

March - April
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THE GEO-7 PROCESS BEGINS

Modelling and Scenarios and Policy Responses and Solutions Pathways Workshops of the Seventh Edition of UNEP's Global Environment Outlook (GEO-7), 8-10 March 2023.

First Authors Meeting for the Seventh Edition of UNEP's Global Environment Outlook (GEO-7)

The First Face to Face Meeting of the Multidisciplinary Expert Scientific Advisory Group (MESAG)

The Second Face to Face Meeting of the Intergovernmental and Multi stakeholder Advisory Group (IMAG)

Intergovernmental and Multistakeholder Advisory Group and Multidisciplinary Expert Scientific Advisory Group Joint Meeting for the Seventh Edition of UNEP's Global Environment Outlook (GEO-7)

The Coordination Group Meeting for the Seventh Edition of UNEP's Global Environment Outlook (GEO-7)

SIDE EVENT AT THE GEO-7 MEETING

**Energy transition and natural resources
– global and regional discussions**



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Group photo of the workshops participants

The **Modelling and Scenarios** and the **Policy Responses and Solutions Pathways** experts for GEO-7 met at its first in-person and hybrid workshop in Bangkok, Thailand from 8-10 March 2023.

The **Modelling and Scenarios** workshop included discussions on the roles and responsibilities of the different teams/authors in the modelling and scenarios work. This workshop enabled experts to also develop a work plan for the modelling and scenarios work and establish a collaboration approach with the solutions pathways group.

The **workshop** highlighted the purpose of the Outlooks section. GEO's outlook section seeks to explore environmental and socioeconomic implications of different routes: in the absence of new policies; and under scenarios where specific environmental targets are being achieved. The development of target-seeking scenarios requires models and storylines. The **workshop** gave a detailed description



Modelling workshop participants

of the five chapters in the outlooks section of GEO-7 and their possible activities. The Modelling and Scenarios group discussed the methodology to be adopted for the modeling and scenarios work and considered in detail the possibility of creating a "Super model" that would be a combination of different models aiming at different outputs. In-depth discussions from the modelling group included whether to use parallel modelling as an indication of uncertainty or rely on particular models. On the final day of the meeting, the team had a detailed discussion of each model to identify the capabilities of each and understand the expectations

Running in parallel to the **Modelling and Scenarios** workshop was the **Policy Responses and Solutions Pathways** Workshop. These experts met to define solutions pathways, develop a methodology for the solutions pathways and select a pathways framework. This team reviewed various frameworks and key points about the frameworks. The frameworks reviewed in the discussion included the GSDR 2019 and 2023, World in 2050, Brundtland report, IPBES, IEA, Doughnut economy, planetary boundaries amongst others. The discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of the various frameworks concluded that the GSDR framework was a good candidate as its scope was broad and rich and aligned well with the systems of food, materials/waste, energy, economic/finance and environmental systems

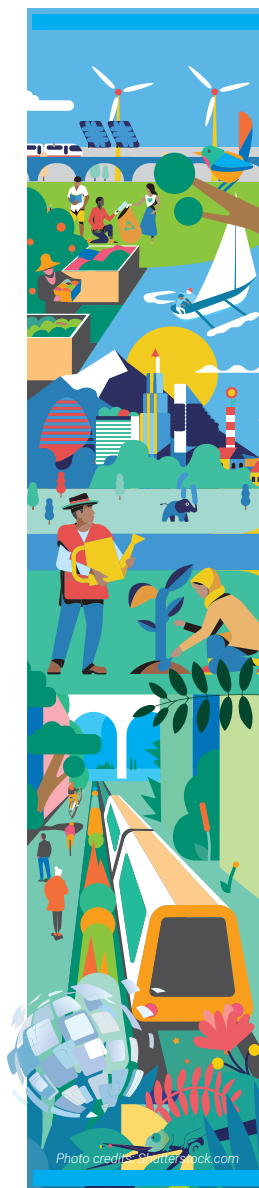


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Participants at the Solutions Pathways Workshop

presented in the [GEO-7 scoping document](#). One of the outcomes of the workshop included a working definition of a *solutions pathway* and it was agreed that policies were not enough, and the definition should include ‘actions’ which would also need to be defined. Further discussions highlighted that actions would be a combination of policies or actions at the business level or society level which would either promote the way to get to the goals or eliminate barriers.

The workshop emphasized the need to have accountability for those who implement policy. Politicians in their term have to be accountable for policy implementation. The solutions pathways experts agreed that having a theory of change should be overarching for the whole report to offer a theoretical background for how transformation happens.

The third and final day of the workshop started with a joint session of both groups to discuss the overall progress. The teams discussed ways to address uncertainty in the modelling and scenarios work and how to validate results from the models outputs. It was emphasised that literature would be key in helping situate the results from the models.

Outcomes documents

[Modelling and Scenarios](#)
[Policy Responses and Solutions Pathways](#)

First Authors Meeting for the Seventh Edition of UNEP’s Global Environment Outlook (GEO-7)

The *First Author’s Meeting* of GEO-7 took place in Bangkok, Thailand from 13-17 March 2023 at the United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC). The objective of this authors’ meeting was to expand the annotated outline and agree on the drafting process for the different chapters. More than 200 experts attended the meeting that was led by the illustrious [Co-chairs of the GEO-7](#). The first draft of the report is expected to be ready for an expert peer review in [February 2024](#).

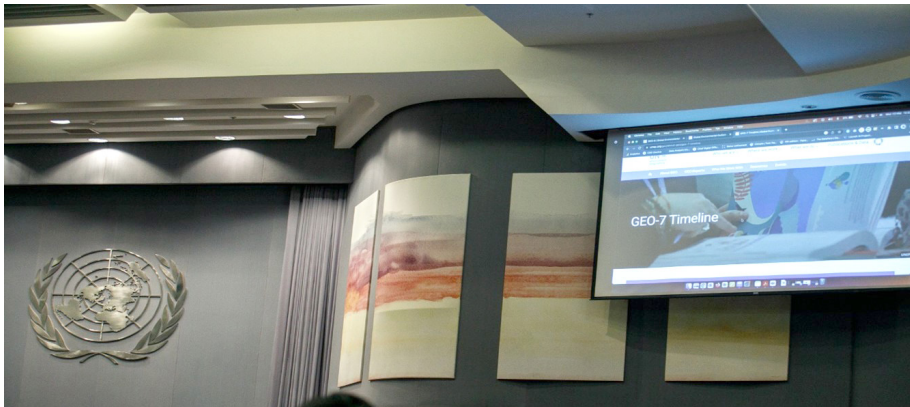
The meeting included various orientation sessions on different topics such as the type of writing style, referencing, use of graphs and maps etc. for the authors to understand the GEO drafting process. Authors were briefed about Behavioral Science and how they could tailor the content to be solutions-focused and behaviorally informed. Key elements of the GEO-7 digitization such as the digital collaboration workspace were presented to the authors and the different functionalities of the platform that explained. The updated [GEO Website](#) was presented along with the changes made to improve the accessibility of GEO reports and different content on the website. The authors were made aware of the reference style to be used in the GEO-7 report and the use of maps and graphics to enhance the readability of the report.

From the third to fifth days of the meeting, the authors separated into parallel sessions as per the four sections of the report: **Overview and Context**, **State and Trends of the Environment**, **Policy Responses and Solutions Pathways** and **Outlooks**.



Participants at the First Global Authors Meeting





GEO-7 presentation slide during the orientation session



Participants at the GEO-7 meeting

In these brainstorming sessions, authors were able to expand the annotated outline and begin developing a draft of the chapters of GEO-7. On the final day of the meeting, the groups presented the achievements made in the week, the gaps in expertise identified within their author teams, the workplan towards the June and September on-line meetings and the production of a first-order draft by January 2024. The GEO-7 timeline can be found [here](#). The outcomes document can be found [here](#).

The First Face to Face Meeting of the Multidisciplinary Expert Scientific Advisory Group (MESAG)

The first face to face meeting of the Multidisciplinary Expert Scientific Advisory Group took place on the 14-16 March 2023, in Bangkok, Thailand at the United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC). The members met to discuss the objectives of the GEO-7 and the scientific credibility of the GEO process. The meeting emphasized the process for monitoring the scientific integrity of GEO-7 assessment. The members discussed recommendations to help ensure the conceptual, analytical and scientific consistency and rigour in the development and implementation of the multi-year work plan and programme of activities, such as assessments and supporting services.

Some of the key decisions agreed from the MESAG meeting include:

- There will be no alternates for MESAG members.
- Identification of experts to participate in GEO-7 will be done through the official nomination portal and the MESAG will provide guidance on the gap filling process for experts in the next virtual meeting in April 2023.
- The MESAG suggested some criteria for the Secretariat to use in the selection and engagement of collaborating centers, including: 1) regional balance with 3 centers from each region, 2) broad expertise to meet needs of GEO-7 as explained in the call for expressions of interest, 3) availability of self-funding without the need for support from and 4) regional and global focus.



MESAG Members during a session with the one of the Assessment Co-chairs





Some MESAG members during one of the sessions

- The MESAG requested full participation at the GEO-7 in-person Author Meetings, however acknowledging the resource constraints, the MESAG requested whether budget-neutral adjustments could be made to their workplan and in-person meeting attendance. MESAG members will explore opportunities to mobilize resources such as travel costs and meeting venues to support GEO-7.
- Assessment co-chairs requested assistance from the MESAG to identify on Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK) expertise for GEO-7. It was agreed that a systematic approach to integrate ILK throughout GEO-7 is required and a task force or working group on ILK could be established.
- The MESAG welcomed the review process and GEO-READ platform. The members suggested that the GEO-READ platform allow the review editors and authors to reassign the categories of comments submitted by reviewers, to add regional balance as a comment category, to add the review period dates in the pop up for reviewers to be reminded of the deadline and to check if it's possible to add maps instead of only graphs to show the geographical distribution of reviewers.



The Second Face to Face Meeting of the Intergovernmental and Multi stakeholder Advisory Group (IMAG)

The Intergovernmental and Multi stakeholder Advisory Group met for their second face to face meeting in Bangkok, Thailand on 14th -16th March 2023 at theto discuss various objectives regarding the GEO-7 process and the next steps. The IMAG members met to agree IMAG's work plan for the coming year, provide advice on key GEO-7 policy questions and on the profiles of additional experts and authors that may be needed, provide advice on the profiles and roles of selected collaborating centers among other important objectives regarding the GEO-7 process.

The first day of the meeting began with a summary of the GEO-7 funding. 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. The second and third days of the meetings covered various discussions on the objectives of the meeting emphasizing on GEO-7 policy questions, the status of the authors based on gender and geographical distribution as well as the selection of collaborating centres amongst other key objectives.



Members of the GEO-7 IMAG



Intergovernmental and Multistakeholder Advisory Group and Multidisciplinary Expert Scientific Advisory Group Joint Meeting for the Seventh Edition of UNEP's Global Environment Outlook (GEO-7)

The Intergovernmental and Multistakeholder Advisory Group and Multidisciplinary Expert Scientific Advisory Group met to discuss how they can work together and decided to ensure synergy and avoid conflicting guidance to the authors/ co-chairs from the GEO-7 advisory bodies.

Both advisory groups agreed on the following:

- To share information on the meeting schedules and workplans for IMAG and MESAG to plan for any matters that require policy and scientific guidance.
- Any decision on regional and sub-regional classification should be well documented and made in a transparent and clear manner.
- The IMAG also discussed the evidence base to be used in GEO-7 and this is particularly important to discuss because the IMAG and MESAG guidance may overlap in this case.
- In the case of Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK), IMAG recommended to leave the matter of guidance on scientific oversight to the MESAG.
- IMAG can rely on MESAG to ensure that the key scientific conclusions will be clearly stated in the Summary for Policy Makers (SPM) and added that the IMAG's role is to ensure the policy relevance of the SPM.
- To hold calls between the IMAG and MESAG Bureaus as needed at semi- regular intervals to discuss key issues and any potential overlapping scientific and policy guidance and if deemed necessary by the respective Bureaus, exchange any draft guidance before it is issued.
- To hold full IMAG and MESAG calls if deemed necessary by the respective Bureaus on matters where scientific and policy guidance are required from both GEO-7 advisory bodies.

The co-chairs concluded the meeting following all the advice and discussions from the advisory groups.



IMAG member during the meeting

Some of the key points from the meeting include:

- Member States to consider contributing to the process, including through in-kind contribution (e.g., hosting of meetings and financing collaborating centers) and UNEP to continue efforts to find support for GEO and other related science activities from the UN Multi Partner Development Trust Fund.
- GEO should strive for a balance on the overall GEO level and 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.
- The collaborating centers selected should be regionally balanced and be able to contribute in a balanced manner to the development of the GEO-7 report and the provision of supporting services which may also translate into centres that contribute at the global level, and others that are regionally focused.

Having finished the meeting agenda, IMAG members identified the next steps in closing. The next face to face meeting of IMAG is scheduled to take place in September 2024.

The outcomes document of the meeting can be found [here](#).

The Coordination Group Meeting for the Seventh Edition of UNEP's Global Environment Outlook (GEO-7)

The Coordination Group consisting of the Co-chairs and vice-chairs of the Ad hoc Open-ended meetings, the four Co-Chairs of the assessment, the IMAG and MESAG Bureaus met in Bangkok, Thailand to provide a brief update on the main outcomes of their Bangkok meeting and agreed next steps of working together on the GEO-7 process.

The assessment co-chairs briefed the group on their progress, noting that by the end of the meeting annotated outlines for all chapters will be ready. Initial gaps in the authors teams have been identified, especially gaps in Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK) experts and tools to integrate ILK throughout the assessment. The IMAG co-chairs briefed the group on the progress of the week, including key principles and policy guidance from IMAG. The MESAG co-chair followed with a briefing on the MESAG meetings, stating they were lively and participatory with a strong balance of expertise and backgrounds which supports the work of MESAG.

The meeting decided:

- The Coordination Group will interact informally relying on the existing Terms of Reference for the IMAG, MESAG, the assessment co-chairs and the co-chairs for the ad-hoc open-ended meetings, and it will meet as needed to discuss the overarching goals of GEO-7 and in case of any need for guidance among the group.
- The adopted documents from the September and October ad-hoc open-ended meetings, namely the [GEO-7 Procedures Document](#) and the [GEO-7 Scoping Document](#), must not be reopened or changed and need to be adhered to throughout the GEO-7 process.

The outcomes document of this meeting can be found [here](#).



Experts at GEO-7 meeting

SIDE EVENT AT THE GEO-7 MEETING

Energy transition and natural resources – global and regional discussions



Experts at the side event

At the authors meeting in Bangkok, a side event titled **“Energy transition and natural resources – global and regional discussions”** was organized. The event focused on the role of the Asia Pacific region in the transition to sustainable energy systems, proposed actions to reach this goal including examples from other countries expanding the conversation to the importance of critical minerals for the energy system. The event explored the key elements to be considered for a transition to more sustainable energy systems and proposed actions to reach this goal.

The event opened with two keynote presentations from Mrs. Patcharaporn Phasukavanich from the [Ministry of Energy in Thailand](#) and Dr Janez Potocnik from the [International Resource Panel](#) followed by an expert dialogue.

The main discussions points were:

- Current environmental issues of Thailand and the Asia-Pacific region, specifically focusing on energy systems and climate change issues.
- Steps needed for an environmentally sustainable energy transition focusing on the need for critical minerals, at a global and regional perspective.





Energy experts dialogue

- Innovative solutions and technologies that can help accelerate the energy transition and circularity in the region and globally.
- Regional policy, technology and behavioural change recommendations to reach these goals.
- How the GEO-7 can inform policymaking for the energy transition.

The discussion also included ways in which material use/natural resource management can be optimized for the decarbonization of the energy system in the Asia Pacific region.



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Author gap-filling exercise after Bangkok and ILK call for GEO-7

Following the Bangkok meeting, the gap-filling exercise began to identify additional authors for different chapters of the report. The purpose of this exercise was to ensure a balanced cohort of authors in the chapters that lacked enough expertise. Experts at the meeting proposed authors to fill in gaps within their chapters. This gap-filling exercise took place over a one month period through various recommendations from the authors and the late nominations received after the initial call for authors. Following this exercise, UNEP received over 300 expressions of interest from experts in different expertise willing to participate as authors for the GEO-7 report. A total of 197 experts nominations were shared with the co-chairs of the assessment for review before making a final selection of the authors.

Following the Bangkok meeting, the need to integrate Indigenous and Local Knowledge throughout GEO-7 was raised, therefore, a call was issued to over 70 experts with expertise on Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK). The importance of the inclusion of ILK had also been reiterated by the [Inter-governmental and Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group \[IMAG\]](#) and [Multi-stakeholder Expert Scientific Advisory Group \[MESAG\]](#). UNEP contacted experts in the field based on their experience in current leading global assessments. The call was made in order to bring together regionally and gender balanced experts to cover ILK in the assessment on two fronts: 1. The systematic integration of ILK into the assessment; and, 2. The selection of authors/ reviewers to support the development of content. Following this call of experts, UNEP received expressions of interest from 12 ILK experts. The co-chairs of the assessment will review their nominations before the final selection of the authors.



Experts in Bangkok

