

Committee of the Permanent Representatives
Subcommittee meeting
Nairobi, 18 April 2024
09:00 – 12:00 and 13.00 – 16:00 (GMT+3)
Hybrid meeting
Conference Room 2 (in person)
and Microsoft Teams (online)

Agenda item 3: Update on UNEP’s Foresight Trajectory.

This background document has been developed by the Secretariat to update the Committee on the implementation of [UNEP’s Foresight Trajectory](#), following the previous presentation held in May 2023. To better navigate current and future uncertainty and disruptive change in line with the UN 2.0 Quintet of Change, UNEP is advancing its strategic foresight and futures-thinking work, putting in place an institutionalized approach to strategic foresight and horizon scanning to provide real-time monitoring of emerging signals of change that could have implications for the environment and our future workstreams.

Following the presentation, the Committee is invited to take note of the briefing and engage in an exchange of views with Committee members and the Secretariat.

Developing and implementing a foresight trajectory for UNEP



UNEP has been developing an institutionalized approach to strategic foresight and horizon scanning with the view to developing an anticipatory and future-oriented culture and to help navigate current and future uncertainty to strengthen the delivery of its mandate. The process will culminate in the issuing of a Global Foresight Report as a contribution to the 2024 Summit of the Future; an uplift in its internal capacity and the introduction of a systemic methodology to help inform decision making.

Foresight is a set of approaches and tools that help explore, envision, anticipate, and even shape the future in an open, structured and systematic way. At UNEP, we are using foresight in an open and structured manner to improve our preparedness to tackle change and uncertainty.

Leveraging foresight and futures thinking to improve our preparedness to tackle disruptive change. Along with other entities in the UN and as part of Our Common Agenda and UN2.0,

An Update on Progress

We are entering the final phase of our 2023-2024 Foresight Process. The first phase scoped a wide range of inputs including through a Global Delphi survey and construction of four divergent scenarios of plausible futures to 2050. The next phase included a series of sensemaking sessions with a wide spectrum of experts, practitioners and informed stakeholders through a series of structured debates and the regional workshops. Over 250 participants from six regions (one youth workshop), came together to reflect on possible futures and crucially, to “reverse engineer” them: to walk backwards from them to the present with respect to the interventions needed in 2024 to speed up addressing the underlying causes of the triple planetary crisis and achieve planetary health and wellbeing. In doing so, we have identified some key issues to address and perhaps more importantly, have identified some weaker trends we need to keep an eye on.

Global issues require a global perspective that also consider the unique contexts of each region. That’s why UNEP’s Foresight Process incorporated this regional element. What surprised many of us, was how diverse the visions which emerged from each region were.

This work is being written up and will be released sometime in July 2024.

Process and approach. The foresight process has made use of a Global Delphi Survey, Global and regional sensemaking workshops, the development of scenarios and the application of these in regional workshops, a second Delphi survey which has been issued to finalise a list of weak signals

of change. The process has involved all 6 regions with workshops held in Poland October 2023; Africa and West Asia November 2023; North America, Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia Pacific in December 2023. The insights and results of the Delphi Survey will be reflected in a final Foresight Report. The process is outlined in Fig. 1.

Preliminary Outcomes:

Data gathering for the Delphi 1 survey was conducted from May to June 2023. A total of 790 usable responses were received by the closing date of 30 June 2023. The data was distributed as follows: Africa 19%, Asia Pacific 26%, Europe 33%, Latin America and the Caribbean 8%, North America 10%, and West Asia 4%. Within these responses a total of 1,156 entries were submitted, distilled into 29 emerging changes clusters and 280 weak signals of change. Key trends that will affect the environment that can now be considered strong trends are:

Key Trends evident

- Mass forced displacement and migration
- A new era of conflict
- Declining trust in science and institutions
- Navigating the Avalanche of AI and exponential tech
- Critical resources and scarcity
- Inequality within and between countries
- Cascading shocks

The 280 signals were prioritized in 20 the subject of the second Delphi Survey. Please complete the survey!

Figure 1: Schematic diagram of the steps to be implemented for the establishment of a UNEP strategic foresight mechanism.

The foresight process for UNEP

