

Navigating New Horizons

A Global Foresight report on planetary health and human wellbeing

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11th Annual Subcommittee meeting of the CPR- **Special event on Foresight**
13:45 to 14:45

8 July 2024

Briefing Objectives

- Present an overview of the UNEP Foresight process.
- Provide information on how the outcomes will inform the strategic planning and future oriented knowledge products that are produced by UNEP.
- Provide preliminary reflections on insights and key messages from the process/ forthcoming report.
- Question and Answer session.

Strategic Foresight – Why now?

- **Preparing for a changing world and new operating context:** Multiple crises are converging, potential disruptions; resulting shifts are too rapid for some of us to even realize.
- Responds to **Our Common Agenda** and “**Quintet of Change**”: reform and strengthen UN System; more impactful SPI; need to modernize our tools and capabilities to be anticipate change, minimize surprise.

Foresight trajectory and the *2024 Global Foresight Report* is a small but important step in this direction.

Strengthening of the UN system



DATA, ANALYSIS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Building on the overarching UN Data Strategy, turning the organisation into the state-of-the-art data analyst and communicator for the benefit of the world.

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INNOVATION AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Based on all available means, using our innovation infrastructure to discover and implement new ideas to create value and help us do our job in a more digital world.

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STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Engaging in strategic foresight, linking up with other entities around the world to enable anticipatory action and the design of more forward-looking policies and programmes.



PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS ORIENTATION

Ensuring the UN family is focused on impact, learning, and continuous improvement.



BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE

Leveraging behavioural science to improve UN family programme and policy effectiveness and reduce bureaucratic processes.

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A new foresight trajectory for UNEP



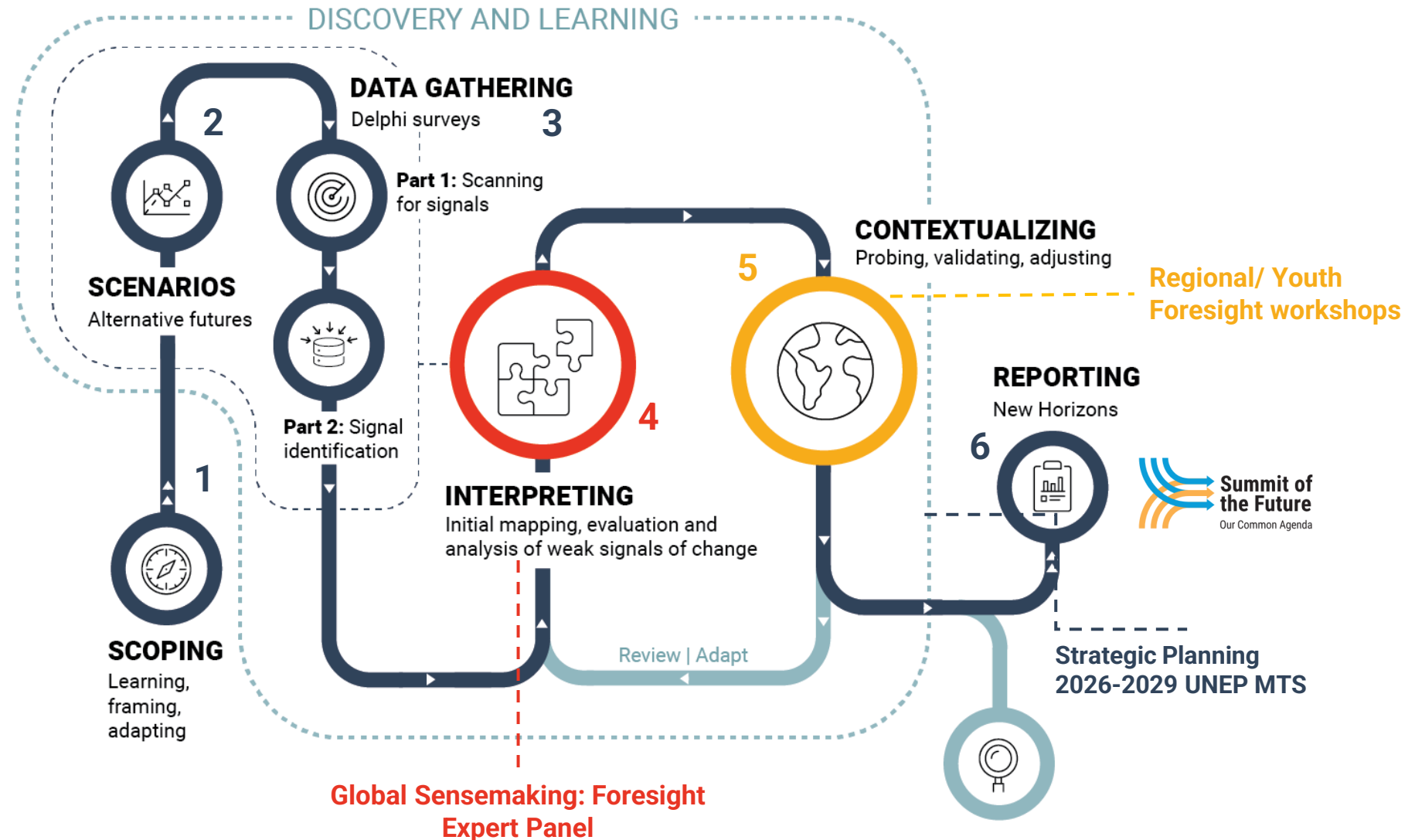
- Foresight can enable a wide set of tools to support **strategic planning** and advance effective preparedness.
- UNEP needs a common understanding and vision of its foresight function and a process to unite efforts, maximize efficiency and extend impact.



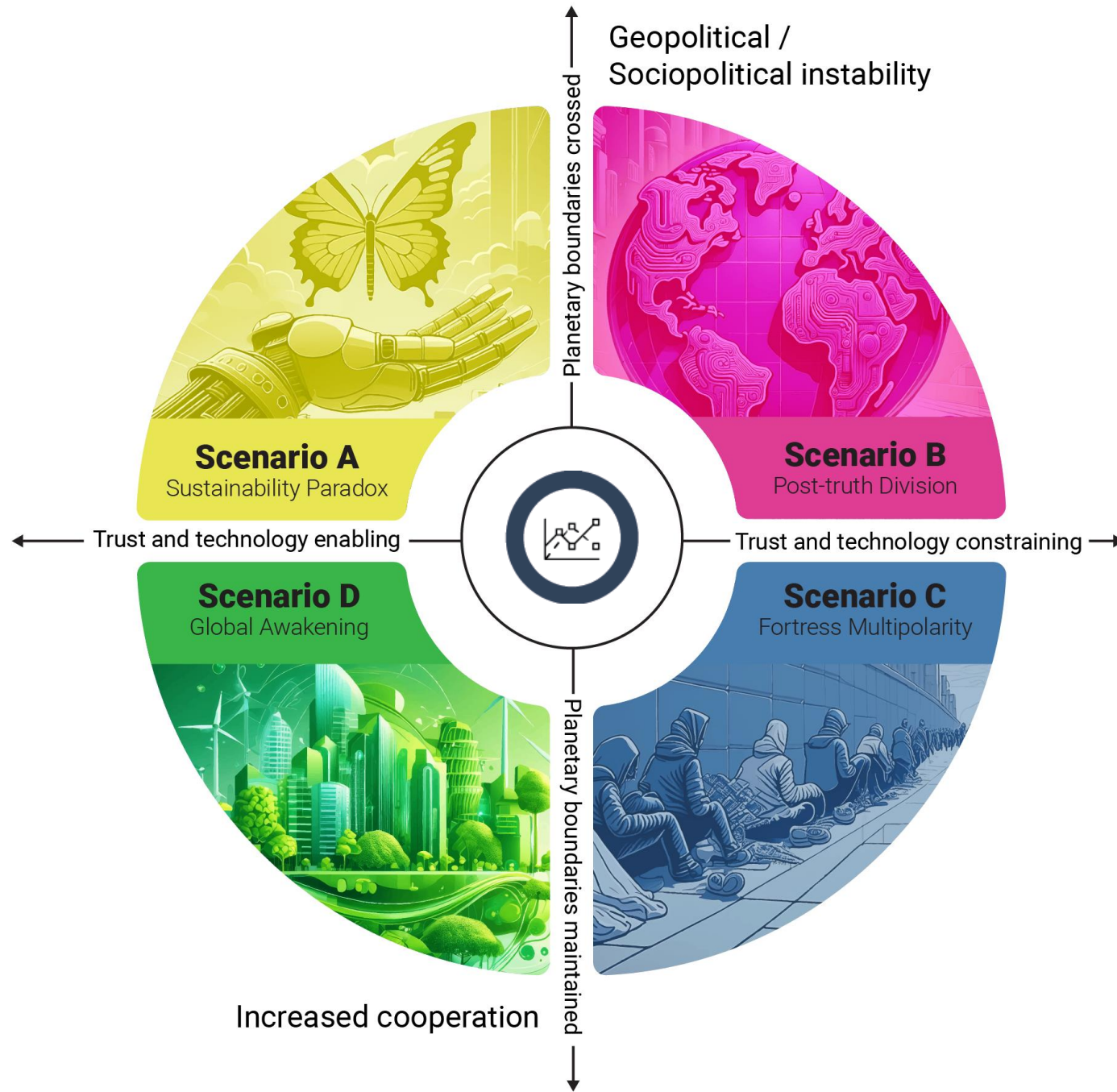
Three mutually supportive workstreams

1. **Building internal capacity and capabilities** for applying foresight.
2. **Codifying UNEP's approach**, methodology and mutually agreed Strategic Foresight function.
3. **Applying foresight and horizon scanning** as an organization (short-term & long-term future perspectives) to inform planning.

Phases of the Foresight Trajectory



Four scenarios for 2050



The scenario set is qualitative and seek to describe alternative futures in the year 2050

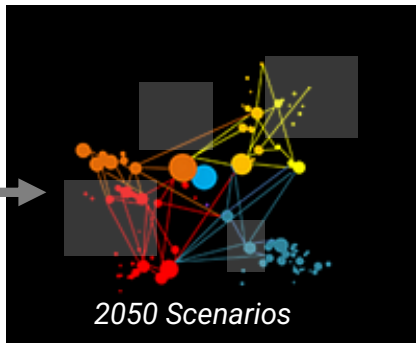
...the right issues, at the right time for the right audience



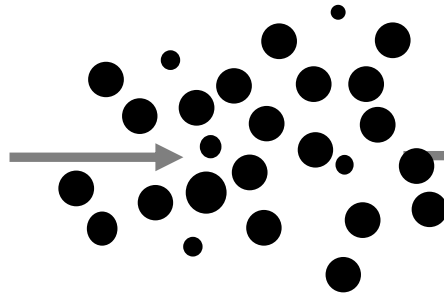
- inputs -
Signs of New



Sensemaking



- output -
Signals of change
280



Critical shifts

Emerging phenomena, potential disruptions and new dynamics



New Horizons

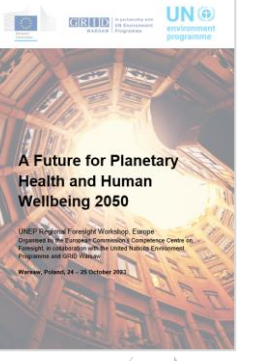
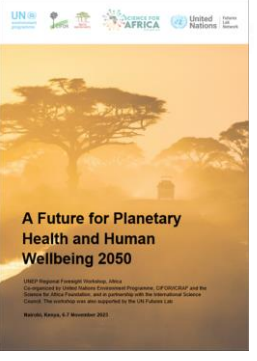
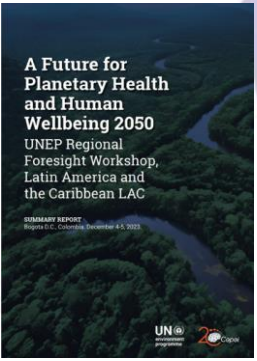
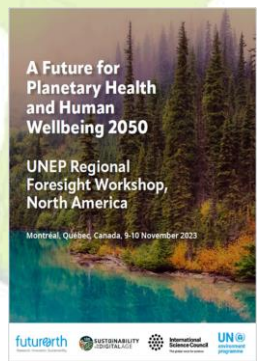
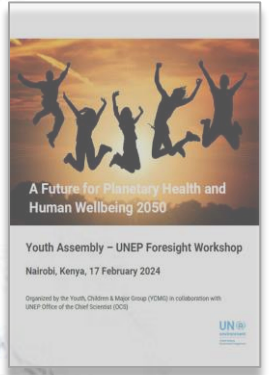


Regional and youth foresight workshops



Local, regional, sociocultural contextualization of insights:

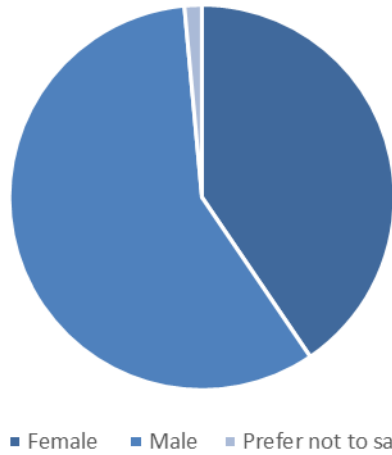
- Underestimated issues
- Reviewing scenarios
- Exploring changes, signs of new, emerging issues
- Key areas for interventions



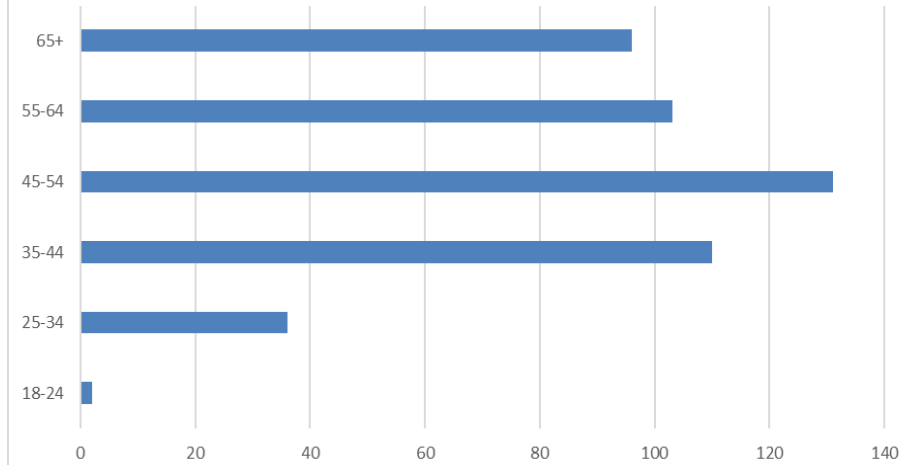
In partnership with UN Environment Programme

Descriptive stats from survey

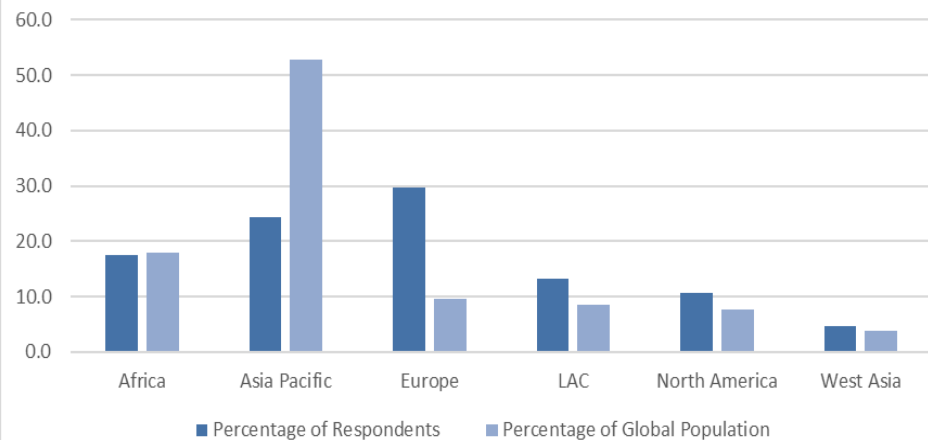
Respondents - Gender breakdown



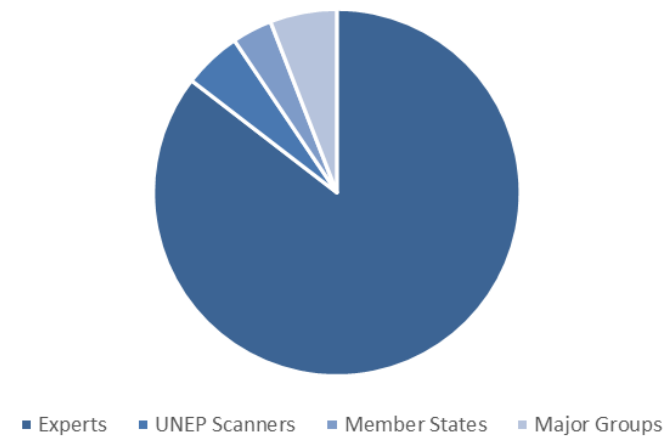
Respondents - Age group



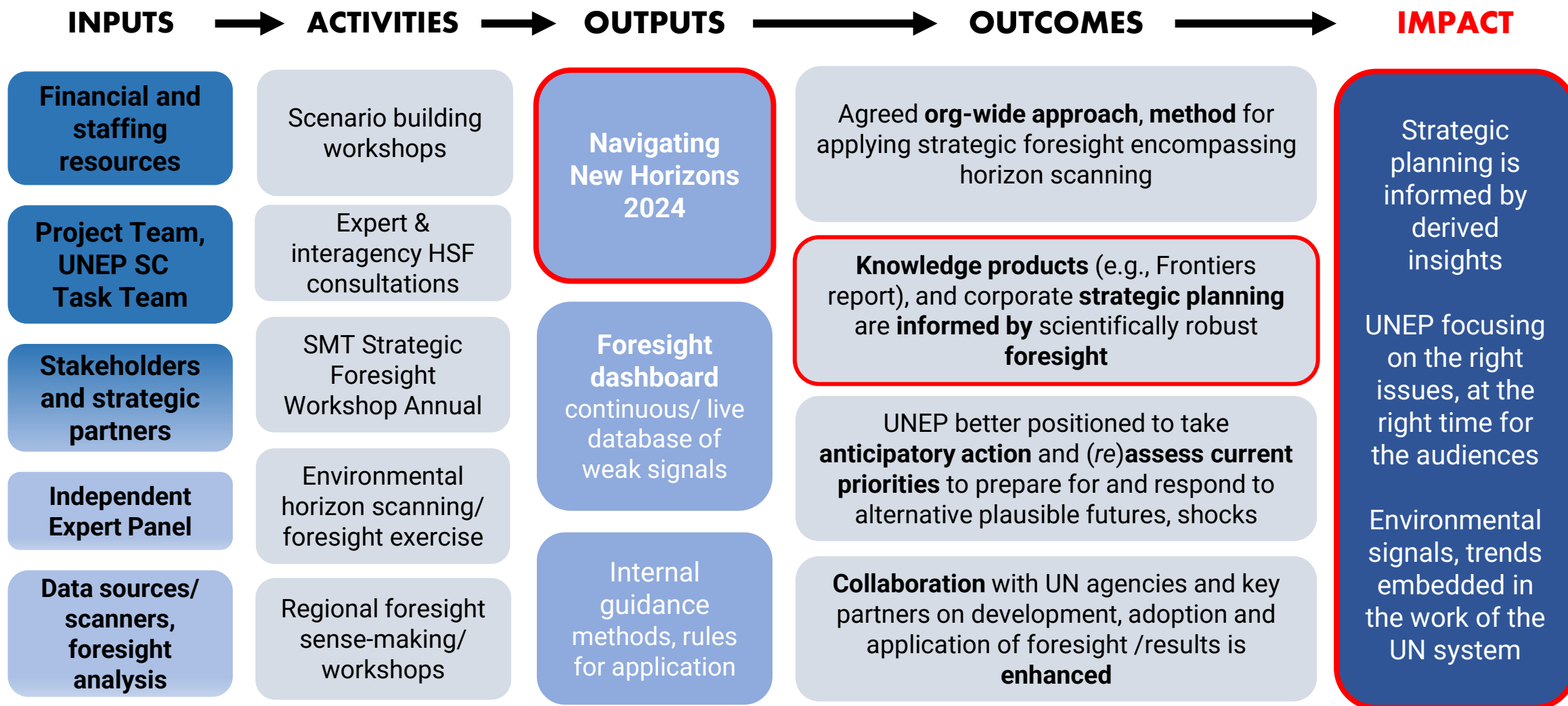
Respondents - Regional Distribution



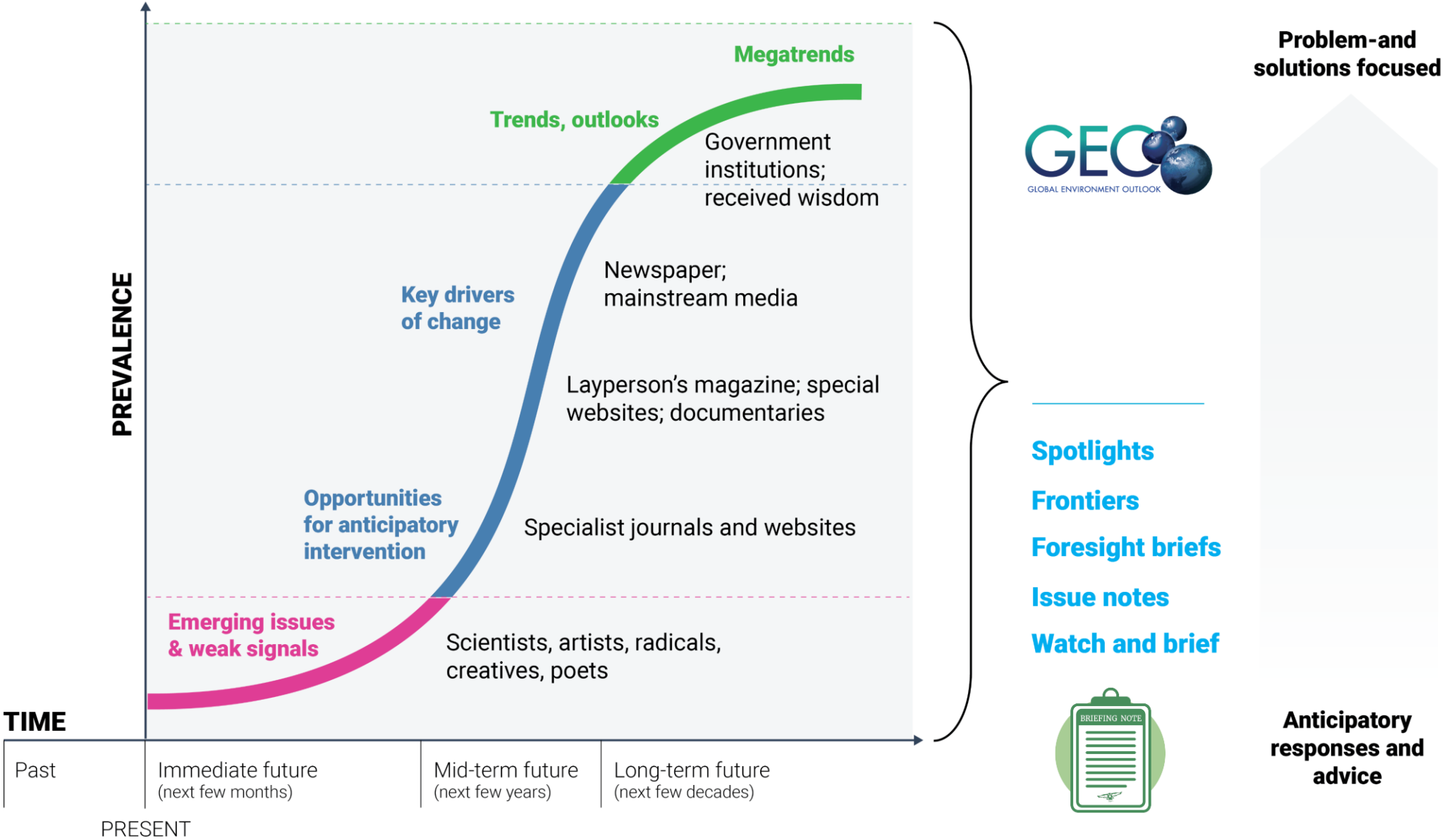
Respondents - Stakeholder Groups



What could Foresight help UNEP with?

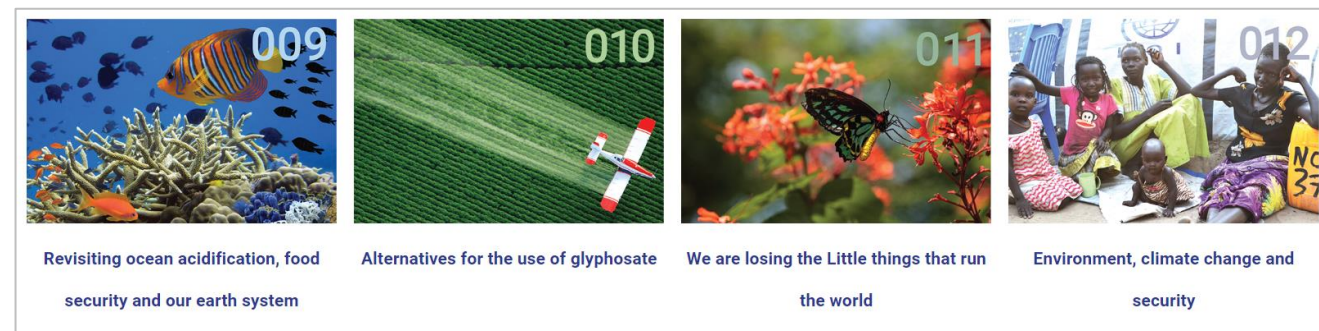
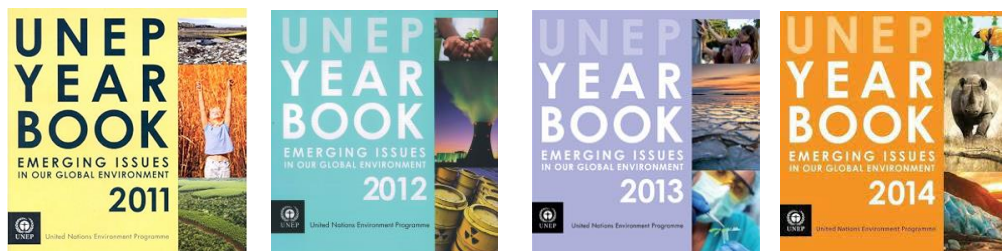


Getting ahead of the curve – future issues (or crises)



Foresight informing key outputs

Emerging issues of environmental concern

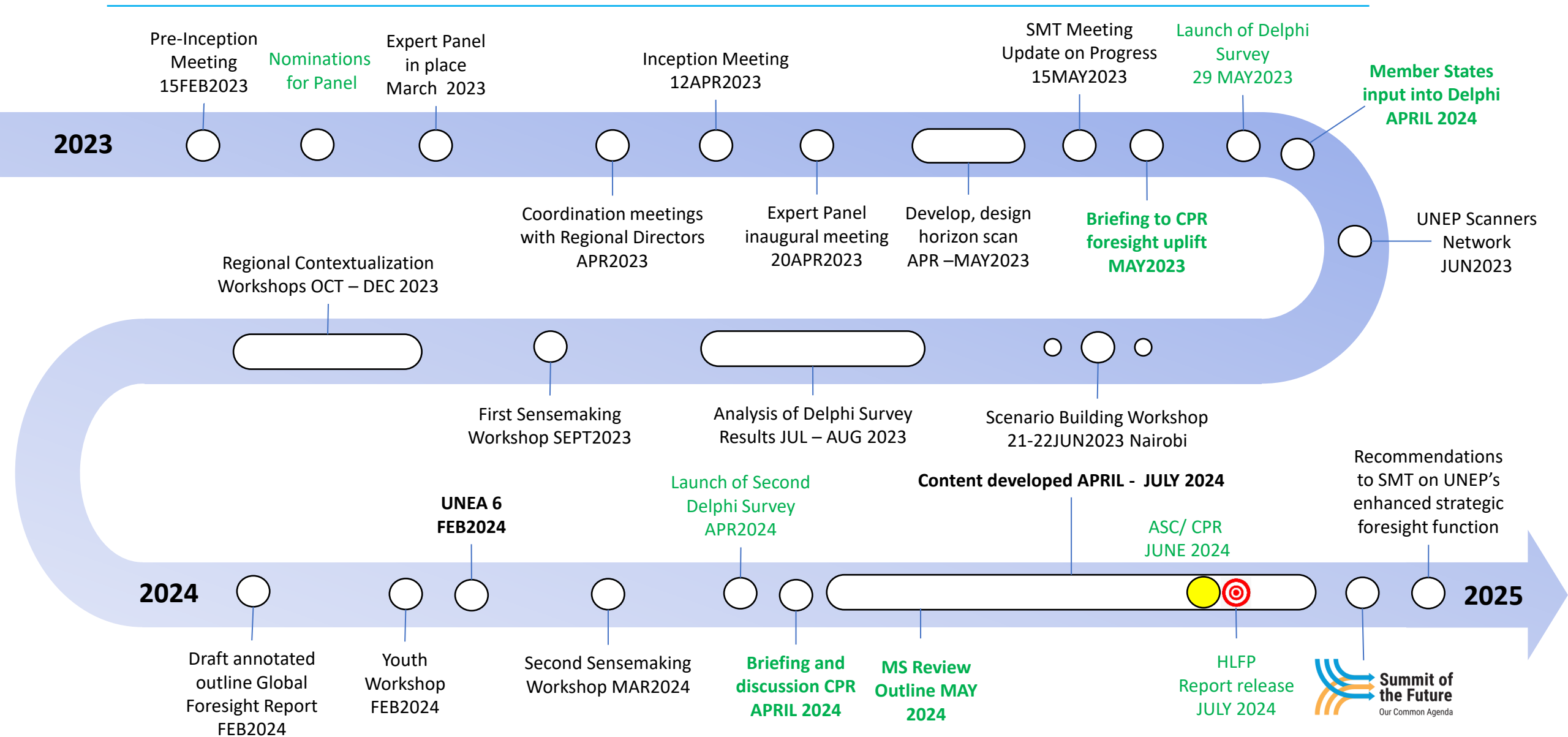


Foresight informing strategic planning



- **Strategic planning is informed by scientifically robust foresight.**
- As we navigate towards the next MTS, UNEP better positioned to take **anticipatory action** and **(re)assess current priorities** to prepare for and respond to alternative plausible futures, shocks.
- The UN is better placed to consider environmental aspects in the different portfolios.
- Member States can consider the issues in their own planning processes.

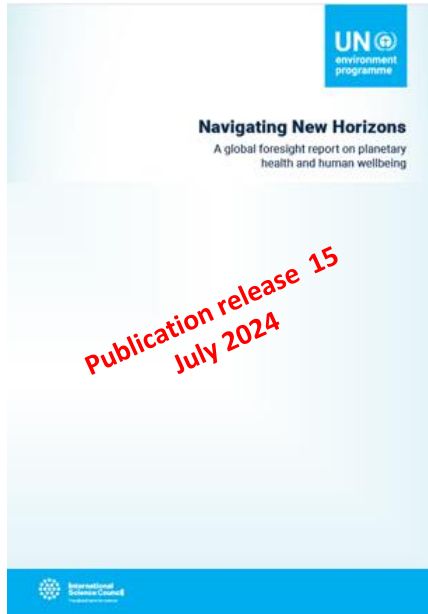
Road map and key milestones



Preliminary reflections and insights – What's new?

- Foresight aims to identify potential signals of change and disruptions, including those outside the traditional environmental space.
- The report highlights a select number of signals of change that **intersect with and affect the environment**, from among the 100s identified during the process, that are of concern.
- By monitoring and analyzing these key signals, as well as others, UNEP, the UN system and other stakeholders can proactively shape strategic interventions that amplify the positive signals and mitigate the negative.

Global Foresight Report – Big picture



- **New operating context**
 - Technological advances, rapid rate of change, new extremes, more frequent and devastating disasters, turbulent geopolitical landscape
- **Critical global shifts and emerging signals of change on the horizon—potential for environmental disruption**
- **The solutions are interlinked**
 - Polycrisis to polysolutions
 - Towards a new social contract; agile governance...

Preliminary reflections and insights – Where are we now?

- The global context in which UNEP operates has shifted – key critical shifts have been identified through the foresight process and are described
 - Examining the nexus between the triple planetary crisis, its current and future impacts on human wellbeing, and widening inequalities.
- These shifts are working in concert – therefore creating a polycrisis – whereby global crises are not just amplifying and accelerating individually but also **appear to be synchronizing**. This is and has environmental implications.

- Positive feedback loops are exacerbating already dire situations; Predictive capabilities are being confounded;
 - Severe flash flooding in **Horn of Africa** in 2024: +49M people acute food insecurity, 2M displaced; **Brazil**: cost of successive disasters +US\$20B
 - Compounding effects of increasing conflicts and forced migration exacerbating certain aspects of the triple planetary crisis
- Three areas are outlined in the report as important opportunities to renew the global approach to addressing environmental concerns and increase society's resilience.
- Importance of **engaging a broader and diverse range of stakeholders**, including indigenous and local peoples; giving young people a stronger voice; intergenerational equity and rethinking measures of progress.

Many of the signals of change can be addressed by implementing existing international environmental commitments. The positive ones will enhance success.

Introduction of more agile and flexible governance measures in the form of shorter term or interim targets and indicators to help keep action on achieving longer term goals would be useful.

The need for integration of data information and knowledge is not new but it has become clear through the foresight process that accelerating progress to achieve integrated, open accessible data across portfolios will help address drivers of environmental degradation and also enable measuring progress more effectively.

- Foresight delivers insights – something needs to be done with them for the process to be useful.
- UNEP needs to consider what process is fit for purpose and can best support its mandate on keeping the environment under review.
- What is a sensible process for horizon scanning for informing UNEP and the broader UN system of emerging issues that can affect the environment.
- How do we embed more futures thinking into our work.

Thank you!



www.unep.org/ocs/strategicforesightatunep

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Horizon scanning and foresight

Trends describe the expected future, the high-probability developments we need to address.

Focusing exclusively on trends risks being blindsided by surprises.

Surprises come from the places we are not looking. **Horizon scanning** and foresight identifies **weak signals** with potentially significant impact

