

DRAFT SUMMARY REPORT OF THE GOVERNANCE AFFAIRS OFFICE RETREAT

DATE: 27TH – 29TH MAY 2024

LOCATION: Sweetwaters Serena Camp, Ol Pejeta Conservancy (Nanyuki)

Participants Present at the Retreat

Radhika Ochalik	Maria Haanes	John Njuguna	Shang Zhang
Ulf Bjornholm	Edwike Nyauncho	Paul Ng'ang'a	Rayan Herpin
David Ombisi	Henry Ndede	Rachel Gomba	Cosmus Mutuku
Laetitia Zobel	Aline Nsengimana	Sabine Walsh	Linda Kegedi
Isaiah Otieno	Marie-Pia Tixier	Brian Mbanga	Monica Mutira
Melissa Ngilandala	Carlota Estalella	Michelle Achieng	
Peter Kirongothi	Ruiwen Zhang		



Agenda Item 1: Introduction and Opening Remarks

- **Moderator:**
 - ✓ David Ombisi introduced the retreat agenda, emphasizing the importance of benchmarking.
 - ✓ David also acted as the MC for the retreat
- **GAO Director and Deputy Director Opening Remarks:**
 - ✓ Radhika Ochalik made her opening remarks and did a presentation titled “Visioning Governance Affairs Office 2.0”
 - ✓ The presentation focused on the lessons learnt and commitments towards building capacity and understanding our impact in environmental governance – this was guided by the 2022-2025 MTS.
 - ✓ The vision of GAO 2.0 revolved around the following:
 - Professional expertise and competence
 - Image/reputation/positioning
 - Innovation
 - New publications
 - Outreach to Member States, UN agencies, multi-stakeholders
 - Resource mobilization and partnership
 - Inclusivity
 - Collaboration
 - Transparent
 - Trust
 - New behaviors
 - Training
 - Collaborative leadership
 - ✓ Opening remarks by Ulf Bjornholm included:
 - Appreciation to the team for the success of the 6th session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.
 - Expectations of the retreat, encouraging staff to be at ease and provide inputs in engagements and enjoy the retreat.

Commented [DA1]: Perhaps it would be nice to summarize the key issues that Radhika highlighted based on Governance Affairs 2.0 (from the previous retreat) - what the vision was then

Agenda Item 2: [Governing Bodies Unit Workplan](#)

- **Objective 1:** Provide efficient and effective secretariat support to the Environment Assembly and its subsidiary bodies.
 - **Presenter:** Paul
 - ✓ This objective was highlighted as an integral part of the GBU work plan, aligning with the GAO office work plan and conforming to the

Commented [DA2]: Maybe we add a link to the final workplan?

Executive Director's Compact, focusing on result-oriented and strategic objectives pertinent to UNEP.

- ✓ **Objective 2:** Contribute to successful preparations for other UNEP-related intergovernmental processes upon request.

➤ **Presenter:** Shang

This objective aimed at contributing to successful preparations for UNEP-related intergovernmental processes.

- **Objective 3:** Serve as the main interface for external relations with representatives of the governing bodies, including through training and digital transformation.

➤ **Presenter:** John, Brian & Sabine

- ✓ Clarification was provided that this goal has been reformulated from last workplan to better align to the IT and digitalization efforts of the Office. It was emphasised that there is a need to ensure:
 - Careful handling of sensitive information and recordkeeping was emphasized..
 - Emphasize was also placed on engaging with the CPR Member States on:
 - ensure effective communication and need for accurate record especially on the website.
 - being proactive.
 - timely training of the CPR members
 - proper meeting management and planning.
 - facilitate increased accreditation of Member States
- Continue the work in increasing accreditation of Member States to the CPR.

Agenda Item 3: **Civil Society Unit Workplan**

- **Objective 1:** Provide efficient and effective secretariat support to the Environment Assembly and its subsidiary bodies by engaging Major Groups and Stakeholders.

➤ **Presenter:** David Ombisi

Commented [DA3]: Were you not able to capture some key issues here?

Commented [RO4R3]: Lets just reflect the objective

Commented [DO5R3]: Okay. Agreed

Commented [DA6]: Maybe we add a link to the final workplan?

- ✓ Discussed the future of Perspectives publication and a follow up meeting with Andrea Hinwood to agree on the use of UNEP logo on the publication. It was agreed that a survey should be sent to the Major Groups and Stakeholders on their views/usefulness of the publication.
- ✓ The existence and activeness of accredited organizations: Accredited organizations are expected to share their annual reports every four years. Ideally, the CSU should undertake a review of all the current accredited organizations to make sure they are still in existence and are actively participating in environmental activities.
- ✓ Explore collaboration with other offices, annual capacity building with international NGOs.
- ✓ Discussion on whether support to Africa Network for Animal Welfare (ANAW) is long-term or short-term. ANAW partnership with UNEP was created from a concern that the number of accredited organizations in Africa was too low to increase the number of accredited organizations in Africa. It was brought to CSU's attention that ANAW is undertaking research to see the impact of the conference so far- in terms of the number of accredited organizations in Africa. The results of the research will be presented in the upcoming conference in September 2024.

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- **Objective 2:** Contribute to successful preparations for other UNEP-related intergovernmental processes and other relevant MGS related activities of UNEP Divisions, Regional Offices and Sister Offices.
 - **Presenter:** Laetitia Zobel
 - ✓ Discussed staffing support and recruitment for the Unit's Chief position. It was explained that the post would be readvertised shortly, however, due to the Regular Budget freeze, the position may not be filled soon.
- **Objective 3:** Serve as the main interface for external relations with representatives of the Major Groups and Stakeholders, including through training and digital transformation
 - **Presenter:** Isaiah
 - ✓ Proposed a separate IT unit for better coordination of IT related work within GAO.
 - ✓ Need to have a follow up discussion on the Resolution Portal, in particular, regarding MGS contribution, while taking into account cyber security issues related to the platform.

Agenda Item 4: Finalization of Workplans

- **Presenter:** Radhika Ochalik

Radhika – requested the two units to submit the finalized workplans to her for her to finalize the Division workplan. She also requested staff to use the finalized unit workplans to prepare their individual workplan before the deadline.

UNEA-7 theme

Radhika informed of the proposed themes that are being reviewed, namely,

1. Emerging environment issues
2. Pathways to a liveable and resilient planet
3. Accelerating just transition for people and planet

Office of the Director

➤ **Presentation by:** Linda

- ✓ Linda read through the General commitments of the office
- ✓ The following reflections were made in response to the general commitments of the office:
 - **Recruitment:**
 - ✓ Recruitment processes need to be reviewed by CSD.
 - **Flexible Work Arrangements:**
 - ✓ One-day flexible work arrangements can be approved; more days or different arrangements depend on special circumstances.
 - ✓ Linda was requested to present on this topic during a team meeting.
 - **Reference to UNEP's Policy and Strategy on gender equality**
 - ✓ If relevant, work plans should include reference to gender-related goals and targets.
 - **Support Work-Life Balance:**
 - ✓ Implement a buddy system to support colleagues having a difficult time.
 - ✓ Schedule emails to be sent before 5 p.m. to avoid sending them late at night.
 - ✓ Allow compensatory time off for overtime work.
 - ✓ Avoid scheduling meetings on Fridays.
 - ✓ Discuss optimal working hours with colleagues/supervisors for certain activities

Commented [DA8]: Maybe merge this with the one above on work-life balance

Agenda Item 5: UNEA-6 Lessons Learned and Assessment

➤ **Presenter:** Carlota

- ✓ The presentation covered lessons learned from the CPR and preparatory process, focusing on the negotiation process.
- ✓ An internal lessons learned document and the CPR lessons learned document is available for further reference.

✓

Agenda Item 6: Informal Reflections on CSU and GBU Collaboration

Bonfire session led by Carlota

- Discussed collaborative workflows between GBU and CSU.

The following issues were discussed.

- ✓ The urgency for recruitment of the CSU Chief to effectively align the workstream of the CSU.
- ✓ Identification of duties that cut across the whole of the Governance Affairs Office for instance Information Communication and Technology and whether there is need to create a third unit.
- ✓ Ensure that GBU and CSU are aware of the work of each unit by having staff attend both GBU and CSU weekly meeting. Also ensure that the agenda of each meeting is shared in advance as well as the summary of the meetings,
- ✓ It was proposed that meetings should be held as follows: Wednesdays: 10-11 (GBU); 11-12 (CSU); and 12-1 (GAO). The GAO meetings to be on a fortnightly basis. Meetings to be chaired by different colleagues from the Office.
- ✓ There is need for more visibility on the work of CSU in the work of Governance Affairs.

✓

Agenda Item 7: UNEA-7 Preparations and Retreat Recap

- **Presenter:** Carlota

- ✓ Carlota presented a detailed UNEA-7 preparations and draft workplan and later invited colleagues to give feedback.

The following comments on the UNEA-7 draft work plan were provided by colleagues:

- ✓ Expressed appreciations and confirmed the workplan which was built on achievements from UNEA-6, is comprehensive and useful.
- ✓ Suggested to include lead DRIs for each point to be filled in, along with Cluster lead/subtitle lead, and set up teams.
- ✓ Suggested to extract each cluster and sent to cluster leads for timeline provision and information capture and reported to the GAO team meeting.
- ✓ Encouraged to cooperate with MEAs on how to implement their agenda item in UNEA-7.
- ✓ Discussed whether the next MTS could influence or guide the theme for UNEA-7.
- ✓ Lessons learned from UNEA-6 could help further improve the guidelines for the submission of draft resolutions for UNEA-7.

- **Retreat Recap:**

✓ **Acknowledgements and Gratitude:**

Special thanks were expressed to the retreat organizing team.

✓ **Team-Building Activities:**

The team-building activities were highlighted and suggested to be continued in future retreats.

These activities strengthened teamwork and collaboration between the units and their importance was emphasized.

✓ **Management Meetings with staff:**

Management meetings with UNVs, Interns, G staff, and P staff were highlighted as useful for sharing ideas and insights.

✓ **Future Retreat Format:**

A proposal was made for a 3-night, 4-day format for the next retreat.

It was recommended to hold events more frequently and in more economical locations.

✓ **Collaboration Between Units:**

It was stated that CSU and GBU have more in common than expected and should share and learn from each other.

Everyone was reminded to work as a team and help each other.

✓ **Building Trust and Communication:**

The importance of personal connections that build trust in the workplace was emphasized.

Empowering people from management and fostering bottom-up communication were stressed.

The significance of communication and understanding colleagues' needs was highlighted.

Conclusion

The retreat was successful in reviewing past activities, planning future work, and enhancing collaboration within the GAO. The discussions led to actionable insights and strategies for improving operations and fostering a more cohesive and effective work environment. It was agreed that there will be quarterly review of the implementation of the retreat outcomes.