

Launch of the sixth edition of the Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6) process

The Global Environment Outlook (GEO) is UNEP's flagship integrated environmental assessment; published every 4-5 years. The 6th edition of the Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6) was requested by Member States through the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) Resolution 1/4 in June 2014. It will report on the state of the global environment, the extent and effectiveness of the policy responses and the prospects or outlook for the environment over the foreseeable future.

The GEO-6 process began in early 2015 with a series of Regional Environmental Information Network (REIN) conferences to help define the priorities for the assessments in each region. From these priorities, **six regional environmental assessments** were produced and these are the foundation of the global GEO-6 assessment, in particular for explaining the state of the environment and the current policy response. The work programme for the global assessment will deliver two separate review drafts, one for the first two parts of the document (State and Trends, Policy Response) and the second for the full GEO-6, including Outlooks. The meeting schedule will encourage authors to prepare the drafts at the appropriate times to ensure the process moves forward. Here are some details:

- The first author's meeting in Feb. 2017 will have all three main groups (State and Trends, Policy Response, Innovative Outlooks group) and the GEO-6 advisory bodies meeting together. Parallel sessions and combined sessions help create interaction among the groups as well as allow them time to plan their individual activities. The Innovative Outlooks Group will work to develop new Outlooks methods and tools that will be used in GEO-6.
- The second author's meeting in May, 2017 will only host the State and Trends and Policy Response authors. The goal of the meeting is to prepare a review draft of the first two chapters and to provide input to the progress report being prepared for UNEA-3.
- The third author's meeting (Oct. 2017) will have all the groups come back together again. The goal of the meeting is to ensure the review drafts of the first two chapters are completed (State and Trends, Policy Response) and that drafting begins for the Outlooks chapter. Review editors will attend the meeting to ensure authors have dealt with review comments appropriately and to prepare their summary report of the review process. The GEO-6 advisory bodies will meet to plan their activities and also finalize the progress report for UNEA-3.
- The fourth author's meeting, March, 2018 will prepare the review draft of the full GEO-6, including Outlooks. Authors will also prepare the first draft of the Summary for Policy Makers (SPM). The advisory bodies will also meet to layout the next steps and to observe the author drafting process and ensure its credibility and relevance for Member States.
- The 2nd Review Editor's meeting will address review comments from the second review period and prepare a summary report of how these comments were addressed.
- The drafting meeting of the High-level Intergovernmental and Stakeholder Advisory Group will review the draft Summary for Policy Makers, prepared by the authors, and prepare a final draft that Member States will receive.
- The Member State negotiation meeting for the Summary for Policy Makers will be the meeting where this document is finalized by Member States in preparation for endorsement by the 4th United Nations Environment Assembly.

The full GEO-6 as well as the translated Summary for Policy Makers will be made available to UNEA-4 for endorsement.

[Click here](#) for the GEO-6 Process chart.



Proposed Working Structure of GEO-6

The working structure of GEO-6 is different from GEO-5 in that it includes Co-chairs and vice-chairs. This structure was recommended by the Scientific Advisory Panel (SAP) to help ensure the scientific credibility of the GEO-6 process. Other details of the structure include:

- Policy advice will be received from the High-level Intergovernmental and Stakeholder Advisory Group
- Scientific integrity of the process will be overseen by the Scientific Advisory Panel
- Both advisory bodies will provide advice on the overall management of the GEO-6 process
- The Co-Chairs (Dr. Paul Ekin, Dr. Joyeeta Gupta) will act as the bridge between the advisory bodies and the author teams and will be supported by the UN Environment Secretariat.
- The Secretariat will continue to support the advisory bodies in their planning activities.
- The author teams will be separated somewhat by the timing of the process, with the two first chapters being prepared in the first half of 2017 and the last chapter on Outlooks being prepared in the last months of 2017 and the first months of 2018.
- However, the main authors meetings will allow for interactions among all of the author teams in order to maintain coherence of the assessment.
- GEO Fellows will support the process by assisting the authors with research questions and performing quality assurance tasks for citations and references.
- Review editors will conduct evaluations at the end of each review period to ensure that review comments were dealt with appropriately. They will prepare a summary report from each review period.

[Click here](#) to view the working structure of GEO-6.

The next three months: GEO-6 2016 work plan

Since the first author's meeting is planned for Feb. 2017, there are many tasks to complete to ensure a smooth and productive meeting. These include:

- Planning calls with the advisory bodies to set the timing and delivery of GEO-6 and develop a common understanding for the progress report to be delivered for UNEA-3.
- Planning calls with the GEO-6 co-chairs to ensure they have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and they are well briefed for the February meeting.
- Planning and content calls with the prospective and selected authors. This is to ensure full engagement of the authors and making sure they have the right assignments.
- Orientation webinars for the authors, Secretariat staff, co-chairs and other interested parties to ensure that key elements and procedures of the GEO-6 are clearly understood by everyone.
- Coordination is also required to ensure that the right experts within UNEP are there to support the author teams and that GEO-6 avoids duplication with other assessments.

[Click here](#) for the three month GEO-6 Schedule.



GEO-6 Announces Co-chairs



Professor Joyeeta Gupta



Professor Paul Ekins

Two of the world's most celebrated scientists, Professor Joyeeta Gupta and Professor Paul Ekins, have been nominated to lead the production of the sixth edition of the 'Global Environment Outlook' (GEO-6), the world's most comprehensive assessment of the state of the global environment.

Joyeeta Gupta is Professor of Environment and Development at the University of Amsterdam. She will lead in the areas of environmental sustainability and governance. Paul Ekins is Professor of Energy and Environment Policy at University College, London. He will provide leadership and guidance in the areas of sustainable resource use, energy and environmental policy.

In accepting the co-chair role Professor Ekins, said, "It is a huge privilege and responsibility to be invited to co-chair the production of GEO-6. In this report I will seek to highlight the opportunities for economic growth and increased human welfare that will arise from addressing today's local and global environmental challenges."

Professor Gupta said, "It is both an exciting and daunting challenge to create the enabling environment for global scholars to come together and work collaboratively to understand, analyse and suggest ways and means to mitigate or adapt to our environmental and resource problems."

The co-chairs will act as the bridge between the GEO-6 advisory bodies, the UN Environment Secretariat and the authors who will be drafting the assessment. This extremely important role helps the assessment maintain scientific integrity and also means the findings of the report will be relevant for environmental decision makers.

The key role of the fellows in the Global Environment Outlook process

To guarantee a successful and effective final product, the Global Environment Outlook-6 (GEO-6) is built on a multi-stakeholder and highly participative process, where each working group is strongly related and linked to the others. In this important process, the GEO fellows play a key role. This important group has a long-lasting history of involvement in the Global Environment Outlook process, from providing support to authors and the Secretariat to moving from a role as a GEO Fellow and becoming a co-chair in the GEO-6 regional assessments.

The kick-off conference call for the involvement of the new cohort of GEO Fellows in GEO-6 took place on the 28th of September, during which the Secretariat and Fellows agreed on several key responsibilities that the GEO Fellows will have in the GEO-6 process. Firstly, Fellows will have a strategic role in the research component for specific sections of GEO-6, assisting authors where needed. In this context, they will closely interact with Coordinating Lead Authors and Lead Authors of the State & Trends, Policy Response and Innovative Outlook sections of the document.

A major contribution will also be to assist in the technical review process of the GEO-6 document as well as on the verification of data and information sources used by the authors, to ensure data integrity. To achieve these goals, regular interaction will be needed with the Scientific Advisory Panel (SAP) and the Assessment Methodologies, Data and Information Working Group (AMDG). Moreover, the Fellows will help verify and improve the use of citations and references contained in the document and support the review editors to assess how review comments have been dealt with. GEO Fellows will also contribute to the GEO-6 outreach strategy by identifying key events or opportunities to promote GEO-6 and provide outreach material. The Secretariat is now preparing an official document to formalize the collaboration with the Fellows, not only for the GEO-6 process but also for the following editions.

New GEO website launched

The new GEO website is a comprehensive information portal that seeks to inform, educate experts, advisory groups, the Secretariat and the broader public on the GEO process and on issues important for GEO-6 and environmental assessments. The GEO website fills the gap in information on the GEO processes and activities. The Website also assures linkages with other relevant assessments and global knowledge platforms such as UNEP Live as well as the GEO 6 Community of Practice (CoP), which is a web-based collaboration place that seeks to engage members.

The website now provides easy access to important information on the state of the environment and policies that could help achieve a more sustainable future.



GEO-6 Regional Assessments	Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, West Asia, Europe
Assessment Data	Assessment Data
Assessment Findings	Key findings and policy messages
Previous Global GEO reports	GEO-1, GEO 2000, GEO-3, GEO-4, GEO-5
Other GEO related Publications	Thematic reports, Specialized reports
Community of Practice (CoP)	Community of Practice (CoP)
UNEP Live	UNEP Live
IEA Guidelines	IEA Guidelines, Integrated Environmental Assessment Platform
GEO Newsletters	September 2015, November 2016

Progress report: updated guidelines for conducting UNEP's assessments

Prepared by Yannick Beaudoin, Chief Scientist of GRID-Arendal and Elaine Baker, Senior Expert, GRID-Arendal

The practice of integrated environmental assessment (IEA) has evolved significantly since the last set of guidance which was developed by UNEP in 2007. Demands from governments have meant that IEA's need to be more policy relevant, interactive and understandable by the general public. Moreover, there are new needs for rapid response and thematic assessments, which may not typically undergo the same level of rigor as a full IEA. The recent adoption of the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals is a clear indication of the drive towards greater integration of key pillars for enabling sustainable development.

Since early 2016, UNEP, through its collaborating center GRID-Arendal, has been working to produce an updated set of guidelines that take into account the latest science-based approaches, Member State advice and other stakeholder input. Starting with a writing workshop conducted in April 2016 in Arendal, Norway, a foundational draft was produced to catalyze the overall process of producing update guidelines. A group of 15 experts with

experience in conducting assessments and in working across different fields that make use of assessments, gathered for 5 days allowing for a vibrant exchange and lively collaboration. Experts represented every region of the globe, ensuring diversity in perspectives and contexts. Following the writing workshop, the foundational draft was uploaded to an online document collaboration system allowing for the core writing group to continue contributing to the draft. More recently, members of the Assessment Methodologies, Data and Information Working Group (one of the advisory bodies of UN Environment's 6th edition of the Global Environmental Outlook) were invited to the online collaboration to add content and provide feedback. A new draft is now in the process of being reviewed by the broader global community with a formal 'living document' of the guidelines expected to be launched on the UNEP Live web site by the end of November 2016. This living document will continue to be open for comment, revision and feedback to ensure the guidelines can remain aligned to the latest advances in producing Integrated Environmental Assessments.

Delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development: a Gap analysis to strengthen the science-policy interface:

Bringing the gap between science and the policy in environmental decision making is still considered one of the main challenges for many governments. Governments, international organizations and a wide range of stakeholders involved along the chain which connects environmental information and its use in the decision making process at different scales, have raised this issue for some time, pushing the international agenda to take concrete action to implement an effective and inclusive science-policy interface. Through Governing Council decision 27/2 and UNEA I resolution 1 / 4 UN Environment was mandated to produce a Gap Analysis to stimulate governments to “urgently take action to bridge those [data and information] gaps through the building of capacities, the strengthening of existing mechanisms, including those of the multilateral environmental agreements, for monitoring the state of the environment and producing policy-relevant environmental assessments”.

This report, being prepared for the next United Nations Environment Assembly, will focus on 3 main sections: Evidence Based Decision making versus “Other Factors”; Gap analysis and Recommendations for member states. The first draft of the document will undergo a month-long scientific review period by the Assessment Methodologies, Data and Information Working group and other identified key stakeholders. The review period will allow the Secretariat to integrate all comments in a final version to be submitted for intergovernmental review in December 2016.

Member states are expected to provide their comments until the end of January to allow the Secretariat to integrate them in a final document to be submitted to the Committee of Permanent Representatives. The Gap Analysis will be formally delivered UNEA-3.

GEO Facts: Former Global Environment Outlook co-chairs now Environment Ministers

Now there may not be a direct link, but some of our most illustrious GEO partners have made important strides towards improving the environment in their own countries. Some have also attained high political office so they can even do more. We are very glad to have been a part of their success. For example:



Dr. Edgar E. Gutiérrez



Elsa Galarza

Dr. Edgar E. Gutiérrez Espeleta, Minister of Environment, Energy, Oceans, Coasts and Wetlands, Republic of Costa Rica was a coordinating lead author of the third Global Environment Outlook (GEO-3) for Latin America and the Caribbean (2010). Currently, he is the president of the second United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-2). And,

Elsa Galarza Contreras, Minister of Environment, Peru was the lead author of

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