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**United Nations
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Programme**

**United Nations Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment Programme
Fifth session**

Nairobi (hybrid), 22–26 February 2021 and 28 February–2 March 2022*
Item 5 of the provisional agenda**

International environmental policy and governance issues

**Progress in the implementation of resolution 4/23 entitled
“Keeping the world environment under review: enhancing the
United Nations Environment Programme science-policy
interface and endorsement of the Global Environment
Outlook”: results of the consultation on the findings of the
feasibility study on the financial, administrative and
collaborative consequences of the recommended options and
approaches for the future of the Global Environment Outlook**

Note by the secretariat

1. In its resolution 4/23, entitled “Keeping the world environment under review: enhancing the United Nations Environment Programme science-policy interface and endorsement of the Global Environment Outlook”, the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme requested a broad consultation on the options for the future of the Global Environment Outlook. That consultation was conducted as part of the preparation of the interim report of the steering committee on the future of the Global Environment Outlook on options for the future of the Outlook (UNEP/EA.5/24), submitted for consideration by the Environment Assembly during the online meeting of its fifth session.
2. As part of its continued work, the steering committee considered that a second broad consultation should be held on the findings of the feasibility study on the financial, administrative and collaborative consequences of the recommended options and approaches for the future of the Global Environment Outlook (UNEP/EA.5/INF/26, annex), since those findings would be an integral part of the steering committee’s final report (UNEP/EA.5/27). The results of that second broad consultation are set out in the annex to the present note, without formal editing.

* In accordance with the decisions taken by the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its meeting held on 8 October 2020 and by the bureaux of the United Nations Environment Assembly and the Committee of Permanent Representatives at their joint meeting held on 1 December 2020, the fifth session of the Environment Assembly was adjourned on 23 February 2021 and is expected to resume as an in-person meeting in February 2022.

** UNEP/EA.5/1/Rev.2.

Annex

Results of the consultation on the findings of the feasibility study on the financial, administrative and collaborative consequences of the recommended options and approaches for the future of the Global Environment Outlook*

1. Purpose and structure

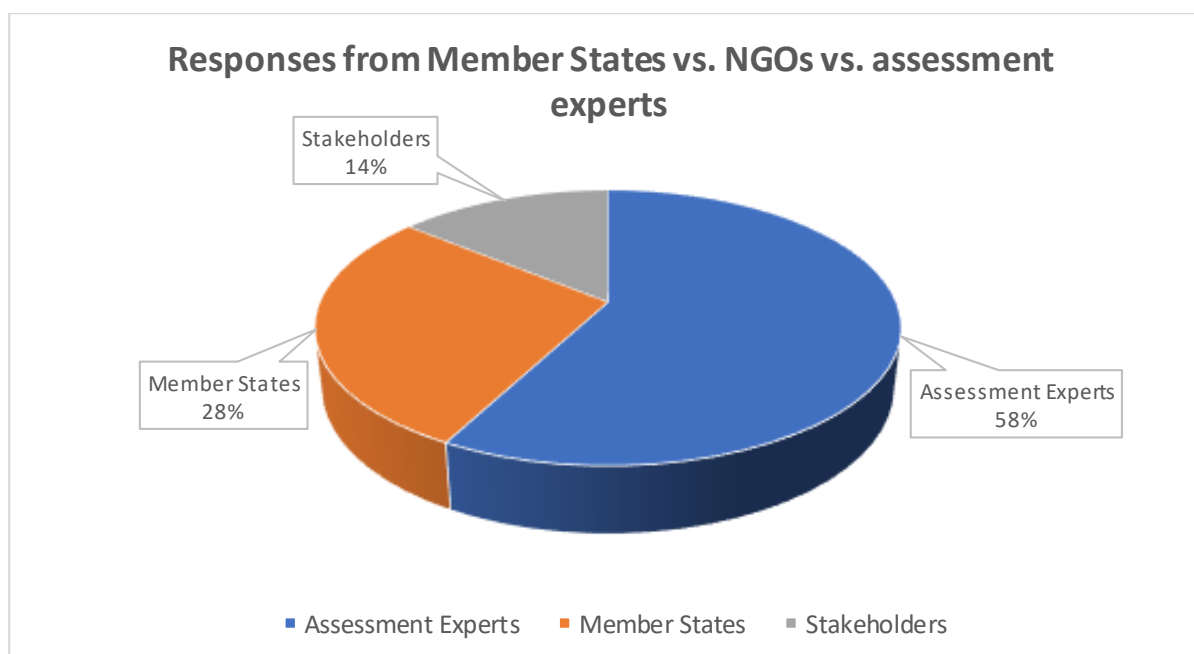
This document provides a brief synopsis of the key results of the consultation on the findings of the feasibility study for the Future of the GEO process, which examined the financial, administrative and collaborative consequences of the recommended options and approaches. The analysis is meant to inform the deliberations of the Future of GEO Steering Committee at its November workshop.

2. Diversity of responses

The Future of GEO consultation period began on October 4, 2021 and ended October 22, 2021. It was supported by a feasibility study report prepared by the Steering Committee on the Future of GEO and an interim report that the Committee had submitted to the opening session of UNEA-5 in February 2021. The entire consultation occurred online due to the global pandemic. 4 orientation webinars were organized to assist participants to better understand the context and purpose of the consultation and to understand the consultation tools (mainly the questionnaire which was made available in all 6 UN languages) that were being used.

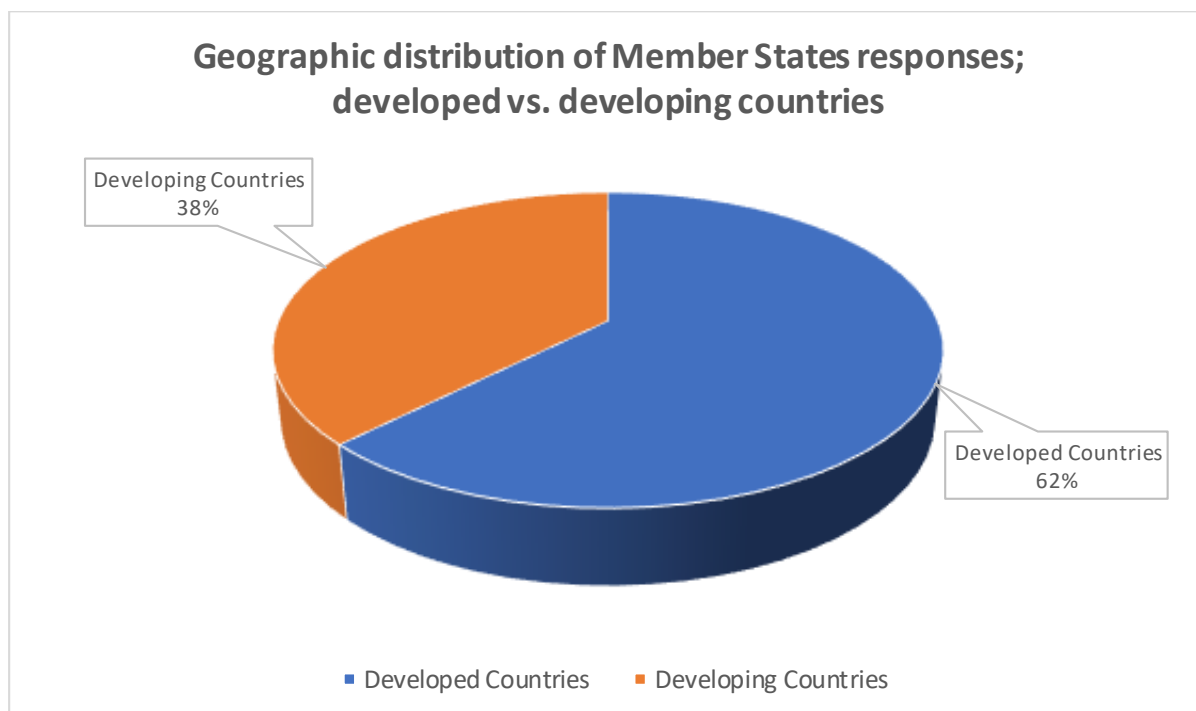
Some brief highlights of the consultation include: 167 participants in the webinars, 172 questionnaires completed, 47 consolidated responses vs. individual responses, 125 of independent written responses, etc. The European Union and its Member States provided a consolidated response for this consultation. In this analysis, the EU+ MS input has been treated as 27 responses rather than one for accuracy of the analysis. In addition to these highlights, efforts were made by the Secretariat to encourage responses from a wide range of countries and experts. In all, 2 reminders were sent by the Secretariat during the consultation to ensure a diversity of responses were received.

2.1 Distribution of responses from Member States vs. NGOs vs. assessment experts



* The annex has not been formally edited.

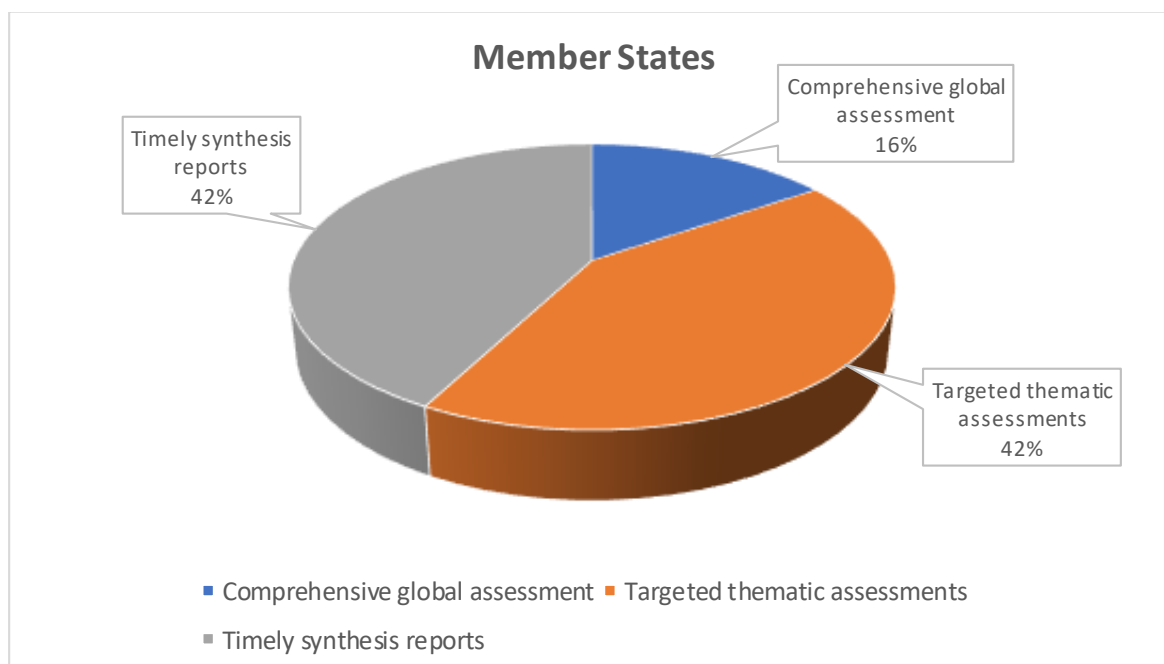
2.2 Geographic distribution (developed vs. developing countries) for Member States responses received

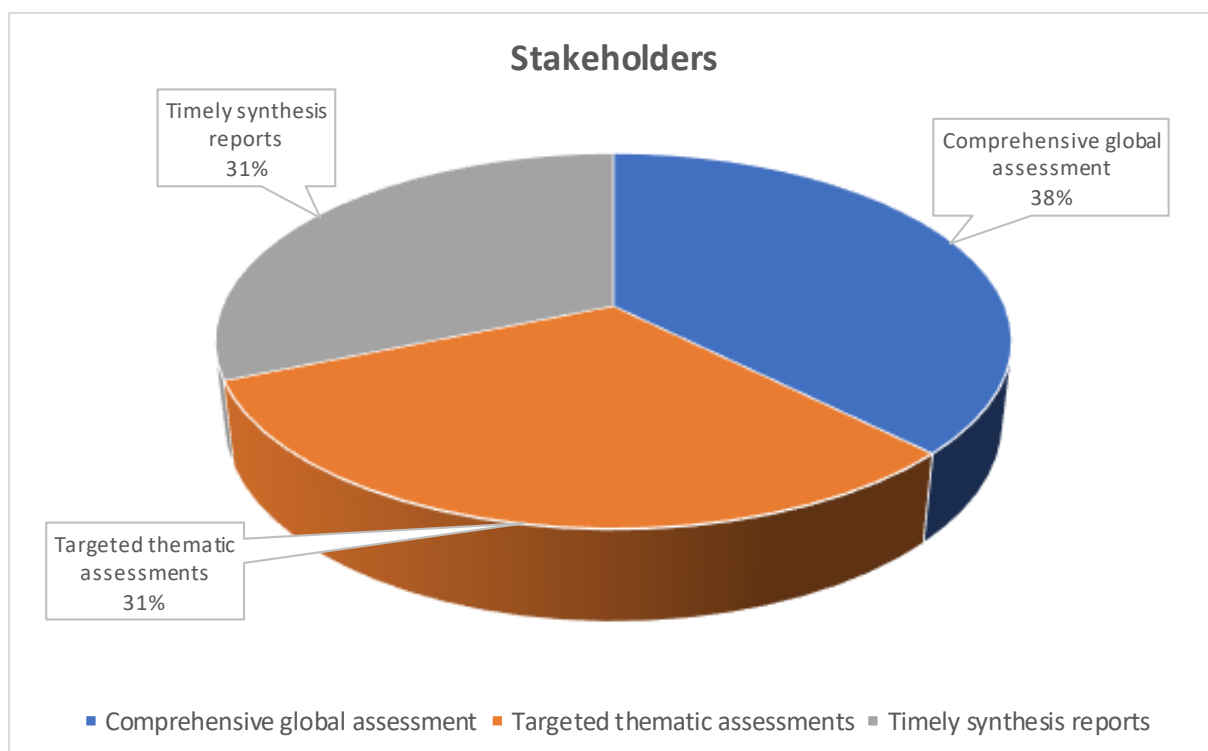
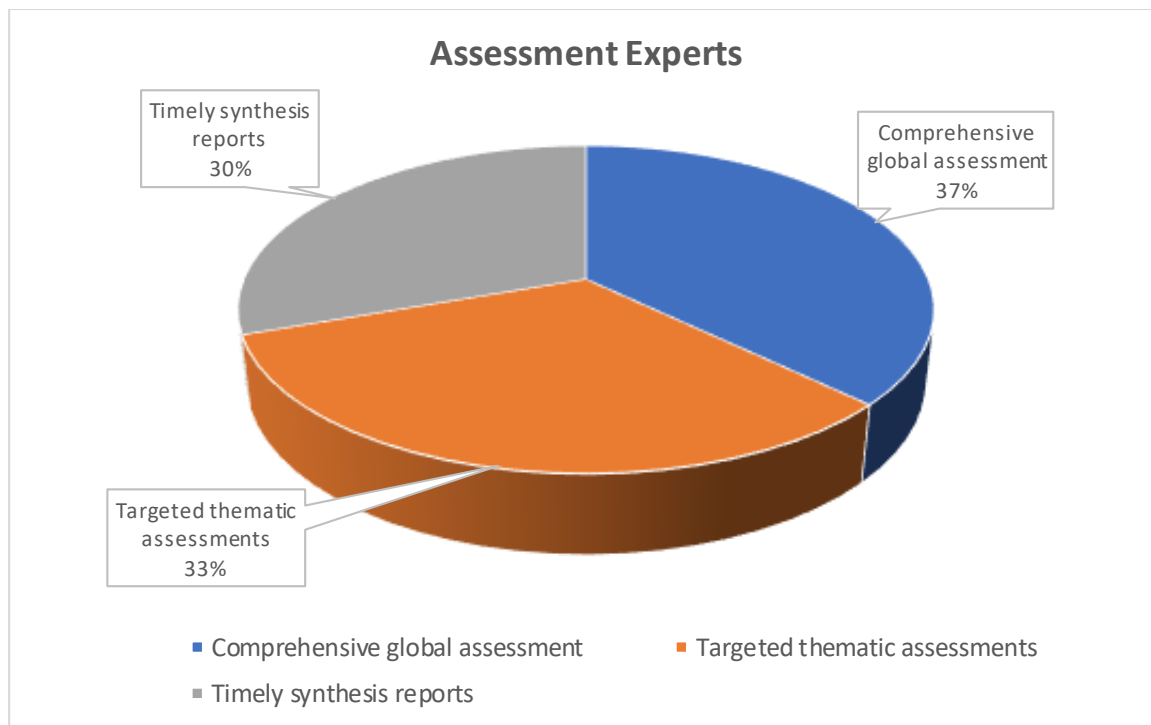


3. Responses from the feasibility study questions

3.1 Choices on the preferred GEO assessment options of immediate priority

Of the consultees, Member States favored the options of timely synthesis reports and targeted thematic assessments over comprehensive assessments. Assessment experts and stakeholders were almost equally split over the choice of future GEO assessment options with a marginal preference of assessment experts and stakeholders for comprehensive global assessments.





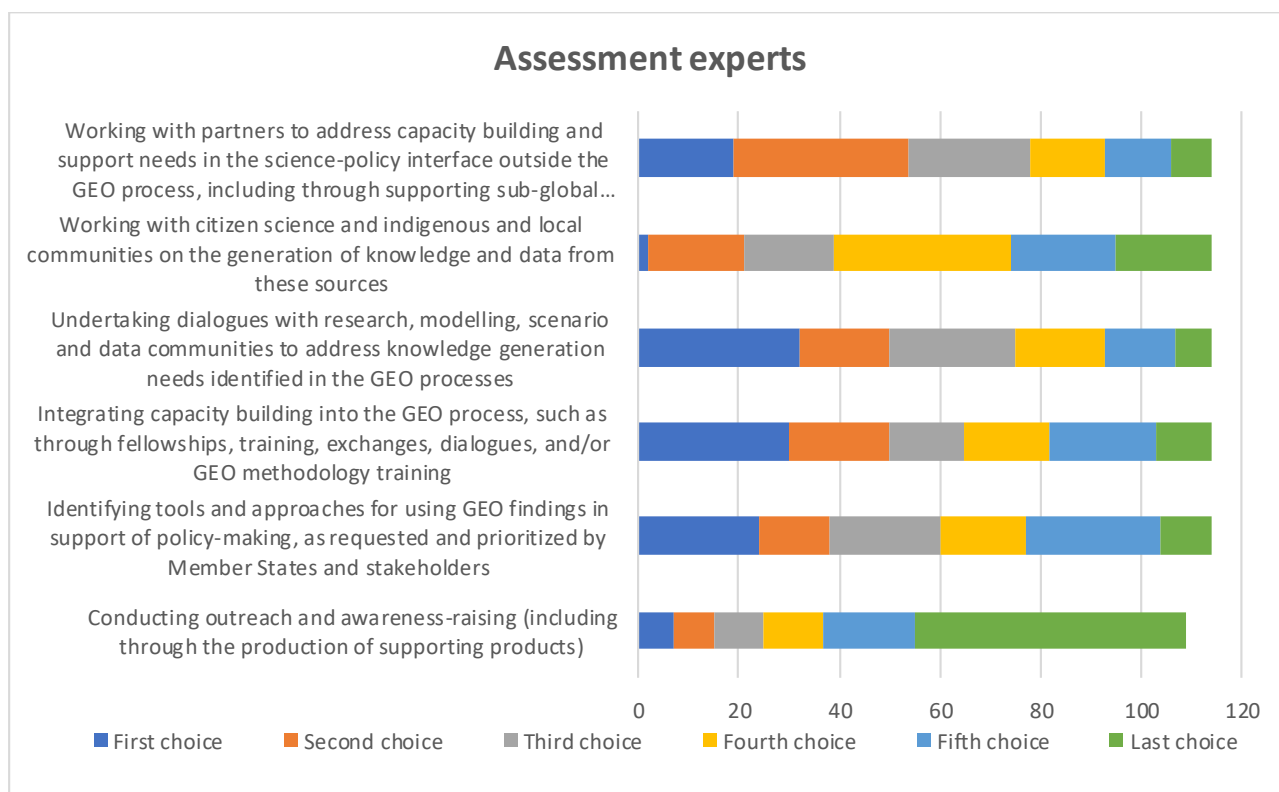
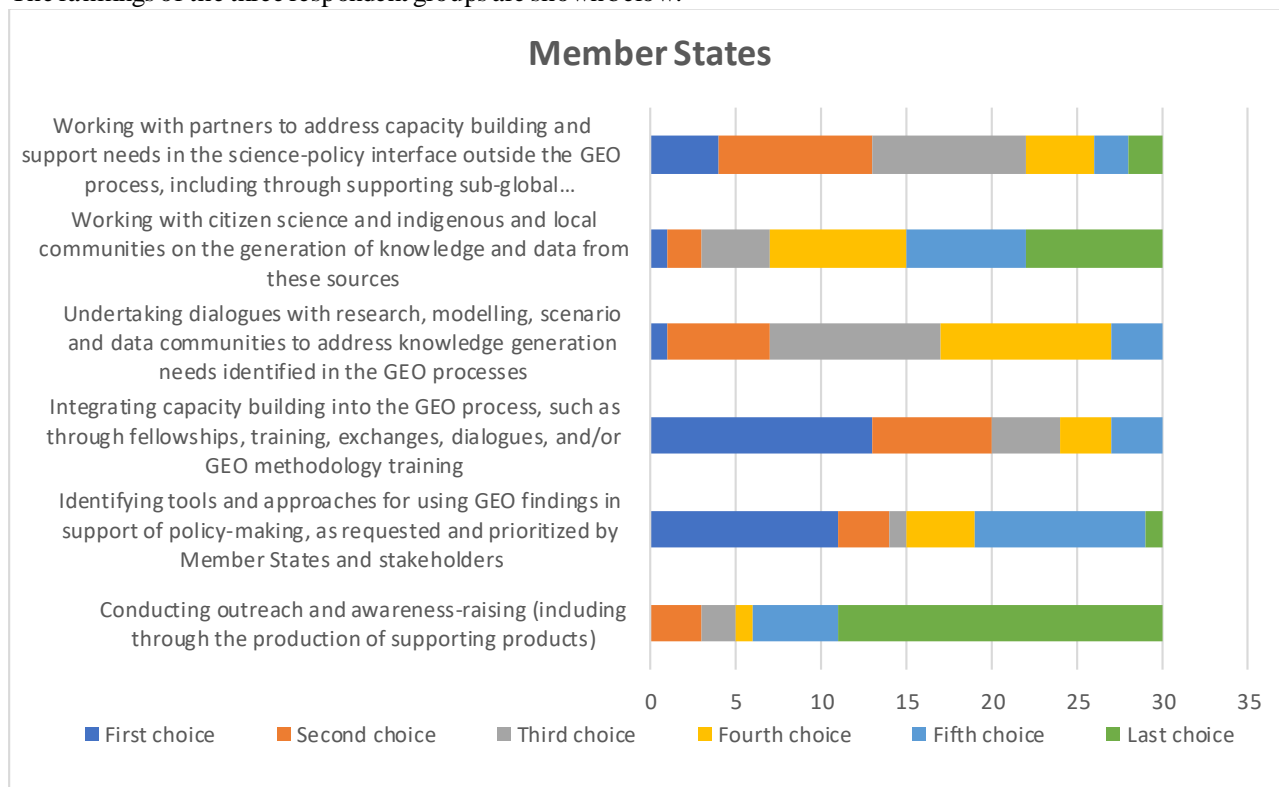
3.2 Ranking of collection of GEO support services

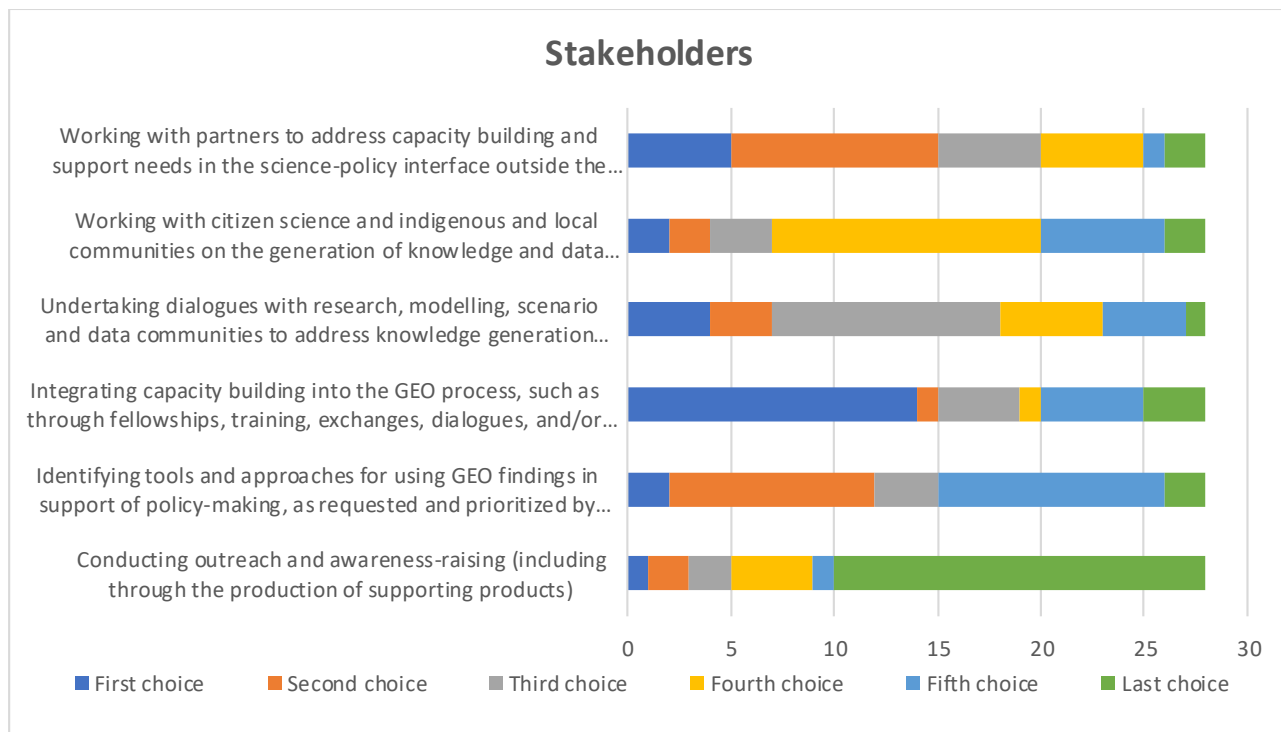
Consultees felt collectively that GEO's support services should be prioritized as below:

1. Integrating capacity building into the GEO process, such as through fellowships, training, exchanges, dialogues, and/or GEO methodology training
2. Working with partners to address capacity building and support needs in the science-policy interface outside the GEO process, including through supporting sub-global assessments
3. Undertaking dialogues with research, modelling, scenario and data communities to address knowledge generation needs identified in the GEO processes

4. Working with citizen science and indigenous and local communities on the generation of knowledge and data from these sources
5. Identifying tools and approaches for using GEO findings in support of policy-making, as requested and prioritized by Member States and stakeholders
6. Conducting outreach and awareness-raising (including through the production of supporting products)

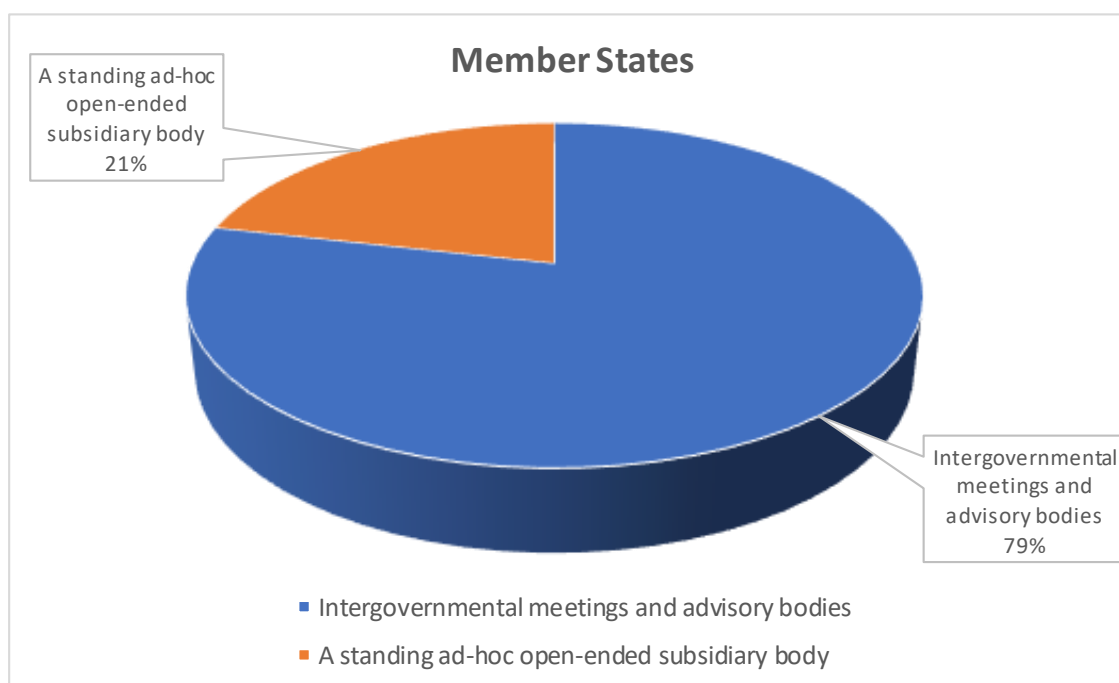
The rankings of the three respondent groups are shown below.

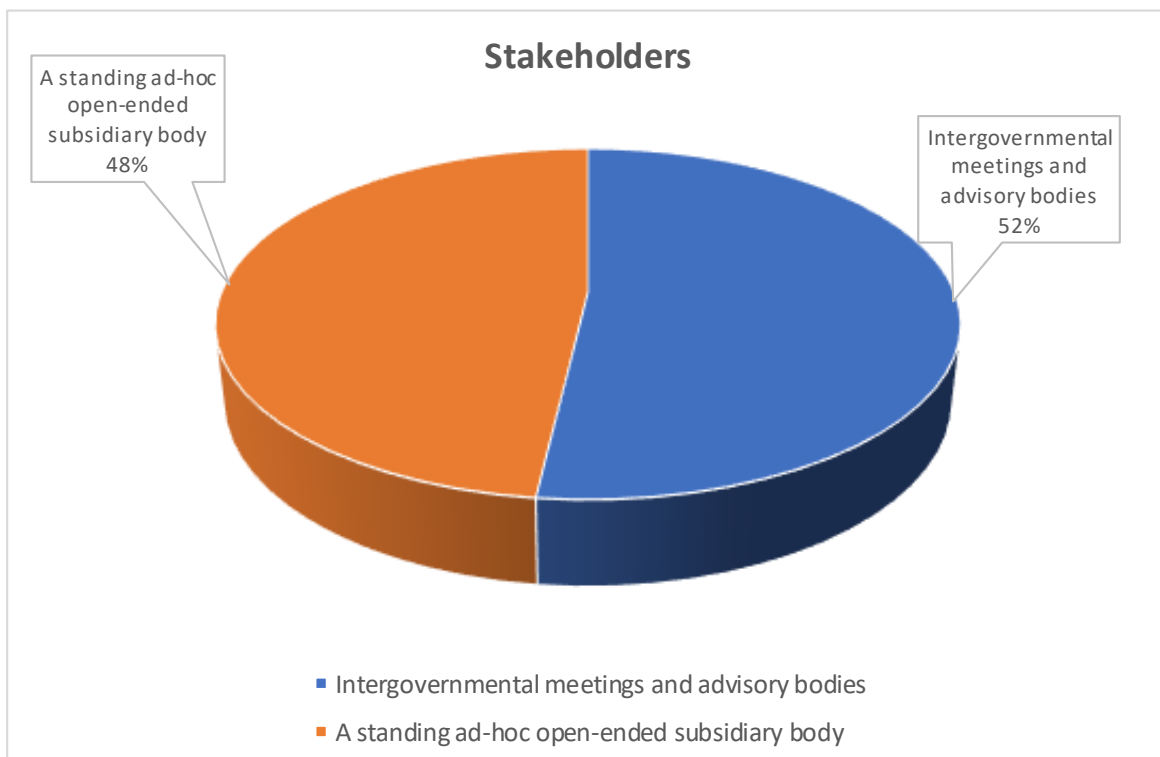
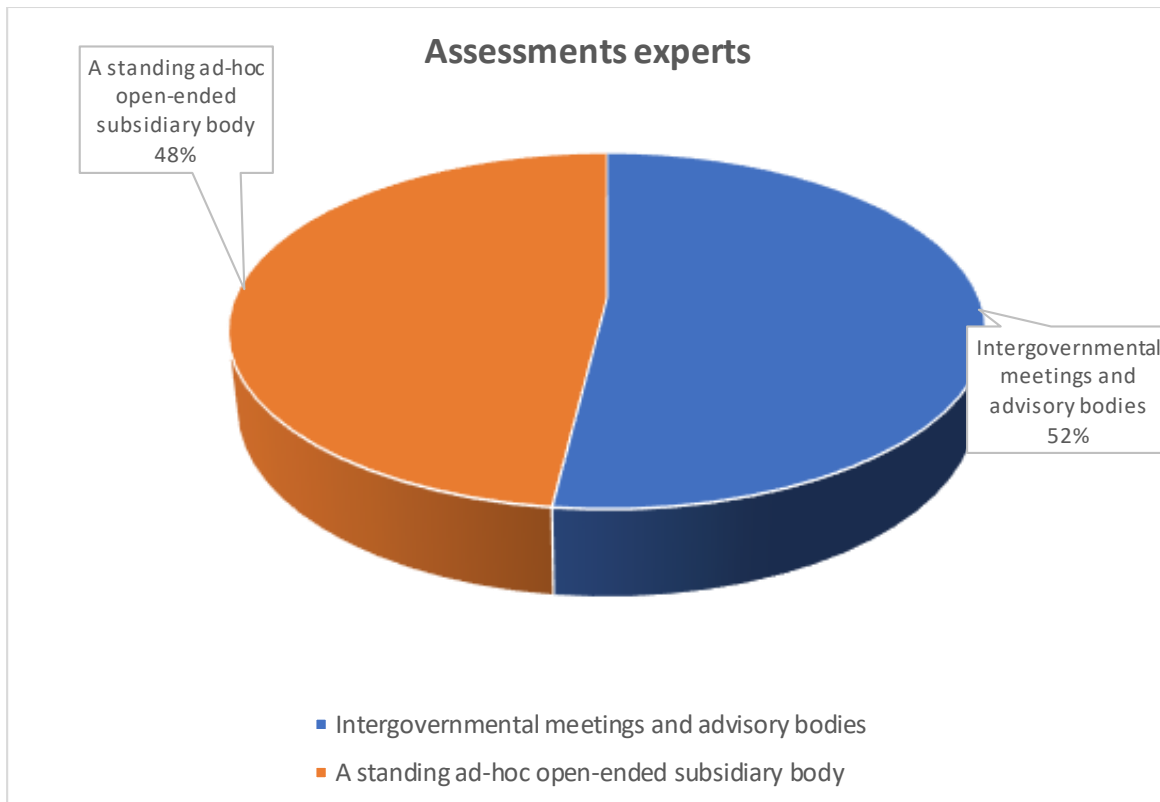




3.3 Choices on the preferred GEO's governance approach

Of the consultee groups, Member States strongly supported the governance model of intergovernmental meetings and advisory bodies (alternative 1) over the model of a standing ad hoc open-ended subsidiary body (alternative 2). Stakeholders and assessment experts were almost evenly divided between the two options. In general consultees prefer an intergovernmental meeting and bodies approach similar to past GEOs.





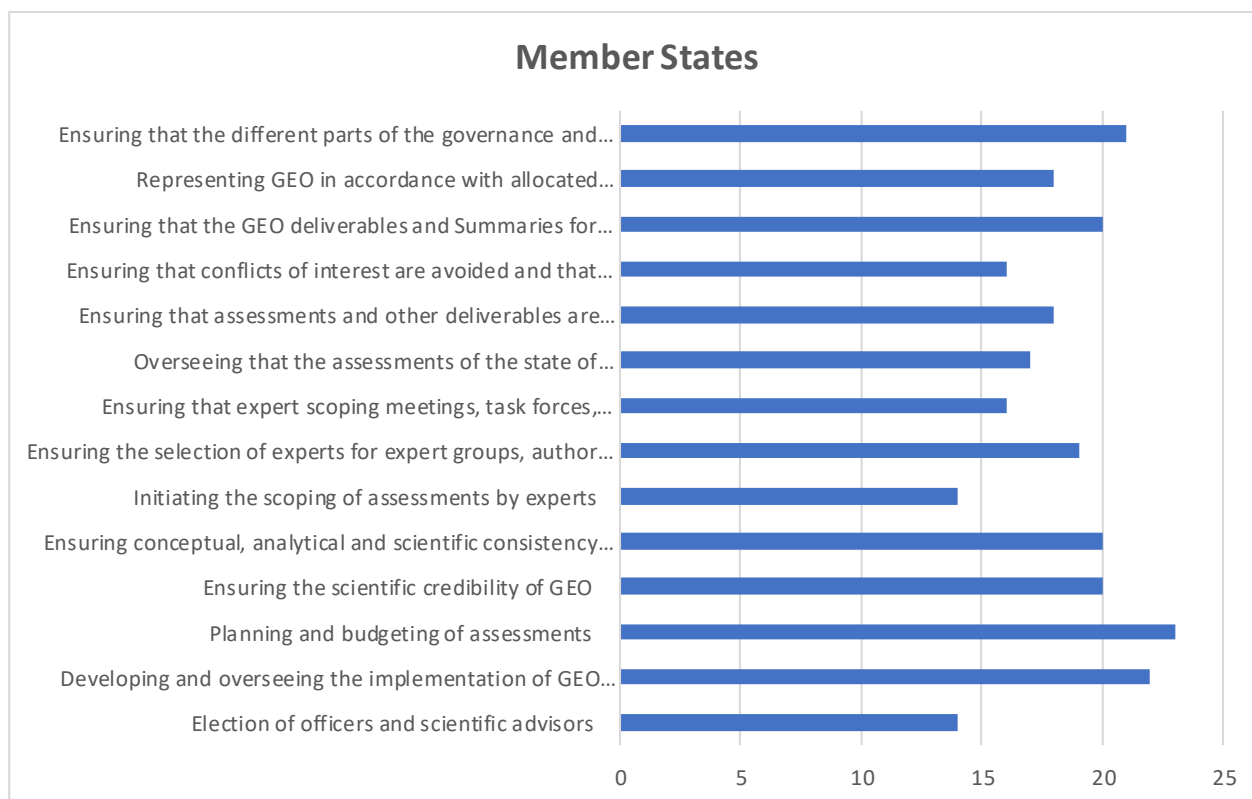
3.4 Choices on potential functions for the Governance and Implementation body of GEO

Most consultees favored most of the roles provided in the questionnaire. Overall consultees felt that GEO's governance roles should be prioritized as below;

1. Ensuring the scientific credibility of GEO as a robust and rigorous assessment based on scientifically accepted methods and a analysis from multiple sources;

2. Ensuring conceptual, analytical and scientific consistency and rigour in the development and implementation of the long-term rolling programme of work;
3. Planning and budgeting of assessments and support to agreed needs in capacity building, knowledge generation and/or policy making;
4. Ensuring that the GEO deliverables and Summaries for Policy Makers are cleared following due process
5. Developing and overseeing the implementation of GEO procedures;
6. Ensuring the selection of experts for expert groups, author teams and task forces on the basis of the merits of experts from nominations provided by Member States and relevant stakeholders.
7. Ensuring that assessments and other deliverables are subject to expert peer review and reviews by Member States and stakeholders;
8. Overseeing that the assessments of the state of knowledge are undertaken by a gender, disciplinary and geographically balanced team of independent experts acting in their personal capacity
9. Ensuring that the different parts of the governance and implementation structure acts in a mutually supportive manner in carrying out its functions;
10. Ensuring that conflicts of interest are avoided and that possible errors are investigated and addressed;
11. Election of officers and scientific advisors as applicable based on agreed guidelines and approaches;
12. Ensuring that expert scoping meetings, task forces, workshops, and expert groups for other reports and deliverables are presided over;
13. Initiating the scoping of assessments by experts;
14. Representing GEO in accordance with allocated responsibilities;

The preferences of the three respondent groups are shown below.

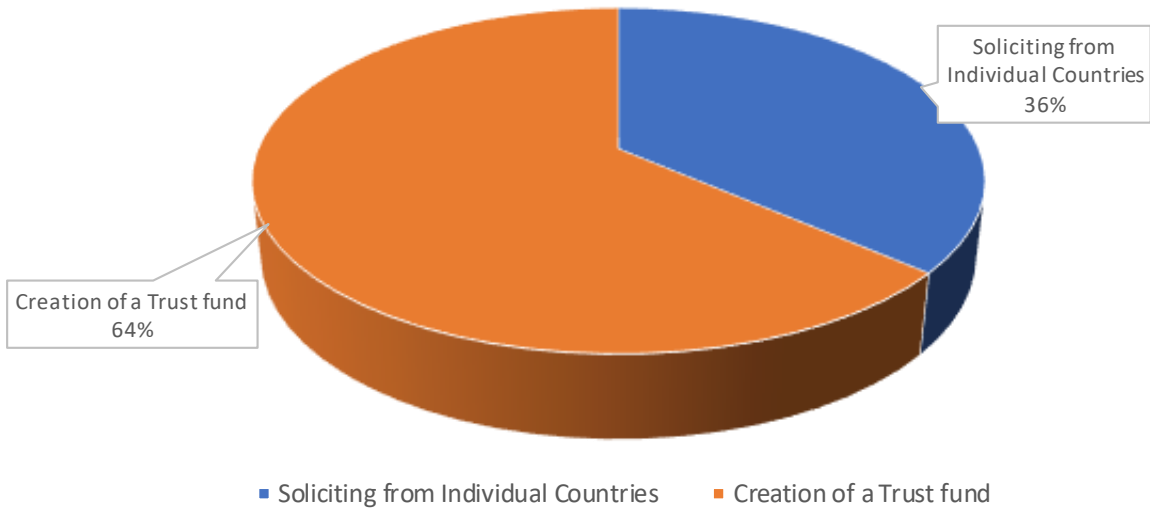




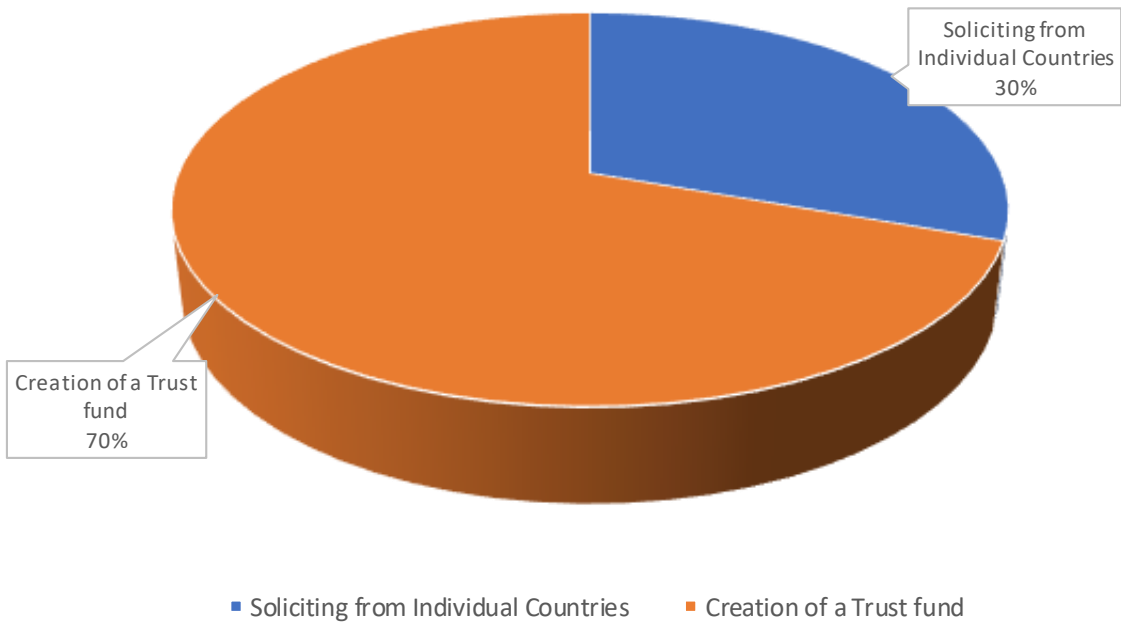
3.5 Choices on mechanisms best placed to enable voluntary contributions from Member States and other donors

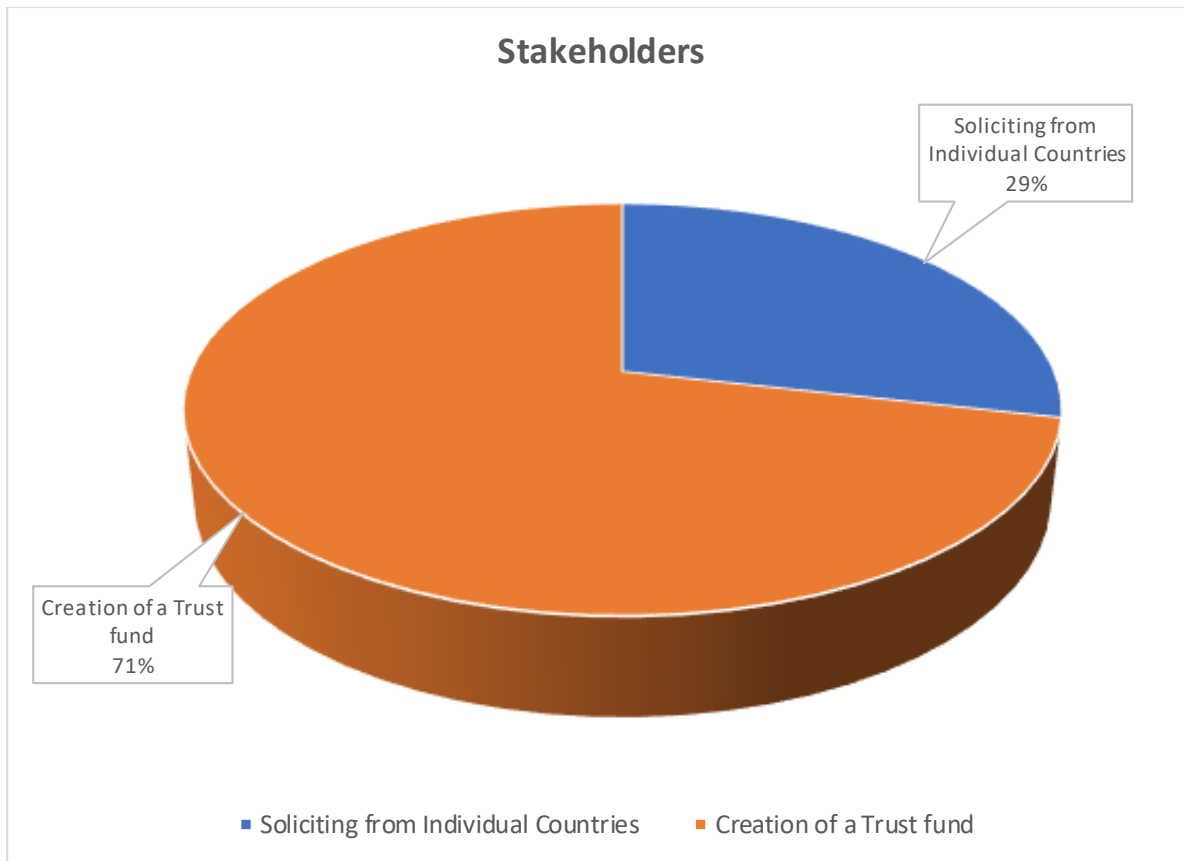
In general, all consultees preferred creation of a trust fund over soliciting funds from individual countries. Assessment experts and stakeholders were marginally more favor of a trust fund than Member States.

Member States



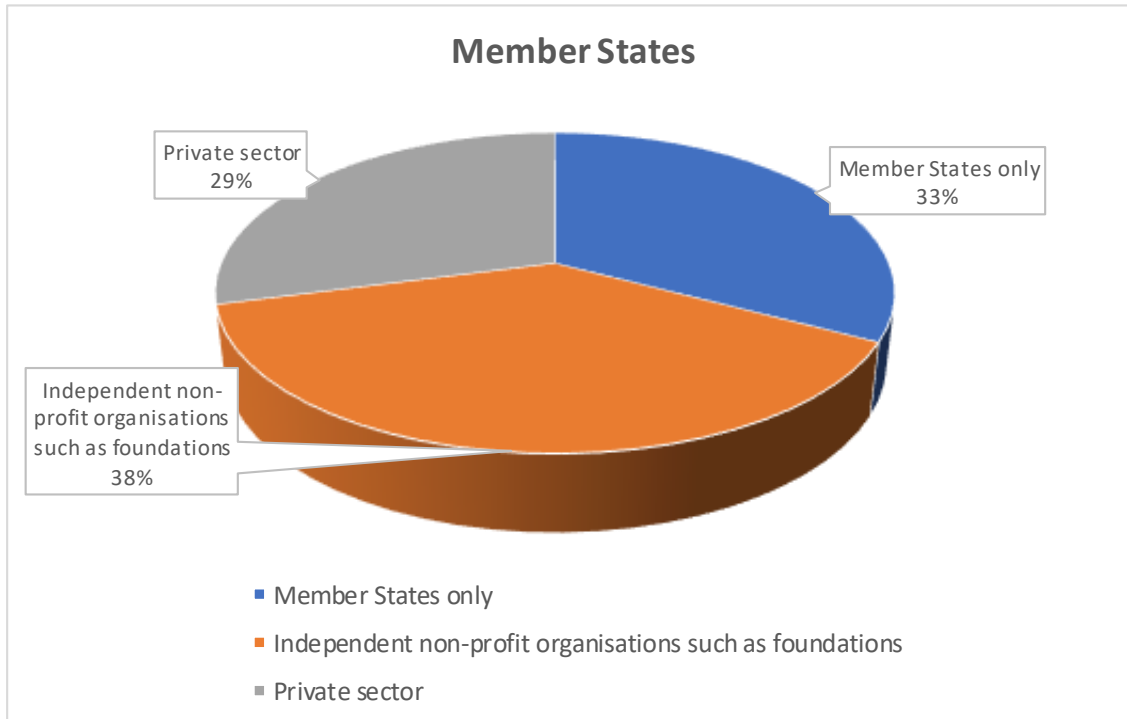
Assessments Experts

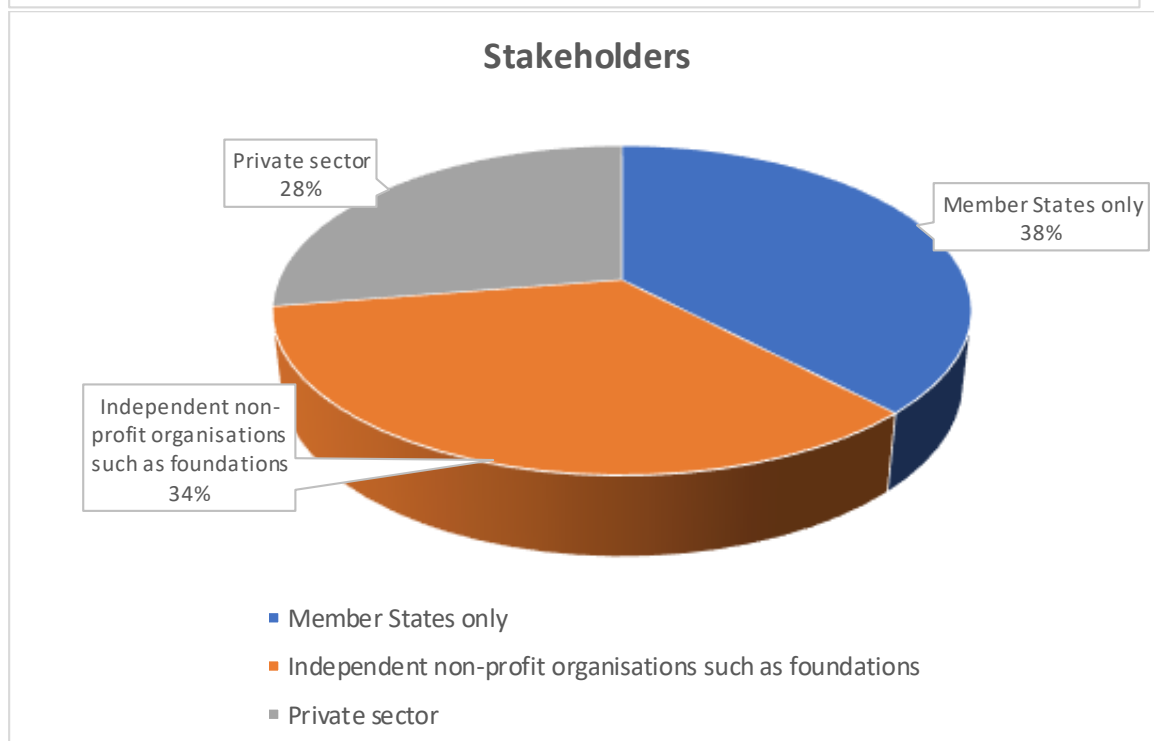
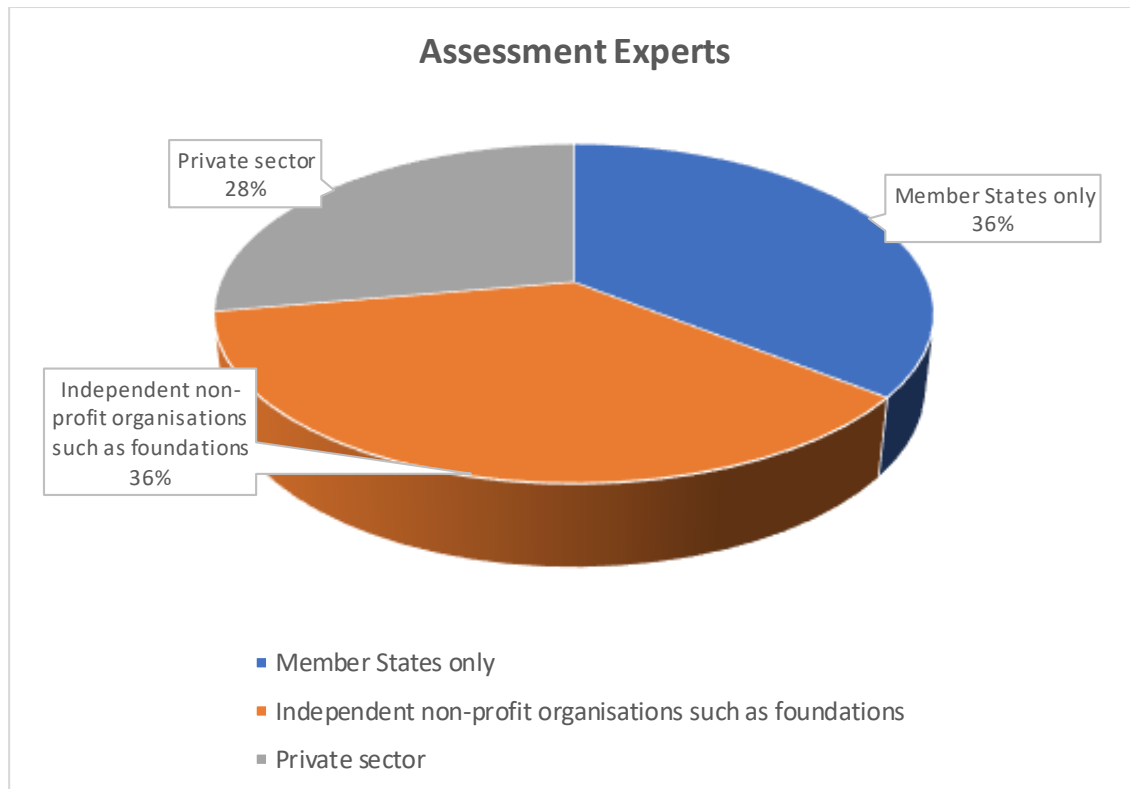




3.6 Choices on type of organization from which GEO should be allowed to solicit funds

Consultees generally favored soliciting funds from all three sources of suggested funding.

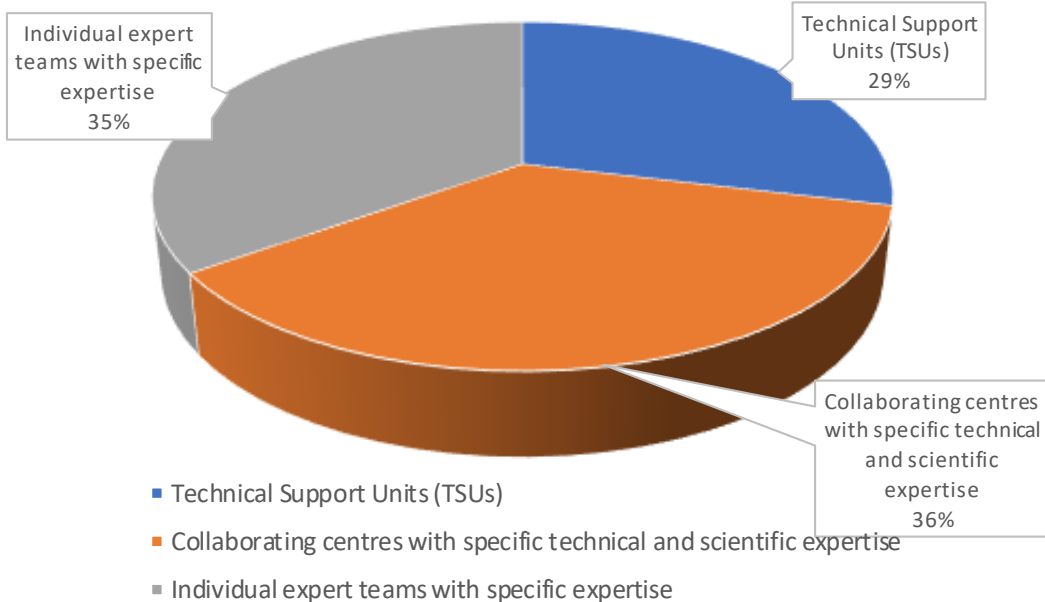




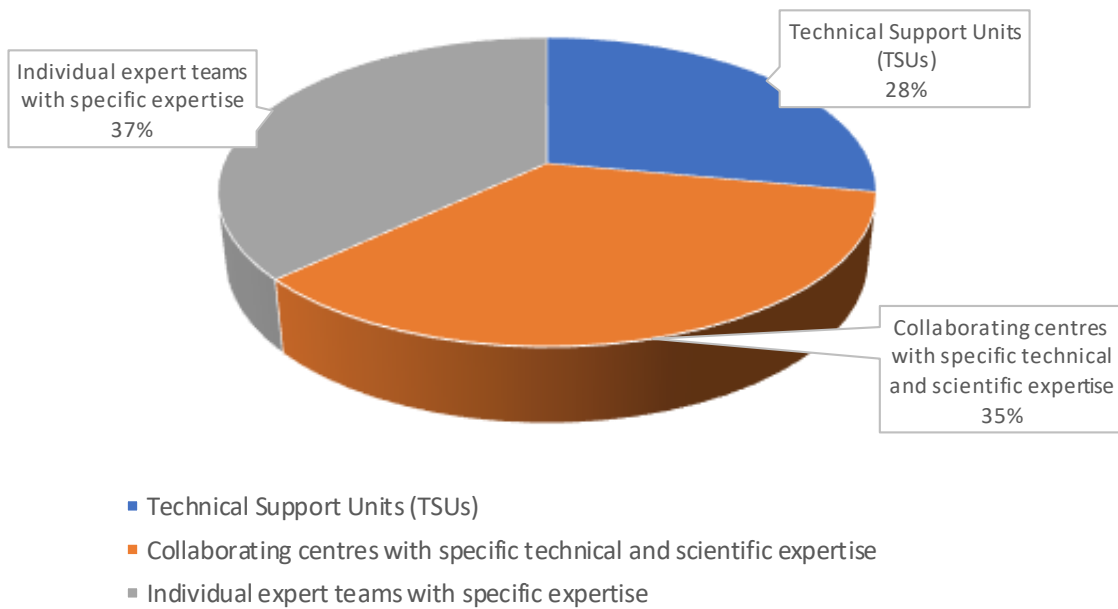
3.7 Choices on type of collaborators and collaborative institutions for future GEO

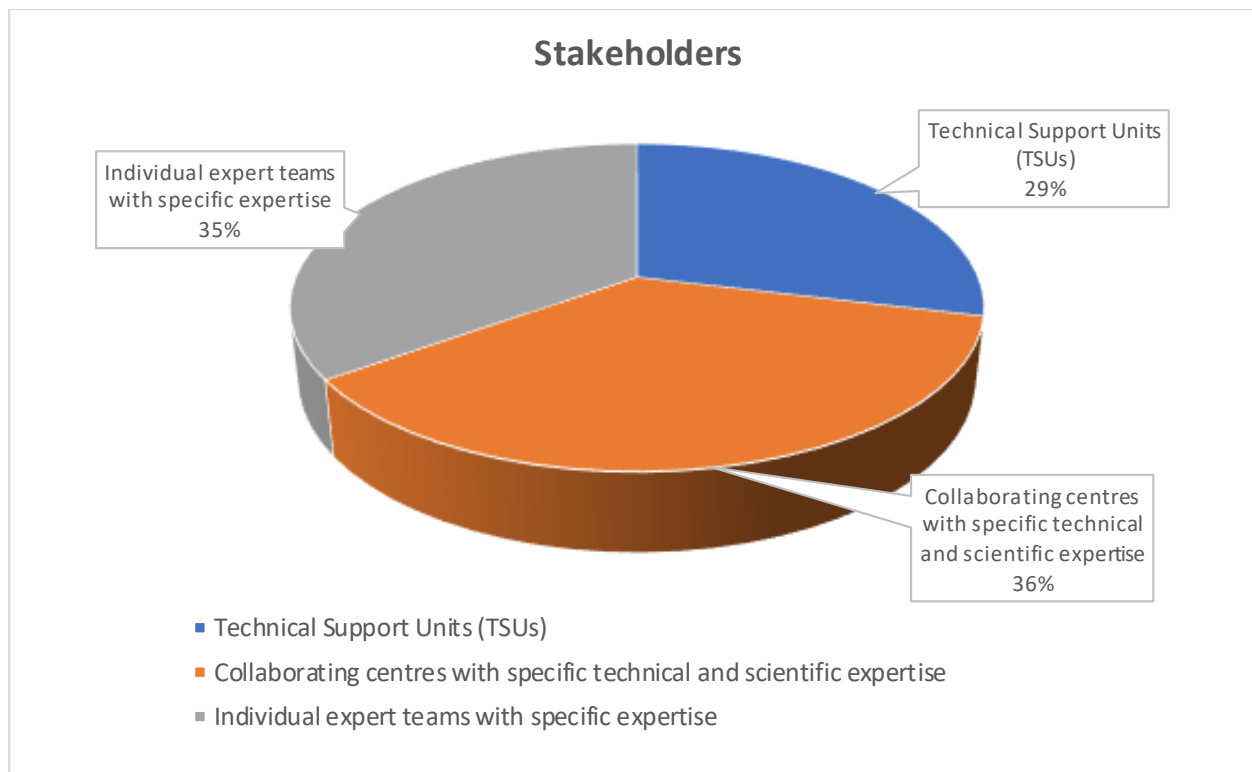
Consultees generally favored all the three collaboration options suggested.

Member States



Assessment experts



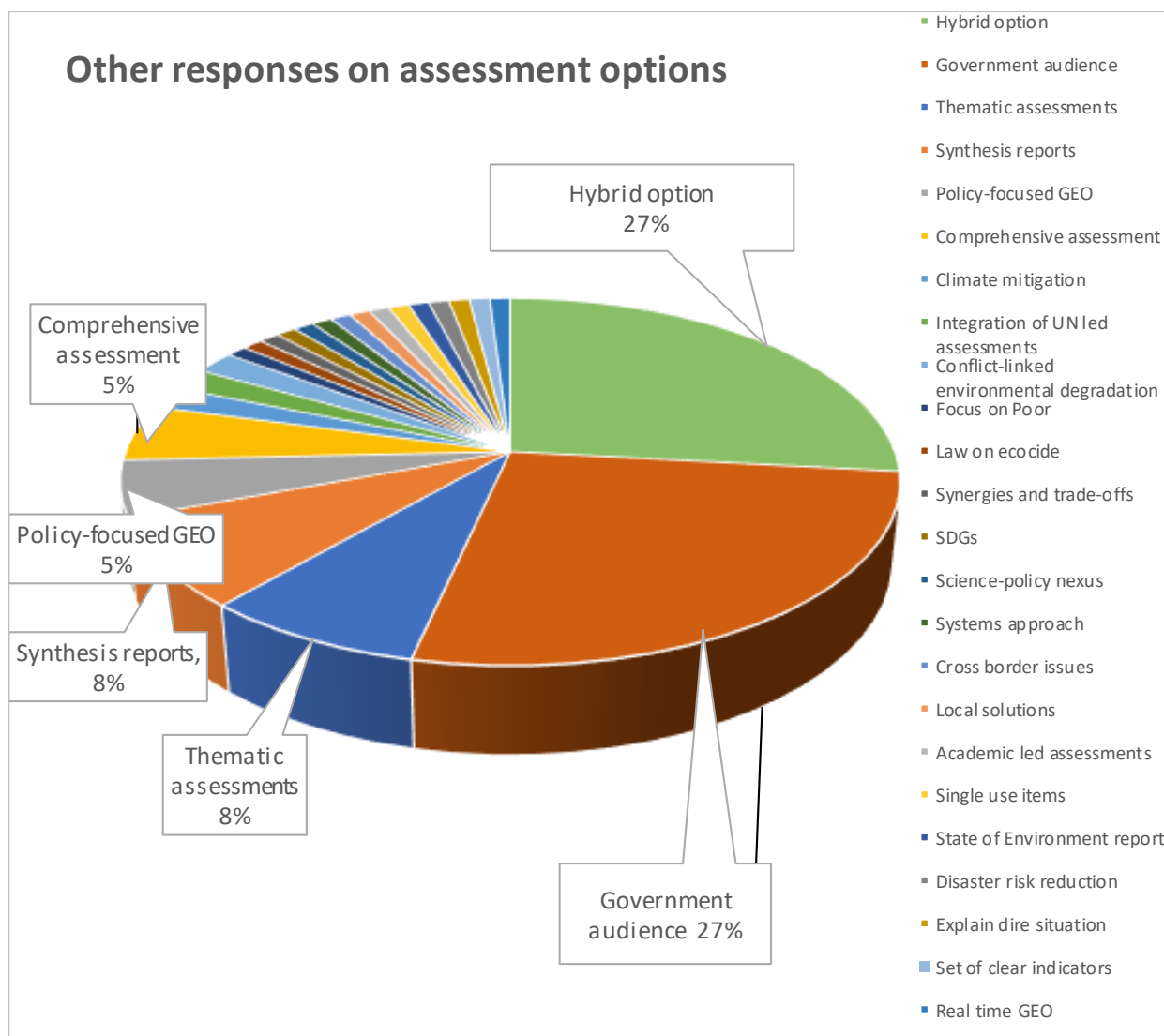


4. Other suggestions

Within the questionnaire participants were invited to provide additional ideas and suggestions in free text boxes. The written responses were analyzed and tagged to a number of categories. The results are presented in a consolidated form from all three groups of respondents. Where longer responses from a participant were received covering a range of themes, these were regarded as separate responses. A selection of direct quotes from respondents is shown in *italics*.

4.1 Other responses on Assessment options for future GEO

Of the categories of responses received relating to assessment options, 27% suggested consideration of a hybrid option of combining the synthesis option with the thematic/gap filling option; 27% also commented that government was the primary audience for GEO. Targeted assessments were favored in 19% of responses and timely synthesis responses in 8%. A total of 5% of responses mentioned the distinctiveness of GEO in analysing policy and wanted to see that continue. Almost all of the remaining responses took the opportunity to add suggestions for thematic assessments.



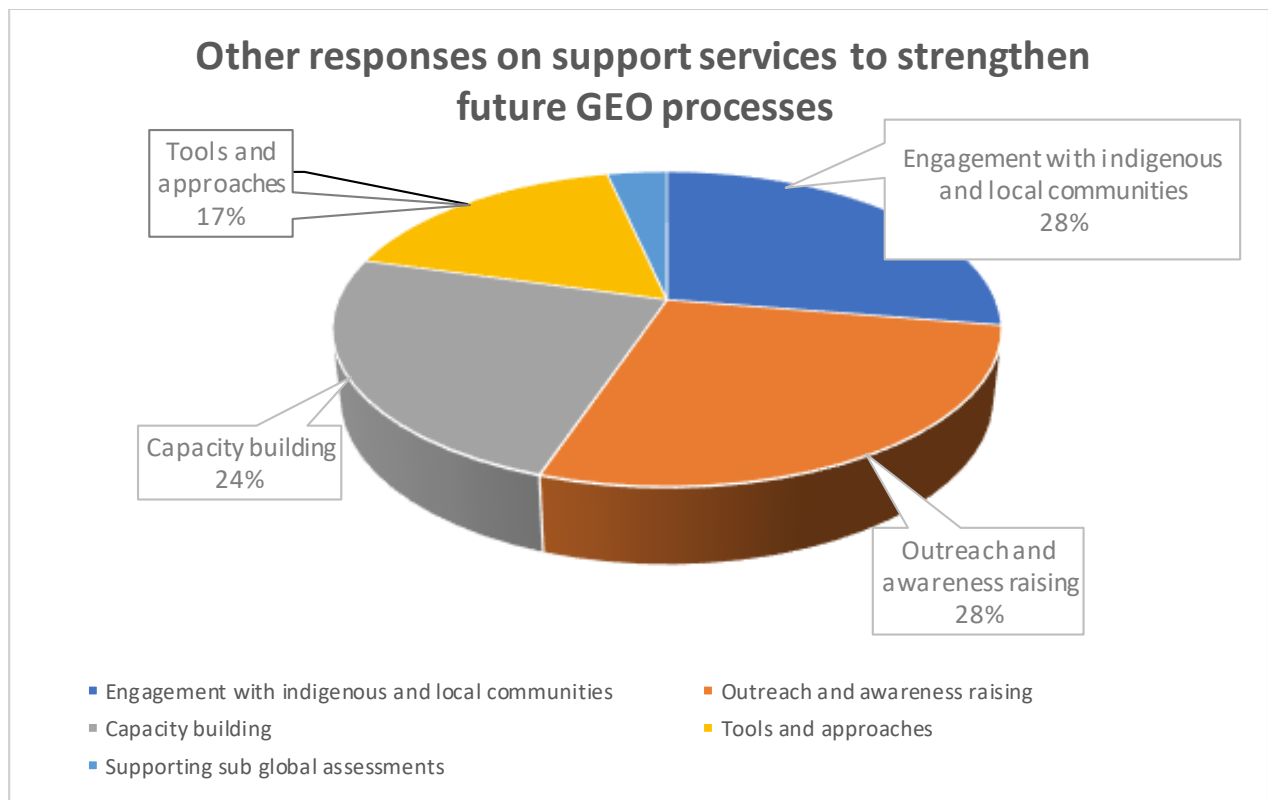
“New and novel themes may come up and gaps may remain that require specific attention and assessment. Therefore ideally the ‘synthesis option’ should be combined with the ‘thematic/gapfilling option’ allowing for flexibility and ensuring the full range of environmental issues is covered in a balanced and authoritative manner.”

“A missing piece in the assessment landscape is the rigorous evaluation of the effectiveness of policies.”

“I think that current overlaps and potential co-operation between environmental bodies is a must and GEO, IPCC and IPBES in particular should seriously work for a more common agenda..... without the burden of heterogenous and dispersed priorities and efforts.”

4.2 Other responses on support services to strengthen future GEO processes

Far fewer comments were made on this question but 28% of responses placed strong emphasis on working with both indigenous and local communities both for purpose of access to knowledge and also on implantation and follow up action. An equal proportion of responses (28%) mentioned the importance of outreach and awareness raising, especially in the light of lower profile of GEO compared with other global assessments. Capacity building was mentioned in 24% of responses, both to help engagement with GEO itself and also in sub-global assessments.



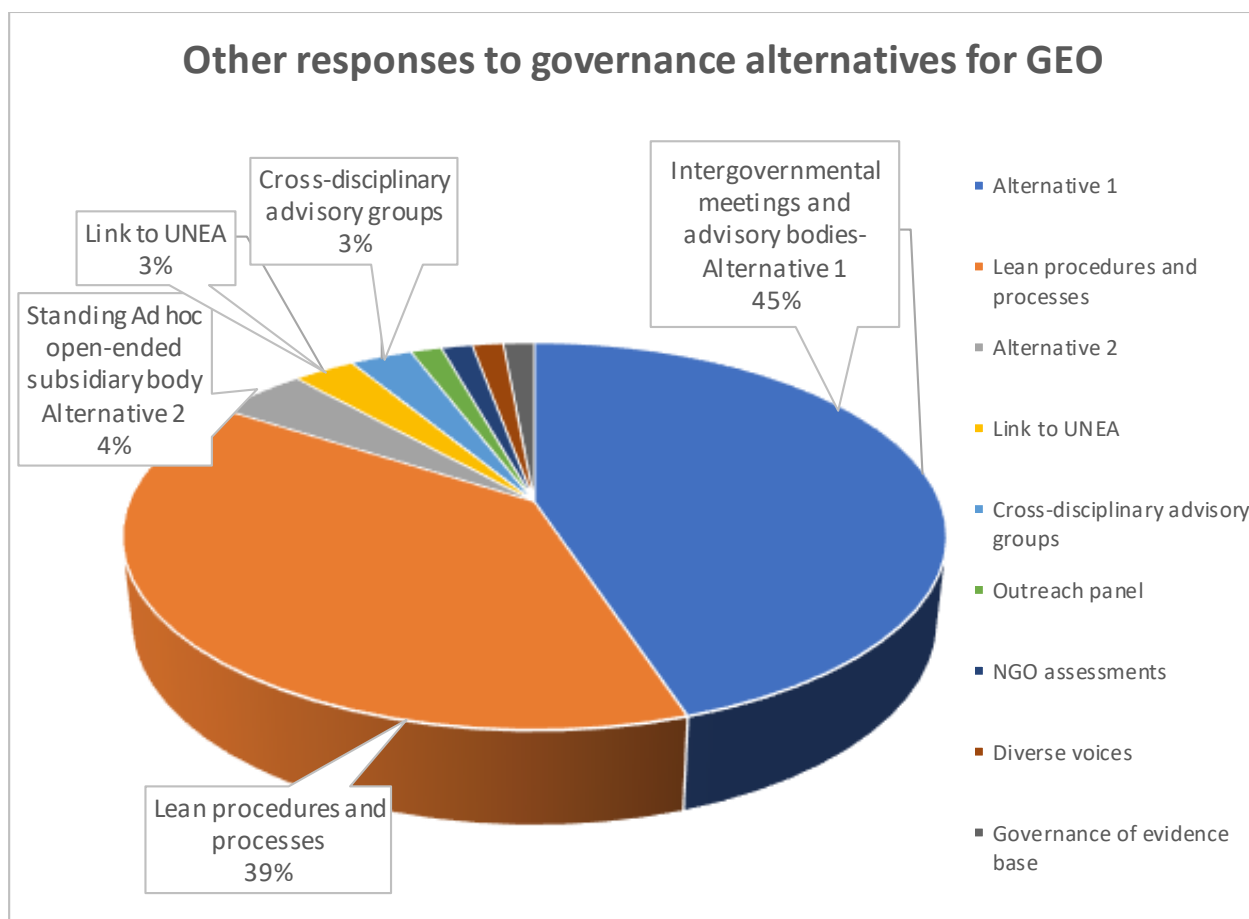
“The role of indigenous knowledge should be addressed more robustly, with indigenous communities participating not merely in an ex-post consultative/approval role but proactively where there is co-generation of knowledge (integrating indigenous and scientific perspectives) cycled back in to the GEO process.”

“Opportunities for increasing the outreach of GEO findings beyond the policy and scientific communities should be strengthened.”

“Not all of the functions here are unique to roles for GEO and could be performed through other UNEP processes. Those which directly support GEO and its impact should be prioritized.”

4.3 Other responses on governance alternatives for future GEO

Intergovernmental meeting and advisory bodies – Alternative 1 – was supported in 45% of the comments compared with 4% for the standing ad-hoc open-ended subsidiary body – Alternative 2. This preference is mirrored in the main questionnaire results. The importance of lean procedures and processes was mentioned in 39% of responses, 3% of responses mentioned the importance of links to UNEA and a further 3% wished to see expert groups bringing in cross disciplinary expertise from social scientists as part of Alternative 1.



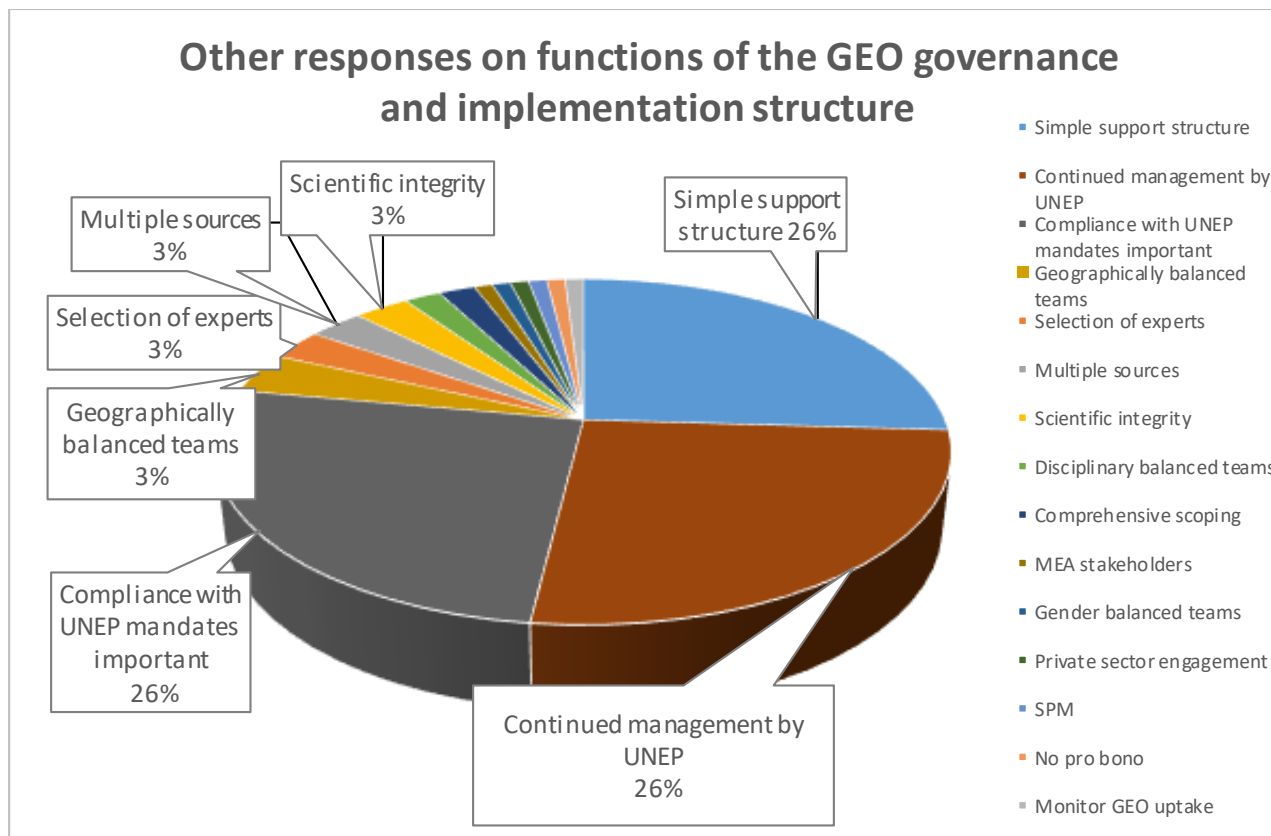
“An approach that introduces methodologies and processes that resemble the ones of IPCC and IPBES would be less flexible, more costly and would risk frictions with the mandates of UNEP and UNEA Creating a permanent subsidiary body to oversee the role of GEO would most likely create frictions with the regular work of the Science Division that is underpinning the service-oriented pillar...”

“I support Alternative 1 but have concerns about the [proposed] team of 25 distinguished scientists. Any panel...MUST include experts from who have some experience in working across the science-policy interface spanning ecological, economic and social science fields.”

4.4 Other responses on functions of the GEO governance and implementation structure

Of the categories of responses relating to the functions of GEO’s governance and implementation, 26% of comments related to a wish to see simple support structures, 26% wanted continued management of the GEO process by UNEP and 26% noted the importance of compliance with UNEP mandates.

Further groups of recurring comments included 3% wishing to see geographically balanced teams of experts, 3% focusing on transparency, rigor and broader selection of experts, 3% emphasizing multiple sources including from evidence not in English and from indigenous and local knowledge, and 3% identifying what they perceived as tensions between presenting science and the political processes of negotiating text, and pressures to present data and results in a favorable light.



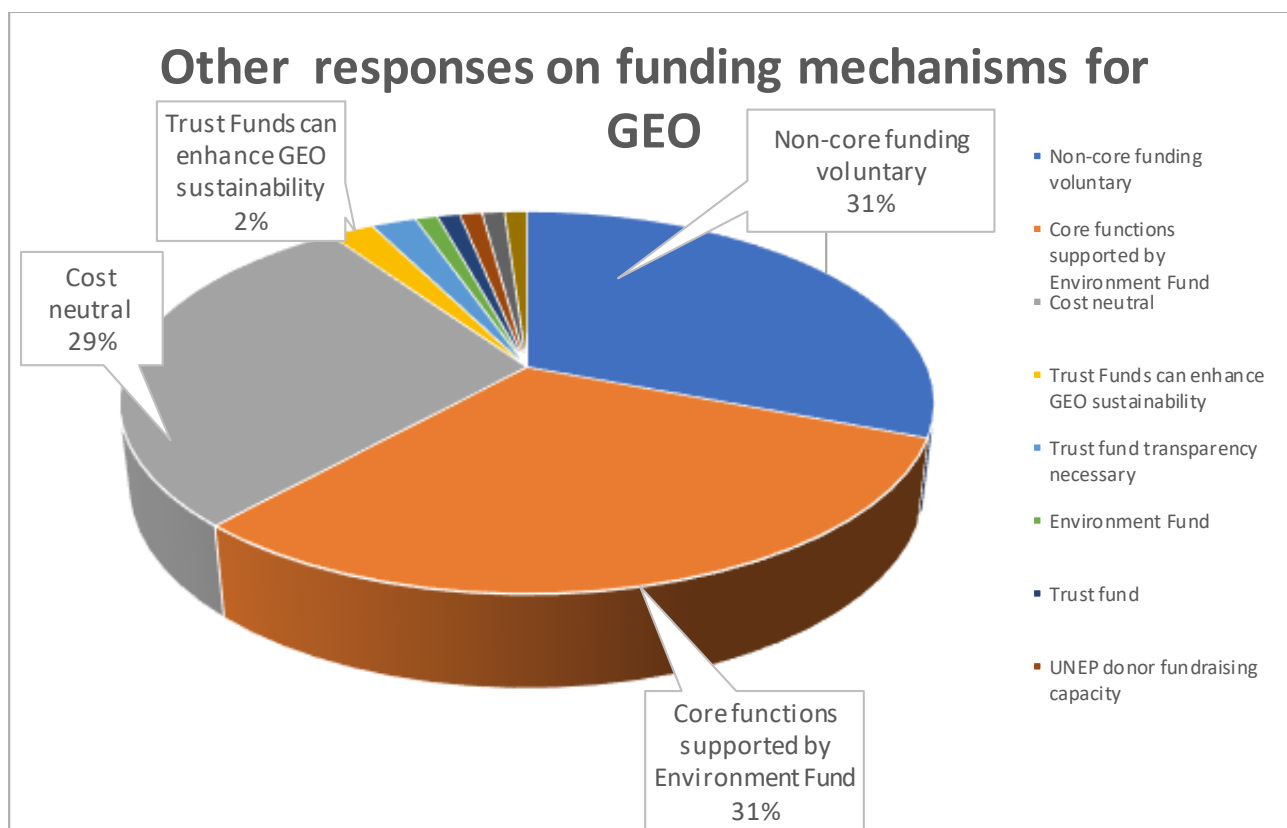
“Protecting the scientific integrity of GEO is paramount. Member State involvement should not undermine or dilute the scientific nature of the assessment.”

“There needs to be a more open transparent and accountable call for experts beyond asking Member States and the usual same old institutions.”

“We agree there is a function in managing budgets. Greater clarity is needed ... on the relationship between the management of the budgets under the different governance options and the body that will provide overall oversight and adoption of GEO’s budget”

4.5 Other responses on funding mechanisms for GEO

The most recurrent theme of responses under funding mechanism for GEO focused on voluntary funding providing for non-core GEO activity (31%) and core functions of GEO being supported by UNEP’s Environment Fund. The importance of GEO being cost neutral occurred in 29% of responses. Other responses noted the need for transparency of the Trust Fund option if additional non-Member State contributions are sought.

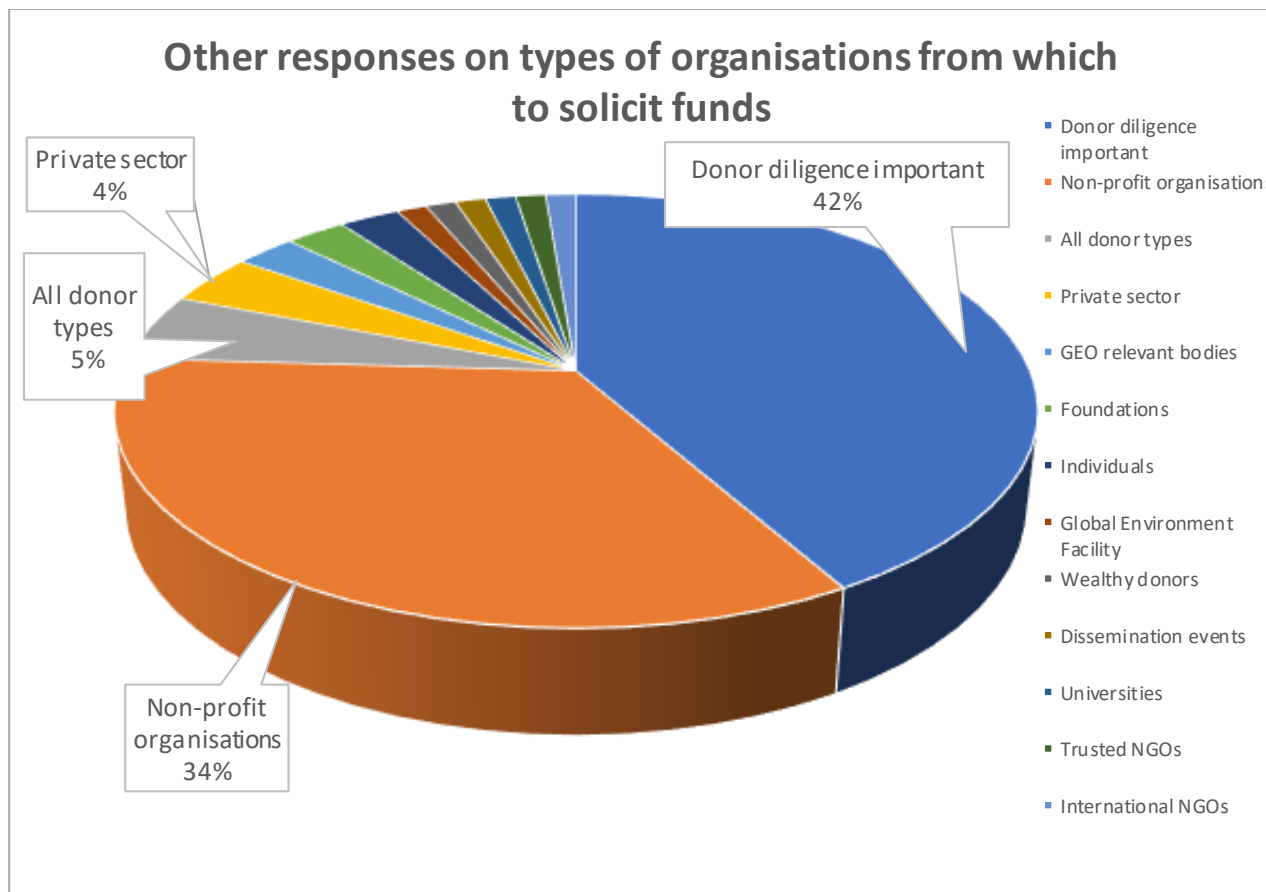


“The key word here is ‘trust’ which ever option you choose.”

“Further detail is needed on how the core budget is determined and how the changes in the core budget due to decisions taken will affect the voluntary contributions needed.”

4.6 Other responses on types of organization from which to solicit funds

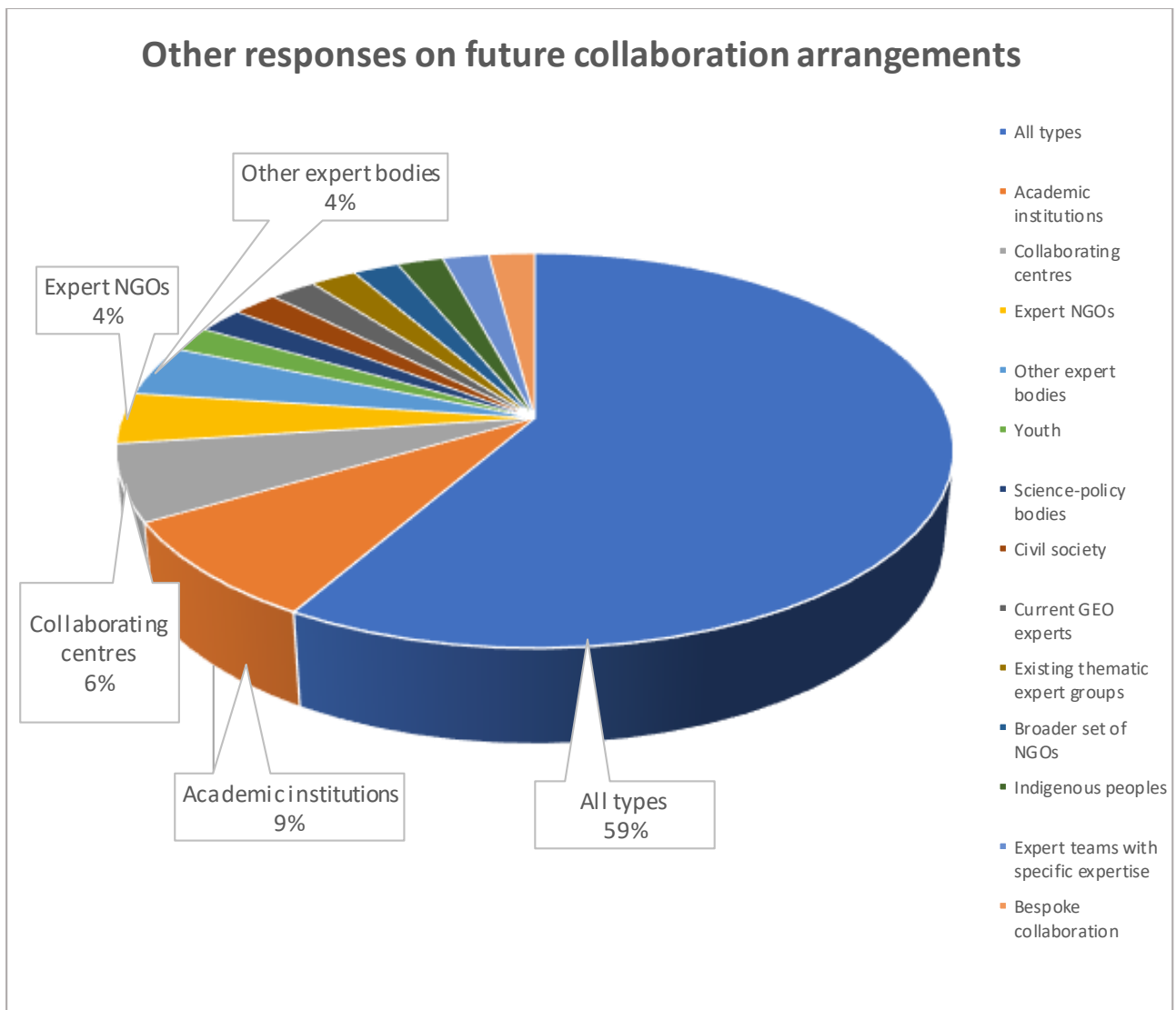
Of the categories of responses relating to the types of organisation from which to solicit funds most comments (41%) related to the importance of donor diligence in respect UNEP’s reputation, the credibility of GEO, possible conflicts of interest and potential undue influence. A further 35% of responses supported funding from non-profit organizations, with 5% supporting all of the donor categories in the questionnaire and 4% mentioning the private sector as a source.



“As a key product of UNEO, GEO should be funded within resources of the Environment Fund, and additional support from relevant stakeholders may be considered as long as they in line with any existing funding principles and guidelines established for UNEP.”

4.7 Other responses on future collaboration arrangements

Of the categories of responses relating to future collaboration arrangements, 59% of responses felt that all kinds of partners should be considered, with 9% mentioning academic institutions, 6%, 6% collaborating centers, 6% expert NGOs and 4% other expert bodies. Responses did not include any suggestions of categories of partners with whom GEO should not work.



“New partnerships may be needed both thematically, geographically and functionally.”
“Any expert group which is outside of the academic world will create a weakness in credibility.”

