

Outcomes Document
Second Face to Face Meeting of the Intergovernmental and Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group (IMAG) of
UNEP's Global Environment Outlook (GEO-7)
14-16 March 2023

On March 14-16, 2023, the Intergovernmental and Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group met to consider the following agenda items:

- Agree IMAG's work plan for the coming year.
- Provide advice on key GEO-7 policy questions.
- Provide advice on the profiles of additional experts and authors that may be needed.
- Provide advice on the profiles and roles of selected collaborating centers.
- Provide advice on the evidence base and literature to support the GEO-7.
- Provide advice on the approach for regional and sub-regional analysis within the GEO.
- Review and provide advice on proposed methodological approach to developing solutions pathways.
- Review and provide advice of the proposed outlooks methodology.
- Discuss and provide advice on the proposed supporting services and how these will be delivered within the GEO process.

On these agenda items, whose context of discussion is provided below in the body of the document under each agenda item, the meeting decided that:

- Member States to consider contributing to the process, including through cash contributions to fill the financial gap, as well as through in-kind contributions (e.g., hosting of meetings and financing for collaborating centers to support the Secretariat) and UNEP to continue efforts to find support for the GEO process and other related science activities from the UNEP core budget.
- The secretariat to produce a detailed IMAG workplan table with time, activities, deadlines, products, put together in the context of the overall GEO-7 and the MESAG planning. In general, IMAG's workplan should be aligned and contribute to the overall GEO-7 planning and the IMAG workplan should duly reflect this.
- Authors to be as clear as possible, where needed, on issues regarding the state of the environment, and the overall goals that need to be achieved through the solutions pathways to be defined in the solution-oriented GEO-7.
- Policy recommendations in GEO-7 should be specific, relevant, and concrete, without being prescriptive. (Guidance from the IMAG on how this could be done is presented under the relevant agenda item).
- The GEO-7 policy questions should be clustered, including and prioritising questions around environment and health, as well as questions around governance, e.g., the security of environmental defenders, considering uncertainties, interdependencies, opportunities for synergies, risks of trade-offs and systems thinking.
- The secretariat to ensure that political economy expertise is available in the author teams in GEO-7;
- The secretariat to develop a transparent procedure to replace CLA's or LA's if/as necessary.
- The secretariat to develop guidance on the Statement of Confidentiality for IMAG members;
- The secretariat, together with the co-chairs of GEO-7, to revisit the existing nominations of authors including late nominations, and try to close the gaps, not only looking at filling the gaps in expertise but also to ensure gender and geographic balance. Only after consideration of existing nominations and based on an updated and final version of the list of authors, will IMAG be able to provide targeted advice on how to close the remaining gaps, possibly also through a focused new call for nominations. This is to be done at the latest in its next virtual meeting of the IMAG.
- In terms of gender and geographical balance in the cohort of authors, the GEO should first strive for achieving the best possible balance at the overall GEO level, and then at the chapter and sub chapter level where feasible. While expertise balance in the author teams is a predominant concern, gender and geographic balance is also of utmost importance to warrant an inclusive and credible process.
- Transparency on the efforts undertaken in gap filling are crucially important and these should be carefully documented by the Secretariat.
- The Secretariat to ensure the inclusion of more authors to contribute to the (sub)regional chapters that currently have few authors.
- Given that currently collaboration with GEO already exists with some 7-8 collaborating centres and considering the Secretariat's limited capacity and budget to adequately manage additional centres, the IMAG recommended adding around 8 more collaborating centres as a maximum.

- The network of collaborating centers for GEO-7 should be strategic and based on continuous collaboration beyond GEO-7, instead of emerging from periodic calls for expression of interest.
- The collaborating centers selected should be regionally balanced and should be able to contribute in a balanced manner to (a) the development of the GEO-7 report and (b) the provision of supporting services which may also translate into selecting some centres that can contribute at the global level, and others that are regionally focused.
- There can be a phased and tiered approach in dealing with the collaborating centres. Those that will be formalised by the Secretariat and engaged during the development/writing phase of GEO-7, and those that can be engaged at a later stage and/or without necessarily formalising the process at the same level.
- The Secretariat should preferably aim to achieve a balance between some collaborating centres that have a track record of collaborating with the GEO process, and can bring substantive input to these processes, and some other centres that can learn and further develop their capabilities to support the GEO processes in the future.
- Preferably, collaborating centres will be selected based on their actual or potential contributions to the GEO-7 process either in cash or in-kind.
- The secretariat to develop a proposal for selection of collaborative centres for the consideration of IMAG in its next virtual call based on the above IMAG guidance on collaborating centres.
- The secretariat to organise a joint virtual meeting with MESAG in which the UNEP GRID-collaborating centres could present ongoing work and proposals for the digitalization of the work and dissemination of the GEO-7.
- The secretariat to organise a meeting with the communications team on expectations and plans for the communication and outreach of GEO-7.
- The IMAG recommended that the GEO-7 should draw from and build upon existing global assessments and should not duplicate them.
- Authors to include policy documents and policy impact assessments (ex-ante and ex-post) as an additional evidence base and literature in the GEO-7 report (relevant links and sources to be provided by IMAG members to the Secretariat).
- Indigenous and local knowledge as well as Citizen Science expertise is currently lacking in the GEO-7 process and this should be addressed during the gap-filling exercise.
- The strategy for supporting services should go beyond the GEO-7 report period and should envisage the development of capacities of Member States and stakeholders to also contribute to future GEO processes as well as making better use of the outcomes of GEO-7.
- The 'Supporting Services' element of the UNEA Resolution 5/3 on the future of GEO is a pillar of the GEO process and it deserves adequate funding.
- The secretariat to share the draft survey on supporting services with IMAG members for input/comment.
- The survey on Supporting Services should be well communicated and it should also be designed to help with identifying priorities per (sub)region and for specific thematic issues to be addressed in the GEO-7.
- The Secretariat to work with other global assessment bodies, UNEP regional offices and even UN resident coordinators / UN country teams, in the provision of GEO support services, to save costs and ensure synergies.
- The classification of regions and sub regions for the analysis to be used in GEO-7 should have clear and transparent argumentation around the choice used and should also consider data availability at the regional level.
- The importance of not solely looking at the geographic grouping per se but analyse groups of countries also based on other parameters, such as GDP, consumption patterns, etc.
- To include interconnectedness and linkages between regions and subregions in the analysis.
- The secretariat and co-chairs to consider working towards the development of online chapters for all the sub-regional chapters.
- To also include the use of the term 'policy' in the definition of solutions pathways which currently focuses on the use of the term 'actions', to ensure that there are no misunderstandings in the communication of the key messages to policy makers.
- A common-sense approach in how scenarios' storylines are developed, to ensure their consistency with potential real-life scenarios, would be best.
- One of the scenario's to be developed should focus on issues around sufficiency and degrowth with attention to the use of appropriate terminology), while other scenarios can follow technological, behavioural change or international governance approaches.
- GEO-7 to follow the IPBES definition of transformational change;

Rapporteur	Signature
Mr. Rafael Monge	

Meeting Summary

Day 1

Welcome

Following the welcome message and housekeeping on the modalities of the session from the bureau of the IMAG, the Co-chair of the meeting began the meeting with the objectives of the IMAG meeting followed by approval of the agenda.

There was a short summary on the changes made to the agenda which included the inclusion of the Side event: 'Energy transition and natural resources – global and regional discussions' and the evening reception that was to take place on the 14th of March 2023.

Briefing from Director of Corporate Services Division on funding for GEO

The Secretariat then provided a summary on the GEO-7 funding situation. The briefing covered three parts: overall funding of UNEP and the resource mobilization strategy, challenges, successes, and opportunities and lastly the current situation and funding for GEO-7.

On the overall funding of UNEP, the Secretariat highlighted that UNEP is 95% voluntary funded and relies on two pots of money one being the Environment Fund which is the voluntary core funding provided by Member States to UNEP which has never been fully funded, and the Regular Budget, provided by the UN General Assembly. The majority of all other UNEP funding is earmarked and thus restricted. The Secretariat then pointed out that in 2022 UNEP launched the three thematic funds on climate, nature and pollution as an invitation to Member States to find ways to support UNEP's Medium-term strategy, with less conditions than strict ear marking.

On the funding situation of GEO, the Secretariat highlighted that GEO is funded from the three core resources such as the Environment Fund, the regular budget and the three thematic funds. The Secretariat highlighted that even with these resources, there still exists a 36% funding gap in the GEO and human resource constraints with only two fixed term positions P5 and P4 in the GEO team and all other positions being temporary and extrabudgetary which is a challenge in retaining intellectual human capital. Another challenge highlighted by the Secretariat was that the GEO competes for funding with the other priority areas that UNEP is working on, that also need funding, and which fall under the three pillars of planetary crisis. The briefing also mentioned that UNEP is committed to allocating a total of 6.2 million out of the 10.3 million needed for the GEO during the next four years (from 2022 when the resolution was passed) which represents 64% of the total budget for the essential GEO, which is currently estimated to need 10.3 million. The Secretariat expressed gratitude to the European Commission for supporting the preparatory stages for GEO-7 and to Germany that made the ad-hoc contribution to organize the two methodology workshops that took place on 8-10 March 2023 in Bangkok to define the methodology for the solutions pathways and the modelling and scenarios work for GEO-7. It was also noted that there has been ongoing conversation with the Government of China, to discuss the possibility to host the second set of modelling and solution pathways workshops in September 2023 in Tongji University in Shanghai. The Secretariat also expressed gratitude for Norway's contribution to the three thematic funds that are also supporting GEO-7, among other UNEP initiatives.

The Secretariat also briefed on the fund-raising outlook such as the proposal toward to the European Commission for an amount of USD 535,000 to support coordination of the GEO-7 process in 2023-2024, through the participation of GEO-7 fellows and the Ad hoc Global Assessment Dialogue (AGAD). Lastly, the secretariat encouraged IMAG members to support by engaging with their governments and other Member States to encourage additional financial support through conversations at various levels to influence allocation decisions. Several suggestions were mentioned that could be possible avenues for fundraising including in-kind contributions such as hosting in person meetings and supporting collaborating centers.

IMAG expressed its appreciation to the Secretariat for the helpful presentation on the funding of GEO and called on Member States to consider contributing to the process, including through in-kind contribution such as hosting of in person meetings. It also requested UNEP to continue efforts to find support for GEO and other related science activities from the UN Core Funds.

The Co-chairs requested feedback or interventions from IMAG experts. The main comments were:

- If the budget accounts for increased inflation due to the current situation in rise of cost in transportation, accommodation etc. around the globe.
- The timing on when the funding gap must be closed before it compromises the GEO-7 process.
- If translation is budgeted and does it require budgeting in the context of the nationally peer reviewed assessments in different languages that may be used as sources and need to be translated.
- If the GEO serves UN as a whole or just UNEP.

The Secretariat responded that the:

- UNEP has developed solid budgeting mechanisms over the years. The budget does include some inflationary calculations.
- 2023 and 2024 are critical years for the GEO-7 process and there is a predictability needed in funding. The thematic funds contribution will take GEO-7 to 2025 because that's when MTS ends but the funding sources such as the Environment Fund require a waiting period, as they are annually pledged and annually received.
- The communication of the GEO-7 report and the take up of the report is important but the report needs to be in place as a basis for communication and outreach. In the current budget, not much has been allocated for the policy uptake part as it will require reaching out and consulting Member States on how better to do it with the limited resources available. The diversity in the author teams and in the Multi-disciplinary and Expert Scientific Advisory Group will help in the translation of sources not in English. The translation of the main report of GEO-6 was challenging due to lack of financial resources and some language versions such as the French and the Russian were only translated in 2022 yet the report was launched in 2019.
- GEO is an important component contributing to other global scientific assessment processes such as the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) that is led by the UN Secretary General. Through the Ad hoc Global Assessments Dialogue, the GEO facilitates the connection with and contribution to other major global assessments, such as the IPCC, IPBES, IRP, the GBO, etc. which serve the UN as a whole. It was also noted that UNEP's Executive Director chairs the High-Level Committee on programmatic issues for the entire UN where she ensures the integration of environment to all the UN agencies to use our science products such as the GEO.

Review and agree IMAG's work plan for the coming year.

The co-chair provided an overview of the proposed workplan of the coming year and invited interventions from the IMAG experts.

The workplan was adopted, but it was noted that several tasks and activities could be clustered and combined such as the selection of authors and the gap filling exercise for additional expertise. IMAG also noted that in general IMAG's planning should be aligned and contribute to the overall GEO-planning and requested the secretariat to produce a detailed workplan table with time, activities, deadlines, products, put together in the context of the overall GEO-planning and workplan.

The co-chair requested feedback or interventions from IMAG experts. The main comments were:

- The workplan to be revisited after the joint IMAG and MESAG meeting to ensure alignment, synergies and linkages.
- The items on selection of experts and gap filling exercise of experts to be combined into one item.
- Concern that the process of authors' selection is lagging as there's a first author's meeting while there are gaps in the regional chapter authors.
- Potential clashes on the meeting dates for the calls as some of the Intersessional subsidiary bodies under the CBD will be meeting in October when the IMAG is expected to discuss and review outcomes for the GEO- 7 internal review process.
- The schedule for the next in person meeting for the IMAG and why the workplan ends in January 2024 instead of carrying on to the end of the process.
- The work plan to be contextualized to what's going on in the GEO-7 process to show how the advice is being picked up by the authors and the work plan to relate to the overall planning of GEO.

- Whether there will be a process of continuous advice giving and revisiting some of the items on the work plan and specifically on the issue of the policy questions
- To have an online or face to face meeting before UNEA-6 where GEO-7 will be launched.

The Secretariat responded that:

- The detailed workplan will be developed and shared with the IMAG before the next IMAG virtual meeting.
- The workplan may then be revised when there's a clearer idea of what items IMAG experts would like to focus on, and after the joint meeting with the MESAG.
- The gaps in the regional and sub regional chapters, ILK and citizen science have been noted by the secretariat and co-chairs and it's high in the agenda of the authors/co-chairs and secretariat in addressing those gaps.
- The Secretariat has been receiving expressions of interest even after the deadline, so all that information is available in the portal. In the case of the fellows, more will be selected during the gap filling exercise, drawing from the large number of nominations received. The fellows will be having their own dedicated meeting on the same day in Bangkok, and the outcome of that meeting can also be shared with the IMAG if required.
- It was noted that there will always be clashes with some other major meetings, and that the Secretariat will keep that in mind and strive to avoid such overlaps when organizing the virtual calls for the IMAG.
- The secretariat responded that the next in person meeting of the IMAG will be in September 2024 and that all the other meetings indicated in the workplan are virtual and will run up to the launch of the report with short agendas focusing on one/two topics per meeting.

Provide advice on key GEO-7 policy questions.

The Secretariat provided an overview of the workshops on the solutions pathways and the outlooks methodology as well as the highlights of the first day of the author's meeting. The Secretariat noted that the first day had an opening session with the representative from the Ministry of Thailand and the UNEP Regional Director for Asia Pacific region based in Bangkok. Several orientation presentations were presented to the authors by the GEO-7 Assessment Co-chairs and the Secretariat. It was also highlighted that the GEO-7 fellows attending the meeting will be going through a dedicated training and capacity development to be ready to support the authors in their work. The Secretariat also noted that there were brief presentations on the digitization of GEO-7 which included the author's collaboration platform as well as the mapping and graphing platform, the revamped GEO website and from the solutions pathways and modelling and scenarios focal points to provide an overview from the methodologies workshops. Other presentations by experts included the Behaviour Science presentation from Busara and the 'Science to Policy' educational training course that is being developed by several partners including UNEP.

The discussion on GEO-7 policy questions then began with a discussion on 'prescriptiveness' and IMAG experts agreed that GEO-7 can be very clear when it describes the environmental challenges and environmental goals (comparable to the 80% phase out in fossil fuels from GEO-6) given the ambition of GEO-7 to be more solutions focused.

IMAG members however also indicated that policy recommendations should be as specific and concrete as possible without being prescriptive. There might be a need to balance between giving concrete recommendations at the scales chosen for the analysis, while the action should also be locally effective. Several elements that can contribute to that may include:

- Having authors present policies and measures in terms of options and packages that could be presented at different levels e.g., regional and sub regional levels.
- The 'value chain' approach was also identified as another way of trying to become as concrete and valuable in drafting policy recommendations. This value chain approach would also be a lens through which authors can tie in all different spatial scales and elements together (global, regional and sub regional).
- IMAG members also discussed the importance of identifying best practices as there is a lot happening in the world at various levels that policy makers could learn from, and authors can use such examples to illustrate how things would work out, based on those 'best practices'. This would also assist authors on how to translate global challenges into smaller challenges at lower levels spatial scales, and vice versa.
- It was also recognised that there's a need to take a 'whole of society' approach to address different audiences using understandable language, and the need to include the concept of vertical and

horizontal governance, given that there are different governance systems around the world and recommendations that can cater for that diversity are needed.

- A need to distinguish between policies and measures that need to be taken before 2030, and policies for 2040 and 2050.
- It was also suggested that authors identify 'no regrets measures' for policy makers.
- A need to identify political economics expertise to ensure the policy packages are framed realistically by the author team (see also below).

With regards to the policy questions to be posed by the IMAG and to be addressed by the authors in the report, the IMAG suggested that such questions would gain value when clustered together and underlined the need to also include environment and health as a priority as well as questions around governance. IMAG also emphasized the need to explain uncertainties in providing policy recommendations or just to clarify the uncertainty surrounding different options or packages, as well as the need to consider the interdependencies, opportunities for synergies, the risk of trade-offs and systems thinking.

IMAG also noted the need to engage not only with behavioural science expertise in the GEO-7 process, but also political economy experts to ensure recommendations are phrased in a way that they acknowledge the difficulties and the specificities of different systems at various scales. IMAG members also noted that the protection of the environmental human rights as important.

The co-chair requested feedback or interventions from IMAG experts. The main comments were:

- To revisit the agenda to ensure that there is a moment in time for organized interaction and feedback from the modelling and scenarios as well as the solutions pathways group.
- The need to rapidly advance work by the IMAG to finalise its own advice to the authors on the policy questions, as the author's meeting was already happening in parallel to the IMAG meeting in Bangkok, and those questions will be vital for the authors to go ahead with their drafting.

It was responded that the:

- Solutions pathways and the modelling and scenarios group will be providing an update to the IMAG later in the same meeting.
- IMAG will discuss the policy questions in their next call after receiving a revised version based on the guidance provided and inputs from the GEO-7 co-chairs.

Side event: Energy transition and natural resources – global and regional discussions (Conference Room 1)

IMAG experts were invited to join the side event on Energy transitions. This event focused on the role of the Asia Pacific region in this transition, while including examples from other countries and expanding the conversation to the importance of critical minerals for the energy system. The Asia Pacific region is home to some of the world's fastest-growing economies and largest populations, making it a key player in the global effort to transition to a more sustainable energy system. At the same time, more than any other global region, it is highly reliant on fossil fuels and affected by climate disasters. How it transitions away from fossil fuels, while providing equitable energy access to its population will be a pivotal issue for Asia-Pacific and the world in the coming years.

Provide advice on the profiles of additional experts and authors that may be needed.

On this agenda item, the Secretariat provided an overview of the status of the authors based on gender and geographical distribution as presented in the document circulated to IMAG members. The Secretariat highlighted that there were gaps in the author teams that need to be filled. The first selection process of authors aimed at selecting mainly authors with planning experience and previous Coordinating Lead Author (CLA) experience and that resulted in an initial cohort of 116 experts being selected.

IMAG expressed concern that they were consulted very briefly on the first selection of authors given the limited time frame that was available for the consideration of authors and noted that the current situation of authors may be 'accident prone' and requested the Secretariat to develop a procedure to replace CLA's or LA's when necessary, in a transparent manner. IMAG also expressed concern over the timing of their deliberations where they need to provide advice on the additional profile of authors while other processes were moving in parallel such as the allocation of authors to various chapters which happened before the IMAG meeting and the IMAG

bureau suggested to hold a call with the Secretariat to discuss lessons learned from the second face to face meeting.

To provide advice on the profiles of additional experts required for the GEO-7 process, IMAG requested the Secretariat to provide a briefing of where the gaps are by the next IMAG meeting, after having reviewed late nominations so that they can offer advice on a possible targeted and specific nomination process that would be time limited given that authors would need to get drafting as soon as possible.

IMAG noted that there is need for more authors for the sub regional chapters which is an important component of GEO-7 and effort should be made in filling the gaps for the regional and sub regional chapters.

IMAG also noted that the religious element and multi religious perspective can be included into the GEO-7 process as there already exists expertise and knowledge of already written content that can contribute to the GEO-7 from a multi religious perspective. It was mentioned that the secretariat would still welcome additional nominations, although the advice would be to start with the nominations that they already have.

The Co-chairs requested feedback or interventions from IMAG experts. The main comments were:

- If there was a hierarchy in terms of the selection of authors with regards to gender, geographic region, and expertise
- If there was a briefing on the gaps in the author teams that could be provided as some IMAG members have suggestions of names that could fill gaps but that would only be useful if all the gaps were clearly outlined.
- If experts nominated for a different category such as the MESAG could be considered as authors to fill the gaps and if new nominations can still be included

The Secretariat responded that the:

- There is no hierarchy because all elements are equally important. IMAG however agreed that expertise is the most crucial and that after that gender and geographic balance at all levels is most important, to ensure credibility and inclusivity.
- Unless an individual had been asked specifically to also express interest in the authors portal, then they wouldn't be considered as there were separate portals for the different processes such as the MESAG and IMAG nominations thus those individuals who could be authors would also need to submit their nominations in the author nomination portal.
- There will be a report on the gaps in terms of expertise by the end of the author's meeting after Co-chairs and authors point out where the gaps are.

On this agenda item, IMAG provided advice that the Secretariat and the GEO-7 co-chairs first review the list of authors and where gaps occur, then they should revisit the existing nominations, including late nominations, and former GEO-6 'senior fellows' and try to close the gaps, considering expertise, gender and geographical balance. IMAG will then be able to provide targeted advice on how to close the remaining gaps (e.g. new call for nominations), only after consideration of existing nominations.

Even though expertise, gender and geographic balance are all equally important, IMAG however agreed that expertise is the most predominant concern, and that gender and geographical balance is also important to ensure an inclusive and credible process. It would be preferable to achieve such a balance at all levels (chapter and sub chapter levels) but if that proves impossible, then the GEO should strive for a balance on the overall GEO report.

Finally, IMAG concluded that whatever the result, transparency on the efforts undertaken in the selection of authors and the gap filling exercise are crucially important and these should be carefully documented.

Day 2

Provide advice on the profiles and roles of selected collaborating centers

IMAG then moved to discuss the collaborating centres based on the document made available to them by the Secretariat. The document highlighted that 45 institutions expressed interest in being a GEO collaborating center and they were geographically distributed in the following manner: 6 from the African Group, 20 from Western Europe, 3 from Eastern Europe, 12 from Asia Pacific and 4 from the Latin America and Caribbean region.

The Secretariat pointed out that managing 45 institutions could be difficult given resource constraints and that the Secretariat can only manage to develop a collaboration with around 15 centres. It was also explained that there's a screening process that's undertaken for institutions that collaborate with UNEP and that there is a due diligence

process that requires internal approvals and different modalities for collaboration as some require financial implications while others do not. The Secretariat also pointed out that some of the collaborating centres are already engaging with UNEP in some ways such as providing their expertise through individual authors and in the review editing process of GEO.

Based on this update from the Secretariat, IMAG provided the following guidance to the secretariat.

- The development of a network of collaborating centers for GEO-7 should be strategic and continuous exercise requiring a continuous scanning of options for collaboration instead of periodic calls for expression of interest.
- Given that currently collaboration already exists with 7-8 centres, the current capacity of the Secretariat would leave room for potentially adding around 8 more as a maximum.
- The overall result in the selection of the collaborating centers (the 15 or so centres) should be;
 - regionally balanced.
 - able to contribute in a balanced manner to the development of the GEO-7 report and the provision of supporting services, ranging from outreach, knowledge generation and capacity building; that may also translate into some centres that contribute at the global level, and other more regionally focused centres.
- There should preferably also be a balance between centres that have a track record of working with GEO and can bring input to these processes, and centres that can learn and further develop their capabilities to support the GEO-processes in the future.
- Preferably, centres will be selected that are able to contribute to the GEO-processes, either in cash or through in-kind contributions.

The IMAG Co-chairs requested feedback or interventions from IMAG experts. The main comments were:

- The LAC region is divided into English and Spanish speaking, and it would be nice to find a collaborating centre also from the English-speaking Caribbean.
- What would be the threshold in terms of the numbers of collaborating centers that the secretariat is prepared to take on, based on the Secretariat's current or projected capacity.
- If there's a difference in collaboration centres for GEO-6 and GEO-7

The secretariat responded that:

- Latin America is underrepresented in the collaborating centres nominations and that further nominations could be stimulated as the portal is still open.
- In GEO-6 there were several partners and most of them are still engaging with the process. However, the effort of attracting more collaborating centres in GEO-7 was more of an effort to try and expand the pool because the traditional parties are already well on board, and each GEO has different needs and with the solutions-focus and digitalization effort of GEO-7, specific expertise will also be needed.

IMAG requested the secretariat based on this guidance, to develop a proposal for selection for the consideration of IMAG in its next virtual call.

Provide advice on the evidence base and literature to support the GEO-7.

IMAG then moved on to discuss the evidence base of the GEO7-report. It was noted that the Future of GEO resolution requested the Executive Director, with guidance from the IMAG to:

“...Ensure that the Global Environment Outlook process draws from the evidence base of peer-reviewed literature, national peer-reviewed assessments in various languages, and other international and United Nations-led assessments, data and analysis, and information from other credible sources, ... and elements of knowledge generation within and outside the United Nations Environment Programme.”

IMAG identified Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK) as well as Citizen Science as areas that needed to be addressed during the GEO-7 process.

IMAG agreed that further guidance on the evidence base and literature to support GEO-7 should be based on standard practice and guidance developed under GEO-6 as well as guidance from the MESAG. IMAG also emphasized that as per the GEO-7 Scoping document, GEO-7 needs to draw from existing global assessments,

and should not duplicate these assessments. In referring to these assessments, reference to conclusions reached in these assessments may be sufficient in many instances.

IMAG noted that policy documents and policy impact assessments (ex-ante and ex post) are an important evidence base and literature to be included in GEO-7 and requested the Secretariat to ensure that this category is actively applied throughout the GEO-7 report. It was noted that this would also include making use of concrete practices that are not necessarily well represented and documented in policy documents. The IMAG offered to provide links and resources for the Secretariat on this topic.

Provide advice on the approach for regional and sub-regional analysis within the GEO-7.

The global geographic scope of the GEO-7 assessment covers the 5 UN regions which include African States, Asia-Pacific States, Eastern European States, Latin American and Caribbean States and the Western European and other States. To carry out the sub regional analysis within GEO-7, as outlined in the GEO-7 scoping document and in line with the GEO resolution, the Secretariat proposed to use the regions and sub regions used in the IPBES regional reports as a useful starting point for answering key policy questions at the regional and sub regional level.

The discussion on the approach for the regional and sub-regional analysis within the GEO-7 was initiated by presentations from the GEO-7 Co chairs and relevant authors of the regional chapters. The discussion focused on the selection and classification of subregions as the global regions were already identified by making use of the UN regions.

IMAG members indicated that;

- data availability was a key issue to consider in the approach for the sub regions as some sub regions could have challenges around data availability.
- it could agree to either using the IPBES classification or the UN classification for regions and sub regions but clear argumentation and transparency around the choice made is essential.

IMAG members also welcomed the suggestion by the authors to include the interconnectedness and linkages between regions and subregions in the analysis. It acknowledged that in terms of modelling and scenarios, not all 17 subregions identified in the IPBES subregions can be fully serviced, but stressed the importance of the subregional dimension and welcomed the suggestion by the secretariat to work towards online chapters for all subregions.

IMAG experts then concluded their discussion by preparing for their joint meeting with MESAG that was scheduled for the next day.

Review and provide advice on proposed methodological approach to developing solutions pathways and Review and provide advice on the proposed outlooks methodology.

IMAG welcomed two presentations from the authors on the outcomes of workshops held the previous week on solution pathways and outlooks. IMAG noted and appreciated the important steps that have been made by the authors and their teams. In the discussions, IMAG members noted the following issues:

- The focus on actions (including policies) was welcomed in the defining solutions pathways, but IMAG noted that to avoid misunderstandings, the use of the term 'policy' was to be included in the definitions.
- To ensure internal and external consistency with regards to how the storylines are developed in GEO-7, IMAG recognized that a common-sense approach, based on existing material and experience was probably the best feasible approach.
- One of the scenarios to be developed will focus on issues around sufficiency and degrowth (paying attention to the use of appropriate terminology), while others may follow a technological, behavioural change, or international governance approach.
- GEO-7 will follow the IPBES definition of 'transformational change'.

The importance of including economic and finance in the GEO-7 analysis was underlined by the GEO-7 co-chairs and two main questions were presented by the GEO-7 co-chairs to the IMAG to be addressed over the upcoming production phase of GEO:

- Is the report consistent with the scoping provided and is it useful?
- is the report of good quality?

It was stated that GEO-7 should bring an 'honest message' that i.e. there may still be good technological feasibility to solve the planetary crises, but the economic feasibility is less, and the political feasibility is worse and that while there are opportunities, there are also serious barriers, such as vested interests.

Day 3

Discuss and provide advice on proposed supporting services and how these will be delivered within the GEO process.

IMAG initiated the discussion on Supporting Services by highlighting that the Future of GEO resolution mentions that the GEO process should,

“identify intergovernmentally defined needs and terms for the provision of support for capacity-building, knowledge generation and policymaking, in line with the mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme, and should provide support services for addressing those needs, in partnership with relevant institutions as appropriate”

IMAG welcomed the document prepared by the secretariat on Supporting services and underlined that, much like the collaborating centres:

- developing a strategy for supporting services goes beyond the GEO-7 report and should envisage the development of capacities of Member States and stakeholders to contribute to the GEO-process as well as make better use of the GEO-7 outcomes.
- The workstream on supporting services is a pillar of the GEO process and deserves adequate funding.
- A communication strategy for the GEO-7 and its supporting services is also crucial.

The secretariat was requested to provide information on the planned survey on supporting services that is meant to identify the intergovernmentally defined needs as per the Resolution 5/3.

The Secretariat responded that the survey would follow standard procedure;

- By having it translated in all the six UN languages.
- it will be sent out to Member States and Major Groups and Stakeholders through the usual UNEP channels such as regional offices and through Governance Affairs.
- Webinars will be conducted to communicate what the survey is about and what it aims to achieve.

IMAG stressed that the survey and identification of needs should also allow for regional and subregional specificities.

In the discussion, IMAG members highlighted several elements:

- In terms of knowledge generation, attention must be paid to improving the quality of monitoring, data management and the overall science-policy interface used to translate data to information to knowledge and vice versa, translating policy needs into relevant research questions and data needs. It was recognized that this process, and the specific needs, would differ per region.
- IMAG underscored the relevance of the GEO process for other related UNEP initiatives such as the WESR and the Global Environmental Data Strategy, that are also in the UNEA resolution 5/3.
- Supporting services should be aimed at co-creation of knowledge, at learning (including via e-based tools) and at developing partnerships with Member States as well as relevant Major Groups of Stakeholders, including i.e., business, youth and faith-based groups.
- In developing a program for developing and delivering supporting services, collaboration should be sought with collaborating centres, UNEP regional offices, relevant resident coordinators / UN Country Teams, other global assessment bodies, the UNEP Montevideo program on environmental governance and of course with the GEO-7 authors where relevant and possible.

The secretariat underscored the need to be practical as not everything is feasible at once, and activities should where possible also be linked to the production, dissemination and use of the report.

IMAG members also noted that for the preparation of the survey, allowing for adequate response time would probably not allow for an IMAG discussion in June, as planned in the work plan.

IMAG/MESAG joint meeting

The joint meeting of the two advisory bodies of GEO-7 had the below agenda;

- Item 1: Roundtable Introductions
- Item 2: Discussion on how the IMAG and MESAG can work together.
- Item 3: Any other business.

A detailed summary of this meeting will be provided separately.

Continued session: Discuss and provide advice on proposed supporting services and how these will be delivered within the GEO process.

IMAG experts revisited the earlier discussion on supporting services. Some elements in the discussion were underlined or elaborated based on the recap of the first session of the discussion:

- The importance of facilitating co-creation of knowledge and building capacity of Member States and stakeholders to improve the quality of science, of monitoring and of the science-policy interface, e.g., through Communities of Practice, Learning Networks or Committees of Science.
- The survey that the secretariat is going to undertake should be well communicated and should allow for identifying priorities per (sub)region and for thematic specificities.
- Also, the survey should not just try to identify needs, but also seek input from Member States and stakeholders that can help to meet those needs.
- It was stressed that developing a strategic and long-term work program just like for the collaborating centres is needed, which will require time and resources, but IMAG considered it would probably deliver a good return on investment in the longer run, in terms of developing a quality GEO-network.
- IMAG considered that it would be good to develop and implement such work program digitally where possible; the current dialogue of the secretariat with the GRID-collaborating centres on 'Digital GEO' should be expanded to serve the needs of the GEO-7 products (the report, summaries and targeted products, digitally as well as in PDF) as well as GEO services.

IMAG welcomed the suggestion from the secretariat to have a joint virtual meeting with MESAG in which the GRID-collaborating centres could present proposals for the digitalization work.

Having finished the meeting agenda, IMAG members identified the next steps in closing.

- The IMAG virtual meeting in April should focus on the issues highlighted below.
 - Revised GEO-7 policy questions as per the guidance given.
 - A proposal for the selection of Collaborating Centres
 - Documentation of the remaining gaps in the author teams
 - Argumentation for the GEO-7 Regional classification
 - A revised IMAG workplan 2023/ 2024 (can be considered later if time does not allow).
- The IMAG virtual meeting in May will focus on the draft survey for supporting services revised by the Secretariat as per the guidance given.
- The IMAG virtual meeting in June will focus on communication and outreach around GEO-7 with communication colleagues in the Secretariat.
- The Secretariat will organise a joint presentation of the digitization of GEO to IMAG and MESAG
- The next face to face meeting of IMAG is scheduled to take place in September 2024.

Following these interventions, the co-chair closed the meeting thanking the entire IMAG-bureau, the secretariat for the preparations and work during the meeting, and thanked all the participants in Bangkok and online, for their active participation that had resulted in a creative, focused, and productive IMAG-meeting. Having no other business, the meeting was closed at 15h30 (UTC+7).

Annex 1: Participants List

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation	Nationality	Region(s) of Representation	Participation
Dr. Leila	Bendifallah	Professor, M'hamed Bougara University, Algeria	Algeria	African Group	In person
Anna	Mampye	Director: State of Environment Information in the Branch, ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment	South Africa	African Group	In person
Toghrul	Feyziyev	Advisor, International cooperation division of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan	Azerbaijan	Eastern European Group	In person
Miroslav	Havránek	Director of the Czech Environmental Information Agency	Czechia	Eastern European Group	In person
Claudia	Kabel	German Environment Agency (UBA), academic staff member, International Sustainability Strategies, Policy and Knowledge Transfer	Germany	Western European Group	Online
Mohamed	Abdelraouf	Sustainability Research Program Director at Gulf Research Center (GRC)	Egypt	Science and Technology	In person
Ruth	Viola Spencer	Member to the National Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for Antigua and Barbuda	Antigua and Barbuda	Women	In person
Djatougbe	Aziaka	President and founder of welfare Togo; co-facilitator of UNEP NGO major group	Togo	Non-governmental organization	In person
Zahra	Abu Taha	Recycling officer at ZATARI refugees camp, Oxfam	Jordan	Children and youth	Online
Prem	Singh Tharu	Regional Programme Officer, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) under Environment Programme	Thailand	Indigenous peoples	In person
Yi	Huang	Professor, School of Environmental Sciences and Engineering, Peking University, China	China	Asia and the Pacific Group	In person
Takashi	Otsuka	Director of Knowledge and Communications, Strategic Management Office, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), Hayama, Japan	Japan	Asia and the Pacific Group	In person
Meri	Harutyunyan	Chief specialist of Strategic Policy Department, Ministry of Environment, Armenia	Armenia	Eastern European Group	In person
Marek	Haliniak	General Counsellor in the Ministry of Climate and Environment, Department of Strategy and Analysis, Poland	Poland	Eastern European Group	Online
Gillian	Stanislaus	Environmental Programme Officer, Environmental Management Authority (EMA)	Trinidad & Tobago	Latin American and Caribbean Group	Online
Neyra	Herrera	Environmental Statistics Chief – Ministry of Environment	Panama	Latin American and Caribbean Group	In person
Rafael	Monge	Director - National Center of Environmental Information (CENIGA) Ministry of Environment and Energy; Costa Rica	Costa Rica	Latin American and Caribbean Group	In person
Arthur	EIJS	Policy coordinator Natural Resource Management & Sustainable Land Use - Ministry of Infrastructure & water management, department of International Affairs	Netherlands	Western European Group	In person
Salla	Rantala	Development Manager, Environmental Policy Centre, Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE)	Finland	Western European Group	In person
Fabian	Wagner	Dean, Capacity Development and Academic Training, IIASA, Austria	Germany	Science and Technology	Online
Ingrid	Coetzee	Director, Nature & Health; ICLEI Africa	South Africa	Local authorities	In person
Merylene	Chitharai	African Council of Religious Leaders - Religions for Peace	South Africa	Faith-based groups	In person

Apologies

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation	Nationality	Region(s) of Representation
Modibo	Sacko	Vice President of the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CONACILSS), Mali	Mali	African Group
Thuraya	AL Sariri	Assistance Director General of Nature Conservation at MECA- Oman	Oman	Asia and the Pacific Group

Maha	Maayta	Director of the Policy and International Cooperation, Ministry of Environment, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan	Jordan	Asia and the Pacific Group
Dušica	Pešević	Associate Professor, University of Banja Luka, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Bosnia and Herzegovina	Bosnia & Herzegovina	Eastern European Group
Kenset	Amaury Rosales Riveiro	Coordinator, Information Unit, Environment and Climate Change; Ministry of Environment and Resources Natural Resources (MARN)	Guatemala	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Marisol	Dimas		Panama	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Margarita	Guerra		Panama	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Lisa	Eriksson	Transport Analysis	Sweden	Western European Group
Jan-Gustav	Strandenaes	Advisory board member of sustainability/environment governance project at the University of Stockholm	Norway	Non-governmental organization
Thomas	Chali	Senior Policy Advisor on Environmental Conservation and Natural Resources Management in Tanzania	Tanzania	African Group
Jerome	Lugumira Sebadduka	Natural Resources Management Specialist (Soils and Land Use), National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) Uganda	Uganda	African Group
Silvio	Albuquerque e Silva	Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Brazil to UNEP; Embassy of Brazil in Kenya	Brazil	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Christina	Komorski	Director, Information & Indicators Division, Sustainability Directorate, Environment and Climate Change Canada	Canada	Western European Group
Toral	Patel-Weynand	Director of the Southern Research Station at the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service	United States	Western European Group
Rolenas	Baereleo	Principal Officer, Biodiversity and Conservation; Department of Environmental protection and Conservation (DEPC), Vanuatu	Vanuatu	Asia and the Pacific Group
Keri	Holland	Senior Policy Advisor in the Office of Environmental Quality in the Bureau of Oceans, International and Scientific Affairs at the U.S. Department of State	United States	Western European Group
Denise Filip	Filip	On behalf of Dominic Kailash Nath Waughray who is Senior Advisor to the CEO World Business Council for Sustainable Development	India	Business and industry