

Building blocks and illustrative options for the Future of the Global Environment Outlook (GEO)

Co-chair's discussion paper

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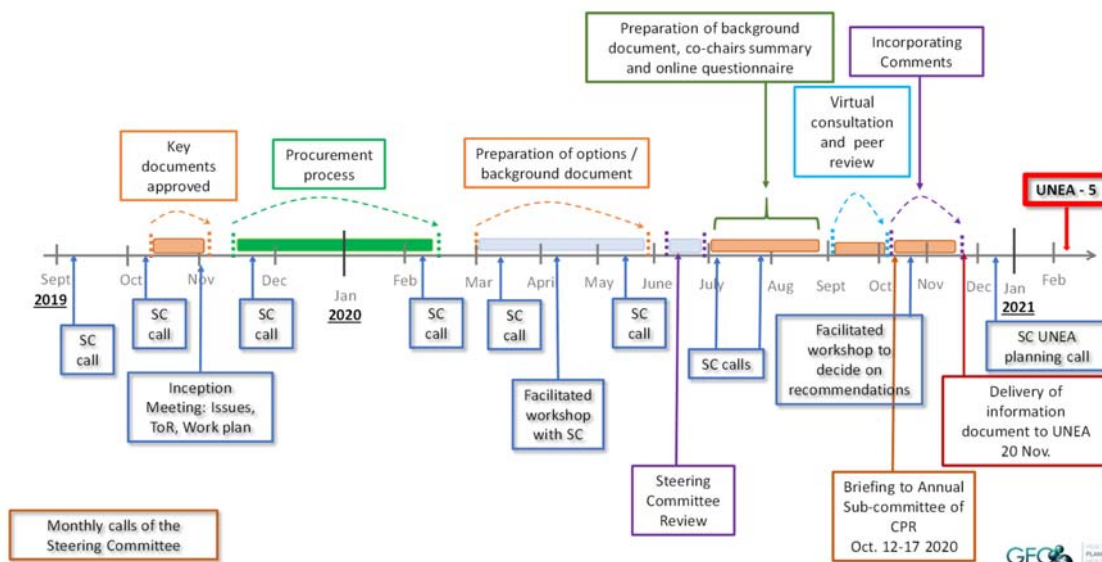
List of abbreviations and acronyms

GEO	Global Environment Outlook
GFCs	Global Framework for Climate Services
GSDR	Global Sustainable Development Report
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Service
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
MEAs	Multilateral Environmental Agreements
MEP	Multidisciplinary Expert Panel
ODA	Official Development Assistance
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SPM	Summary for Policy Makers
UN	United Nations
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
USD	United States Dollar
WMO	World Meteorological Organisation

1 Background

2 **The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) has initiated an intergovernmental consultative**
 3 **process to propose options for the future of the Global Environment Outlook (GEO).** In resolution
 4 23, the fourth UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) (UNEP/EA.4/RES.23¹) welcomed with appreciation
 5 the flagship sixth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6) report and its summary for policymakers,
 6 which was reviewed and approved by Member States. UNEA also requested the Executive Director
 7 "to prioritize ... the preparation of an options document on the future of the Global Environment
 8 Outlook process, in broad consultation with Member States, stakeholders and the custodians of
 9 other global environmental assessment processes". To this end, UNEA requested the establishment,
 10 under its auspices, of a Steering Committee of experts from Member States to oversee and manage
 11 the consultations for and preparation of an options document to be prepared by the Secretariat. The
 12 UNEA further requested the Steering Committee to submit the options document for consideration
 13 at its fifth session, to inform a decision on key function(s), scope and possible forms of the Global
 14 Environment Outlook process. The steering committee is to include an assessment of the impact of
 15 the various options and provide recommendations to the Assembly.

Timeline for the Future of GEO



16
 17 Figure 1: Process for the future of GEO (UNEP 2020)

18 **The current discussion paper by the co-chairs of the steering committee aims to support the**
 19 **considerations of the options for the future of GEO.** It recalls guidance given by UNEA in resolution
 20 UNEP/EA.4/RES.23, including that "the options document should address the role of the GEO process
 21 in regularly preparing independent analyses of the state of and trends in the global environmental
 22 situation". In the same resolution UNEA also requested the Executive Director "to strengthen the
 23 policy relevance of the Global Environment Outlook process by measuring progress towards the
 24 achievement of internationally agreed environmental goals, to inform relevant global processes and

¹ Keeping the World Environment under Review: Enhancing United Nations Environment Programme's Science-Policy Interface and Endorsement of the Global Environment Outlook, <http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/28486/K1901170.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>

25 meetings". UNEA also recognized the potential benefits of a scientifically sound and evidence-based
 26 detailed assessment of the state of the environment as a way of raising awareness and informing
 27 policy formulation and decision-making in the context of sustainable development. The current
 28 discussion paper is a living document which summarizes and gives examples of how different building
 29 blocks could be configured into preliminary illustrative options. The paper also provides a set of
 30 proposed decision-making criteria and questions to be considered for discussing and prioritizing the
 31 different proposed options. The paper builds on analytical work carried out by UNEP and a team of
 32 consultants from the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and deliberations
 33 among members of the Steering Committee. The paper is meant to serve as a basis for the broad
 34 consultation where views from Member States, stakeholders and assessment experts will be
 35 solicited. This consultation will provide views on the various building blocks and decision-making
 36 criteria. It will assist the Steering Committee in the development of a set of recommended options
 37 for the future of GEO, for consideration by Member States at UNEA-5 (Figure 1).

38 2 UNEPs mandate and GEO's place in the science policy interface

39 **UNEP's science-policy interface has developed since 1972² in response to the unprecedented**
 40 **changes in the Earth's environment caused by human-environment interactions.** The interface is
 41 anchored in the core function assigned to the UNEP Governing Council in 1972 of "keeping under
 42 review the world environmental situation"³. The enhanced science-policy interface has enabled
 43 society to address a growing number of often inter-linked environmental challenges, some of which
 44 society was largely unaware of in 1972, such as climate change and depletion of the ozone layer.
 45 Human well-being depends on a finite Earth. We need to continuously improve our understanding of
 46 how human-environment interactions can be reconfigured to implement the 2030 Agenda for
 47 Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The transformation to a
 48 sustainable future can build on a growing body of data, expertise and knowledge from many walks of
 49 life.

50 **Assessment processes such as the GEO process represents a key function in the science-policy**
 51 **interface, together with other mutually supportive functions.** Other functions undertaken by UNEP
 52 partly within the GEO process or partly aligned with the process, include policy support, knowledge
 53 generation, capacity building and the collection, analysis and dissemination of data. An assessment
 54 process typically reviews, synthesizes, analyzes and passes a judgement on the relevance and
 55 confidence levels of available knowledge from peer reviewed scientific literature and other relevant
 56 knowledge systems.⁴ It serves several purposes, including:

² <https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/report/strengthening-science-policy-interface-gap-analysis>

³ The function is set out in UN General Assembly resolution No 2997 XXVII. The resolution also sets out the Council is to "ensure that emerging environmental problems of wide international significance, receive appropriate and adequate consideration by Governments" and "promote the contribution of the relevant international scientific and other professional communities to the acquisition, assessment and exchange of environmental knowledge and information". These functions are key to the Councils responsibility of "promoting international cooperation in the field of the environment and to recommend, as appropriate, policies to this end" and in "providing general policy guidance for the direction and coordination of environmental programmes in the UN system".

⁴ Intergovernmental scientific assessments like GEO are typically critical evaluations of the state of knowledge by independent experts interacting with government representatives and other stakeholders in a stepwise process. These independent critical evaluations entail a collective and iterative review, synthesis, analysis and judgement of policy relevance and confidence levels of available knowledge from peer reviewed scientific

- 57 i. builds a shared understanding of the state of knowledge among those who take part
58 in the assessment and presents the findings to a potentially broad set of users;
- 59 ii. supports improved decision making by intergovernmental bodies, governments,
60 business and civil society;
- 61 iii. supports improved knowledge generation, such as research, modeling, monitoring
62 and data dissemination;
- 63 iv. enhances awareness on environmental challenges and how to deal with them.

64 So, if those who take part in the assessment process are also key players, or close to key players, in
65 decision making and knowledge generation, then an assessment is more likely to achieve its purpose.
66 The GEO process has features for collaboration between independent experts, Member States,
67 partners and stakeholders and such collaboration is called for by UNEA in paragraph 4 of resolution
68 UNEP/EA.4/RES.23.

69 **The GEO is the only intergovernmental scientific assessment which covers all forms of**
70 **environmental change comprehensively in an increasingly crowded assessment landscape.** Its role
71 and contributions within the UN system were acknowledged, amongst others, by Member States at
72 the Rio +20.⁵ Other prominent intergovernmental assessments also hosted or administered by UNEP,
73 include: the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Science-
74 Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). Other global environmental
75 assessments with intergovernmental features include UNEPs International Resource Panel and the
76 Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment under
77 the UN General Assembly. The GEO was initiated in 1995 by UNEP's Governing Council. In its first
78 three iterations, the GEO was an expert and partnership-based integrated assessment. The GEO
79 process has, since GEO-4, taken on co-design and co-production features similar to those of IPCC and
80 IPBES, but in a less formal way and with less stringent and codified procedures. UNEA in resolution
81 UNEP/EA.4/RES.23 requested the Executive Director "to continue to promote greater coherence and
82 coordination of global assessments undertaken within the United Nations system". This together
83 with the request from UNEA for GEO to become a more policy relevant force in a strengthened
84 science-policy interface requires a fresh look at the purpose, form and process for preparing the
85 GEO, as requested in resolution 23, to ensure it complements what other assessments do and still
86 fulfils its flagship role within UNEP.

literature and other relevant knowledge sources and systems by a gender and geographically balanced team of experts selected on the basis of their merits. The experts interact with government representatives, observers and stakeholders at the initiation, scoping, reviewing, consultation and approval stages of the assessment through mutually agreed, transparent and documented processes. (see background paper for details)

⁵ The UNEA recalled in resolution UNEP/EA.4/RES.23 paragraph 88 of the Rio +20 outcome document (UN General Assembly A/RES/66/288, The Future We Want) which called for UNEP to "promote a strong science-policy interface, building on existing international instruments, assessments, panels and information networks, including the Global Environment Outlook, as one of the processes aimed at bringing together information and assessment to support informed decision-making" and paragraph 90 which noted "the need to integrate the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainable development and to disseminate and share evidence-based environmental information on critical and emerging economic, environmental and social issues". The same paragraph also recognised GEOs role in building national and regional capacity to support informed decision-making. The recognition should be understood also against the background that GEO-5 was designed to serve as an input to the Rio +20 conference. Among the contributions in GEO-5 was an assessment of the need for a balanced set of sustainable development goals, which was materialised in Agenda 2030.

87 3 Building blocks which can contribute to future GEOs

88 3.1 Objective and function

89 **The overall objective of a future GEO could be to strengthen the science – policy interface on the**
 90 **environmental dimensions of sustainable development for evidence-based decision making.** Such
 91 an objective would seem to respond to the rationale for GEO which is set out by UNEA in resolution
 92 UNEP/EA.4/RES.23 and it would largely be in line with the existing objectives of GEO. Furthermore, it
 93 would encapsulate efforts to meet the request by UNEA mentioned above, to strengthen the policy
 94 relevance of the Global Environment Outlook process. GEO's contribution to a strengthened science-
 95 policy interface would be defined both by its purpose, its relevance, scientific rigour and legitimacy of
 96 its procedures and the scope and form of its products.

97 **The main function of GEO, to undertake intergovernmental scientific assessments, could be**
 98 **furthered and/or focused for example towards more targeted, rapid assessments or service-**
 99 **oriented policy support and other complementary functions.** A core consideration for the future is
 100 how the main function of GEO is best operationalized within the evolving global science-policy
 101 interface. Relevant questions to be considered include:

- 102 i. the degree to which the assessment process should be intergovernmental,
 103 independent scientific analysis, partnership based, networked and the extent to
 104 which the processes need to be formalized⁶,
- 105 ii. if and to what extent its complementary functions on capacity building⁷, education,
 106 data provision⁸, helping direct science-policy research, scenario and model
 107 development⁹, encouraging synergies across assessments and policy support should
 108 be strengthened within UNEP and the extent to which they should be part of the
 109 GEO process; and
- 110 iii. whether GEO should continue to be focused on integrating a broad set of topics for a
 111 broad set of users in comprehensive reports and/or be focused on rapid assessments
 112 and/or be given a greater service- and solution-orientation¹⁰.

⁷ Capacity building in GEO includes a young fellowship program, development of assessment guidelines and training. GEO findings provide the basis for the development of educational curricula and course materials across the globe. Capacity building also entails support to the undertaking of GEO-like assessments at sub-global and national levels aimed at enhancing the evidence base for regional and national implementation. GEO has spurred the creation of more than 300 GEO-type assessments since its inception (see upcoming history of GEO) UNEP regional offices and partnerships play a key role in capacity building initiatives.

⁸ UNEA in resolution UNEP/EA.4/RES. 23 also requested that UNEP develop a Global Environmental Data Strategy linked to GEO and other assessments. UNEP has advanced on this request by developing new data partnerships and by further linking the World Environment Situation Room to GEO and to the Common Country Analysis in the UN Development Cooperation Frameworks. See Digital Transformation towards a Global Environmental Data Strategy, http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/29769/DigitalTransformation_GlobalDataStrategy_ReportCPR_10Dec2019.pdf?sequence=13&isAllowed=y

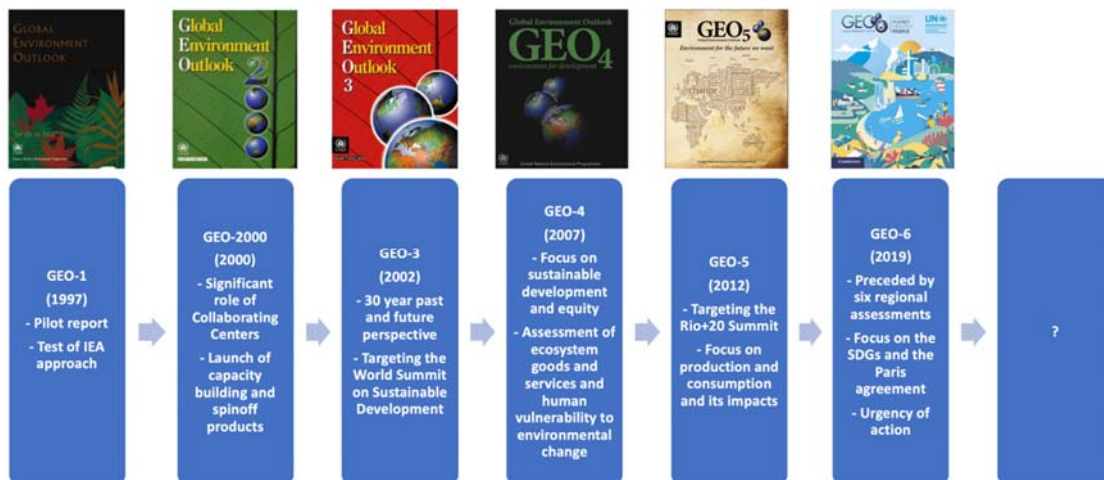
⁹ The GEO process involves cooperation with communities involved in research, education, as well as provision and management of data and in development of scenarios and models.

¹⁰ While an assessment provide a critical evaluations of the state of knowledge for a given set of topics for a defined set of users, the background document highlights that attention has also turned to the services that the expert community can provide to support implementation of actions by diverse actors in their particular contexts. A service-orientation for GEO would imply increased attention to specific user needs and transdisciplinary co-production of services to meet those needs and more attention to the modalities of networking and polycentric governance structures.

113 3.2 Scope

114 **GEO’s role to date has been to assess all human-induced environmental change, their combined**
 115 **impacts on the environment and their links to human well-being, as well as gaps between**
 116 **commitments and actions and policy effectiveness.** Typically, GEO includes a full-scale Earth-
 117 diagnosis of past, current and projected global environmental change; an assessment of
 118 environmental risks and opportunities for current and prospective future human well-being and the
 119 integrity of nature; and an assessment of the effectiveness of the policy responses needed to
 120 advance the transformation to a sustainable future. GEO-6 assessed how environmental change
 121 impacted the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. It paid particular attention to the
 122 intimate link between the environment and human health, but also covered other issues such as
 123 energy, food, resource use and disasters. It also assessed the effectiveness of environmental policies
 124 over the recent past. GEO has also been pioneering the assessment of environmental outcomes
 125 indicators for measuring policy progress.

126 **GEO could maintain its broad scope of covering all scientific and policy relevant environmental**
 127 **aspects of sustainable development, home in on specific themes or do both.** Such themes could
 128 focus on the interlinkages between various environmental trends and their societal drivers, which
 129 need to be better understood to achieve sustainable development. GEO has sought to integrate the
 130 findings of other environmental assessments and connect them with social and economic issues.
 131 Future GEOs could continue to develop this role. GEO could focus on analysing the science-policy
 132 aspects of the environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and it's
 133 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including interlinkages across environment, health, economic
 134 development and human well-being, as well as emerging issues such as recovery from the COVID-19
 135 crisis, and effectiveness of related policies. Such a scope would be building on the experience of
 136 earlier GEOs where GEO-6, for instance, contributed to the Global Sustainable Development Report
 137 (GSDR): The Future is Now. Alternatively, future GEOs could home in on more specific themes that
 138 are not covered by existing global assessments. GEO-6 demonstrated that policies for single
 139 environmental issues need to be complemented by social and economic policies for systems that
 140 drive environmental change (e.g. economy, energy, food, urban systems and waste) if we are to stop
 141 and reverse environmental degradation. To avoid duplicating other assessment processes on specific
 142 environmental themes, GEO could fill gaps or focus on the transformation of the environmental
 143 impacts of specific socioeconomic systems to achieve sustainability. There is also a possibility for GEO
 144 to undertake both synoptic and thematic assessments over time.



146 Figure 2: Six comprehensive global GEOs have been prepared to date: GEO-6: Healthy Planet, Healthy people
 147 (2019); GEO-5: Environment for the future we want (2012); GEO-4: Environment for development (2007); GEO-
 148 3: Past, present and future perspectives (2002); GEO-2: GEO-2000 (1999); GEO-1: For life on Earth (1997). The
 149 GEO process has also included: i) derivatives of the comprehensive global GEOs for target audiences ; ii) some
 150 special thematic GEOs; iii) regional GEOs, national GEOs; and a period of GEO yearbooks (2003 – 2007) which
 151 morphed into the UNEP Yearbook (2008 - 2014).

152 3.3 Utility

153 **GEO could continue to support UNEA and decision making on sustainable development by the UN¹¹**
 154 **and other actors in the public and private sector, it could home in on more specific users or do**
 155 **both.** The co-design features and co-production features described in section 3.4 below could help
 156 maintain the utility of GEO for key users (see Figure 2). That includes helping to provide the broader
 157 scientific context for synergistic actions across the thematic Multilateral Environmental Agreements
 158 (MEA) and for regional and national implementation of international commitments. GEO could
 159 possibly also home in on specific topics in a sequential manner to meet the needs of relevant
 160 international policymaking processes. It could also become more policy focused and service oriented.
 161 These options are not mutually exclusive, and, over time, GEO could do both; potentially in the
 162 context of a long-term rolling programme of work built on requests from key users (see section 4.3
 163 below for details). Such a long-term plan could be linked to global policy milestones (such as a follow-
 164 up to SDGs in 2030) – which would necessarily be kept under review as circumstances and
 165 knowledge evolve. The precise utility of GEOs would in principle be determined through the scoping
 166 process for each assessment or function.

167 3.4 Process and methodology

168 **The GEO process and methodology could be further codified in agreed procedures setting out the**
 169 **modalities for collaboration and co-production, as was the case for GEO-6.** That could apply both
 170 for GEO as an intergovernmental scientific assessment and for options where it shifts to become
 171 more networked, science oriented, rapid and targeted or service oriented (see section 4.4 below).
 172 Complementary functions may also require their own processes and methodologies and will likely
 173 greatly benefit from collaborative approaches. The IPBES capacity building rolling plan supported by
 174 a task force, a technical support unit a network of partners and contributors¹² is a point in case. This
 175 also serves to illustrate the general point that procedures for future GEOs should be based on
 176 experience with existing processes. The well tested process elements for intergovernmental scientific
 177 assessments as set out below and illustrated in Figure 3 could usefully serve to illustrate the point:

- 178 • **Requests.** Some assessments have procedures in place for receiving and prioritising requests
 179 from Member States and observers such as other intergovernmental bodies and
 180 stakeholders. They would cover a broad range of different kinds of products and services
 181 which may include global, regional, special, thematic, methodological and rapid assessments,
 182 synthesis reports and other products and services such as policy support and capacity

¹¹ Examples of use include that agreed language from GEO-4 was used in the UNEP Governing Council resolution and in the ensuing UN General Assembly resolution. GEO-5 findings contributed to the Rio+20 Conference and the discussions on SDGs and the assessment was referred to in the outcome document from the summit. GEO-6 provided inputs to report "The Future is Now: Science for Achieving Sustainable Development" of the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) (2019) prepared by an independent group of scientists appointed by the United Nations Secretary-General.

¹² See <https://ipbes.net/building-capacity>

183 building. An example of such a process can be found in IPBES¹³. Such procedures could be
184 established also for GEO. Requests could be prioritised through a rolling work plan approved
185 by UNEA or agreed through a process devised by it.

186 • **Scoping and initiation of assessments and other products and services.** IPCC and IPBES have
187 procedures for the initiation, development and approval of detailed scoping of assessments.
188 Decisions on the initiation of the scoping of an assessment are typically based on an initial
189 scoping carried out by subsidiary bodies/technical support units. The initial scoping typically
190 sets out the broad scope, rationale, utility and assumptions; the annotated chapter outline;
191 the process and timetable; and the cost estimate. Alternatively, an initial scoping can be
192 undertaken by the Secretariat. Scoping is undertaken based on a detailed template and
193 typically organised as a co-design with inputs from selected experts in dialogue with
194 government representatives and partners. GEO scoping has until now been guided and
195 endorsed by open ended intergovernmental and stakeholder meetings, but otherwise
196 followed a less stringent procedure than that of IPCC and IPBES. The scope of IPCC and IPBES
197 reports are approved by their intergovernmental plenaries. The scope is considered
198 paragraph by paragraph and approved in an open-ended meeting of government
199 representatives and stakeholders / accredited observers. Initiation of an assessment is
200 undertaken by a dedicated intergovernmental body for IPBES or IPCC, and for the GEO that
201 authority rests with UNEA.

202 • **Nomination and selection of experts.** Author teams and task forces are composed of
203 independent and geographically-, gender- and disciplinary-balanced expert teams. IPBES and
204 IPCC have established procedures for nomination and selection of experts, as well as for
205 filling of gaps. Formal nomination can be submitted by governments and accredited
206 observers. The subsidiary bodies/technical support units are responsible for the selection of
207 experts based on documented merits. Nomination of authors and experts in the GEO-6
208 followed an open process which included, nomination by colleagues, nominations by the
209 Secretariat, nomination by other UN entities, nomination by co-authors, as well as
210 nominations by governments. Experts were selected by the Secretariat. Such a process may
211 or may not be further codified for the GEO, along the blueprint of the IPBES and IPCC.

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https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/downloads/Procedure%20for%20receiving%20and%20prioritizing%20requests%20put%20to%20the%20Platform_2013.pdf



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214 Figure 3: An example of the Intergovernmental Scientific Assessment Process: The IPBES Assessment Process,
 215 An expert evaluation of the state of knowledge for policy. From the IPBES Assessment Guide, Summary (See
 216 https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/180719_ipbes_assessment_guide_summary_hi-res.pdf)

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- **Assessment processes.** The assessment process entails a collective and iterative review, synthesis, analysis and judgement of policy relevance and confidence levels of available knowledge with traceability. The assessments cover all available scientific peer reviewed knowledge and other relevant and credible knowledge sources and systems, including scenarios, UN data and indigenous and local knowledge. Indicators are used. The responsibility for the preparation of the assessment chapters and the Summary for Policy Makers rests with the author teams. Roles and responsibilities of assessment co-chairs, coordinating lead authors, lead authors and contributing authors are set out tin the procedures. The drafting of the report follows the approved outline, timeline, and costing set out in the scoping document. Typically, it involves the preparation of several drafts submitted for review (see Figure 3). Procedures for use of confidence levels, policy relevant findings, referencing, and traceability can be established. Procedures may differ between different assessment products and services. IPBES has for example simplified procedures for rapid assessments but has not yet chosen to apply them. IPBES and IPCC have separate procedures for the preparation of synthesis reports based on approved assessments which do not need to be approved by their respective plenaries.
 - **Peer review and government and stakeholder review.** The drafts are subject to peer review and government and stakeholder reviews. Review editors are appointed and their responsibilities are set out in the procedures. Review comments are submitted and

236 responded to. Comments and responses are kept for the record. Review editors oversee the
 237 quality of the peer review process. GEO follows this practice.

- 238 • **Conflict of interest and treatment of errors.** IPBES and IPCC have established procedures for
 239 conflict of interest and treatments of errors, while GEO only requires a statement from
 240 authors on conflict of interest.
- 241 • **Approval of Summary for Policy Makers (SPMs) & acceptance of assessment reports.** IPCC
 242 and IPBES have established procedures for approval of SPMs and acceptance of assessments.
 243 The GEO SPMs for GEO-4, 5 and 6 have been considered in a similar fashion. The procedures
 244 include a process for submission of written comments prior to the session in which an SPM is
 245 considered. The draft is prepared and finalised under the responsibility of independent
 246 experts who are credited as being the authors of the approved and published SPM. The draft
 247 SPM is considered line by line and approved through an in-depth consensus seeking dialogue
 248 on the findings between the authors, government representatives and accredited partner
 249 and stakeholder observers. The aim of the consideration is to review the draft with the view
 250 to ensure that findings are factual and can be substantiated by the referenced literature. The
 251 consideration also helps ensure that findings are framed and formulated so they are relevant
 252 and easily conveyed to policymakers and users who represent a wide range of perspectives
 253 and capacity needs. The authors are responsible for ensuring that any reformulation of the
 254 findings can be supported by available scientific evidence presented in the background
 255 chapters. Areas of high political sensitivity, scientific complexity or uncertainty may become
 256 the subject of discussion. Such discussions can result in reformulations which may lead to the
 257 findings being presented more clearly, framed differently, weighted differently, simplified or
 258 removed altogether. However, all findings will still remain in the underlying chapters.
 259 Assessment chapters are not considered in detail and are accepted.

260 The co-production process for the SPM is important for both its credibility and relevance. The
 261 process is also highly important for its legitimacy as it involves designated representatives
 262 from a broad range of countries together with representatives from organisations and civil
 263 society. A practical aspect of relevance is that an SPM approved by Member States equips
 264 negotiators with agreed language on evidence for decision-making which later can be used in
 265 intergovernmental policy negotiations. An important outcome of the deliberations on the
 266 SPM is that policy makers are being exposed to scientific findings in important policy areas,
 267 and that scientists become aware of policy areas where the science may need to be
 268 strengthened. This is important for the iterative nature of the assessment process as a
 269 shared collective understanding of the challenges in the science-policy interface makes it
 270 easier to identify and scope new assessments. It should be noted that science-policy
 271 dialogues also can be highly successful in assessments without formal SPM approval
 272 processes, in service-oriented assessments and outside the assessment processes.

273 3.5 Governance and implementation structures

274 **UNEA is responsible for overall oversight and governance of the GEO process and can establish the**
 275 **governance and implementation structures it deems necessary.** UNEA and its predecessor, the
 276 UNEP Governing Council, made a number of requests to the Executive Director on the GEO process.
 277 Consequently, governance and implementation structures with dedicated roles and responsibilities
 278 for functions and process elements for GEO were established. Similar structures are found in other
 279 global environmental assessments. Options for future GEOs would need to consider several

280 governance and implementation options, and any sub-options contained therein. Hybrids of the
281 governance and implementation options outlined below are also a possibility.

282 **Open-ended intergovernmental consultation meetings or a standing intergovernmental body with**
283 **accredited observers from stakeholders.** Such bodies would have responsibilities for oversight of
284 assessments and other functions, for initiation and approval of scoping of assessments and for
285 approval and endorsement of Summary for Policy makers in cooperation with appointed experts. The
286 IPBES and IPCC intergovernmental plenaries, with accredited observers, undertake such functions
287 supported by a substructure which include bureaus, working groups, expert panels, task forces,
288 author groups (as explained below). The UNEP governing body has initiated scoping and the
289 preparation of GEO assessments. The Executive Director of UNEP has convened intergovernmental
290 consultation meetings with stakeholder observers for approval of scoping, process and endorsement
291 of SPMs for GEO 4, 5, and 6. Such functions could potentially be undertaken by an open-ended
292 subsidiary intergovernmental body of UNEA open to all accredited observers for the GEO process.

293 **A geographically representative and gender balanced intergovernmental steering body or a high-**
294 **level intergovernmental and stakeholder advisory group.** An intergovernmental steering body could
295 be appointed by UNEA, based on nominations from countries and regions. It could also be set up
296 through a process devised by UNEA, including by an open ended intergovernmental subsidiary body
297 of UNEA for the GEO process as mentioned above. It could be composed in the fashion of the IPBES
298 bureau consisting of 10 members with 2 representatives from 5 regions, or it could be a larger group
299 like the Future of GEO or International Resource Panel steering committees. The steering body would
300 be tasked with responsibilities set out in a terms of reference and/or the procedures for the GEO
301 process (see section 3.4 above). Responsibilities could include functions such as oversight of scoping
302 and development of assessments and potentially other supportive functions such as, capacity
303 building, data management, helping guide scientific research and cooperation on scenario and model
304 development. Alternatively, a High-Level Intergovernmental and Stakeholder Advisory Group, similar
305 to the one for GEO-6, could be appointed by the Executive Director. In GEO-6 it included 25–30 high-
306 level government representatives from all six UN Environment regions as well as 8-10 key
307 stakeholders. The High-level Group provided strategic advice and initial guidance on the structure
308 and content of the GEO-6 Summary for Policymakers and further guidance to the experts all along
309 the way, as well as in finalizing the draft Summary, in preparation for the final intergovernmental
310 negotiation.

311 **An independent multidisciplinary advisory expert group or a Science Advisory Panel.** Such a body
312 could be appointed by UNEA, based on nominations from countries and regions. It could also be set
313 up through a process devised by UNEA, including by an open ended intergovernmental subsidiary
314 body of UNEA for the GEO process as mentioned above. It could be composed in the fashion of the
315 IPBES Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP) which has 25 members acting in their individual capacity
316 with 5 experts from each region. The expert group would be tasked with responsibilities set out in a
317 terms of reference and or the procedures for the GEO process (see section 3.4 above).
318 Responsibilities could include oversight for development of assessments, selection of authors and
319 experts and oversight of peer review processes and potentially other supportive functions such as,
320 capacity building, data management, helping guide scientific research and cooperation on scenario
321 and model development. Alternatively, a Science Advisory Panel of some 20-25 distinguished
322 scientists, akin to the body created for GEO-6, could be appointed by the Executive Director of UNEP.
323 It was responsible for providing advice on the scientific credibility of the assessment process; the
324 peer review process; and evaluation of effectiveness of the GEO process.

325 **Dedicated groups of authors, experts and collaborating partners which would reflect the agreed**
 326 **scope and utility of the assessments.** Author groups can be dedicated to specific assessments or
 327 parts thereof. They would typically be selected to meet the need for expertise and be geographically
 328 and gender balanced. The author teams would be interdisciplinary and balanced to reflect the scope
 329 and utility of the assessments, so that a group responsible for the policy focused parts of an
 330 assessment, for instance, would be comprised of policy experts. Task forces can be appointed for
 331 complementary functions such as, capacity building, data management, helping guide scientific
 332 research, scenario and model development and outreach. Members of such groups can be
 333 nominated by governments and institutions and selected by the secretariat or by the structures
 334 referred to above in accordance with procedures discussed in section 3.4 above. Such groups can be
 335 supported by technical support units provided by collaborating partners and networks of thematic,
 336 methodological and geographic centres such as the UNEP GRID centres. Partners could be other UN
 337 agencies or other global, regional or national institutions which possess the relevant competence.
 338 They would be selected in accordance with an agreed process and would be supported by UNEP
 339 Member States. Such technical support units could be linked to the GEO process through agreements
 340 with the UNEP secretariat and they would work under the overall coordination and management of
 341 the UNEP secretariat.

342 3.6 Secretariat, partnerships and financing

343 **Funding of core activities and improvement of funding predictability and enhanced operational**
 344 **efficiency.** The budget for GEO covers meetings, travel of experts, secretariat costs, publication,
 345 outreach and other complementary activities. While IPCC and IPBES only cover travel for ODA eligible
 346 experts, GEO has over the years supported the travel and participation of all of the authors and
 347 experts. Authors are normally not remunerated, but collaborating centers involved in the process,
 348 have received funds for work undertaken through agreed contracts. This amounted to a significant
 349 cost for GEO 2, 3 and 4. Some of the technical support units in IPBES also receive funding for their
 350 work, while others work *pro bono*. The GEO could continue to be financed by the Environment Fund,
 351 Regular Budget and earmarked donor contributions, but this system proved unpredictable and
 352 constrained the operational effectiveness in prior GEOs. The predictability of funding and operational
 353 efficiency needs to be enhanced. Funding for future GEOs could either be provided through an
 354 advanced and ring-fenced budget within UNEP core resources, or through a dedicated trust fund.

355 **UNEP provides the secretariat for GEO and has at times done so in close partnership with other**
 356 **entities.** GEOs 1 to 4 were supported by a significant network of collaborating centers¹⁴. GEO-4 also
 357 introduced a process where the assessment was to be undertaken by a multidisciplinary, regionally
 358 and gender-balanced community of independent authors. GEOs 5 and 6 used the same approach,
 359 but without as much partner support and this model proved to be very labour intensive for the
 360 Secretariat. The collaborating centres network, which was employed in GEOs 1 to 4, supported the
 361 process in several ways, including by:

- 362
- 363 i. providing administrative support to the UNEP secretariat for specified parts of the
 - 364 process,
 - 365 ii. undertaking research into critical gaps identified in the preceding GEO reports;

¹⁴ Including a network of GRID centers that provided specific analysis and graphics capabilities.

- 366 iii. operating as a network that fostered complementarity and avoided duplication;
- 367 iv. contributing with quality control of drafts;
- 368 v. assisting with identification of potential authors including from within their own pool of
- 369 staff; and
- 370 vi. conducting outreach and dissemination of the findings of GEO.

371

372 These advantages also apply to the system used by IPCC and IPBES of technical support units
373 provided by partners, often funded by Member States, to support author teams and task forces.

374 Partners could be other UN agencies or other global, regional or national institutions which possess
375 the relevant competence. They would be selected in accordance with an agreed process. Such
376 technical support units could be linked to the GEO process through contracts with the UNEP
377 Secretariat and they would work under the overall coordination and management of the UNEP
378 Secretariat. The use of technical support units or collaborating centers, such as the UNEP GRID
379 centres, may involve costs, but can also mobilise considerable in-kind support. Such arrangements
380 enhance the capacity of the Secretariat and the global ownership of the process, but it also requires
381 the central Secretariat to take on a coordination and managerial role *vis a vis* the partners.

382 4 Illustrative options for the future of GEO

383 The form of a future GEO should be designed to meet its intended objective and functions. The
384 following illustrative options are intended to show how the form of GEO could vary depending on its
385 purpose and functions, by putting together the above building blocks in different ways. These are not
386 the only options and do not indicate any particular preference of the Co-Chairs or the Steering
387 Committee. The options will be further considered by the Steering Committee, taking into account
388 the feedback from the consultation process:

389 4.1 GEO formalised.

390 Here GEO's overall objectives and functions in support of UNEA's responsibilities in the science-policy
391 interface would largely remain as is. GEO would continue on the current path of formalising its
392 procedures and governance and implementation structures. It will aim to become a more rigorous
393 intergovernmental scientific global assessment process for evidence-based decision making,
394 supported by relevant complementary functions, such as in capacity building, data, scenarios and
395 outreach as part of UNEPs wider efforts in this area.

396 *The process.* A novelty would be that the GEO would be undertaken in accordance with a set of
397 procedures approved by Member States. The procedures would be negotiated, based on existing
398 practices set out in section 3.2 above, and aim at ensuring the credibility, legitimacy and relevance of
399 the GEO process. The procedures would detail the process for co-design and co-production of the
400 GEO through a structured collaboration between government representatives, experts, partners and
401 stakeholders as managed and supported by the UNEP Secretariat. The GEO would act on requests for
402 topics to be covered from users, including from the UNEA and other relevant intergovernmental
403 bodies, Member States, partners and stakeholders. The scope of each assessment would be co-
404 designed through an agreed rigorous scoping process. The assessments and other functions would be
405 undertaken by the UNEP Secretariat together with experts and partners selected on the basis of their
406 merits. Assessments will be subjected to government and expert peer review. The GEO would
407 include a co-produced Summaries for Policymakers prepared and finalised under the responsibility of
408 independent experts and reviewed and approved by Member States with inputs from stakeholders.

409 *The scope* of GEO will continue to be comprehensive and cover the environmental dimension of
410 Agenda 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals and the transformation to a sustainable future. It
411 would build on, but not duplicate existing assessments. It could produce comprehensive global
412 assessments and/or series of targeted assessments in accordance, for instance, with a rolling plan
413 approved by Member States.

414 *The outputs* of GEO will include global assessment reports for an audience comprised of the UNEA,
415 the UNGA, MEAs, Governments and a broad range of actors in the public and private sphere. The
416 GEO outputs would feature on and be complemented by digital products on the World Environment
417 Situation Room, including on underlying data.

418 *Governance, administration and funding.* The UNEA would devise an appropriate governance and
419 implementation structure. A novelty could be the establishment of a designated open ended or
420 regionally balanced intergovernmental subsidiary body of UNEA with functions set out in the GEO
421 procedures akin to the Plenaries of IPCC and IPBES. Such a body could possibly be given tasks also for
422 other UNEP science–policy activities which are associated with GEOs functions. It could be
423 supported by a bureau, an expert panel, author groups, task forces and partnerships with specific
424 tasks and responsibilities set out in agreed procedures. UNEP would provide the secretariat for this
425 broad network in partnership with other UN entities, as appropriate. The Secretariat would be
426 supported by Technical Support Units provided by partners. The budget would cover meetings, travel
427 of experts from ODA eligible countries and complementary functions. Finance would come from the
428 Environment Fund, UN Regular Budget and a GEO trust fund. *The costs of the process would be*
429 *significant and higher than the current GEO, estimated at 6-6.5 M USD per year.*

430 4.2 GEO consolidated.

431 Here GEO's overall objectives and functions in support of UNEA's responsibilities in the science-policy
432 interface would largely remain as is. GEO would consolidate its current intergovernmental scientific
433 global assessment process for evidence-based decision making. It will continue with relevant
434 complementary functions, such as in capacity building, data, scenarios and outreach as part of
435 UNEP;s wider efforts in this area.

436 *The process.* The UNEP Secretariat would develop the GEO procedures in consultation with Member
437 States, experts, partners and stakeholders. GEO functions would be undertaken by the UNEP
438 Secretariat in cooperation with Member State representatives, experts, partners and stakeholders,
439 as is currently the case, but the partnerships would be strengthened compared with what was the
440 case for GEO-6. GEO would act on requests from the UNEA, or a process devised by it. The scope of
441 each assessment would be co-designed through a rigorous scoping process. The assessments would
442 be prepared by experts selected on the basis of their merits. Assessments would be subjected to
443 government and expert peer review. The GEO would include a co-produced Summary for
444 Policymakers prepared and finalised under the responsibility of independent experts and reviewed
445 and approved by Member States with inputs from stakeholders.

446 *The scope* of GEO would continue to be comprehensive and cover the environmental dimension of
447 Agenda 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals and the transformation to a sustainable future. It
448 would build on, but not duplicate existing assessments. It could produce comprehensive global
449 assessments and/or series of targeted assessments in accordance, for instance, with a rolling plan
450 approved by the UNEA.

451 *The outputs* of GEO would include assessment reports for an audience comprised of the UNEA, the
452 UNGA, MEAs, regional environmental bodies, Governments and a broad range of actors in the public

453 and private sphere. The GEO outputs would feature and be complemented by digital products on the
454 World Environment Situation Room, including on underlying data.

455 Governance, administration and funding. The UNEA would request the Executive Director to continue
456 the current governance and implementation structure which may include additional groups such as
457 task forces. UNEP would provide the secretariat. The Secretariat would be supported by technical
458 support units provided by partners. The budget would cover meetings, travel of experts from ODA
459 eligible countries and complementary functions. Finance would come from the Environment Fund,
460 Regular Budget and possibly a GEO trust fund. *The cost would be just higher than GEO-6 but in the
461 order of magnitude as for GEO-6, estimated at 4-4.5M USD per year.*

462 4.3 GEO network.

463 Here GEO's overall objectives in support of UNEA's responsibilities would largely remain as is. The
464 functions would be altered so that collaboration between Member States, experts, partners and
465 stakeholders would be context specific and network oriented. GEO would reinvent a process
466 similar to the one used for GEO-1 to 3 based on a network of collaborating centres. It would continue
467 with relevant complementary functions, such as in capacity building, data, scenarios and outreach as
468 part of UNEP's wider efforts in this area.

469 The process. The GEO would primarily be prepared by the UNEP Secretariat in close collaboration
470 with a representative network of distinguished thematic and functional collaborating centres from all
471 over the world selected on the basis of their merits. The co-design and co-production features,
472 involving collaboration between experts, government representatives, partners and stakeholders
473 would be geared towards a context specific networking model. The scope would be determined
474 through regional and global scoping processes in dialogue with Member States and stakeholders.
475 Assessments would be subjected to government and expert peer review. The GEO reports would
476 include Summaries for Policymakers prepared through a consultative co-production processes, but
477 they would not be approved by Member States.

478 The scope of the GEO assessments would continue to be comprehensive and cover the
479 environmental dimension of Agenda 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals and the
480 transformation to a sustainable future. It would build on, but not duplicate existing assessments. In
481 this option GEO would be well positioned to prepare a set of regional assessments and global
482 synthesis reports and/or reports with a targeted scope based on the regional assessments and other
483 existing assessments.

484 The outputs of the GEO would include assessment reports for an audience comprised of the UNEA,
485 the UNGA, MEAs, regional environmental bodies, Governments, and a broad range of actors from
486 the public and private sphere. The GEO outputs would feature and be complemented by digital
487 products on the World Environment Situation Room, including on underlying data.

488 Governance, administration and funding. The UNEA would request the Executive Director to establish
489 an appropriate governance and implementation structure. UNEP would provide the secretariat. The
490 budget would cover meetings, and participation of experts and collaborating centres, and
491 complementary functions. Finance would be from the Environment Fund, Regular Budget and
492 possibly a GEO trust fund. *The costs of the process would be significant, estimated at 3.5-4M USD per
493 year.*

494 4.4 GEO synthesis.

495 Here GEO's overall objectives in support of UNEAs' responsibilities would largely remain as is, but the
 496 functions would be altered so that the involvement of Member States and stakeholders would be
 497 review-oriented. GEO would be a scientific process synthesising existing environmental assessments
 498 and other relevant material. Complementary functions would be undertaken by UNEP, but be
 499 outside the GEO process.

500 The process. The GEO would be undertaken by experts selected on the basis of their merits. It would
 501 be prepared in cooperation with an advisory body comprised of experts from other assessments and
 502 UN-system entities, partners and stakeholders. The co-design and co-production features involving
 503 collaboration between experts, government representatives, partners and stakeholder would be
 504 simplified and review-oriented. The GEO would act on requests from UNEA or a process devised by it.
 505 The scope would be determined through a scoping process involving scientists and advisors.
 506 Assessments would be subjected to government and expert peer review. The report could include
 507 Summaries for Policymakers, but they would not be approved by Member States.

508 The scope of GEO would continue to be comprehensive and cover the environmental dimension of
 509 Agenda 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals and the transformation to a sustainable future,
 510 but could also be given a more targeted scope.

511 The outputs of GEO will primarily be expert synthesis reports for an audience comprised of the UNEA,
 512 UNGA, MEAs, Governments and a broad range of actors in the public and private sphere. The GEO
 513 outputs would feature and be complemented by digital products on the World Environment
 514 Situation Room, including on underlying data.

515 Governance, administration and funding. The UNEA would request the Executive Director to establish
 516 an appropriate governance and implementation structure. UNEP would provide the secretariat. The
 517 budget would cover meetings, travel of experts from ODA eligible countries and UNEP staff. Finance
 518 would be from the Environment Fund, Regula Budget and earmarked contributions. *The costs of the*
 519 *process would be lower than other options, estimated at 1M USD per year.*

520 4.5 GEO rapid.

521 Here GEO's overall objectives in support of UNEA's responsibilities would largely remain as is, but the
 522 functions would be altered so that the involvement of Member States and stakeholders will be
 523 happen through rapid co-production modalities. GEO would be more frequent, agile and tailor-made
 524 and geared towards producing rapid assessments or service- and advice-orientated digital products.
 525 IPBES for instance has procedures for rapid thematic and methodological assessments. It would
 526 continue with relevant complementary functions, such as in capacity building, data, scenarios and
 527 outreach as part of UNEP's wider efforts in this area.

528 The process. GEO would be undertaken by the UNEP Secretariat in cooperation with government
 529 representatives, experts and partners. GEO would act on requests from UNEA or a process devised
 530 by it. The co-design and co-production features involving collaboration between experts, government
 531 representatives, partners and stakeholder would be rapid and focused on scoping and review. GEO
 532 would be subject to government and expert peer review. The GEO reports would include Summaries
 533 for Policymakers prepared through a consultative co-production process, but they would not be
 534 approved by Member States.

535 *The scope* of GEO would be targeted thematic, regional and global assessment products within the
536 environmental dimension of sustainable development. They would *inter alia* build on but not
537 duplicate existing assessments.

538 *The outputs* of GEO would be rapid assessments or service- and advice-orientated digital products
539 that could appear on the World Environment Situation Room and be tailor-made for different
540 audiences comprised of e.g. UNEA, UNGA, MEA's, regional environmental bodies, governments and a
541 broad range of actors in the public and private sphere.

542 *Governance, administration and funding.* The UNEA would request the Executive Director to establish
543 an appropriate governance and implementation structure. UNEP would provide the secretariat. The
544 budget would cover meetings, travel of experts from ODA eligible countries and UNEP staff. *The costs*
545 *of the process would be lower than other options, estimated at 1,5M USD per year.*

546 4.6 GEO service.

547 Here GEO's overall objectives would be supporting decision-making by Member States and
548 stakeholders. The function would be to undertake service- and advice-oriented policy support.

549 *The process.* The GEO would in this option be turned into a service provider that would facilitate the
550 support from expert communities to implementation of actions by diverse actors in their particular
551 contexts. Such an orientation could build on the experience from other initiatives such as IPBES's
552 work on policy support and the Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS) of the World
553 Meteorological Organisation (WMO). In the case of IPBES it advances work on policy instruments,
554 policy support tools, methodologies, scenarios and models and multiple values¹⁵. In the case of GFCS,
555 climate services are provided through iterative engagement with users in order to produce a timely
556 advisory that end-users can comprehend and which can aid their decision-making and enable early
557 action and preparedness.¹⁶ Such a service-orientation for GEO would imply high attention to user
558 needs and transdisciplinary co-production of services to meet those needs. A service-oriented policy
559 support function would require new approaches that transform ways of working, including the use of
560 iterative processes and the development and management of networking and polycentric
561 governance structures. A framework for the GEO-service process would be approved by UNEA.

562 *The scope* of the GEO process would be tailor-made services to support environmental decision-
563 making for the transformation to a sustainable future. The scope would be determined by user needs
564 and requests that would be attended to in accordance with priorities established by the UNEA.

565 *The outputs* of GEO would include service and advice- oriented products which would include digital
566 products on the World Environment Situation Room.

567 *Governance, administration and funding.* The UNEA would request the Executive Director to establish
568 an appropriate governance and implementation structure. UNEP would provide the secretariat. The
569 budget would cover meetings, travel of experts from ODA eligible countries and UNEP staff. The
570 costs of the process would probably be modest in a start-up and learning phase, but could if
571 successful potentially be high, *estimated at 1,5M USD per year.*

¹⁵ <https://ipbes.net/o4-supporting-policy>

¹⁶ see <https://public.wmo.int/en/bulletin/what-do-we-mean-climate-services> for additional details

572 5 Criteria for the analysis of options for the future of GEO

573 **The proposed options would be subject to a criteria-based analysis.** This analysis will likely assess
574 the implications of each option for process and methodologies; for governance and implementation
575 structures; and for secretariat functions, partnerships and budget. The different options are also to
576 be assessed against a set of criteria, including but not limited to:

- 577 • *relevance* (or saliency) of the assessment process and its report to the needs of actors who
578 are calling for an assessment and/or using it to inform their choices in decision-making and
579 policies. For GEO, considerations in this regard would include its relevance for priority
580 setting in UNEP Medium Term Strategy and Programme of Work, agenda setting at UNEA as
581 well as for regional and national policy making efforts ;
- 582 • *legitimacy* in terms of an assessment being accepted by actors as authoritative through
583 unbiased, representative and fair procedures which are geographically, expertise and gender
584 balanced and may involve having the endorsement and the participation of representatives
585 from the users in the assessment process. For GEO, considerations in this regard would
586 include its approach to collaboration across UNEP and the broader UN, across the expert
587 community, across Member States, between Member States and business/civil society;
- 588 • *credibility* in terms of an assessment being accepted by actors as based on scientifically
589 rigorous methods and analysis which presents plausible, convincing and technically
590 adequate information with confidence levels from peer reviewed and other relevant
591 sources; and
- 592 • *overall feasibility* in terms of implications for current administrative, financial and
593 collaborative structures and other initiatives in UNEPs science-policy interface, such as on
594 improving the effectiveness of environmental policy and expanding the availability and
595 relevance of environmental data and information.

596 6 Questions to be considered during the consultation phase

597 The key questions to be considered during the consultation phase include the following aspects of
598 the future of GEO (see <https://bit.ly/3loms1f> for the full questionnaire):

- 599 1) What should be GEO's objectives?
- 600 2) What should be GEO's functions?
- 601 3) What process and methods should be followed and to what extent should they be formalised
602 for GEO?
- 603 4) What should be GEO's scope and utility?
- 604 5) Who will be the main users of GEO and how will they use it, what products do they require,
605 when will these products be needed?
- 606 6) What would the preferred governance and implementation structure look like, and to what
607 extent should GEO be a scientific intergovernmental assessment?
- 608 7) What key criteria or aspects should be used to assess the limited set of options for the future
609 of GEO to be presented to the UNEA?

610

611 **7 Conclusion**

612 **GEO has, since its inception 25 years ago, developed to fill a unique place in the science policy**
613 **interface on environment and sustainable development.** GEO has proved relevant to the
614 overarching environmental agenda setting and the evolution of the larger sustainable development
615 agenda. Having considered the many issues regarding the development of the global science-policy
616 interface and the essential building blocks for a future GEO process the co-chairs have, through the
617 deliberations of the Steering Committee, identified 6 illustrative options. There are sub-options
618 within options. Across the several options, GEO could be scoped more thematically, address a more
619 limited audience, focus more on indicators and become more digital. Across the preliminary options
620 are multiple variations and there could well be options and option elements not listed. It should be
621 noted that the illustrative options are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and there is a considerable
622 scope for applying well established approaches in combination with new ideas. The Steering
623 Committee is seeking review comments on the current co-chair’s discussion paper and the
624 background paper to improve their overall correctness, and also on the building blocks for the future
625 of GEO as set out in the above-mentioned questionnaire.

626 **The illustrative options represent elements that could be brought together as mutually supportive**
627 **and complementary approaches under one umbrella developed in a process devised by UNEA.**
628 Such an umbrella could consist of a set of GEO procedures for UNEP's science-policy interface
629 governed by a multifaceted governance and implementation structure. Assessment products and
630 services could be initiated through a process for receiving and prioritising requests from Member
631 States, intergovernmental bodies, partners and stakeholders. Requests could be prioritised in a
632 rolling work plan and later scoped in detail. UNEP would provide the secretariat for the approach, in
633 partnership with other UN entities as appropriate. The Secretariat could be supported by Technical
634 Support Units provided by partners and a network of thematic, geographical and methodological
635 collaborating centres. The broad consultation with Member States, stakeholders and assessment
636 experts will assist the Steering Committee in identifying the options for the future of GEO for
637 consideration by Member States at UNEA-5.