

Outcomes Document

**Intergovernmental and Multistakeholder Advisory Group (IMAG) and Multidisciplinary Expert Scientific Advisory Group (MESAG) Joint Meeting for the Seventh Edition of UNEP's Global Environment Outlook (GEO-7)
16 March 2023**

On 16 March 2023 the Intergovernmental and Multistakeholder Advisory Group and Multidisciplinary Expert Scientific Advisory Group met to consider the following agenda items:

- Roundtable introductions
- Discussion on how the IMAG and MESAG can work together.

On these agenda items, the meeting decided to ensure synergy and avoid conflicting guidance to the authors / co-chairs from the GEO-7 advisory bodies. To that effect the IMAG and MESAG agreed to:

- To share information on the meeting schedules and workplans for IMAG and MESAG to plan for any matters that require policy and scientific guidance.
- To hold calls between the IMAG and MESAG Bureaus as needed at semi- regular intervals to discuss key issues and any potential overlapping scientific and policy guidance and if deemed necessary by the respective Bureaus, exchange any draft guidance before it is issued.
- To hold full IMAG and MESAG calls if deemed necessary by the respective Bureaus on matters where scientific and policy guidance are required from both GEO-7 advisory bodies.

MESAG Rapporteur	Signature
Mr. Andres Guhl	

IMAG Rapporteur	Signature
Mr. Rafael Monge	

Meeting Summary 16 March 2023

Joint session of the full IMAG and MESAG

The IMAG and MESAG members participated in roundtable introductions to open the session. The IMAG Co-Chair thanked the groups and suggested that the MESAG Co-Chair provide an overview of the meeting discussions so far and mention any questions for the IMAG. The MESAG co-chair introduced the discussions on synergies across assessments, especially ongoing assessments such as the IPBES Nexus assessment, the levels of confidence in the assessment findings and the available literature for conducting the assessment, the diversity of experts in the process and recommendations

for the gap filling for gender, geographic and expertise balance. The integrity of the review process was also mentioned and the oversight on that process with specific mention of the review editors and their selection, and lastly the scientific integrity of the production of the Summary for Policymakers (SPM) to ensure that the line of sight between the main report and the SPM is maintained. The MESAG will provide scientific oversight on all of those activities, acting in line with the [GEO Procedures Document](#) to consider any additional guidance required for all components of GEO-7 and the MESAG will issue a final validation opinion on the scientific credibility of the process. The MESAG Co-Chairs explained that while there are not many matters for attention at this early stage of the assessment, the initial stages are going well and the MESAG is in a good position to provide scientific guidance on key issues.

The IMAG co-chair provided an overview of the IMAG discussions and guidance provided by the group on the regional and sub-regional classification with initial conclusions that any decision on regional and sub-regional classification should be well documented and made in a transparent and clear manner. The IMAG also discussed the evidence base to be used in GEO-7 and this is particularly important to discuss because the IMAG and MESAG guidance may overlap in this case. Specifically in the case of Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK), IMAG has recommended to leave the matter of guidance on scientific oversight to the MESAG. The IMAG Co-Chair added that impact assessment from a policy perspective is currently lacking in the process and that there was a request to build this literature base up including ex-ante and ex-post impact assessments to be considered as part of the literature base. Challenges on the availability of ex-post impact assessments were raised. The IMAG discussed supporting services and the issue that this is a newly prioritized element of GEO-7 to provide supporting services, mainly to Member States, to facilitate the process of take-up of the findings beyond the publication of the assessment, and towards GEO-8, including elements of knowledge generation, capacity building, support for policymaking and communication and outreach. The IMAG Co-Chair also highlighted the need for collaborating centers to be selected and engage in the GEO process and that collaborating centers will be agents of change and will benefit from participating in the GEO-7 process as well as contribute to the process. The IMAG Co-Chair mentioned that it is good to note that IMAG can rely on MESAG to ensure that the key scientific conclusions will be clearly stated in the SPM and added that the IMAG's role is to ensure the policy relevance of the SPM.

A suggestion was made to mention the citizen science and ILK discussion and to ensure it is cross-cutting in the policy questions that are agreed by the IMAG. An additional point was raised about the IMAG discussions on adding authors during the gap-filling process, the recommendation from IMAG to the assessment co-chairs was to encourage existing authors to use their networks to recruit more authors and then use the existing pool of nominated authors to fill all gaps. Following those steps, an update can be shared with the IMAG on any remaining gaps which can be filled through a targeted process jointly with advice from IMAG and MESAG.

The MESAG Co-Chair thanked the IMAG Co-Chair and explained that the gap-filling process is the focus of the April virtual MESAG meeting, to have an update from the Secretariat on the remaining gaps in the expert team. The MESAG raised that members should seek to have previous GEO fellows engaged in the process and to raise ideas on how to expand the notification for the need of additional experts in GEO-7. When speaking with the assessment co-chairs, a key concern expressed by the MESAG was

about building on existing assessments as well as relying on knowledge from other assessments on key topics such as ILK, on which IPBES is a leading example of best practice, therefore learning from the IPBES ILK expertise and engaging with their experts is a key guidance from MESAG. The MESAG Co-Chair also mentioned that engaging with IMAG is very useful and to possibly have semi-regular virtual meetings among the Bureaus of IMAG and MESAG to stay aligned and informed. The IMAG Co-Chair agreed that this would be beneficial for both advisory bodies and that the IMAG Bureau would be happy to participate in such coordination calls, and that from those calls, a need for a full IMAG and MESAG joint call might be identified where relevant.

A question was raised about the GEO-7's approach to regional classification. The recommendation was to adopt and build upon the regional approach used by existing processes such as for example the World Bank, IPBES, IPCC, etc.

Additionally, the MESAG Co-chair emphasized that the respective roles of both advisory bodies should be very clear, also considering the assessment co-chairs. The IMAG Co-Chair agreed and responded that there are key issues in the next joint IMAG-MESAG call including i.e., the policy questions and the gap filling exercise which should be considered in consultation with the MESAG. The IMAG Co-Chair added that GEO-7 is a long and iterative process, and that the central goal is to ensure the optimal level of scientific and policy oversight for the GEO-7 process from both advisory bodies.

The IMAG Co-Chair asked if the MESAG is advising on scientific guidance at a high-level or if there is also focus on the key details on scientific matters. The MESAG Co-Chair responded that the MESAG should stay at the high-level and process level, and for example does not envision searching for individual CVs for the gap filling exercise but expects to hear the gaps from the co-chairs to make suggestions from the scientific networks of MESAG members as to how to help fill the gaps and ensure gender, geographical and expertise balance.

Regarding the consideration of a potential expansion of the network of GEO-7 collaborating centers, it was suggested that this can be a two-way process, i.e., considering what can the GEO-7 gain from collaborating centers, and what will the centers gain. The MESAG Co-Chair shared the suggestion for collaborating centers to contribute case studies using the digital platform considering the centers' regional expertise and knowledge. The MESAG would like to recommend that the collaborating centers could provide case studies of local success stories and be engaged in GEO-7 outreach. Previous GEOs have focused more on the 'states and trends' and less on the 'outlooks', so the recommendation from MESAG is that emphasis is on the outlooks of GEO-7 since the states and trends are well explained in GEO-6 and IPCC and IPBES assessments. The MESAG encourages the GEO-7 to avoid raising concerns alone and to focus on how actors can respond to the environmental crises using the solutions pathways.

A comment was made that there are overlapping roles of IMAG and MESAG including guidance on collaborating centers, gap filling process and the SPM, so coordination and virtual calls may help the advisory bodies to proceed coherently and synergically. A question was raised about the distinction between the two advisory bodies. The IMAG Co-Chair responded that the distinction is clear because the MESAG is tasked with overseeing the scientific integrity of the GEO-7 process, while IMAG is tasked to oversee the policy relevance of the GEO-7 and the overall implementation of the UNEA

resolution. So, while the specific areas to guide in GEO-7 are similar, the perspectives are different. Even though there's difference in scientific and policy oversight, the guidance from both MESAG and IMAG are synergistic in GEO-7.

Regarding collaborating centers, a suggestion was made for IMAG and MESAG to help the Secretariat select collaborating centers to i.e., choose the best centers to contribute to GEO-7. The IMAG Co-Chair responded that the IMAG has provided guidance to the Secretariat and asked that the Secretariat conduct the selection since the Secretariat must manage the engagement with collaborating centers.

A comment was made on the key difference between the GEO and other global environmental assessments being the high-level integration among the findings of major global thematic assessments (e.g., on climate, biodiversity, pollution etc.), and that an important element of the GEO-7 outlooks sections would be to focus on the integrative and synergistic issues.

A question was shared as to whether IMAG and MESAG can share key outcomes from meetings to exchange information. The IMAG Co-Chair explained that there is overlap in advice from policy and science perspectives, and that the advice and guidance between both bodies could be shared in advance (i.e., before it is released to the co-chairs and authors), to avoid contradicting advice. For example, the IMAG had previously provided advice to the Secretariat on collaborating centers so, to avoid a completely different approach or advice provided from MESAG, it might be necessary to share the final advice among IMAG and MESAG, rather than only discussing them separately, to ensure synergy and clarity in the final advice to the Secretariat by both IMAG and MESAG. The MESAG co-chair explained that these advisory bodies act on the science-policy interface and clarified that the discussion on collaborating centers so far considered the criteria for Secretariat to consider in selecting the pool of collaborative centers for the GEO-7. The MESAG Co-Chair suggested that the IMAG and MESAG can certainly collaborate as advised and mentioned that the vision for the GEO-7 report is a shorter report that focuses on the outlooks and raised that the report should build upon and synthesize all existing assessments, similar to UNEP's Making Peace with Nature report, and building on that report. The MESAG Co-Chair raised the importance of having mechanisms to interact between IMAG and MESAG. The Co-Chair agreed that the roles are clear in general, but that on specific topics some overlap may emerge when considering that guidance may be developed separately from both bodies (hence the need for coordination as discussed above).

With regards to the draft SPM, there may be a need for enhanced coordinating guidance to ensure that both advisory bodies are working in the same direction. The MESAG Co-Chair also suggested that the bodies can adjust and organize according to their interactions to specific situations.

A comment was raised on the need for the Secretariat to support regular interaction between IMAG and MESAG to enhance collaboration. The IMAG Co-Chair suggested to exchange information on the schedules for IMAG and MESAG to ensure that the work plans align, and to note any key moments for guidance from both advisory bodies. A question was raised about the MESAG work plan to understand if they have a work plan prepared, similar to the IMAG's plan.

The MESAG Co-Chair raised a question about the GEO-7 nominations and asked if the

call for nominations were circulated to previous GEO experts, IPCC, IPBES and from other assessments. There was a suggestion that if this has not yet happened, then it would be a key element of scientific best practice to circulate the call for nominations to all assessment experts. The MESAG Co-Chair then raised the question of how to be more involved in the oversight of the GEO-7 scientific process, while avoiding administrative matters and involvement in content. The MESAG Co-Chair raised the example of some budget-neutral requests by the MESAG, that operate within the approved budget.

A question was raised about the gap-filling exercise with the concern that if key experts from previous scientific assessments are used to fill GEO-7 gaps, then will the information be repetitive with previous assessments. Since the world is still facing the same serious issues as during previous assessments, then are those experts the ones to choose for GEO-7? The IMAG Co-Chair explained that the challenge that authors face is to synthesize all the latest information from previous assessments is a newer and elevated challenge in GEO-7 because they need to explain solutions for the key issues raised in previous assessments.

The Secretariat took note of and welcomed with appreciation all the comments and advice received during the meeting.

Annex 1: Participants List

MESAG Participants				
First Name	Last Name	Affiliation	Region(s) of Representation	Participation
Nijavalli	Ravindranath	Center for Sustainable Technologies	Asia and the Pacific Group	In-person
Inna	Stecenko	Transport and Telecommunication Institute	Eastern European Group	In-person
James	Ford	Priestley International Centre for Climate	Western European Group	In-person
Nagwa	El Karawy	Ministry of Environment (Egypt)	African Group	In-person
Tambe	Honourine Enow	Africa Climate and Environment Foundation (ACEF)	African Group	In-person
Richard	Filcak	European Environmental Agency (EEA)	Specialized Agency - EU	In-person
Lorenzo	Ciccarese	Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA)	Western European Group	In-person
Rosemarie	Casimiro	Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology	Asia and the Pacific Group	In-person
Maria del Mar	Viana Rodriguez	Institute of Environmental Assessment & Water Research, Spanish Research Council	Western European Group	In-person
Nicholas	King	Wilderness Foundation Africa	African Group	In-person
Andres	Guhl	Universidad de los Andes	Latin American and Caribbean Group	In-person
Belay	Simane	Addis Ababa University	African Group	In-person
Amal (Alternate)	Moufarreh	Ministry of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development (Morocco)	African Group	In-person
Yonglong	Lu	Xiamen University	Asia and the Pacific Group	In-person
Gian Carlo	Delgado-Ramos	Institute of Geography, National Autonomous University of Mexico	Latin American and Caribbean Group	In-person
Tatiana	Kuznetsova	Federal Service for the Supervision of Natural Resources of the Russian Federation	Eastern European Group	In-person
Galina (translator)	Mishanina	Federal Service for the Supervision of Natural Resources of the Russian Federation	Eastern European Group	In-person
IMAG Participants				
First Name	Last Name	Affiliation	Region(s) of Representation	Participation
Leila	Bendifallah	Professor, M'hamed Bougara University, Algeria	African Group	In person
Anna	Mampye	Director: State of Environment Information in the Branch, ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment	African Group	In person
Toghrul	Feyziyev	Advisor, International cooperation division of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan	Eastern European Group	In person

Miroslav	Havránek	Director of the Czech Environmental Information Agency	Eastern European Group	In person
Claudia	Kabel	German Environment Agency (UBA), academic staff member, International Sustainability Strategies, Policy and Knowledge Transfer	Western European Group	Online
Mohamed	Abdelraouf	Sustainability Research Program Director at Gulf Research Center (GRC)	Science and Technology	In person
Ruth	Viola Spencer	Member to the National Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for Antigua and Barbuda	Women	In person
Djatougbe	Aziaka	President and founder of welfare Togo; co-facilitator of UNEP NGO major group	Non-governmental organization	In person
Zahra	Abu Taha	Recycling officer at ZATARI refugees camp, Oxfam	Children and youth	Online
Prem	Singh Tharu	Regional Programme Officer, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) under Environment Programme	Indigenous peoples	In person
Yi	Huang	Professor, School of Environmental Sciences and Engineering, Peking University, China	Asia and the Pacific Group	In person
Takashi	Otsuka	Director of Knowledge and Communications, Strategic Management Office, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), Hayama, Japan	Asia and the Pacific Group	In person
Meri	Harutyunyan	Chief specialist of Strategic Policy Department, Ministry of Environment, Armenia	Eastern European Group	In person
Marek	Haliniak	General Counsellor in the Ministry of Climate and Environment, Department of Strategy and Analysis, Poland	Eastern European Group	Online
Gillian	Stanislaus	Environmental Programme Officer, Environmental Management Authority (EMA)	Latin American and Caribbean Group	Online
Neyra	Herrera	Environmental Statistics Chief – Ministry of Environment	Latin American and Caribbean Group	In person
Rafael	Monge	Director - National Center of Environmental Information (CENIGA) Ministry of Environment and Energy; Costa Rica	Latin American and Caribbean Group	In person
Arthur	Eijs	Policy coordinator Natural Resource Management & Sustainable Land Use - Ministry of Infrastructure & water management, department of International Affairs	Western European Group	In person
Salla	Rantala	Development Manager, Environmental Policy Centre, Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE)	Western European Group	In person
Fabian	Wagner	Dean, Capacity Development and Academic Training, IIASA, Austria	Science and Technology	Online
Ingrid	Coetzee	Director, Nature & Health; ICLEI Africa	Local authorities	In person
Merylene	Chitharai	African Council of Religious Leaders - Religions for Peace	Faith-based groups	In person

Andrea	Hinwood	UNEP Chief Scientist		Online
Jason	Jabbour	UNEP Chief Scientist's Office		In person
Jian	Liu	Director, UNEP Early Warning and Assessment Division		In person
Edoardo	Zandri	Chief, UNEP Scientific Assessment Branch		In person
Caroline	Kaimuru	UNEP, IMAG Secretariat Support		In person
Matt	Billot	UNEP, MESAG Secretariat Support		In person
Rachel	Kosse	UNEP, MESAG Secretariat Support		In person

Apologies

MESAG			
First Name	Last Name	Affiliation	Region(s) of Representation
Ervin	Balázs	Centre for Agricultural Research of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences	Eastern European Group
Alban	Thomas	INRAE - French national research institute for agriculture, food and environment	Western European Group
Eric	Davidson	University of Maryland	Western European Group
Ousséni	Arouna	National University of Sciences, Technologies, Engineering and Mathematics	African Group
Isabelle (Alternate)	Buttino	Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA)	Western European Group
Natalia	Ryzhenko	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine	Eastern European Group
Alberto	Capra	Secretariat of Environmental Policy in Natural Resources (SPARN), Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of the Nation, Republic of Argentina	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Farah	Bouqartacha	Ministry of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development (Morocco)	African Group
Joyeeta	Gupta	University of Amsterdam	Western European Group
Carmen Rosa	Garcia Davila	Research Institute of the Peruvian Amazon	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Mónica	Moraes	Bolivian National Academy of Science and Universidad Mayor de San Andrés	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Asha	Singh	Environmental Governance Consulting	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Janez	Potočnik	UNEP International Resource Panel	Eastern European Group
Edgar John	Maeniuta Pollard	WHO	Asia and the Pacific Group
IMAG			
First Name	Last Name	Affiliation	Region(s) of Representation
Modibo	Sacko	Vice President of the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CONACILSS), Mali	African Group

Thuraya	AL Sariri	Assistance Director General of Nature Conservation at MECA- Oman	Asia and the Pacific Group
Maha	Maayta	Director of the Policy and International Cooperation, Ministry of Environment, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan	Asia and the Pacific Group
Dušica	Pešević	Associate Professor, University of Banja Luka, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Bosnia and Herzegovina	Eastern European Group
Kenset	Amaury Rosales Riveiro	Coordinator, Information Unit, Environment and Climate Change; Ministry of Environment and Resources Natural Resources (MARN)	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Marisol	Dimas		Latin American and Caribbean Group
Margarita	Guerra		Latin American and Caribbean Group
Lisa	Eriksson	Policy evaluation and analysis; Sustainable Development Department; Swedish Environmental protection agency	Western European Group
Jan-Gustav	Strandenaes	Advisory board member of sustainability/environment governance project at the University of Stockholm	Non-governmental organization
Thomas	Chali	Senior Policy Advisor on Environmental Conservation and Natural Resources Management in Tanzania	African Group
Jerome	Lugumira Sebadduka	Natural Resources Management Specialist (Soils and Land Use), National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) Uganda	African Group
Silvio	Albuquerque e Silva	Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Brazil to UNEP; Embassy of Brazil in Kenya	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Christina	Komorski	Director, Information & Indicators Division, Sustainability Directorate, Environment and Climate Change Canada	Western European Group
Toral	Patel-Weynand	Director of the Southern Research Station at the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service	Western European Group
Rolenas	Baereleo	Principal Officer, Biodiversity and Conservation; Department of Environmental protection and Conservation (DEPC), Vanuatu	Asia and the Pacific Group
Keri	Holland	Senior Policy Advisor in the Office of Environmental Quality in the Bureau of Oceans, International and Scientific Affairs at the U.S. Department of State	Western European Group
Denise Filip	Filip	On behalf of Dominic Kailash Nath Waughray who is Senior Advisor to the CEO World Business Council for Sustainable Development	Business and industry