

Briefing of the Options Paper to the Committee of Permanent Representatives



The Committee of Permanent Representatives Subcommittee meeting was held on 14 July 2020 as an Online Meeting chaired by H.E. Mr. Fernando Coimbra, Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representative, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Brazil.



The update on the consultation process of the Future of Global Environment Outlook was the 4th Agenda Item. The Secretariat presented an update on the upcoming peer review and consultation process of the Future of Global Environment Outlook (GEO) found [here](#), including preparations for the online consultation sessions (webinars), and the current status of the Options Paper for the Future of GEO. Member States were invited to provide guidance on the peer review/consultation process, as well as inform the Secretariat of their preferred way of communicating with government experts.

Update on EA.4/RES.23 - Future of GEO Process

The 'Future of GEO' process was launched at UNEA-4 to develop various options for the future of the Global Environment Outlook. This process will deliver these options with recommendations to the fifth UN Environment Assembly. In developing these options, the 36 Member State Steering Committee (created in response to EA.4/RES.23), which was formed to oversee and manage the Future of GEO process, is considering the current and desired function of GEO in the overall landscape of assessments which are 'keeping the world environment situation under review', one of the core UNEP mandates. This will lead to a desired purpose and function of GEO to determine its future form and governance. While assessment reports typically answer the what and why questions regarding the changes in the environment, there is a need for presenting solutions to enable Member States on how to respond to these challenges. In this regard the Steering Committee will be seeking to establish how GEO can be used to engage other non-environmental decision makers in the design of integrated and coherent policies that consider the economic, social and environmental dimensions of these complex problems.

The process is advancing to a very crucial phase where Member States, stakeholders and other global assessment experts will be consulted for a month, from mid-August to mid-September. It is in this phase that input will be sought from MEAs, other divisions of UNEP and regional offices to ensure that the Steering Committee has the best advice possible on the future GEO, for UNEA-5 consideration.

The Options Paper review of process included the nomination of Steering Committee held in April 2019, nominations were requested for Future of GEO Steering Committee. The SC was established as a subsidiary body of UNEA. In August, the CPR was briefed, and they requested that further nominations should be sought to ensure geographic and gender balance. The Steering Committee was officially formed in September 2019 and

included a total of 37 Member States. The First calls were held in Sept. and Oct. for the purpose of preparing face to face meeting in Prague. The outcome of the 31 October - 1 November meeting Prague approved the terms of reference and issues paper for a consultant to prepare draft options paper. One of the 37 Member States from the Czech Republic nominee resigned in December 2019 bringing the Steering Committee (SC) members to 36.

Procurement process and facilitated workshop

There was a 3-month procurement process and the Secretariat issued an expression of interest followed by a Request for bids. The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) were selected through competitive bidding process. The first facilitated workshop with Steering Committee was held virtually due to COVID-19 where the SC members expressed interest in helping to develop the options paper thus resulting in the development of 'building blocks' papers for input from SC members. The intent of this workshop was to gather experience and thoughts of SC members through the extensive expertise on assessments within the Steering Committee.



A zero draft of the Options Paper has been received and commented on and after review by the Bureau of the SC and the Secretariat there are requests to shorten the document and provide more rationale for proposed options. The SC suggested the need for better links between mapping papers and proposed options. From the SC call on 2 July, a comment was made on the current draft of options paper not being ready for broader review and consultation. There is a preferred two-track approach which the consultant will be requested to produce a **background paper** and co-chairs will prepare a **summary document**. Two documents to be reviewed by SC at end of July. The broad consultation will be held from mid-August to mid-September and the main consultation document will be from the **co-chair's summary**.

Amended Work Plan and Timeline of the Future of GEO process:

The timeline options will be reviewed and based on the advice from the Steering Committee, the production of the Future of GEO options paper has been split into a two-track process, with the production of a background document which reviews and analyses the assessment landscape, combined with a summary of the issues to be consulted upon, prepared by the co-chairs of the Steering Committee (the co-chairs summary). The consultation process on the co-chairs summary, supported by the background paper, will be conducted over a month's time, and will support the deliberations of the Steering Committee at its second facilitated workshop.

The Steering Committee decided to allow one more month for the consultancy team to work with the Secretariat to develop a background document that reviews the global environmental assessment landscape and GEO's role and position in it. Over this time the Co-chairs will draft a summary document that will review the issues and decision-making criteria that are important in determining the future of GEO. The two documents, (new background document and the Co-chairs summary) will be submitted to the Steering Committee on 31 July for their review which the SC will review the two documents over a two-week period, up to the 14 August. The review comments will be submitted to the consultancy team and the co-chairs during this time so that these two documents can be updated in preparation for the broader consultation period.

The next planning call of the SC to be held on 17 August will focus on ensuring the background document and the co-chairs summary are ready for the broader consultation. These broad consultations will run for one month (instead of six weeks) between 18 August - 18 September. The new drafts of the background paper and the co-chairs summary will be developed following the consultations outcome and submitted for the SC's consideration by 2 October.

The second facilitated workshop of the SC will either happen in the second or the third week of October. In parallel to this, the co-chairs will present an interim report (tentative table of options) to the UNEP Annual Subcommittee Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives in the week of 12 October. This will be a virtual presentation. This presentation will be mainly to provide information to the CPR rather than to seek input on the options. Between this Second workshop and mid-November the SC and Secretariat will work to produce the relevant documents to be submitted to UNEA. These documents will enable a decision on the Future of GEO, as per the request in the resolution. The appropriate documents will be submitted by the Steering Committee to UNEA on 20 November.

