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**GEO-7 Intergovernmental and Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group (IMAG) Meeting Summary,
August 20, 2024**

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

1. Review and feedback on draft agenda of the third in person meeting of the IMAG
2. Any Other Business

On these items the IMAG decided:

- The Secretariat and the IMAG will discuss the development of the validation opinion in person during the Nairobi meeting.
- The Secretariat will revise the work plan for 2025, and several briefings will be delivered to IMAG, including updates from the Task Force on IK&LK and from two task groups developing content on behavioural, social, and cultural science.
- The Secretariat will update the IMAG on chapter development and coordination efforts, facilitating presentations by the CLAs of various GEO-7 chapters.
- The Secretariat will present success stories from the supporting services contributing to GEO-7 during the Nairobi meeting.
- The Secretariat will share the revised annotated outline with the IMAG as a means of providing a clear overview of the GEO-7 report's framework.
- The Secretariat will convene a coordination session between the IMAG and MESAG bureaus, and the assessment co-chairs in order to reflect on the outcomes of several key events taking place in Nairobi

Rapporteur	Signature
Ana Julieta Calvo Obando	

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 draft agenda of the third in person meeting of the IMAG

The Secretariat provided an update on the budgetary and staffing developments regarding the GEO-7 process. The Secretariat has successfully mobilized resources enabling the achievement of all activities in the approved in the workplan. The Secretariat is working for the mobilization of additional resources to ensure to ensure the full delivery of GEO-7.

Furthermore, the Secretariat explained that it is preparing for the intergovernmental and expert peer review phase scheduled for November, December, and early January. These will cover the Second Order Draft (SOD) of the main report and the First Order Draft (FOD) of the Summary for Policymakers (SPM), which

is currently under preparation by the authors. To enhance the robustness of the review process, the Secretariat aims to brief the IMAG during the in person meeting on the challenges encountered during the FOD review of the main report and the corresponding changes proposed for the upcoming reviews of the SOD and the SPM. These efforts seek to increase the number of experts in the review of both the main report and the SPM.

Moreover, the Secretariat highlighted, that an additional and complex component of GEO-7 is the preparation of a validation opinion by the IMAG at the conclusion of the process. In GEO-6, the Scientific Advisory Panel issued a validation letter affirming the scientific credibility of the process. Under the new procedures, IMAG could contribute to its own validation opinion. The in-person meeting will discuss with IMAG how this opinion could be developed: either jointly with, or independently from, the validation opinion being prepared by the MESAG. The Secretariat emphasized the importance of having these discussions in person during the Nairobi meeting.

The Secretariat also mentioned the agenda item on the work plan for 2025, seeking IMAG's guidance on key elements, particularly those related to the SPM review and approval, and final launch of GEO-7 at UNEA-7. Several briefings will be delivered to IMAG, including updates from the Task Force on IK&LK, as well as from two task groups developing content on behavioural, social, and cultural science.

The Secretariat also explained the aim to facilitate presentations by the Coordinating Lead Authors (CLAs) of various GEO-7 chapters, to update IMAG on chapter development and coordination efforts. Additionally, a digital version of the report is planned, and the Secretariat would also present success stories from the supporting services contributing to GEO-7.

IMAG sought clarification on its role in ensuring policy relevance and in providing procedural guidance throughout the development process. Specifically, IMAG inquired about access to the current drafts and opportunities to receive presentations on draft chapters. The IMAG stated, that the lack of access to current drafts has hindered their ability to offer timely policy guidance, particularly in anticipation of the governmental review. The Secretariat acknowledged this concern but indicated that providing access to draft chapters prior to the start of the SOD review in November is difficult due to the ongoing and dynamic nature of drafting. Chapters are being revised continuously, and authors are expected to continue refining them throughout September and October to ensure accuracy in content, references, and visualizations. It is standard practice that draft chapters are not shared externally before the official peer review period begins. The Secretariat further noted that the assessment co-chairs also expressed discomfort with sharing early versions due to the preliminary status of the material.

To address IMAG's concerns, the author teams will provide verbal briefings on the content and emerging findings of each chapter during the Nairobi meeting, allowing IMAG to offer preliminary input. Additionally, the Secretariat confirmed that IMAG members will have access to draft materials through their respective governments, which have been requested to submit nominations this week. Governments are expected to liaise with IMAG to ensure timely access to the SOD once the review period begins.

IMAG also requested broad outlines of each chapter in advance of the next meeting to facilitate preparation and stakeholder consultation. While the Secretariat expressed reservations about requiring authors to prepare such outlines, as citing challenges were observed during GEO-6, it suggested that the existing annotated outline from the scoping document could be used. The only substantive change to this outline involves moving the outlook chapters ahead of the system chapters to reflect the current structure. The

Secretariat will share this revised annotated outline with the IMAG as a means of providing a clear overview of the report's framework.

The Secretariat informed participants that IMAG co-chairs had been invited to attend a high-level meeting with the Executive Director of UNEP, alongside the co-chairs of the MESAG and the co-chairs of the assessment. The purpose of this strategic discussion is to review the overall progress of the GEO-7 assessment process. The IMAG co-chairs expressed their hope that the Executive Director may use this opportunity to articulate any specific areas in which she would like the IMAG to provide targeted advice. Such guidance would likewise be relevant to MESAG and could help clarify the scope and focus of each group's advisory role moving forward. This engagement was indicated as important to support a broader understanding of potential areas of common ground between IMAG and MESAG, particularly in preparation for the forthcoming joint IMAG and MESAG meeting. One of the central objectives of this joint meeting will be to discuss and assess the validation process being undertaken by both bodies.

Following these meetings, a coordination session will be convened between the IMAG and MESAG bureaus, the assessment co-chairs, and the Secretariat, which will serve as a platform for reflecting on the outcomes of several key events occurring in early September.

The IMAG co-chairs also provided background information regarding the decision to hold the third authors' meeting in Nairobi, rather than in Jordan, as originally planned. This shift in venue was the result of extensive deliberations involving the co-chairs of IMAG and MESAG, and assessment co-chairs, and the Secretariat, in consultation with UNEP's Executive Director. Safety considerations were a central factor in the decision-making process. It became increasingly evident that a significant number of CLAs, authors, and assessment co-chairs would be unable to attend a meeting held in Jordan due to security-related concerns.

This raised serious concerns about the viability and cost-effectiveness of hosting the meeting in Jordan, given that substantial resources would be invested into an event in which a considerable number of the authors could not participate. Following these concerns, and after several rounds of consultations, a diplomatic meeting was held with the Ambassador of Jordan to express appreciation for Jordan's commitment and to convert the logistical and participation challenges being faced. Although the Jordanian delegation expressed disappointment, they ultimately acknowledged the situation and graciously agreed to co-host the Third Authors meeting in Nairobi. This decision was greatly appreciated and viewed as constructive, as it enabled a significantly larger number of authors to attend and contribute in person. The Nairobi meeting is now expected to host approximately 250 participants, thereby providing a strong foundation for high-quality discussions and meaningful contributions to the GEO-7 report and related outputs.

It was noted that the decision to relocate the meeting had to be made over the summer period, during which time rapid response and immediate decision-making were necessary. Consequently, it was not possible to consult the full membership of either IMAG or MESAG. Given the time-sensitive nature of the situation, the co-chairs of IMAG assumed responsibility for addressing the matter. They ultimately concluded that holding a meeting in Jordan with only partial participation would be detrimental to the success of the GEO-7 process. On that basis, the IMAG co-chairs endorsed the relocation of the meeting to Nairobi in order to preserve the quality and inclusiveness of the assessment process.

Any Other Business

Indigenous and Local Knowledge Dialogue: The Secretariat stated that the organization of the Third IK & LK Dialogue, initially proposed for September, was delayed due to budgetary constraints and associated uncertainties. However, the Secretariat recently received formal communication confirming that the government of the United Kingdom has committed its support for the event. Consequently, it is now anticipated that the Third IK & LK dialogue will take place in November. This dialogue represents a critical step in ensuring that Indigenous and Local Knowledge is appropriately acknowledged and meaningfully integrated into the GEO-7 assessment process. The IMAG expressed appreciation for the timely support extended by the UK Government.

Logistics: The IMAG had inquired about the hosting arrangements made by the Government of Jordan for the Nairobi meeting. In response, the Secretariat confirmed that the Jordan Ambassador has been invited to the event, and opening remarks will either be delivered by the Ambassador and his staff or by an official delegation from Amman.

In addition, the Secretariat is organizing a side event focusing on the transformation of food systems and has extended a request to the Jordanian government to nominate a subject-matter expert to contribute substantively to the session. The Secretariat is providing financial support to facilitate the participation of the Jordanian delegation.

Regarding the arrival and registration process, some IMAG members are expected to arrive on the 2nd of September. To facilitate a smooth registration process, the Secretariat announced that the registration desk will be operational at the main gate on that day between 15:00 and 17:00 in the afternoon, and it will remain open on the following day for additional arrivals. The Secretariat encouraged participants staying near the campus to complete their registration on Monday. Secretariat staff will be present at the gate to welcome IMAG members and assist them in obtaining their access badges.

Finally, the IMAG confirmed that all travel arrangements are in order and expressed satisfaction with the logistical coordination provided.

Supporting Services: The Secretariat reported that the third meeting with national experts from Malawi took place last week, marking the formal inception of the drafting process for Malawi's National State of the Environment and Outlook Report. This meeting initiated the national-level assessment and set the groundwork for the report's development.

The Secretariat noted that the process is being led by GRID-Arendal, a GEO collaborating centre, with direct financial support provided by the government of Norway. Over the coming three months, the authors will be engaged in drafting twelve thematic chapters, which will largely follow the structure and approach used in the GEO reports. The Secretariat emphasized that in contrast to the GEO-7's broader solution-based outlook, the policy section of the Malawi report will place a stronger emphasis on assessing the effectiveness of implemented policies.

The national assessment process will last for 18 months in total. The Secretariat stated that the drafting process is progressing smoothly, and a Second Order Draft (SOD) is expected to be ready by June of the following year.

In addition, the Secretariat shared that it has received an invitation to engage with the Sichuan Province in China to support the development of their State of the Environment report.

List of Participants

Names	Affiliation	Nationality	Region(s) of Representation
Dr. Leila Bendifallah	Professor, M'hamed Bougara University, Algeria	Algeria	African Group
Dr. Thuraya AL Sariri	Assistance Director General of Nature Conservation at MECA-Oman	Oman	Asia and the Pacific Group
Ms. Anna Mampye	Director: State of Environment Information in the Branch, Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment	South Africa	African 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
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
Mr. Miroslav Havránek	Director of the Czech Environmental Information Agency	Czechia	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. 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
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
Ms. Ingrid Coetzee	Director, Nature & Health; ICLEI Africa	South Africa	Local authorities

Apologies

Names	Affiliation	Nationality	Region(s) of Representation
Ms. Neyra Herrera	Chief of Environmental Statistics; ministry of environment- Panama	Panama	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Ms. Margarita Guerra (Alternate)	Ministry of environment- Panama	Panama	Latin American and Caribbean 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
Ms. Christina Komorski	Director, Information & Indicators Division, Sustainability Directorate, Environment and Climate Change Canada	Canada	Western 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
Dr. Marek Haliniak	General Counsellor in the Ministry of Climate and Environment, Department of Strategy and Analysis, Poland	Poland	Eastern 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
Mr. Jan-Gustav Strandenaes	Advisory board member of sustainability/environment governance project at the University of Stockholm	Norway	Non-governmental organization
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