

Our Ref: UNEA/GEOIMAG/pb/05

April 14, 2023

**GEO-7 Intergovernmental and Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group (IMAG) Meeting Summary,
April 13, 2023**

The Intergovernmental and Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group (IMAG) of the Global Environment Outlook (GEO) met at its fifth virtual call to discuss GEO-7 progress and plan next steps for the advancement of its work. Agenda items included:

1. Update on the gap filling exercise and any remaining gaps.
2. Review and discussion on revised GEO-7 policy questions.
3. Review and discussion of the GEO-7 regional and sub regional analysis.
4. Review and discussion of the proposal for the selection of collaborating centers.
5. Review of the updated draft workplan
6. Any other business.

On these agenda items the IMAG decided:

- The IMAG welcomed the documents for the various agenda items and IMAG members were invited to share any comments on (a) the proposed new list of authors, (b) the sub regional classification and (c) collaborating centres by 24th of April 2023 close of business Nairobi time and any comments on (d) the revised policy questions to be kindly shared by 28th of April close of business Nairobi time.
- The IMAG requested for an updated budget based on the new list of proposed authors noting that the quality of the report should be prioritised and not be compromised by cutting down on the number of authors due to budget reasons.
- The revised budget table to be provided should show some options and scenarios that reflect the changes in budget estimates that may result from an increased number of authors, noting that the Secretariat and GEO-7 co-chairs i.e., could also seek ways to mitigate the budget implications of such an increase by i.e., prioritizing and/or minimizing the number of authors that would participate physically during each author's meetings.
- Highlighting key assumptions in the GEO-7 report with regards to the policy questions is crucial as well as giving a clear indication on what the confidence is and where the limits are whilst being policy relevant.
- As per guidance provided with regards to the policy questions, 'policy recommendations' to be replaced by 'policy options' to avoid being prescriptive.
- All elements of the areas of work that the collaborating centres would be engaged in are equally important and collaborating centres for each of the five thematic areas of work should be identified and that looking out for collaborating centres should be a continuous exercise.
- The IMAG agreed to the proposal for the selection of collaborating centres while requesting the Secretariat to also propose collaborating centres for thematic areas three and four and start putting in place the agreements.
- The IMAG also decided that the issue on collaborating centres will be revisited on a regular basis once there's more information and hopefully more clarity on available budget.
- An updated work plan will be provided regularly to IMAG members.
- The next IMAG meeting will be on the 16th of May 2023.

Rapporteur	Signature
Rafael Monge	

Summary of the meeting

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

Update on the gap filling exercise and any remaining gaps.

The meeting started with a briefing by the Secretariat on the steps taken to gap fill the missing expertise in the author teams since the Bangkok meeting. The Secretariat briefed that there is a much better gender and geographical balance after the gap filling, and that the number of experts in the proposed list has increased significantly. This has budget implications as the original budget estimates catered for 120 experts while the new list of authors has 197 authors, but the main aim for the gap filling is to ensure the best possible report is produced. The Secretariat also informed the IMAG about the ongoing process on identifying and contacting experts on indigenous and local knowledge, disasters and conflicts and climate change adaptation will continue to fill the remaining gaps. IMAG inquired whether the Secretariat needed any recommendations to fill the thematic gaps on climate change adaptation and conflicts and the Secretariat responded that they have so far received a good number of expressions of interest for ILK and that with the recent presentation of GEO-7 to the World Adaptation Science Program they hope to receive more on climate change adaptation. The GEO-7 co-chairs noted that the gender balance is now almost perfect (a rare achievement for any assessment) and that the geographic balance was much improved while still a little light on Eastern Europe and Africa but that there's a good pool of experts from Africa who will be used as reviewers as they currently can't be accommodated in the author's list. They also noted the increased number of authors and noted that it's reasonable given the range of issues that GEO-7 intends to cover.

The IMAG requested for an updated budget based on the new list of proposed authors noting that the quality of the report should be prioritised and not be compromised by cutting down on the number of authors due to budget reasons. The Secretariat noted that at the moment they do not have the resources to fund such a larger group of authors to meetings, but they would prioritize the quality of the report and keep mobilizing resources internally and externally to cater for the increased numbers while noting the increased cost of travel and inflation. The Secretariat also noted that they do not intend to reject the nominations but allocate a different role for some authors such as have them in a contributing author capacity thus keeping their expertise within the team but not having them physically present in meetings. Once there was an agreed upon final number of authors, the Secretariat would then produce an updated cost estimate and share it with the IMAG.

On this item the IMAG decided that the scientific basis for gap filling should not be comprised because of simply reducing the number of authors and that the Secretariat and the Co-chairs could prioritize Coordinating Lead Authors to participate physically during meetings and that the Secretariat should share a revised budget table that shows the changes given the increased number of authors. The IMAG also decided that the 24th of April 2023 would be the deadline to provide any comments to the Secretariat with regards to the proposed list of authors.

Review and discussion on revised GEO-7 policy questions.

The Secretariat noted the good work done by the GEO-7 Co-chairs to revise the policy questions

based on the advice given by IMAG during the Bangkok meeting. The GEO-7 co-chairs mentioned that they clustered and streamlined the policy questions including adding elements of human health and security while ensuring they highlighted the chapters that will provide the relevant information for the questions. They then proceeded to inquire from IMAG on what was meant by 'taking uncertainties into account' given that on every piece of work done, there will be talk about uncertainties and confidence limits. They also inquired on the IMAG guidance on not being prescriptive yet requesting for policy recommendations at the lowest spatial level as by definition, a recommendation is prescriptive.

On this issue of uncertainties, IMAG noted that highlighting key assumptions in the report is crucial as well as giving a clear indication on what the confidence is and where the limits are as whilst being policy relevant, it's also important to have a clear indication of how confident we are that a certain policy response will deliver or might deliver. With regards to prescriptiveness and the use of 'policy recommendations', the IMAG noted that indeed policy recommendations would tend to be prescriptive and policy options on the other hand would be a much better way of looking at it as this is a science-based report that needs to be factual and credible as well as policy relevant. The GEO-7 chairs thanked the IMAG for the clarification and noted that they could include couple of words the chapeau to the policy questions to say what the confidence limits are, how robust is the information and the need to be clear about any assumptions, the efficacy and replicability to give guidance to the authors.

IMAG also inquired about the inconsistencies about on whether the report will be discussing the implication of environmental changes on SDG's and internationally agreed goals. The GEO-7 co-chairs responded that there is a specific chapter in the annotated outline, explicitly looking at the SDGs but also in the other chapters, there will be coverage on the other environmental goals that have been internationally agreed. IMAG noted the need for caution and ensuring that the language is not prescriptive as not all parties are party to all the international agreed to goals or are in agreement with the goals thus the need for correct packaging to address some of the important goals and targets. The GEO-7 co-chairs agreed to the need for caution and emphasized the importance of the expert and government review to ensure a proper balance and that the discussion on the goals focuses on whether the goals as currently written going to be achieved or are be undermined if \ things such as climate change, loss of biodiversity etc are not dealt with.

On this issue, the IMAG agreed to set a deadline for the 28th of April 2023 close of business Nairobi time to receive any comments from IMAG members on the revised policy questions and to allow the Secretariat and Co-chairs to consolidate all comments and allow for discussion where needed before a 72hr silence procedure to ensure a final set of policy questions are with the Co-chairs by 5th of May 2023.

Review and discussion of the GEO-7 regional and sub regional analysis

The Secretariat briefed the IMAG members that during the Bangkok meeting it was suggested that GEO-7 adopt the sub regional classification used in the IPBES regional reports. The Secretariat went further ahead to mention that they together with the Co-chairs had revisited those sub regions as per the guidance of the IMAG in Bangkok to have a clear argumentation for the choice and that they can comfortably recommend it as it fits well with the five UN regions that were agreed in the October 2022 Scoping meeting.

On this issue, it was agreed that IMAG members will comment on the IPBES sub regions for use in GEO-7 by 24th April close of business Nairobi time to facilitate any final discussion if there's any, before a 72hr sign off silent procedure.

Review and discussion of the proposal for the selection of collaborating centers

The Secretariat explained that the first proposal of the selection of the collaborating centres was done following the guidance provided by the IMAG in the Bangkok meeting and thanked IMAG for their guidance. The Secretariat explained that the selection proposes a phased approach with the first phase focusing on selecting collaborating centres to support the production of the report and the second phase focusing on engaging a larger number of partners in all regions to amplify and maximize the impact of the report through communication, capacity building and providing supporting services to Member States. The Secretariat also noted that the balance of the 14 centres selected in the first proposal is not perfect, but the idea would be to engage all the other centres in a lighter touch in the outreach and capacity development work later depending on the resources available, but some centres could also be engaged from the beginning to show that outreach and communication is an important aspect of the GEO-7 process. The Secretariat also noted that some of the phase-one centres will also be involved in more than one area of work, including areas 3-4 and that can be clarified in the next version of the document.

IMAG inquired on what was meant by engaging some collaborating centres in a less formal way to which the Secretariat responded by saying that this would mean engaging them without the formalities of partnership agreements and Memorandum of understanding which usually are used by UNEP when engaging with partners. This is because it is time consuming and there is a lot of effort required. IMAG also sought clarification on whether the 'less formal' engagement of collaborating centres is what the Secretariat had translated as a two-phase approach to which the Secretariat responded yes.

On this issue IMAG noted that all elements of the areas of work that the collaborating centres would be engaged in are equally important and collaborating centres for each category should be identified and that looking out for collaborating centres should be a continuous exercise to see with which new collaborating centres could be engaged in a formal or informal manner.

The IMAG agreed to the proposal for the selection of collaborating centres while requesting the Secretariat to also propose collaborating centres for the thematic areas three and four and start finalizing the agreements. Any additional comments on this proposal can also be shared by April 24th close of business Nairobi time. The IMAG also decided that the issue on collaborating centres will be revisited on a regular basis once there's more information and more budget.

Review of the updated draft workplan

IMAG noted that the IMAG work plan had been revised to provide an overall view of the GEO-7 calendar as well as show the possible interactions with the MESAG.

On this item, IMAG requested the Bureau of IMAG to continue working with the Secretariat in enhancing the work plan and keeping it updated and that an updated version will be provided regularly to IMAG members.

Any other business

- The Secretariat briefed IMAG members on the capacity constraints within the GEO team after a key member (the Head of GEO) took extended medical leave. The IMAG wished the team member a quick recovery and appreciated the efforts of the Secretariat despite the capacity challenges.

Having no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 17h35 (EAT).

Action items

- The Secretariat will prepare a written summary of the meeting.
- The Secretariat will prepare an updated budget table for various scenarios in terms of number of authors, to be shared with IMAG members.
- The Secretariat to share a revised database of the proposal of new authors that has all the links working (done).
- IMAG members to send feedback on proposed new list of authors by 24th of April 2023 close of business Nairobi time.
- IMAG members to send feedback on sub regional classification by 24th of April 2023 close of business Nairobi time.
- IMAG members to send feedback on collaborating centres classification by 24th of April 2023 close of business Nairobi time.
- IMAG members to send feedback on revised policy questions by 28th of April close of business Nairobi time.
- The Secretariat will consolidate all comments received from the various documents where feedback has been requested and initiate a 72hr silence procedure.

List of Participants

Names	Affiliation	Nationality	Region(s) of Representation
Dr. Leila BENDIFALLAH	Professor, M'hamed Bougara University, Algeria	Algeria	African Group
Dr. Jerome Lugumira Sebadduka	Natural Resources Management Specialist (Soils and Land Use), National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) Uganda	Uganda	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
Dr. Marek Haliniak	General Counsellor in the Ministry of Climate and Environment, Department of Strategy and Analysis, Poland	Poland	Eastern European Group
Mr. Rafael Monge	Director - National Center of Environmental Information (CENIGA) Ministry of Environment and Energy; Costa Rica	Costa Rica	Latin American and Caribbean 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. Yi Huang	Professor, School of Environmental Sciences and Engineering, Peking University, China	China	Asia and the Pacific Group
Ms. Claudia Kabel	German Environment Agency (UBA), academic staff member, International Sustainability Strategies, Policy and Knowledge Transfer	Germany	Western European Group
Ms. Christina Komorski	Director, Information & Indicators Division, Sustainability Directorate, Environment and Climate Change Canada	Canada	Western European 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
Ms. Meri Harutyunyan	Chief specialist of Strategic Policy Department, Ministry of Environment, Armenia	Armenia	Eastern European Group
Ms. Gillian Stanislaus	Environmental Programme Officer, Environmental Management Authority (EMA)	Trinidad & Tobago	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Dr. Salla Rantala	Development Manager, Environmental Policy Centre, Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE)	Finland	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
Mr. Thomas Chali	Senior Policy Advisor on Environmental Conservation and Natural Resources Management in Tanzania	Tanzania	African Group
Ms. Alexandra Gurgel Valente da Costa (Alternate)	Environment Analyst, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change	Brazil	Latin American and Caribbean Group
Dr. Lisa Eriksson (Alternate)	Policy evaluation and analysis; Sustainable Development Department; Swedish Environmental protection agency	Sweden	Western European Group
Names	Gender	Nationality	Major Group
Ms. Ruth Viola Spencer	Chair, Marine Ecosystems Protected Areas(MEPA) Trust	Antigua and Barbuda	Women
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
Ms. Djatougbe Aziaka	President and founder of welfare Togo; co-facilitator of UNEP NGO major group	Togo	Non-governmental organization
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

*Alternates to the relevant IMAG members are indicated.

Apologies

Names	Affiliation	Nationality	Region(s) of Representation
Dr. Modibo sacko	Vice President of the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CONACILSS), Mali	Mali	African Group
Dr. Thuraya AL Sariri	Assistance Director General of Nature Conservation at MECA- Oman	Oman	Asia and the Pacific 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
Mrs. Rolenas Baereleo	Principal Officer, Biodiversity and Conservation; Department of Environmental protection and Conservation (DEPC), Vanuatu	Vanuatu	Asia and the Pacific Group
Mr Silvio Albuquerque e Silva	Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Brazil to UNEP; Embassy of Brazil in Kenya	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. 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
Ms. Margarita Guerra (Alternate)	Ministry of environment- Panama	Panama	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. Fabian Wagner	Dean, Capacity Development and Academic Training, IIASA, Austria	Germany	Science and Technology
Mr. Prem Singh Tharu	Regional Programme Officer, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) under Environment Programme	Thailand	Indigenous peoples