

## Outcome of the First Authors Meeting of the sixth edition of the Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6) for Cities

The Co-Chairs and Authors of GEO-6 for Cities met at the Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites Vancouver Downtown from October 14-18, 2019 to familiarize the authors with the GEO process, logistics and procedures as well as allow for brainstorming on an overall strategy for completing the five chapters of the GEO-6 for Cities report. The meeting also provided an opportunity for an orientation session for all authors where they worked on expanding the annotated outlines for each chapter and began drafting the chapters towards their zero-order draft stage. Lastly, the team defined next steps, roles and responsibilities.

### The meeting decided:

- The storyline that goes across the report should be how cities could be power houses towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals;
- To try and provide hopeful message at the end of the report;
- Start with how diversity of cities affects the vision and pathway to sustainable cities;
- Cross cutting issues will be defined first and then later a decision will be taken on where to put them;
- Case studies could be used as supporting materials, but the report will need to focus on actual pathways;
- A good purpose statement for the report is 'showing how cities can set, prioritize and achieve their environmental goals while achieving other social and economic goals and contributing their fair share to environmental goals';
- At the end of each chapter, a summary will be provided;
- Co-chairs and secretariat will keep searching for additional authors based on a gap analysis in each chapter;
- Secretariat will talk to the Coordinating Lead Authors in Chapter 1 to explain the key points in introduction chapter;
- The zero-order draft will be delivered to the [Advisory Committee](#) for comments in the middle of December, which should include confirmed structure and key messages;
- Secretariat will confirm the date and location for the second authors meeting in early November. The second authors meeting will be a drafting meeting;
- Secretariat will organize a call with the [Advisory Committee](#) to update them on the results of the meeting.

The [Co-Chairs of GEO for Cities](#) gave a warm welcome and thanked everyone for participating in the meeting. After thanking Grid-Arendal for hosting the meeting, co-chairs illustrated the objectives of the five-day meeting. The secretariat highlighted that from discussions with the [Advisory Committee](#), the GEO-6 for Cities report should consider biodiversity and cities since there is a lot of guidance that exists related to climate and cities. Also discussed was the planned launch of the report at the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Beijing in 2020. A representative from the Cities Unit at UNEP gave an overview about their work related to cities and how they will work together with UN Habitat to support the GEO-6 for Cities process.



GEO-6 for Cities - Authors

It was emphasized that the GEO-6 for Cities report should be more actionable and policy related. Some key points are as follows:

- The report should be related to SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and other SDG targets;
- Key messages for the chapters already exist but the 'how to' messages are not obvious, which should be explored more;
- Cities could be the answer to the energy, food and waste questions that come from GEO-6;
- Ensure it is an environment report and not a climate report;
- Try to help urban people to understand the environment;
- The target audience is multiple, but the priority target should be confirmed;

Coordinating Lead Authors in chapters 1-4 presented their views of their respective chapter. The discussion included how to define cities. Apparently, there is no clear definition of cities. Some authors mentioned it is directly connected to the type of audience, and it also depends on what issues will be addressed in the report. It was agreed that there will be 3-4 lines to define the scope of cities in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 will describe the environmental issues in Cities. There was a deeper discussion on typology in Chapter 3. One solution that was proposed, was to start with how diversity of cities affects the vision and pathway to sustainable cities. Co-chairs and secretariat will keep supporting Chapter 3 authors to figure out the typology issues to be covered. For Chapter 4, it would be necessary to do a deep dive on the environmental part of SDG 11. Chapter 5 could start drafting later than other chapters, but it's necessary to frame the chapter earlier and think about the connection with other chapters.



A discussion session during the five-day meeting

It was emphasized again that it would be more prudent to add biodiversity into the report. It was also agreed that the report should try to provide hopeful message at the end and include the political economy somewhere in the report.

To avoid overlap and to ensure coherence, discussions among different chapters are quite important, co-chairs encouraged authors in different chapters to communicate more. Given the [main findings of GEO-6](#) centred around energy, food and waste, it was discussed that it would be good to bring that connection to the pathway chapter.

Following the various chapter discussions, co-chairs requested authors to write down the niche for the report. Some comments that were provided are as follows:

- Action based report
- Cities need nature and nature needs cities
- Links to biodiversity and functioning ecosystems to healthy cities
- Cities save the world
- Focus on local and then push to global



The Last session of the second day was an orientation session where the secretariat made presentations on including chart and maps in the report, writing for assessments and citation and referencing to provide guidance on the process.

On the third day of the meeting, authors met in their respective chapter groups to discuss the progression of their chapters. Co-chairs gave a presentation on the target audience, key messages and niche. The target or priority audience will be urban and environment experts, who are already working in the urban or environmental field. This report could help catalyse them into action. The niche of this reports consists of three parts: forward-looking, focus on 'how', and having environment at the core. For the key messages, 'transformative' was mentioned to be the key word and more information on transformation should be illustrated.



