Our Ref: UNEA/GEOIMAG/14 7 November 2024

GEO-7 Intergovernmental and Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group (IMAG) Meeting Summary, November 7, 2024

The Intergovernmental and Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group (IMAG) met for its fourteenth virtual call to discuss the following agenda items:

1. Review and feedback on the review process for the Second Order Draft Review of the Main Report and First order Draft of the Summary for Policymakers
2. Review and feedback on the process for discussing terms and definitions for glossary inclusion
3. Review and feedback on the draft letter from IMAG to UN Environment Programme Executive Director
4. Any Other Business

On these items the IMAG decided:

- The IMAG will continue nominating qualified experts for the review of the SOD of the main report and the FOD of the SPM.
- IMAG members will have one week to review and submit comments on the draft letter to UNEP'S ED.
- The Secretariat will participate in a follow-up CPR briefing, which will take place on the 3rd of December, focusing on the ongoing review process for the GEO-7 and including a renewed call for nominations of intergovernmental experts, particularly to support the review of the SPM.
- IK & LK experts will submit their comments via an Excel sheet, which will then be uploaded to the GEO-READ platform by the Secretariat.

Rapporteur	Signature
Ana Julieta Calvo Obando	ANA JULIETA CALVO OBANDO (FIRMA) PERSONA FISICA, CPF-01-1206-0574. Fecha declarada: 23/07/2025 08:09:18 AM Esta es una representación gráfica únicamente, verifique la validez de la firma.

Summary of the meeting

The meeting was chaired by the co-chairs of the Intergovernmental and Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group (IMAG).

Review and feedback on the review process for the Second Order Draft of the Main Report and First Order Draft of the Summary for Policymakers

The Secretariat recalled that the IMAG had previously discussed the First Order Draft (FOD) of the GEO-7 main report during its September meeting, providing important guidance to improve the Second Order Draft (SOD) review process. During the FOD phase, the Secretariat noted that out of 312 registered reviewers, only 208 have provided comments. One of the key recommendations from the IMAG was that the selection of reviewers should be based primarily on subject-matter expertise, while also striving to achieve gender and geographical balance. In this regard, the Communication Division actively engaged UN Environment Programme's social media networks, while the Secretariat reached out to regional networks, collaborating centres, colleagues in various UNEP offices, and members of UNEP's Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR).

As a result of these efforts, the Secretariat reported that 955 reviewers are currently involved in the SOD process. Moreover, notable improvements have been achieved in terms of regional representation, and gender balance has improved relative to the FOD phase.

The Secretariat further informed the IMAG that the application process remains open for intergovernmental reviewers and encouraged Member States to continue nominating qualified experts. The SOD review period, which began on 1st of November, will continue until the 15th of January of the following year. In support of the review process, the Secretariat has thus far organized four webinars to introduce reviewers to the guidance and the GEO-READ platform. The Secretariat indicated that approximately 950 reviewers have attended these webinars to date, and additional sessions are planned. Reviewers have also been encouraged to use the designated support mailboxes should they encounter any issues.

Finally, the Secretariat is actively monitoring comment submissions on the platform to assess the distribution of feedback across chapters. In cases where certain chapters appear to be under-reviewed, the Secretariat intends to reach to experts with relevant knowledge to ensure a comprehensive and balanced review across all sections of the GEO-7 report.

The Secretariat provided an update on the status of the governmental review, informing the IMAG that only 40 countries have officially submitted nominations for intergovernmental reviewers. The Secretariat expressed its appreciation to IMAG members who have proactively reached out to their respective governments to encourage expert nominations. Additionally, the Secretariat announced its intention to address the CPR during its upcoming meeting on 3rd of December, where it will reiterate the call for additional nominations from Member States.

Representatives from the Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE) informed the IMAG that user accounts had been created for all IMAG members on the GEO-READ platform. In cases where members had provided multiple email addresses to receive communication from the GEO team, one email address was selected for account setup purposes. Members were advised to activate their accounts by resetting the password, as default passwords had initially been assigned. Upon first login, IMAG members are required to accept the standard GEO user agreement before proceeding. CEDARE clarified that IMAG members, in their role as advisory body members, are permitted to submit comments once they access the relevant dashboards. In addition to submitting comments, IMAG members will also have access to a real-time overview of submitted comments. However, it was noted that these data are aggregated, thus, individual comment content will not be visible. During the process of addressing the comments, IMAG members will also be able to observe how comments are being addressed: accepted, rejected, incorporated into the text, flagged, or otherwise addressed. CEDARE noted that, at the request of the IMAG, designated governmental focal point will oversee the review process for each country. While multiple reviewers may be nominated by a government, only the designated focal point will have the authority to supervise and make final decisions on behalf of their delegation on comments.

The IMAG concluded by thanking both CEDARE and the Secretariat for their comprehensive presentations and for the continued transparency and clarity provided regarding the progress of the review process.

Review and feedback on the process for discussing terms and definitions for glossary inclusion

The Secretariat emphasized the critical importance of clear and consistent definitions for ensuring scientific

clarity and maintaining the credibility of the GEO assessment process. It acknowledged, however, that achieving terminology consistency across previous GEO cycles has proven challenging. In response, and as part of the broader digitalization initiatives under GEO-7, the Secretariat has introduced a new glossary tool.

In developing this tool, the Secretariat has adopted the glossary platform and procedural framework used by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The Secretariat expressed its sincere appreciation to the IPCC Secretariat for generously sharing the coding and structural framework of the platform, thereby facilitating the adaptation process. The primary objective is to enhance transparency and promote collaborative decision-making in the development and use of terms within GEO-7. The glossary is supported by an integrated online database that allows for the comprehensive storage, management, and tracking of definitions. This includes detailed information on sources, evolution of each term, and the rationale behind any modifications or updates.

The Secretariat noted that the current version of the glossary incorporated terminology from previous GEO assessments, which now serves as the foundational baseline. As the drafting of GEO-7 progresses, the glossary will be filled with additional terms proposed by the authors. Among the platform's functionalities is a search feature that allows users to locate specific terms and their definitions. A comment section is also available, primarily for use by authors, to facilitate debate and collaborative refinement of contested terminology. To ensure a systematic and participatory process for incorporating definitions into GEO-7, the Secretariat has developed a detailed guidance framework consisting of seven steps.
The IMAG took note of the progress made on the development of the glossary and expressed its appreciation to the Secretariat for the comprehensive update on this agenda item.

Review and feedback on the draft letter from IMAG to UN Environment Programme Executive Director

The IMAG recalled its previously stated intention to issue a formal validation opinion. In this context, a draft version of the corresponding report has been prepared. Furthermore, during the in-person meeting held in September, it was agreed that the IMAG would submit a formal letter to the UN Environment Programme's Executive Director to accompany this draft opinion. A draft of the letter, developed by the IMAG co-chairs with support from the Secretariat, has since been circulated among IMAG members for review.

The letter itself comprises a single page and is accompanied by two annexes. The first annex provides a list of current IMAG members, intended to serve as a reference for the Executive Director. The second annex outlines the key outcomes and decisions agreed upon during the September in-person meeting.
As not all IMAG members had yet the had the opportunity to review the draft letter, it was agreed that members would be granted one week to submit comments. It was also noted that the letter is brief and that the content of the second annex had already been signed off.

Finally, the IMAG confirmed that the letter will be formally signed by the IMAG co-chairs on behalf of all IMAG members.

Any Other Business

Budget and staffing: The Secretariat stated that UNEP has made notable progress in addressing both the budgetary and staffing requirements necessary to support the current GEO cycle. Reflecting on past challenges, the Secretariat acknowledged that it had previously faced a difficult financial and operational

situation. However, the Secretariat has recently experienced significant positive developments in this regard. The Secretariat expressed its sincere appreciation to the Government of the Netherlands for its financial contributions of 150,000 Euros. These funds are dedicated especially for the production of GEO-7, with a focus on supporting the development of graphics and illustrations, and the implementation of a robust communication strategy. In addition, the Secretariat expressed gratitude to the European Commission, which has recently approved a renewed contribution to GEO-7 of approximately 500,000 Euros. This funding will also enable the Secretariat to conduct targeted outreach activities in early 2026.

Moreover, the Secretariat is in the process of preparing a proposal to the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The proposal, valued at approximately 4 million US Dollars, aims to secure funding for the production and outreach of the GEO-7 report, as well as for a range of complementary support services. The Secretariat also shared an update on the planning of upcoming author meetings. The Government of the Republic of Korea has confirmed its intention to propose a venue on Jeju Island for the Fourth Author's Meeting, which is scheduled to take place in June 2025, alongside the World Environment Day on the 5th of June. Discussions are currently underway within the Korean National Assembly to determine the level of financial support that may be provided, particularly regarding the coverage of local hosting costs and related logistical arrangements.

SPM core team membership: The IMAG recalled that, during its September meeting, concerns were raised regarding the regional and gender imbalance within the SPM core team. These concerns were communicated to the assessment co-chairs, and the IMAG requested feedback on measures taken to address the issue.
In response, the Secretariat reported that the assessment co-chairs had taken concrete steps to strengthen the representational balance of the SPM core team. As a result, three new members have joined the SPM core team: two female experts from Africa and the Asia-Pacific region, and one male expert from Eastern Europe. The Secretariat believes that the current composition of the SPM core team now reflects an improved and more balanced representation across regions and gender.
It was further noted by the Secretariat that, while the SPM core team plays a central role in synthesizing and integrating key elements from the main GEO-7 report into the SPM, the drafting process involves the participation of all authors.

The IMAG expressed its satisfaction with the revised composition of the SPM core team and appreciated the efforts made to ensure greater inclusivity and diversity in the process.

GEO communication plan including CPR briefings: The IMAG recalled that, during its recent meeting with the UN Environment Programme Executive Director, concerns were raised regarding the strategic communication of the GEO process. In response, the IMAG co-chairs engaged directly with UNEP's Communication Division to emphasize the need for a more structured and stakeholder-responsive communication approach.
The Secretariat noted that the GEO Coordination Group convened on 6th of September, shortly after the in person IMAG meeting where communication-related concerns raised by the IMAG were formally presented to the Communication Division. It was subsequently agreed that the Communication Division would prepare an intital pre-launch communication plan, which was then circulated among Coordination Group members for feedback. Based on the comments received, the Communication Division is now in the process of revising the plan.

The Secretariat also recalled that, during its September meeting, the IMAG had recommended that the GEO Secretariat should provide regular briefings to the CPR to strengthen transparency and engagement with Member States. In line with this recommendation, the Secretariat delivered an update to the CPR on the 19th of September, which was reportedly well received. As a direct outcome of this engagement, the Secretariat explained that the IMAG subsequently received an email under a silence procedure regarding the use of terminology related to the triple planetary crisis, which is now being framed as the global environmental crises. To ensure that Member State concerns are consistently

addressed, the Secretariat announced that a follow-up CPR briefing will take place on the 3rd of December. This session will focus on the ongoing review process for the GEO-7 and include a renewed call for nominations of intergovernmental experts, particularly to support the review of the SPM. The objective is to foster greater CPR involvement in the GEO-7 review phase.

The IMAG expressed appreciation for these positive developments and thanked the Secretariat and the Communication Division for their responsiveness and continued efforts to enhance strategic communication.

Organization and logistics of the Third IK & LK Dialogue: The IMAG recalled that, during the September meeting, the Indigenous and Local Knowledge (IK & LK) Committee presented its ongoing work and engaged in discussions with the IMAG regarding the integration of IK & LK into the GEO process. It was agreed that the timing of the next IK&LK Dialogue would be aligned with the incorporation of comments on the SOD, to ensure that contributions from this group are adequately reflected in the assessment. The Secretariat announced that the Third IK & LK Dialogue will be held in person from the 13th to the 15th of January in Chiang Mai, Thailand, and will include a community visit to an Indigenous community on the 12th of January 2025.

This upcoming dialogue will be strictly dedicated to reviewing and providing comments on the SOD of the GEO-7 main report and the FOD of the SPM. In preparation for the dialogue, the Secretariat is organizing two virtual preparatory meetings. Participants will submit their comments via an Excel sheet, which will then be uploaded to the GEO-READ platform by the Secretariat. The Secretariat has extended invitations to 28 Indigenous participants. The Third IK & LK Dialogue is being organized in collaboration with a regional partner organizing specializing in Indigenous issues in the Asia-Pacific region, with active involvement of an IMAG member. The Secretariat expressed its sincere appreciation to the Governments of the United Kingdom and Canada for their financial support, which has made the organization of this important dialogue possible.

The IMAG thanked the Secretariat for the comprehensive update and acknowledged the significant progress made in advancing the inclusion of Indigenous and Local Knowledge in the GEO process.

List of Participants

Names	Affiliation	Nationality	Region(s) of Representation
Dr. Leila Bendifallah	Professor, M'hamed Bougara University, Algeria	Algeria	African Group
Ms. Anna Mampye	Director: State of Environment Information in the Branch, Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment	South Africa	African Group
Ms. Christina Komorski	Director, Information & Indicators Division, Sustainability Directorate, Environment and Climate Change Canada	Canada	Western European Group
Mr. Takashi Otsuka	Director of Knowledge and Communications, Strategic Management Office, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), Hayama, Japan	Japan	Asia and the Pacific Group
Mr. Arthur EIJS	Policy coordinator Natural Resource Management & Sustainable Land Use – Ministry of Infrastructure & water management, department of International Affairs	Netherlands	Western European Group
Ms. Margarita Guerra (Alternate)	Ministry of environment- Panama	Panama	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Dr. Marek Haliniak	General Counsellor in the Ministry of Climate and Environment, Department of Strategy and Analysis, Poland	Poland	Eastern European Group
Dr. Toral Patel-Weynand	Director of the Southern Research Station at the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service	United States	Western European Group
Ms. Neyra Herrera	Chief of Environmental Statistics; ministry of environment-Panama	Panama	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Ms. Claudia Kabel	German Environment Agency (UBA), academic staff member, International Sustainability Strategies, Policy and Knowledge Transfer	Germany	Western European Group
Ms. Gillian Stanislaus	Environmental Programme Officer, Environmental Management Authority (EMA)	Trinidad & Tobago	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Eng. Julieta Calvo	National Center for Geoenvironmental Information, Ministry of Environment and Energy; Costa Rica	Costa Rica	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Dr. Lisa Eriksson (Alternate)	Senior Advisor, Transport Analysis, and the Department for Outlook and Policy	Sweden	Western European Group
Ms. Yi Huang	Professor, School of Environmental Sciences and Engineering, Peking University, China	China	Asia and the Pacific Group
Names	**Affiliation**	**Nationality**	**Major Group**
Ms. Ruth Viola Spencer	Chair, Marine Ecosystems Protected Areas(MEPA) Trust	Antigua and Barbuda	Women
Mr. Prem Singh Tharu	Regional Programme Officer, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) under Environment Programme	Thailand	Indigenous peoples
Ms. Djatougbe Aziaka	President and founder of welfare Togo; co-facilitator of UNEP NGO major group	Togo	Non-governmental organization
Ms. Merylene Chitharai	Lan Manager at UKZN Howard College	South Africa	Faith-based groups

Apologies

Names	Affiliation	Nationality	Region(s) of Representation
Dr. Thuraya AL Sariri	Assistance Director General of Nature Conservation at MECA-Oman	Oman	Asia and the Pacific Group
Mrs. Maha Maayta	Director of the Policy and International Cooperation, Ministry of Environment, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan	Jordan	Asia and the Pacific Group
Dr. Modibo Sacko	Vice President of the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CONACILSS), Mali	Mali	African Group
Dr. Keri Holland (Alternate)	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
Mr. Silvio Albuquerque e Silva	Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Brazil to UNEP; Embassy of Brazil in Kenya	Brazil	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Ms. Alexandra Gurgel Valente da Costa (Alternate)	Environment Analyst, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change	Brazil	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Mrs. Dušica Pešević	Associate Professor, University of Banja Luka, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Bosnia and Herzegovina	Bosnia & Herzegovina	Eastern European Group
Mr. Miroslav Havránek	Director of the Czech Environmental Information Agency	Czechia	Eastern European Group

Mr. Toghrul Feyziyev	Advisor, International cooperation division of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan	Azerbaijan	Eastern European Group
Mr. Thomas Chali	Senior Policy Advisor on Environmental Conservation and Natural Resources Management in Tanzania	Tanzania	African Group
Dr. Jerome Lugumira Sebadduka	Natural Resources Management Specialist (Soils and Land Use), National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) Uganda	Uganda	African Group
Ms. Meri Harutyunyan	Chief specialist of Strategic Policy Department, Ministry of Environment, Armenia	Armenia	Eastern European Group
Mr. 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
Mr. Carlos Cordero Vega (Alternate)	Director of the Planning Secretariat of the Environment and Energy Sector, Ministry of Environment and Energy, Costa Rica	Costa Rica	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Dr. Salla Rantala	Development Manager, Environmental Policy Centre, Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE)	Finland	Western European Group
Mrs. Rolenas Baereleo	Principal Officer, Biodiversity and Conservation; Department of Environmental protection and Conservation (DEPC), Vanuatu	Vanuatu	Asia and the Pacific Group
Names	**Affiliation**	**Nationality**	**Major Group**
Mr. Jan-Gustav Strandenaes	Advisory board member of sustainability/environment governance project at the University of Stockholm	Norway	Non-governmental organization
Ms. Ingrid Coetzee	Director, Nature & Health; ICLEI Africa	South Africa	Local authorities
Dr. Fabian Wagner	Dean, Capacity Development and Academic Training, IIASA, Austria	Germany	Science and Technology
Mr. Dominic Kailash Nath Waughray	Senior Advisor to the CEO World Business Council for Sustainable Development	India	Business and industry
Dr. Mohamed Abdelraouf	Sustainability Research Program Director at Gulf Research Center (GRC)	Egypt	Science and Technology
Ms. Zahra Abu Taha	Recycling officer at ZATARI refugees camp, Oxfam	Jordan	Children and youth