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**GEO-7 Intergovernmental and Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group (IMAG) Meeting Summary,
June 12, 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 the GEO-7 First Order Draft Review
2. Review and feedback on the draft revised GEO-7 timeline
3. Review and feedback of the GEO-7 approach for providing a validation opinion
4. Any Other Business

On these items the IMAG decided:

- That addressing all peer review comments thoroughly reinforces the credibility of the process and aligns the report with established scientific standards.
- That the Secretariat will put measures in place to encourage broader participation in the peer review process, including targeted invitations to key stakeholders, engagement with academic institutions, and leveraging existing networks within UNEP.
- That the IMAG and the MESAG will jointly discuss and decide on the approach for providing a validation opinion during the in-person September meeting in Nairobi, which will serve as an official endorsement of the GEO-7 process, ensuring that all scientific, procedural, and quality assurance principles have been upheld.
- It was agreed that the IMAG will participate at the in-person meeting in Nairobi on the 2nd – 6th September, where both IMAG and MESAG will finalize the structure and scope of the validation opinion assessment.
- The IMAG will continue to refine their evaluation criteria for their validation opinion based on the GEO-7 operating principles.
- That the IMAG will focus on quality control, geographic balance, and transparency in their validation opinion assessment.
- That the Secretariat recognizes the need for careful planning to balance comprehensive peer review with timely delivery of the final outputs for GEO-7.
- The importance of maintaining the integrity of the peer review process for the Malawi NSEOR.

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 the GEO-7 First Order Draft Review

An introductory briefing was provided by the Secretariat on the concluded FOD review period of the GEO-7 main report. The Secretariat noted the inadequate number of comments provided by the peer review editors. With a total number of 3,700 comments across 21 chapters, the Secretariat emphasized that the current level of feedback falls significantly under the requirements to uphold scientific rigor and integrity. The Secretariat pointed out the need to substantially increase the volume of comments for the second order draft (SOD) review. This objective is to secure approximately 1,000 comments per chapter or 21,000 comments in total for the main GEO-7 report, thereby ensuring a more comprehensive and robust peer review process. To address these concerns, it was agreed that the authors will be allotted two months to incorporate the feedback from the FOD and revise the content. This period is deemed essential to maintain the quality of the main report while simultaneously preparing an embargoed version of subsequent review by intergovernmental bodies.

The IMAG emphasized the necessity of addressing all peer review comments thoroughly to reinforce the credibility of the process and align the report with established scientific standards. The Secretariat confirmed that measures will be put in place to encourage broader participation in the peer review process, including targeted invitations to key stakeholders, engagement with academic institutions, and leveraging existing networks within UNEP.

Additionally, the integration of Indigenous Knowledge and Local Knowledge (IK&LK) was recognized as an integral part of enhancing the report's inclusivity and comprehensiveness. The Secretariat noted that progress has been made in this regard, with the IK&LK task force members actively collaborating with author teams and contributing textual inputs to various chapters. This collaborative effort aims to ensure that diverse knowledge systems are reflected within the GEO-7 report, in accordance with the agreed-upon recommendations from previous meetings with the IMAG. However, the Secretariat recognized that further efforts are needed to ensure meaningful representation of diverse knowledge systems.

Review and feedback on the draft revised GEO-7 timeline

The IMAG provided a detailed review of the revised GEO-7 timeline, which outlines key milestones leading to the launch of the report. The IMAG confirmed several significant dates, including the third authors' meeting and the joint IMAG-MESAG session in Nairobi, which will take place in September 2024. The intergovernmental and expert peer review process for the second order draft (SOD) of the main report and the first order draft (FOD) of the Summary for Policymakers (SPM) is scheduled to commence in November 2024 and conclude by January 2025.

The Secretariat confirmed that a dedicated meeting will be held involving review editors and coordinating lead authors to finalize the MESAG's validation opinion by June 2025. The validation opinion assessment, which will be submitted to the Chief Scientist of UNEP, will have a pivotal role in certifying that due process has been followed and that scientific integrity has been maintained throughout the preparation of main GEO-7 report. Subsequently, in November 2025, an ad hoc open-ended meeting will be convened to review and approve the SPM. The formal launch of the GEO-7 report is anticipated to take place during the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7) on December 10, 2025.

The IMAG raised its concern regarding potential points within the revised timeline, highlighting the challenge of accommodating an increased volume of comments for the second order draft (SOD) review without compromising the quality and accuracy of the main GEO-7 report. It was acknowledged that while the timeline for reviewing the Summary for Policymakers (SPM) appears adequate, the primary area of concern lies in managing the anticipated inflow of comments on the SOD of the main GEO-7 report. The Secretariat recognized the need for careful planning to balance comprehensive peer review with timely delivery of the final outputs.

Review and feedback of the GEO-7 approach for providing a validation opinion

The IMAG and the MESAG agreed to collaborate closely on formulating and delivering a validation opinion assessment, recognizing its critical role in the endorsement process for GEO-7. While the MESAG will focus on assessing scientific integrity and methodological accuracy, the IMAG will contribute by evaluating the broader dimensions of the process, including procedural transparency, quality assurance, and geographic representativeness.

The validation opinion assessment will be presented to the ad hoc open-ended group of Member States during the November 2025 SPM review and approval meeting. This assessment is intended to assure Member States that the GEO-7 process adhered to established principle of scientific rigor and due process. The IMAG acknowledged that further discussions are required to draft the specific structure of the validation opinion assessment and to ensure alignment between IMAG's input and the MESAG's validation opinion.

The IMAG suggested that the validation opinion could be structured around thematic areas, such as procedural integrity, transparency, geographic representation, and responsiveness to peer review comments. Furthermore, the IMAG will continue to refine their evaluation criteria based on the GEO-7 operating principles, ensuring that their contribution adds value to the broader assessment process.

Any Other Business

GEO-7 Nairobi Meeting: The IMAG meeting will be held from September 3 to September 5 in Nairobi, while the Bureau will participate in extended sessions from September 2 to September 6. The Secretariat informed the IMAG, that participants will be required to register through UNEP's online platform, with invitations expected to be issued by the end of June. The Secretariat confirmed two thematic side events, which will take place during the September meeting in Nairobi. One side event will be focusing on the transformation of food systems, and the second will be highlighting the GEO supporting services.

Supporting Services: The Secretariat provided updates on the progress of Malawi's National State of Environment and Outlook Report. The Secretariat confirmed that the scoping meeting held in May 2024 was successful, and the selection of authors is scheduled to be completed by August. However, concerns were raised by the Malawian parliamentary committee, which requested an accelerated timeline for the delivery of the report to accommodate national electoral timelines. The IMAG emphasized the importance of maintaining the integrity of the peer review process despite these pressures.

Indigenous Knowledge and Local Knowledge Dialogue: The Secretariat reported that the second Indigenous Knowledge and Local Knowledge Dialogue has been successfully held in Mexico in June 2024. Feedback from participants expressed the need for pre-meeting online sessions to foster trust and the preference for future dialogues to be held on Indigenous lands where feasible. A third IK&LK Dialogue is planned for October 2024 to further integrate diverse knowledge systems into the GEO-7 report.

Update on IMAG membership: The IMAG provided a membership update, with the announcement that Salla Rantala will take a one-year leave of absence beginning in July 2024. During her absence, her alternate, Lisa Eriksson, will represent Sweden in IMAG deliberations.

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
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. Miroslav Havránek	Director of the Czech Environmental Information Agency	Czechia	Eastern European 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. 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
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
Eng. Julieta Calvo	National Center for Geoenvironmental Information, Ministry of Environment and Energy; Costa Rica	Costa Rica	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Ms. Yi Huang	Professor, School of Environmental Sciences and Engineering, Peking University, China	China	Asia and the Pacific 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
Dr. Fabian Wagner	Dean, Capacity Development and Academic Training, IIASA, Austria	Germany	Science and Technology
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
Dr. Thuraya AL Sariri	Assistance Director General of Nature Conservation at MECA-Oman	Oman	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
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. 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. Maha Maayta	Director of the Policy and International Cooperation, Ministry of Environment, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan	Jordan	Asia and the Pacific 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
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
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