

Our Ref: UNEA/GEOIMAG/pb/08

November 22, 2023

**GEO-7 Intergovernmental and Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group (IMAG) Meeting Summary, November 22, 2023**

The Intergovernmental and Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group (IMAG) met for its eighth virtual call to discuss the following agenda items:

1. Review and approval of the proposed changes to the GEO-7 Chapter Structure.
2. Review of supporting services survey results and proposed next steps.
3. Review of proposed approach for commenting on the regional priorities of the GEO-7 regional chapters.
4. Review and approval of the proposed GEO-7 Review Editors.
5. Any other Business

**On these agenda items the IMAG decided:**

- To approve the new structure of GEO-7 chapters structure, with one objection.
- To provide feedback on the Supporting Services draft workplan by the end of December 2023.
- For the draft supporting services workplan to be shared with collaborating centres for feasibility testing and to gather input on the implementation of the supporting services.
- That the secretariat shares the identified GEO-7 regional priorities, including a description of the systematic approach used for selecting the priorities by end of November.
- IMAG members should provide feedback on the regional priorities and criteria for selection of the regional priorities by the 12<sup>th</sup> of January.
- The next IMAG meeting will be in February 2024.

Rapporteur	Signature
Ana Julieta Calvo Obando	

**Summary of the meeting**

The meeting was chaired by the co-chairs of the Intergovernmental and Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group (IMAG).

**Review and approval of the proposed changes to the GEO-7 Chapter Structure**

A briefing was provided by the Co-chair of the GEO-7 assessment on the updated proposal to restructure the GEO-7 chapters. The Co-chair explained the recent changes from the previously shared version that includes a short chapeau before Part B (State and Trends of the Environment, chapters 3-6) and a concluding section after those chapters. The chapeau will look at interlinkages across the four environmental issues of climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and land degradation and their relationship with land, water, air and ocean systems, as well as including short concluding section after chapters 3-6 that will describe the current state of each environmental issue.

The proposed restructuring of the chapters would also include movement of the outlooks chapters 16, 17

and 18 to just after the transformation chapters, creating a section called System Transformation and Outlooks. This would be followed by a reordering of the solutions pathway chapters with the methodology chapter first followed by a reordering of circularity chapter to follow the finance and economics chapters. Thus, the new order for the solutions pathways chapters would be: methodology -> economics and finance -> materials/waste/circularity -> energy -> food -> environment to form a new section called Solutions Pathways Towards Transformation. Finally, the final 3 chapters (19, 20 and 21) would explain the implications for different groups of countries (e.g. similar economic class, regional groupings) in a section called Implications for Regions and Groups of Countries and Driving the Transformations.

IMAG noted that the initial proposal had been circulated to all IMAG members with a request to provide comments within four weeks. In that period, no comments were received. Therefore, it was recommended that the document be approved. There was one objection from an IMAG member, who requested more time to review the proposed changes. The IMAG co-chair noted the time sensitivity of this issue and the need to share it with authors as soon as possible for the preparation of the First Order Draft of the report, due on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2024. The objection raised was noted and the IMAG agreed to recommend the document for circulation to the authors.

### **Supporting services survey results and proposed next steps**

A briefing was provided on the results from the survey on GEO supporting services. The online survey was circulated to Member States and stakeholders and was supported with six webinars to explain how to complete the survey. 127 responses in the different UN languages were received and 59 of these came from Member States while 68 were from Major Groups and Stakeholders.

The survey analysis for Member States revealed that for Capacity Building, the priority area was to receive training on implementation challenges and how to overcome them. The preferred method for receiving the training was smaller sessions delivered by local collaborating centers, institutions, organisations or UN Country Teams, followed closely by a preference for virtual sessions for larger audiences.

On Knowledge Generation, increasing the areas of knowledge generation with the creation of analytical tools for policy development was noted as a priority issue in addition to providing science-to-policy seminars at the country level. Those surveyed indicated that they hoped knowledge produced by global environmental assessments such as GEO would ultimately assist them in revealing the extent of climate and other environmental impacts at the country level.

Lastly, on Support for Policymaking, the top concerns of those surveyed appeared to be identifying priority environmental issues where policies are implemented or monitored as well as the need for help in identifying common environmental issues, including which policies have been successful in addressing them. The preferred format for receiving the support was via presentations and discussions with experts, policy makers and implementers.

The Secretariat noted that the workplan on the supporting services would be delivered in partnership with specialized collaborating centres. There currently are 14 collaborating centres that were selected through the call for nominations and the process of signing MoUs with them is ongoing. The initial work will focus on the science to policy seminars but there have been requests for help in the development of national state of the environment reports. There will also be knowledge generation through the Adhoc Global Assessments Dialogue and the ongoing work on the production of educational materials on the science to policy interface.

IMAG inquired on the MoUs being signed and the work being undertaken and whether that has

been approved by the permanent representatives and if there are adequate funds in place for this work. The Secretariat replied that the IMAG is the main body to review and comment on the supporting services workplan. The Committee of Permanent Representatives has been informed of this work, as required by Resolution 5/3. On funding, it was mentioned that the Netherlands has provided some seed funding to carry out the supporting services. IMAG also inquired whether multi-level governance had been mentioned in the survey results. The Secretariat responded that in the Capacity Building section of the survey results, an indicator for measuring success levels of the supporting services implementation was government policies that lead to environmental improvements as well as local communities being able to plan for environmental solutions, but that there was no specific question on multi-level governance.

IMAG also inquired whether the workplan will be shared with the collaborating centres, to which the Secretariat replied that it will be shared with them for feasibility testing.

The IMAG co-chair welcomed the analysis of the survey results and invited IMAG members to provide their feedback and inputs to the draft workplan on supporting services which will be further developed based on the inputs for discussion and decision making at the February IMAG meeting. IMAG also noted that the workplan should not only be sent to the collaborating centres for feasibility testing but the results of the open questions in the survey should be reviewed to see if there are additional suggestions on implementation of the workplan.

### **Proposed approach for commenting on the regional priorities of the GEO-7 regional chapters**

The Secretariat outlined that the GEO-7 scoping document requests two sets of regional chapters for GEO-7. One on the state of the environment across the five UN regions (chapter 8) and the other on outlooks for the future (chapter 20). For the regional analysis in the state of the environment chapters, the co-chairs of the assessment have requested that the narrative focus on three priorities per region, given that subsection will only be 5,000 words long. The Secretariat explained that the authors and co-chairs are going through a process of revising the regional priorities following feedback from the internal review of the Zero Order Draft. The assessment co-chair explained the steps being taken to define the regional priorities for the chapter, citing a specific set of criteria developed by the assessment co-chair and state and trends CLAs such as ensuring that the selected priority is grounded in scientific evidence, has significant impact on human systems and is a key environmental issue on the state and trend of key natural systems.

IMAG inquired on when they would receive a document on the selection of the regional priorities, to which the co-chair of the assessment indicated this could be done by end of November. IMAG inquired on the level of granularity in the regional chapters to ensure agreement on the priorities for the regions and the usability as well as the classification of the priorities based on various actors such as business and local communities. The Secretariat responded that the scoping document only allows 5,000 words for the analysis of each UN region, so the analysis would not be able to delve deeply into many different priorities. This supports the need to choose only three priorities, which also need to be environmental priorities that impact human systems.

The assessment co-chair further noted that chapters 8 and 20 will be well coordinated to ensure that the issues brought up in chapter 8 are taken on board in chapter 20 and that IMAG guidance received during the call will be valuable in ensuring coherence across those two chapters. It was further noted that authors will be looking at regional, national and other global assessments in the selection of the priorities and welcomed IMAG members to share relevant assessment documents to ensure authors have the most up-to-date regional information and data.

IMAG thanked the assessment co-chairs for the briefing and suggested that a brief document that contains the description of the systematic approach for the selection of the priorities and identified priorities be shared in the coming days for IMAG members to review by 12<sup>th</sup> January 2024. This would allow any input provided by IMAG to be taken into account in the second authors meeting.

## **Review and approval of the proposed GEO-7 Review Editors**

A briefing was provided by the Secretariat on the status of the selection of peer reviewers and review editors for GEO-7. It was highlighted that the request for nomination of peer reviewers is open until 22<sup>nd</sup> December and that applications were being made on the new online peer review platform called READ. It was further explained that in preparation for the first order draft peer review period, a proposed group of review editors had been selected. Review editors are experienced scientists who will assess how well the comments from the peer review have been addressed by the authors. The Secretariat further noted that each chapter has two review editors assigned, except for the regional chapters where one review editor is allocated per region.

IMAG took note of the proposed review editors list and noted that the work of the review editors will commence in May of 2024.

## **Any other business**

The Secretariat provided a briefing on the second author's meeting that will take place in Vienna from 15-19 January 2024. The meeting will be attended by 200 plus authors and will also include 20-25 fellows who will support the authors. The goal of the meeting is the finalization of the chapters to a First Order Draft level of quality, in preparation for the expert peer review.

The Secretariat provided an update of the Indigenous Knowledge and Local Knowledge (IK&LK) work in GEO-7 and noted that an IK & LK taskforce and a workplan are now in place. The Scoping Document calls for inclusion of IK&LK into GEO-7 and GEO-7 is following IPBES guidance on how best to do this. One of the aspects of the workplan is the call for information that can be incorporated into GEO-7 and the planning of potentially four dialogue meetings with indigenous peoples and local communities. It is likely that IK&LK will be embedded into the chapters and appear at the beginning of major sections of the assessment, such as in the drivers and pressures section, the systems transformation section and in the solutions pathways section. Member States and Major Groups will have an opportunity to nominate their own experts into the process. It was noted that there are ongoing discussions with regards to the separation of Indigenous Knowledge from Local Knowledge. The Secretariat will be reaching out to potential funders to fund the activities of IK & LK in GEO-7 as well as issue a call for a collaborating center with IK & LK expertise. IMAG also noted the need to separate out the Indigenous Knowledge from Local Knowledge for better identification of the type of knowledge.

The Secretariat provided an update on the new Artificial Intelligence (AI) guidance after a query was raised by an IMAG member. The AI guidance was approved by MESAG with one objection, and it will be sent to the Executive Director for the decision on whether to distribute it or not. The guidance will likely be issued to authors as it is important to ensure scientific integrity of the GEO process.

The next IMAG call will be in February 2024 and a doodle will be circulated accordingly.

## **Action items**

- The Secretariat will prepare a written summary of the meeting.
- The Secretariat will share the list of selected Collaborating Centers.
- The Secretariat will share the regional priorities identified and the criteria for their selection.

- IMAG members are invited to join the webinar on AI guidance.
- IMAG members to send feedback on the draft workplan on supporting services by end of December 2023.
- IMAG members to send feedback on the document on regional priorities and criteria for their selection by 12 January 2024.

## List of Participants

Names	Affiliation	Nationality	Region(s) of Representation
Dr. Leila Bendifallah	Professor, M'hamed Bougara University, Algeria	Algeria	African Group
Ms. Anna Mampye	Director: State of Environment Information in the Branch, Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment	South Africa	African Group
Mr. Takashi Otsuka	Director of Knowledge and Communications, Strategic Management Office, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), Hayama, Japan	Japan	Asia and the Pacific Group
Dr. Marek Haliniak	General Counsellor in the Ministry of Climate and Environment, Department of Strategy and Analysis, Poland	Poland	Eastern European Group
Dr. Toral Patel-Weynand	Director of the Southern Research Station at the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service	United States	Western European Group
Eng. Julieta Calvo	National Center for Geoenvironmental Information, Ministry of Environment and Energy; Costa Rica	Costa Rica	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Dr. Thuraya AL Sariri	Assistance Director General of Nature Conservation at MECA- Oman	Oman	Asia and the Pacific Group
Dr. Salla Rantala	Development Manager, Environmental Policy Centre, Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE)	Finland	Western European Group
Ms. Neyra Herrera	Chief of Environmental Statistics; ministry of environment- Panama	Panama	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Mr. Arthur EIJS	Policy coordinator Natural Resource Management & Sustainable Land Use - Ministry of Infrastructure & water management, department of International Affairs	Netherlands	Western European Group
Ms. Yi Huang	Professor, School of Environmental Sciences and Engineering, Peking University, China	China	Asia and the Pacific Group
Dr. Lisa Eriksson (Alternate)	Senior Advisor, Transport Analysis, and the Department for Outlook and Policy	Sweden	Western European Group
Mr. Kenset Amaury Rosales Riveiro	Coordinator, Information Unit, Environment and Climate Change; Ministry of Environment and Resources Natural Resources (MARN)	Guatemala	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Names	Affiliation	Nationality	Major Group
Ms. Ruth Viola Spencer	Chair, Marine Ecosystems Protected Areas(MEPA) Trust	Antigua and Barbuda	Women
Mr. Prem Singh Tharu	Regional Programme Officer, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) under Environment Programme	Thailand	Indigenous peoples
Dr. Fabian Wagner	Dean, Capacity Development and Academic Training, IIASA, Austria	Germany	Science and Technology
Ms. Zahra Abu Taha	Recycling officer at ZATARI refugees camp, Oxfam	Jordan	Children and youth
Ms. Merylene Chitharai	Lan Manager at UKZN Howard College	South Africa	Faith-based groups
Ms. Ingrid Coetzee	Director, Nature & Health; ICLEI Africa	South Africa	Local authorities

## Apologies

Names	Affiliation	Nationality	Region(s) of Representation
Dr. Modibo sacko	Vice President of the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CONACILSS), Mali	Mali	African Group
Mrs. Dušica Pešević	Associate Professor, University of Banja Luka, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Bosnia and Herzegovina	Bosnia & Herzegovina	Eastern European Group
Ms. Christina Komorski	Director, Information & Indicators Division, Sustainability Directorate, Environment and Climate Change Canada	Canada	Western European Group
Dr. Jerome Lugumira Sebadduka	Natural Resources Management Specialist (Soils and Land Use), National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) Uganda	Uganda	African Group
Dr. Keri Holland (Alternate)	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	United States	Western European Group
Mrs. Rolenas Baereleo	Principal Officer, Biodiversity and Conservation; Department of Environmental protection and Conservation (DEPC), Vanuatu	Vanuatu	Asia and the Pacific Group
Mr. Silvio Albuquerque e Silva	Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Brazil to UNEP; Embassy of Brazil in Kenya	Brazil	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Ms. Alexandra Gurgel Valente da Costa (Alternate)	Environment Analyst, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change	Brazil	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Mrs. Maha Maayta	Director of the Policy and International Cooperation, Ministry of Environment, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan	Jordan	Asia and the Pacific Group
Mr. Toghrul Feyziyev	Advisor, International cooperation division of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan	Azerbaijan	Eastern European Group
Mr. Thomas Chali	Senior Policy Advisor on Environmental Conservation and Natural Resources Management in Tanzania	Tanzania	African Group
Ms. Claudia Kabel	German Environment Agency (UBA), academic staff member, International Sustainability Strategies, Policy and Knowledge Transfer	Germany	Western European Group
Mr. Miroslav Havránek	Director of the Czech Environmental Information Agency	Czechia	Eastern European Group
Ms. Gillian Stanislaus	Environmental Programme Officer, Environmental Management Authority (EMA)	Trinidad & Tobago	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Mr. Carlos Cordero Vega (Alternate)	Director of the Planning Secretariat of the Environment and Energy Sector, Ministry of Environment and Energy, Costa Rica	Costa Rica	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Ms. Margarita Guerra (Alternate)	Ministry of environment- Panama	Panama	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Ms. Meri Harutyunyan	Chief specialist of Strategic Policy Department, Ministry of Environment, Armenia	Armenia	Eastern European Group
Names	Affiliation	Nationality	Major Group
Mr. Jan-Gustav Strandenaes	Advisory board member of sustainability/environment governance project at the University of Stockholm	Norway	Non-governmental organization
Mr. Dominic Kailash Nath Waughray	Senior Advisor to the CEO World Business Council for Sustainable Development	India	Business and industry
Dr. Mohamed Abdelraouf	Sustainability Research Program Director at Gulf Research Center (GRC)	Egypt	Science and Technology
Ms. Djatougbe Aziaka	President and founder of welfare Togo; co-facilitator of UNEP NGO major group	Togo	Non-governmental organization