's finite capacity to support human well-being.

#### **3.2 Secretariat staff salaries**

The Secretariat functions are key to the successful implementation of the GEO process as set out in section 4. Methodologies for costing of Secretariat staff salaries are well established and are used in UNEP's budgeting processes when establishing projects for activities such as GEO. The critical factor affecting costs is the size of the core Secretariat administering the GEO process and the staff time contributions from subject matter experts outside the core Secretariat. Estimates of staff costs have been based on the amounts of staff salaries in the current GEO project as it pertains to the GEO core team and other experts.

#### **3.3 Meeting costs**

In person and virtual intergovernmental and expert meetings are needed during the assessment process for dialogues, collective analysis and to meet key milestones and deliverables set out in the GEO process (see Table 1). Since most outside experts and Member State representatives contribute to the assessment process on a pro-bono basis, in-person meetings (rather than contracted dates for deliverables) help establish sign-posts in the assessment process when certain steps in the process must be completed.

Virtual meetings have proven very useful during the pandemic and may in future replace some in-person meetings leading to significant cost and time savings. However, in-person meetings are still important for the negotiation of complex issues among Member States. They are also essential in the expert stage of the assessment. They enable dedicated time to work on assessment drafts, collaboration with other authors, joint meetings and informal interactions among authors and experts within and across chapters. This enhances the coherence of the overall narrative across draft chapters and summaries and also provides a key opportunity for the Secretariat to communicate and obtain feedback on key administrative and process details related to the assessment process.

The key cost elements for meetings, which have been largely standardized by the Secretariat, and are well understood, include:

- a) Staff time for meeting preparations including the preparation and translation of documentation and time spent on travel preparations for the meeting participants (these elements are typically captured in the overall staff costs for the project).
- b) Travel and accommodation for participants from eligible countries to intergovernmental meetings in accordance with UNEP practices and for all experts not able to fund themselves to author and task force meetings.
- c) Rental costs of venue, hospitality (e.g. tea and coffee), conference services and interpretation.
- d) Preparing outreach materials and conducting outreach events associated with the meeting.
- e) Secretariat travel and accommodation to provide support during the meeting.
- f) Travel, accommodation and staff costs for technical support unit or collaborating centre staff participation in the meeting (collaborative partners).

### 3.4 Substantive and expert support during the assessment process

A unique feature of the GEO process compared to other intergovernmental expert lead assessment processes is the recognition that, although all experts participating in the process contribute on a ‘pro-bono’ basis, there are often unanticipated costs associated with the participation of experts who take on a coordination role within the drafting process. These coordination roles include co-chairing of key decision-making bodies and the management of the drafting process for individual chapters of the assessment report. For these experts, a small total stipend (between 3 and 10 thousand dollars depending on role assumed by the expert) is provided to cover any of these unanticipated costs. This helps authors and experts:

- Justify their participation in the assessment process with their senior management.
- Defer any costs associated with their time away from their family or office.
- Defer the costs of any supporting staff’s time to ensure that key deliverables are produced on time.

In other assessments, such unanticipated costs for coordinating experts and travel costs for experts from developed countries have been met by the country or the institution the expert is working for, or by the experts themselves. This approach has been known to occasionally limit participation of experts. The GEO approach helps reduce such obstacles to recruiting top expertise and ensuring geographical and gender balance.

In addition to these stipends, the Secretariat will within the GEO project plan often negotiate, fund and enter into small agreements with specific collaborating centres to ensure timely and expert support on key issues covered in the assessment. This expertise is often obtained to complement the Secretariat and help support author teams process wise and analytically through providing access to data and analysis tools that might not be readily available to experts in their institutions. Similarly, IPBES and IPCC use Technical Support Units (TSUs) that are provided by contracted partner institutions to provide such support. TSUs are typically selected by the Secretariat based on offers from Member States and institutions and are sometimes provided partly or fully pro-bono.

## 4 Financial and administrative consequences of the approaches for governance and implementation structure proposed in the interim report

The key steps in the GEO process necessitate a clear governance and implementation structure geared towards implementing agreed procedures. In its interim report, the Steering Committee identified the following alternative governance approaches:

### *Alternative 1: Intergovernmental meetings and advisory bodies convened by the Executive Director of UNEP*

The Environment Assembly may wish to request the Executive Director of UNEP to continue to convene open-ended intergovernmental (IG) and multi-stakeholder consultative meetings and establish advisory bodies for the GEO process, similar to those established for the sixth instalment (GEO-6). The open-ended intergovernmental consultative meetings with stakeholder observers would be akin to the meetings convened for the fourth, fifth and sixth instalments of GEO<sup>4</sup>. The meetings would work in accordance with the UNEA rules of procedure, roles and responsibilities and be responsible for the GEO procedures and the intergovernmental tasks set out in Table 1. The Executive Director would also establish a high-level intergovernmental and stakeholder advisory group as the GEO oversight and steering group, and a science advisory panel, akin to those set up for the sixth instalment<sup>5</sup>. Both bodies would be composed with the view of ensuring disciplinary, gender and geographical balance across the five United Nations regions. They would work together to provide oversight of the implementation of the GEO process set out in Table 1, in accordance with established procedures.

<sup>4</sup> Composed of 25 to 30 high-level government representatives from all six UNEP regions, as well as 8 to 10 key stakeholders.

<sup>5</sup> Composed of 25 distinguished scientists



**Alternative 2. A standing ad-hoc open-ended subsidiary body for GEO under UNEA**

The Environment Assembly may wish to establish a standing ad-hoc open-ended subsidiary body of Member States and accredited observers that would be responsible for overseeing the role of GEO in the UNEP science-policy interface. The body would be acting as a subsidiary decision-making body of UNEA in accordance with the UNEA rules of procedure and be responsible for the GEO procedures and the intergovernmental tasks set out in Table 1. The body would subsume the functions performed by the open-ended intergovernmental consultative meetings convened for the fourth, fifth and sixth instalments of GEO as reflected in alternative 1.

The subsidiary body would elect its officers from each region that would constitute its executive arm which in addition, could also have representatives from among stakeholders. The subsidiary body would also establish a multidisciplinary expert panel that could consist of a limited number of independent experts from each region tasked with providing scientific oversight. Both the executive arm and the panel would be composed with the view of ensuring disciplinary, gender and geographical balance across the five United Nations regions. The subsidiary body's executive arm and the expert panel would work together to provide oversight over the implementation of the GEO process set out in Table 1, in accordance with established procedures. The executive arm and the expert panel would undertake roles similar to the ones of the high-level intergovernmental and stakeholder advisory group and the science advisory panel of the sixth GEO. A possible set of terms of reference for such a subsidiary body with the responsibilities of its officers and expert panel members and guidance for their selection are set out in Annex 1 to this document. The Annex could be used as a resource for a resolution by UNEA should it decide to establish a subsidiary body for GEO.

Both alternatives would be supported by a *Secretariat*. UNEP's Executive Director would provide the Secretariat for future GEO processes as part of UNEP's science-policy interface. The Secretariat would provide the technical support needed for the governance and implementation structures that would be set out in the GEO procedures (if developed), including day to day management and administration of processes, budgets and funds needed for the implementation of the GEO procedures.

Both approaches would be key to implementing the procedures and achieving the criteria set out in section 2.1 above. Alternative 2 may, as a subsidiary body of UNEA, have a higher standing than a consultative meeting called by the UNEP Executive Director and therefore better fulfil criterion (c) on legitimacy. A higher standing may also attract more expertise, participation and funding, which would give alternative 2 advantages over alternative 1 regarding the criteria d) credibility, b) relevance and f) overall feasibility. Alternative 2 may furthermore, as a standing body, offer more continuity than alternative 1 and therefore better meet criterion a) on mandate consistency and comparability.

The two alternative approaches both involve the use of intergovernmental and stakeholder meetings in combination with expert meetings, and therefore would be quite similar in terms of financial consequences (see Table 2). Costs would include supporting meeting preparations (see section 2 above). The costs of the operation of both approaches would depend on the size and frequency of meetings and the financial and administrative consequences of options related to the scope, utility and timing of assessments (considered below in section 5). While the cost elements for the two approaches are the same, alternative 2 may attract more participants and may therefore prove more costly. Member states and partners may also opt to host meetings and contribute to reducing costs.

*Table 2: Costing estimates of Governance Alternatives 1 and 2*

Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Key Deliverables	cost element description	Average cost /yr	total cost	notes
<b>Intergovernmental oversight (common to all options)</b>						
Intergovernmental and stakeholder involvement (governance alternative 1 and 2)	3 year process	<b>Objectives/outputs:</b> Appointment of officers for the executive/advisory arm and expert panel and clearance of: GEO procedures; a rolling plan; scope of assessment(s); budget for assessments and other deliverables and line approval of SPM(s) as well as managerial oversight in production	2 meetings (at 4 days) of its executive/advisory (25 members) arm (73,800)	147,600	442,800	Based on scenario similar to GEO-6
<b>Scientific oversight (common to all options)</b>						
Expert advice and scientific oversight	3 year process	<b>Objectives/outputs:</b> Selection of authors and reviewers for the assessment and expert for other deliverables, scientific oversight and advice in the production process	1 expert meeting (4 days) (25-30 members) (124,600)	124,600	373,800	Based on scenario similar to GEO-6



Both alternatives would, in addition, make use of all or some of the following implementation structures (whose financial and administrative implications are considered in section 5 below):

- a) *Author Teams* of independent experts for undertaking time-bound assessment processes in accordance with the approved scope (design). Teams will normally consist of one or more co-chairs, a number of coordinating lead authors, lead authors, and contributing authors, review editors and reviewers.
- b) *Task Forces* to guide the development and implementation of methodologies and the undertaking of functions other than assessments, such as capacity building.
- c) *Collaborative centres and/or Technical Support Units (TSU)* provided by partner institutions outside UNEP to support specified time-bound author teams or expert driven tasks. TSUs could be supported financially by Member States but work under supervision by the UNEP Secretariat. TSUs would provide in-kind support to the assessment process but could also receive agreed financial support from other sources.

## 5 Financial and administrative consequences of the future of GEO assessment options and suggestions for support services

The analysis by the Steering Committee and broad consultation process found that issues to be considered in the scope of GEO assessments could include:

- a) analysis of environmental status and trends,
- b) including projected environmental changes; progress towards internationally agreed environmental goals and targets;
- c) current and projected risks to human well-being from environmental change;
- d) impact of environmental change on the implementation of the SDGs;
- e) interlinkages across scales and geographic regions;
- f) policy gaps for meeting internationally agreed environmental goals;
- g) effectiveness of policy responses in differing developmental contexts;
- h) potentially successful policy approaches with examples of how scarce resources can be mobilized; and
- i) actions and policy options needed in the transformation to a sustainable future.

More specifically, the GEO assessments could provide input to UNEA, the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, and the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR), Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEA), relevant regional bodies, individual Member States and society at large. The assessments could analyse and integrate evidence from existing science, data and knowledge, and findings from relevant assessments, including information from indigenous and local knowledge systems, needed to address the environmental issues of concern.

The exact coverage of the assessments would be decided through the scoping process set out in Table 1. The process would determine the timing, geographic and thematic coverage, user needs, target audience, the outline, evidence base and associated functions (capacity building, knowledge generation and policy support), the size of the team of independent authors and the detailed budget. The scoping would furthermore identify key aspects of an appropriate assessment option like: areas of priority and emerging issues to be targeted to address changing environmental conditions and policy priorities, taking account of other assessment activities and findings, and/or allowing for comparison of the state of knowledge across assessments over time. The assessments would factor in areas of expertise covered by other assessments to avoid duplication of effort. Finally, the scoping would determine the administrative and financial implications of the assessment based on the number of experts involved, the number of meetings to be convened, the use of digital technologies and the Secretariat and technical support needed.

The assessments would then generally follow the process set out in Table 1, including for nomination and selection of authors, preparation and review of assessment drafts and clearance of the Summary for Policymakers. The process is key to ensuring that the assessments are relevant, legitimate, credible and accessible (criteria b, c, d and e) but also contributes to meeting the other criteria for the design of GEO as explained in section 2.2. The three overall assessment options identified below could be undertaken individually or in combination in accordance with an adopted rolling plan and budget.

The estimated costs for the three assessment options are summarized in Table 3 and focuses on the costs related to implementation of the options. It should be noted that the exact cost would be dependent on the exact planning and scoping of each assessment. As all options are intergovernmental and expert-led assessments and would incur the governance costs set out in Table 2 these have not been included. Furthermore, Table 3 does not cover estimations of costs related to the activities for provision of capacity building, knowledge generation and policy support services associated with the assessments. These costs and importance for achieving the criteria for design of GEO are presented in section 5.4 below.

Table 3: Cost estimates for the implementation of the assessment options

Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Key Deliverables	cost element description	Average cost /yr	total assessment costs (USD)	notes
<b>Assessment Option 1</b>						
Comprehensive GEO	3 year process	<b>Objectives/outputs:</b> fully intergovernmental process to produce a global integrated environmental assessment every 4 years, including approved SPM.	1 expert scoping meeting and 4 author meetings, stipends, partnership agreements, software licenses, communications, digital platform, document production, layout and translation	2,681,800	8,042,400	Based on scenario similar to GEO-6
<b>Assessment Option 2</b>						
Thematic GEO	2 year process	<b>Objectives/outputs:</b> fully intergovernmental process to produce a thematic integrated environmental assessment including approved SPM at a frequency to be determined.	1 scoping meeting, 3 author meetings stipends, partnership agreements, software licenses, communications, digital platform, document production, layout and translation	2,570,600	5,141,200	Based on scenario of COVID-19 thematic assessment
<b>Assessment Option 3</b>						
Synthesis GEO	2 year process	<b>Objectives/outputs:</b> fully intergovernmental process to produce a synthesis of major global assessments, including approved SPM at a frequency to be determined.	1 scoping meeting, 2 author meetings stipends, partnership agreements, software licenses, communications, digital platform, document production, layout and translation	2,175,333	4,350,666	Based on scenario of Making Peace with Nature Report

## 5.1 Option 1. Comprehensive global and regional integrated environmental assessments every four years

The Comprehensive global and regional GEO assessment option is characterised as follows:

- (a) **Process:** the assessment would follow all steps in the GEO process as set out in Table 1.
- (b) **Scope:** The scope could in principle address the broad range of issues presented above as pertaining to all assessment options and be undertaken every four years. The global and regional dimensions would be addressed as agreed in the planning and scoping stage of the GEO process either as:
  - (i) A global assessment where the regional aspects are integrated in the analysis.
  - (ii) A global assessment where the regions are assessed in separate chapters or sections as has happened in the past GEO's.
  - (iii) A staggered approach of separate comprehensive regional assessments followed by a comprehensive global assessment as happened in GEO-6.
- (c) **Evidence base:** existing assessments, scientific literature, grey literature, data, models and scenarios, national reports, and indigenous and local knowledge of relevance to the agreed scope.

**Option 1 is distinguished from Option 2** by having a broader scope which addresses environmental issues comprehensively and in an integrated manner and not theme by theme. It is distinguished from Option 3 by addressing regional aspects and not having an evidence base primarily limited to existing assessments.

Option 1 would follow a process which is key to ensuring that the assessments are relevant, legitimate and credible (criteria b, c and d) as explained in section 2.2. Otherwise, Option 1 meets the other **criteria for the design of the future GEO** in the following manner:

a) **Mandate consistency:** the approach would be fully consistent with the mandate of UNEA. The scope and process would be similar to earlier comprehensive GEO assessments, and this would ensure consistency and comparability across editions of GEO.

f) **The added value of GEO:** the process would ensure that the GEO responds to the UNEP mandate, and that it avoids duplication with other global assessment processes, while addressing interlinkages and cross-cutting issues and identifying gaps. The assessment would be well placed to address the interlinkages between environmental challenges and their contributions to reaching the ensemble of integrated and indivisible Sustainable Development Goals. As a comprehensive assessment it has a higher risk than Options 2 and 3 of partially duplicating efforts in other assessments, but the risk could be reduced through careful scoping, implementation, use of authors familiar with other assessments and interaction with other assessment processes.

g) **The overall feasibility of GEO:** the option would ensure the continuity of operations for the periodic production of the report, and in terms of the implications for administrative, financial and collaborative structures and other initiatives in the UNEP science-policy interface. Option 1 would be the most expensive option, but the cost difference amongst options would vary according to the agreed scope and the frequency of assessments. Option 1 could also be combined with the other options as set out in a rolling plan and budget agreed by GEO's governing structure to address the needs of Member States.

## 5.2 Option 2. Focused thematically-based assessments

The thematic GEO assessment option is characterised as follows:

- (a) **Process:** the assessment would follow all steps in the GEO process as set out in Table 1.
- (b) **Scope:** The scope could in principle address thematic issues, specific actors (e.g. youth, cities, business) or methodological aspects of the broad range of generic issues presented above as pertaining to all assessment options. It would address issues not covered by existing intergovernmental assessments. For example, an assessment of the environmental impact of COVID-19 or new emerging issues which may need consideration. Regional aspects would normally be integrated in the global analysis. A thematic assessment may typically take two years.
- (c) **Evidence base:** existing assessments, scientific literature, grey literature, data, models and scenarios, national reports, and indigenous and local knowledge of relevance to the agreed scope.

**Option 2 is distinguished from Option 1 and Option 3** by having a narrower scope which address environmental issues theme by theme and not in such a comprehensive and integrated manner. It is also distinguished from Option 3 by not having an evidence base primarily limited to existing assessments.

Option 2 would follow a process which is key to ensuring that the assessments are relevant, legitimate, credible and accessible (criteria b, c, d, and e) as explained in section 2.2. Otherwise, Option 2 meets the other **criteria for the design of the future GEO** in the following manner:

a) **Mandate consistency:** The approach would be fully consistent with the mandate of UNEA. A number of thematic assessments have been produced under the GEO banner but none of them has been intergovernmental and expert-led assessments. Option 2 would be an addition to the GEO process. Option 2, due to a limited coverage, may address the UNEA mandate somewhat less comprehensively and make GEO less comparable with previous instalments. However, assessments under this option could be planned to complement each other in support of the UNEA mandate.

f) **The added value of GEO:** the process would ensure that the GEO responds to the UNEP mandate, and that it avoids duplication with other global assessment processes, while addressing interlinkages and cross-cutting issues and identifying gaps. The thematic assessments would carry little risk of duplicating other assessments, rather they would add to and complement other assessments.

g) **The overall feasibility of GEO:** the option (especially if it is the sole option implemented) would imply a slightly leaner process and downscaled operation than Option 1 and therefore contribute less to the continuity of operations for the periodic production of the report than Option 1. The option would be less expensive than Option 1, but the cost difference may vary with the agreed scope and the frequency of assessments. Option 2 could also be combined with one of the other options in a rolling plan and budget as thematic assessments could be requested as and when needed.

## 5.3 Option 3. Synthesize the findings of relevant global assessments

The option where GEO periodically synthesizes the findings of relevant assessments is characterised as follows:

- (a) **Process:** the assessment would generally follow all steps in the GEO process as set out in Table 1. In IPBES and IPCC the Summary for Policymakers of a synthesis report is *approved* by Member States (endorsed line by line) and the full synthesis report *adopted* by Member States (endorsed paragraph by paragraph) as it is normally a shorter and more policy oriented document than the full assessment reports which are accepted by Member States (i.e. is not subject to line by line or paragraph by paragraph endorsement). In that sense the

synthesis report clearance process would require more intergovernmental attention than the other options. Also, it is estimated to need fewer author meetings than the other options, as it is normally a shorter document.

- (b) **Scope:** The scope could in principle address the broad range of issues presented above as pertaining to all assessment options. Regional aspects would normally be integrated in the synthesis analysis. The scope would in principle be confined to the findings and key conclusions of relevant assessments, and analyses of the systemic links between different thematic areas. Synthesis reports in IPBES and IPCC are written in a non-technical style suitable for policymakers and address a broad range of policy-relevant questions and therefore do not necessarily include formal confidence level statements. Synthesis reports consist of a full report which references underlying assessments and other relevant scientific literature and a Summary for Policymakers. A synthesis may typically take two years.
- (c) **Evidence base:** existing assessments with limited use of additional high impact scientific literature and grey literature to update or complement the picture as relevant to the agreed scope.

**Option 3 is distinguished from Option 1 and 2** by being a shorter and more policy-oriented document, by using a more limited evidence base primarily limited to existing assessments, a less extensive expert process and a more extensive intergovernmental clearance process.

Option 3 would follow a process which is key to ensuring that the assessments are relevant, legitimate, credible and accessible (criteria b, c, d and e) as explained in section 2.2. With a more extensive intergovernmental clearance process and less extensive expert process than the other options, it may perform higher on legitimacy and lower on credibility. The latter could be countered by focusing the synthesis on evidence from assessments with high credibility.

Otherwise, the option meets the other **criteria for the design of the future GEO** in the following manner:

**a) Mandate consistency:** The approach would be fully consistent with the mandate of UNEA, but due to a more limited evidence base, it may not address the mandate as comprehensively as Option 1. If this option is the sole one implemented, then it could potentially be less comprehensive than earlier GEO assessments making it more difficult to ensure consistency and comparability across instalments of GEO than in the case of Option 1.

**f) The added value of GEO:** the process would ensure that the GEO responds to the UNEP mandate, and that it avoids duplication with other global assessment processes, while addressing interlinkages and cross-cutting issues and identifying gaps. The synthesis would carry little risk of duplicating other assessments. Rather, it would amplify the findings of other assessments (to the extent that is needed) and add value by putting them in a broader context (to the extent that such content can be derived from existing assessments supplemented by gap filling).

**g) The overall feasibility of GEO:** the option (especially if it is the sole option implemented) would imply a slightly leaner process and downscaled operation than Option 1, therefore its contribution to the continuity of operations for the periodic production of the report would be contingent on planning. Option 3 would be the least expensive option, but the cost difference may vary with the agreed scope and frequency of the other options. Option 3 could be combined with Option 2 in a rolling plan.

## 5.4 Capacity building, knowledge generation and policy support services

The analysis of the Steering Committee and the broad consultations identified that GEO, in addition to the assessment function, could also encompass mutually supportive functions, namely, support to agreed needs in capacity building, knowledge generation and policy-making. A key function of the GEO process is facilitating the identification of Member States needs in relation to these functions and agreeing on how they best could be supported through GEO itself or through other processes within or outside UNEP. The exact needs may depend on the assessment option or combination of assessment options chosen by UNEA and are best identified after UNEA has made a decision. Consequently GEO would build on the experience from past GEO processes and other initiatives and initiate the development of an approach for identifying the needs and a service oriented approach for addressing those needs in accordance with the GEO process elements set out in Table 1. Suggestions for such an approach include the following activities costed in Table 4:

- a) Integrating capacity building in the GEO process through fellowships, training, exchanges, dialogues and consultations.
- b) Working with partners to address capacity building and support needs in the science-policy interface outside the GEO process, including through supporting sub-global assessments.
- c) Undertaking dialogues with research, modelling, scenario and data communities to address knowledge generation needs identified in the GEO processes.
- d) Working with indigenous and local communities on the generation and use of Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK).
- e) Identifying tools and approaches for using GEO findings in support of policymaking as requested by Member States and stakeholders.
- f) Conducting outreach and awareness-raising (including by producing supporting products).

The approach would add value to and not duplicate other initiatives and would be closely coordinated with them. The GEO process would support – and collaborate with – other global environmental assessments in developing shared tools and data platforms, including conceptual frameworks, scenarios and integrated models, to promote coherence and synergies across assessments and to support capacity-building.

The provision of support functions for agreed needs in capacity building, knowledge generation and policy-making are key to meeting the criteria. All help advance the mandate consistency, added value and feasibility of GEO (criteria a, f and g). Capacity building in the assessment process is essential for ensuring that the assessments are relevant, legitimate, credible and accessible (criteria b, c, d and e). Capacity-building to meet agreed needs in relation to enhancing the science-policy interface more generally also helps strengthen the foundation for the GEO process, as do dialogues on knowledge generation which is also critical for the long-term relevance and credibility of assessments (criteria b, and d). Outreach and provision of agreed policy support are key to enhancing the impact of the GEO process by enhancing their relevance and accessibility (criteria b and e).

*Table 4: Estimated costs for suggested examples of capacity building, knowledge generation and policy support functions*

Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Key Deliverables	cost element description	Average cost /yr	total cost	notes
<b>Capacity building, knowledge generation and policy support services</b>						
Capacity building programme	1 year process	<b>Objectives/outputs:</b> Develop GEO educational material and manage a fellowship programme.	3 consultancies, 2 meetings, production costs.	686,200	686,200	Based on scenario of developing a global science-diplomacy programme
Science-policy seminar series	1 year process	<b>Objectives/outputs:</b> Develop and deliver learning material on the GEO findings and their implication for national policy.	1 consultancy, 1 meeting, online platform + in-person meetings.	192,200	192,200	Based on scenario one basic science-policy seminar that can be adapted to different national policy circumstances
Support for national and sub-national GEO-type assessments	3 year process	<b>Objectives/outputs:</b> Completed GEO-type assessment to support national or sub-national policy making on the environment.	1 consultancy, 1 meeting, and support from the regional economic commission every year.	116,200	348,600	Based on scenario of support to Latin American countries (3 countries per year).

## 6 Possible synergies and comparisons

The feasibility study has aimed at presenting, analysing and comparing the future of GEO governance alternatives, the assessment options and the suggestions for capacity building, knowledge generation and policy support services. Table 5 presents a summary of estimated costs associated with governance and implementation of the intergovernmental and expert-led GEO assessment process for ease of comparison.

The governance alternatives and the assessment options are all designed to be fully consistent with the mandate of UNEA and meet the criteria for the design of GEO although the degree to which may vary somewhat between them. However, all alternatives, options and suggestions are contingent on the GEO process set out in Table 1, and the process could best be secured through the establishment of a set of GEO procedures agreed by Member States.

The alternatives for governance and implementation structures both meet the criteria, but the establishment of the subsidiary body in alternative 2 is considered to have a slight advantage over alternative 1 which is a continuation of the current GEO practice. The two alternative approaches both involve the use of intergovernmental and stakeholder meetings in combination with expert meetings, and therefore would be quite similar in terms of financial consequences. Costs would include supporting meeting preparations. The costs of the operation of both approaches would depend on the size and frequency of meetings and the financial and administrative consequences of options related to the scope, utility and timing of assessments.

**Assessment Option 1** (comprehensive global assessments with regional specificity) and Option 2 (thematic assessments) are quite similar in process and perform well in regard to relevance, legitimacy, credibility and accessibility (criteria b, c, d and e). Option 3 (synthesis assessment) also performs well against these criteria, but the process implies

a slightly more extensive intergovernmental clearance process and less extensive expert process than the other options. Therefore Option 3 may be stronger regarding legitimacy and less so regarding credibility.

The main differences between the three assessment options are related to their scope and evidence base. Option 1 (comprehensive global assessments with regional specificity) is distinguished from Option 2 (thematic assessments) by having a broader scope which addresses environmental issues comprehensively and in an integrated manner and not theme by theme. Option 3 (synthesis assessment) is distinguished from the others by being a shorter more policy-oriented document, with an evidence base which is primarily limited to existing assessments.

The Steering Committee's interim report noted that what is now the three assessment options were not mutually exclusive and could be considered complementary within a rolling work plan on GEO-type assessments. For example, a synthesis GEO could become quite similar to a comprehensive global assessment if additional peer reviewed literature were incorporated in the synthesis process in order to fill gaps and complement the narrative of the synthesis report. Moreover, GEO thematic assessments could support either the comprehensive global and regional assessment processes or the synthesis assessment processes, if scoped and timed appropriately.

UNEA may therefore wish to consider retaining all assessment options and task the governance structure of GEO to apply them in accordance with a rolling plan to address identified needs, priorities and emerging issues. Such a plan would also be instrumental in identifying and addressing the need for supporting services as identified in Table 5 below. The provision of such supporting services in capacity building, knowledge generation and policy-making is key to meeting the criteria for the design of the intergovernmental and expert led GEO assessment process and strengthening the foundation for GEO in the long term.

*Table 5: Summary table of estimated costs associated with governance and implementation of the intergovernmental expert led GEO assessment process*

Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Key Deliverables	cost element description	Average cost /yr	total cost	notes
<b>Intergovernmental oversight (common to all options)</b>						
Intergovernmental and stakeholder involvement (governance alternative 1 and 2)	3 year process	<b>Objectives/outputs:</b> Appointment of officers for the executive/advisory arm and expert panel and clearance of: GEO procedures; a rolling plan; scope of assessment(s); budget for assessments and other deliverables and line approval of SPM(s) as well as managerial oversight in production	2 meetings (at 4 days) of its executive/advisory (25 members) arm (73,800)	147,600	442,800	Based on scenario similar to GEO-6
<b>Scientific oversight (common to all options)</b>						
Expert advice and scientific oversight	3 year process	<b>Objectives/outputs:</b> Selection of authors and reviewers for the assessment and expert for other deliverables, scientific oversight and advice in the production process	1 expert meeting (4 days) (25-30 members) (124,600)	124,600	373,800	Based on scenario similar to GEO-6
<b>Assessment Option 1</b>						
Comprehensive GEO	3 year process	<b>Objectives/outputs:</b> fully intergovernmental process to produce a global integrated environmental assessment every 4 years, including approved SPM.	1 expert scoping meeting and 4 author meetings, stipends, partnership agreements, software licenses, communications, digital platform, document production, layout and translation	2,681,800	8,042,400	Based on scenario similar to GEO-6
<b>Assessment Option 2</b>						
Thematic GEO	2 year process	<b>Objectives/outputs:</b> fully intergovernmental process to produce a thematic integrated environmental assessment including approved SPM at a	1 scoping meeting, 3 author meetings stipends, partnership agreements, software licenses, communications, digital platform, document	2,570,600	5,141,200	Based on scenario of COVID-19 thematic assessment

Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Key Deliverables	cost element description	Average cost /yr	total cost	notes
		frequency to be determined.	production, layout and translation			
<b>Assessment Option 3</b>						
Synthesis GEO	2 year process	<b>Objectives/outputs:</b> fully intergovernmental process to produce a synthesis of major global assessments, including approved SPM at a frequency to be determined.	1 scoping meeting, 2 author meetings stipends, partnership agreements, software licenses, communications, digital platform, document production, layout and translation	2,175,333	4,350,666	Based on scenario of Making Peace with Nature Report
<b>Capacity building, knowledge generation and policy support services</b>						
Capacity building programme	1 year process	<b>Objectives/outputs:</b> Develop GEO educational material and manage a fellowship programme.	3 consultancies, 2 meetings, production costs.	686,200	686,200	Based on scenario of developing a global science-diplomacy programme
Science-policy seminar series	1 year process	<b>Objectives/outputs:</b> Develop and deliver learning material on the GEO findings and their implication for national policy.	1 consultancy, 1 meeting, online platform + in-person meetings.	192,200	192,200	Based on scenario one basic science-policy seminar that can be adapted to different national policy circumstances
Support for national and sub-national GEO-type assessments	3 year process	<b>Objectives/outputs:</b> Completed GEO-type assessment to support national or sub-national policy making on the environment.	1 consultancy, 1 meeting, and support from the regional economic commission every year.	116,200	348,600	Based on scenario of support to Latin American countries (3 countries per year).
Other supportive activities						Could include dialogues with research, data, monitoring and scenario and modelling communities on priorities for knowledge generation



## Annex I

### Terms of reference for a possible subsidiary body of GEO with responsibilities for its officers and experts and guidance for their selection

Any accredited observer of UNEA which is qualified in matters covered by the authorising body, and which has informed the Secretariat of its wish to be represented at sessions of the body, may if UNEA so decides participate as an observer. To facilitate communication, cooperation, nomination of experts and review of reports and other material, Member States would likely need to designate GEO national focal points responsible for liaising with the UNEP Secretariat. The body would typically undertake the following functions<sup>6</sup> as directed by UNEA:

- (a) Acting as a subsidiary decision-making body of UNEA in accordance with the UNEA rules of procedure and the roles and responsibilities given to it regarding the scoping, initiation and clearance of GEO activities and products, including for accepting assessments and approving their summaries for policymakers;
- (b) Selecting the officers of the subsidiary body for GEO, which will constitute its *executive arm*, taking due account of the principle of geographical and gender balance across the five United Nations regions, based on criteria, a nomination process and length of service to be decided by the body. The body may also select a limited number of representatives from among its observers, if it so decides, to serve on the executive arm in their capacity as alternates or observers.
  - (i) The executive arm could carry out the following *functions* as directed by the subsidiary body for GEO:
    - a. The functions of the co-chairs include the following:
      1. Presiding over meetings of the subsidiary body for GEO;
      2. Chairing the executive arm;
      3. Representing GEO as its co-chairs.
    - b. The functions to be carried out by the vice-chairs include the following:
      1. Serving as rapporteur of the subsidiary body for GEO;
      2. Participating in the work of the executive arm;
      3. Acting as the representative of GEO as Vice-Chair as necessary.
    - c. The executive arm would carry out the following functions:
      1. Promote the relevance (or salience) of GEO in terms of responding flexibly to the needs of Member States and stakeholders, for example on improving the effectiveness of environmental policy;
      2. Promote the legitimacy of GEO as an assessment accepted by Member States and stakeholders as authoritative, through unbiased, representative and defensible procedures that are balanced with regard to geography and gender;
      3. Provide administrative and financial oversight including for the development and implementation of the rolling programme of work;
      4. Support the multidisciplinary expert panel in carrying out its functions;
  - (ii) The following *guidelines* could be taken into account in the processes for nominating and selecting the officers that will serve as the co-chairs and vice-chairs of the subsidiary body for GEO and constitute its executive arm:
    - a. Ability to carry out the agreed functions of the co-chairs and vice-chairs;
    - b. Scientific environmental expertise with regard to both natural and social sciences among the officers of the subsidiary body for GEO;
    - c. Scientific, technical or policy expertise and knowledge of the main elements of the GEO's programme of work;
    - d. Experience in communicating, promoting and incorporating science into policy development processes;
    - e. Ability to both lead and work in international scientific and policy processes
- (c) Selecting members of the *multidisciplinary expert panel* or any other subsidiary body as relevant, taking due account of the principle of geographical and gender balance across the five United Nations regions, based on criteria, a nomination process and length of service to be decided by it.
  - (i) The Expert panel could carry out the following *functions* as directed by the subsidiary body for GEO:

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<sup>6</sup> Adapted from IPBES.

- a. Promote the scientific credibility of GEO as a robust and rigorous assessment based on scientifically accepted methods and analysis from multiple sources;
  - b. Promote conceptual, analytical and scientific consistency and rigour in the development and implementation of the long-term rolling programme of work;
  - c. Preside over expert scoping meetings, task forces, workshops, and expert groups for other reports and deliverables;
  - d. Select experts based on merits in accordance with agreed procedures with a view to ensure geographical, gender and disciplinary balance;
  - e. Representing GEO as its expert panel;
  - f. Support the executive arm in carrying out its functions;
- (ii) The following *guidelines* could be taken into account in the processes for nominating and selecting the expert panel:
- a. Ability to carry out the agreed functions of the expert panel;
  - b. Scientific environmental expertise with regard to both natural and social sciences;
  - c. Scientific, technical or policy expertise and knowledge of the main elements of the GEO's programme of work;
  - d. Experience in communicating, promoting and incorporating science into policy development processes;
  - e. Ability both to lead and work in international scientific and policy processes.
-