

Summary Report of the Intergovernmental Meeting on the Sixth Global Environment Outlook Summary for Policy Makers: 21-24 January 2019

The Intergovernmental Meeting on the Sixth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6) Summary for Policy Makers (SPM) convened from 21-24 January 2019 at the UN Environment (UNEP) headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. The meeting was attended by 251 participants from 95 countries, including 26 participants from major groups and stakeholders.

Throughout the week, delegates discussed the SPM in order to reach agreement on a document that will be presented to the fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-4). On Thursday, 24 January, they agreed to the GEO-6 SPM, and requested the Assessment Report Co-Chairs to formulate and forward a summary with key messages of the SPM to UNEA-4.

The SPM consists of five sections:

- What is the Global Environment Outlook?
- What is Happening to Our Environment and How Have We Responded?
- Effectiveness of Environmental Policies;
- Changing the Path We Are On; and
- Knowledge for Action.

Brief History of the GEO

UNEP's GEO was launched in 1995 in response to a request by the UNEP Governing Council for a comprehensive report on the state of the world environment. The GEO is a process of conducting a global integrated environmental assessment to deliver the best available scientific findings to policy makers and provide them with sufficient information to respond effectively to environmental challenges. The output of the GEO process is an assessment report of the state and trends of the global environment. The SPM is intended to communicate the key, policy-relevant findings of the GEO Assessment Report to policy makers.

The GEO-6 report, organized under the theme "Healthy Planet, Healthy People," draws attention to the connection between environmental and human health. It also encourages the achievement of the environmental dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), internationally agreed environmental goals, and the objectives of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), for the benefit of humankind.

The GEO-6 differs from the GEO-5 in that the development of this report involves Co-Chairs in addition to Vice-Chairs. This structure was recommended by the Scientific Advisory Panel (SAP) to help further ensure the scientific credibility of the GEO-6 process, and to encourage learning from best practices from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

The GEO-6 meeting considered the second order draft of the SPM, which was developed at a meeting convened by the High-level Intergovernmental and Stakeholders Advisory Group. The GEO-6 assessment report and the SPM adopted at this meeting will be presented for consideration and possible endorsement by UNEA-4, which will be held from 11-15 March 2019 in Nairobi, Kenya. This endorsement is expected to raise the profile of GEO assessments due to the high-level and universal membership of UNEA.

Previous GEO Reports

GEO-1, published in 1997, provided a comprehensive overview of the state of the world's environment and showed that although significant progress had been made in confronting

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environmental challenges in both developing and industrialized regions, there was still a need to vigorously pursue environmental and associated socioeconomic policies.

GEO-2, published in 1999, concluded that if current trends in population, economic growth, and consumption continued, the natural environment would be increasingly stressed.

GEO-3, published in 2002, provided an overview of the main environmental developments over the previous three decades, demonstrating how social, economic, and other factors contributed to the changes that had occurred. It highlighted increasing poverty and concluded that four major divides categorize the world and threaten sustainable development, namely, the environmental, policy, and lifestyle divides, and the vulnerability gap.

GEO-4, published in 2007, assessed the state of the global atmosphere, land, water, and biodiversity, as well as the human dimensions of environmental change, and presented scenarios and policy options for action in the context of environment for development. It issued an urgent call for action in dealing with persistent and urgent environmental problems, such as climate change, that undermine human wellbeing and development.

GEO-5 was requested by the 25th session of the UNEP Governing Council, held in February 2009, in Nairobi, Kenya. The GEO-5 report differed from previous GEO reports by shifting from assessing priority “problems” to include assessments of priority solutions. The GEO-5 report consisted of three major parts: an assessment of the state and trends of the global environment; regional policy analyses; and potential opportunities for action at the global level.

The GEO-5 report assessed progress toward the achievement of 90 environmental goals and objectives, reporting little or no progress on 24 environmental goals and objectives including: climate change; combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought; maintaining and developing the multiple benefits of ecosystem services; and addressing drivers of habitat loss. These findings were released on the eve of the “Rio+20” UN Conference on Sustainable Development, held in June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.



Joyce Msuya, Acting Executive Director, UNEP

GEO-6 Report

Opening Session

Jorge Laguna-Celis, Secretary, Secretariat of Governing Bodies and Stakeholders, UNEP, opened the meeting. He noted that GEO-6 will be presented to UNEA-4 for possible endorsement in March 2019.

Paolo Soprano, Co-Chair of the High-level Intergovernmental and Stakeholders Advisory Group, Italy, outlined the context in which the GEO-6 SPM is being produced, explaining:

- the origins of the GEO reports;
- GEO’s role as a UNEP “flagship report”;
- the UNEA mandates for GEO-6;
- the GEO-6 governance system, working structure, and processes for peer review and responding to comments; and
- the SPM work programme.

Joyce Msuya, Acting Executive Director, UNEP, characterized the GEO reports as one of the most important UNEP products, representing “the very best of science and partnership for the environment.” She noted that unlike previous reports, the GEO-6



Group photo at the opening of the conference



L-R: **Jian Liu**, UNEP; **Keriako Tobiko**, Cabinet Secretary for the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Kenya; and **Joyce Msuya**, Acting Executive Director, UNEP

report considers policies that may help make a difference in future outcomes.

Keriako Tobiko, Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Forestry, Kenya, said that the outcome of the meeting will form a critical basis for discussions at UNEA-4. Highlighting the disconnects between policy, science, and action, Tobiko urged decision makers to incorporate science into policies and called for translating policy into tangible, concrete, and measurable actions on the ground. He lauded the GEO-6 authors for incorporating traditional knowledge, thus strengthening the link between science and traditional knowledge.

Organization of Work: Delegates elected the bureau by acclamation:

- Paolo Soprano, Italy, for the Western Europe and Others group (WEOG);
- Edgar Gutiérrez, Costa Rica, for the Group of Latin America and Caribbean (GRULAC) countries;
- Marek Garztecki, Poland, for Central and Eastern Europe (CEE); and
- Aziza Geleta Dessalegn, Ethiopia, for the African Group, also serving as Rapporteur.
- The Asia-Pacific Group was requested upon to provide its Bureau nominee later in the meeting. By the end of the meeting, a nominee had not been identified.

Co-Chair Edgar Gutiérrez (Costa Rica) outlined the Bureau's proposed work plan for the week. Delegates adopted the provisional agenda (UNEP/GEO-6/SPM/1.1) without amendment.

SPM Negotiation Procedure: Co-Chair Garztecki informed delegates that the SPM draft incorporates comments that were submitted before the meeting, and invited further member states written and oral comments on the draft SPM. Written comments were accepted until noon, Tuesday, then were compiled by the Secretariat to facilitate delegates' review of the text on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis.

Co-Chair Edgar Gutiérrez, Costa Rica, proposed that the GEO-6 Assessment Co-Chairs provide clarifications on whether text submissions from member states are in line with the underlying GEO-6 report. He suggested that the proponents of changes could

thereafter provide further explanation where necessary, and that the Bureau would work to redraft the paragraph to reflect the compromise reached during the discussion. Delegates agreed to this procedure.

Presentation by GEO-6 Co-Chairs: GEO-6 Assessment Co-Chair Joyeeta Gupta, India, said the report's key underlying messages are:

- a healthy planet supports healthy people;
- an unhealthy planet leads to unhealthy people;
- drivers and pressures need to be addressed;
- current science justifies action now;
- environmental policy is necessary but not sufficient; and
- a healthy planet, healthy people, and healthy economy are mutually supportive goals.

GEO-6 Assessment Co-Chair Paul Ekins, the UK, said the report considers 11 cross-cutting issues, noting that addressing social issues, gender equity, and climate change remain key for achieving all of the SDGs. He outlined messages on the effectiveness of environmental policy, including:

- the importance of multi-level governance;
- the need for sustained and conclusive actions;
- the world is not on track to meet the SDGs;
- transformative change and an integrated approach are required; and
- data gaps need to be addressed but that should not delay urgent action.

General Statements on the SPM: Many countries expressed their gratitude to the experts for the work done to produce the GEO-6 report. The EU, with Norway, noted that the SPM will be instrumental for furthering discussions at UNEA-4 and the High-



GEO-6 Assessment Co-Chair **Paul Ekins**, UK

level Political Forum, and for the development of the Global Sustainable Development Report.

South Africa, for the African Group: noted that the GEO-6 report will help provide best available responses to achieve environmental goals, including the SDGs; highlighted the importance of comprehensive environmental monitoring; and called for adequate means of implementation.

The US called for a stronger focus on data and science informing policy, pointing to the need for clarity in the section on air pollution. The Russian Federation noted the importance of the endorsement of the GEO-6 report and SPM by UNEA-4.

Palestine called for taking note of the environmental- and resource-related challenges faced by people in occupied territories.

Norway called for further discussions to unpack the “science-policy interface” and how best to “act now,” stressing that the SPM needs country buy-in and ownership.

China supported the work towards ensuring the report’s endorsement at UNEA-4. Costa Rica lauded the scientific legitimacy of the GEO-6 report, particularly in support of achieving the SDGs. Japan said the scientific narrative is well presented and drew attention to text on the problem of marine litter in oceans, noting a scarcity of knowledge in this area.

Argentina, for GRULAC, urged consistency with internationally agreed language and definitions, and requested a disclaimer on maps to note boundary disputes. Indonesia requested consistency with language agreed in other processes, including by adding a reference to local communities when referring to indigenous communities.

The UK suggested changes to: avoid “drifting into policy prescriptions”; provide definitions for certain statements of level of confidence; and correct an imbalance in the oceans section, suggesting that it focuses too much on plastics.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo suggested that a statement on the contribution of peatlands to carbon storage notes that most peatlands in the Congo Basin remain pristine.

The Netherlands raised questions about some of the graphics used in the draft SPM, noting, for example, that the timeline used in one graphic did not match the timeline used in the related text.



Lori Dando, US

Canada noted that some messages require qualifiers, suggested more references to women as agents of change, and said that some of the statements related to chemicals are too general.

Switzerland suggested that the meeting should discuss sharing the key messages of the SPM with ministers, as it may serve as an important communication tool.

Chile suggested greater emphasis in the SPM on the relationship between gender and the environment, the importance of biodiversity, and the need for more effective environmental policies, especially regarding resource use.

Saying that the document required more depth, Colombia called for including issues such as mercury and adaptation to climate change, and expanding on issues related to the ozone layer and chemicals management.

Senegal stressed the need to include means of implementation to action the policies that will be created to support implementation of the messages of the GEO-6 report.

Norway reported that their written submission contains more concrete policy advice, aligned with and referencing the main GEO-6 report.

Pointing to the importance of speaking to actors working at different levels, Indonesia suggested that language related to multi-level governance also include references to local and national actors.

Egypt cautioned against prejudging discussions in other fora such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Ecuador called for additional references to gender equality in text and urged referencing the private sector’s role in dealing with plastic pollution. He called for:

- more data collection and exchange of information;
- sustainable consumption and productions patterns towards a circular economy;
- the reduction of fossil fuel use; and
- promoting equitable growth in developed and developing countries.

Kenya said the SPM should call for investment into biodiversity awareness-raising campaigns.



Arthur Eijs, the Netherlands

Samoa stressed that:

- the key messages should be “policy maker-friendly” to ensure the messages of the GEO-6 report are implemented;
- the GEO-6 is linked strongly to the SDGs and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda; and
- the GEO report and SPM are applicable at local, national, and regional levels.

The Philippines highlighted, *inter alia*: low-carbon development; technological innovation; climate change; air pollution; and sustainable energy. Gabon called for incorporating action points from the Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment.

The Women’s Major Group noted that the GEO report and SPM need to translate language on education into “policy language”; called for synergies related to data, innovation, science, and traditional knowledge to ensure equitable benefits; and highlighted the need to include information related to the second Global Chemicals Outlook (GCO II). The Russian Federation drew attention to the recently completed GCO II and urged for reflection of its messages in the GEO-6 SPM.

Sri Lanka noted that land degradation is an important driver for many developing countries and urged outlining ways to convert the policy messages in the SPM into concrete actions on the ground.

Pierre Boileau, GEO-6 Secretariat, responded to comments saying: the SPM has been geared towards alignment with the SDGs, drawing attention to the section titled the State of the Environment, where achievement of the SDGs have been assessed under the business as usual scenario. He said that implementation would be difficult to detail in the SPM, but noted that a third of the main report is dedicated to current policy implementation. He also highlighted that the effectiveness of different policy types and frameworks have been analyzed in detail. With respect to the GCO II, Boileau emphasized that since it has not yet been officially published, it cannot be referenced in the GEO-6. He noted, however, that chemicals and waste are dealt with as cross-cutting issues, and that two authors from the GCO assessments were involved in the GEO-6.



Pierre Boileau, Head of GEO-6 Unit, UNEP

South Africa suggested hyperlinking the electronic version of the SPM to the main GEO-6 report to assist countries to link their messages to the detailed text.

Consideration of the GEO-6 SPM

Delegates discussed the GEO-6 SPM from Tuesday to Thursday in plenary, and met informally to resolve more difficult issues. On Thursday afternoon, Co-Chair Soprano introduced an updated version of the draft SPM. After a page-by-page review, delegates adopted the SPM, which contains five sections.

Section One: What is the GEO?

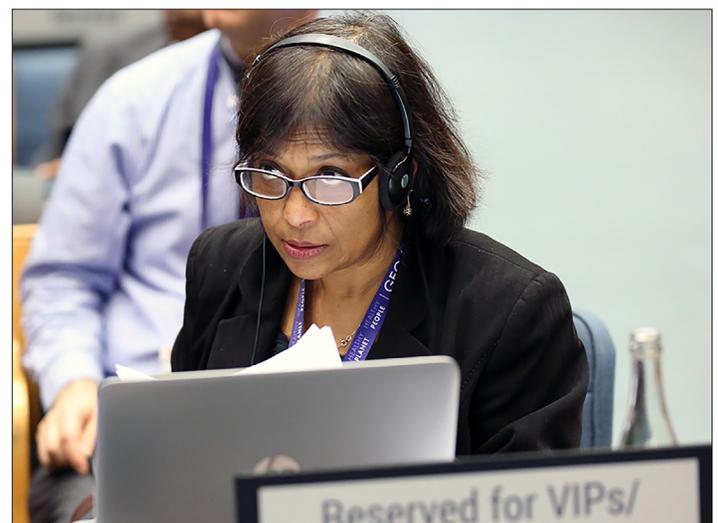
Co-Chair Gupta said the comments received have been assessed according to their consistency with the GEO-6 report, and whether they change the meaning of the phrase or omit valuable information. The African Group, supported by Brazil and Palestine, suggested including new language defining the GEO process.

In the discussion, delegates considered whether the GEO is, in itself, a consultative and participatory process to prepare an independent assessment of the state of the environment. The GEO-6 Assessment Co-Chairs said that the GEO is the result of a consultative and participatory process. Switzerland and Norway supported using approved language from UNEA, with the US calling for only addressing the current draft text.

On the functions of the GEO, delegates agreed to the GEO being a source of sound evidence-based information on the environment, aimed at assisting policy makers deliver on the SDGs.

On the timeframe of the GEO-6, as it relates to timelines of other internationally agreed environment and development goals, India favored aligning the SPM to agreed language in the 2030 Agenda. Brazil preferred specifying “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” and Mongolia and Serbia supported a more general timeframe of 2030 and beyond.

On environmental changes since the GEO-1 report, delegates discussed, but decided against, Chile’s proposal to cite new technological solutions. They considered South Africa’s proposal on stronger and better-enforced environmental policies



GEO-6 Assessment Co-Chair Joyeeta Gupta, India

and legislation, and Brazil's amendment regarding robust international cooperation.

Co-Chair Gupta said the phrase "in some regions" as a qualifier to a statement of differences in regions is not consistent with the GEO-6 report. Brazil, opposed by the EU, said this should be retained, as it is consistent with the Rio+20 outcome document.

On the need for urgent action, delegates debated whether to include a proposal by Chile for a reference to land use, land-use change, and forestry, with Brazil opposing. Ethiopia proposed including disaster risk prevention and reduction. The US and Brazil proposed deleting a reference to decarbonization, decoupling, and detoxification, but Canada, Switzerland, the EU, Bhutan, and Dominican Republic preferred to retain the text.

Canada, supported by Switzerland, Egypt, Colombia, and Dominican Republic suggested adding a reference to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Switzerland, supported by the EU, requested text calling for action on an unprecedented scale.

On linkages between the three sustainable development pillars, the EU, supported by Egypt, preferred referring to "ambitious" policies, while the US suggested "effective" policies. Delegates agreed to accept Brazil's proposed language on more ambitious and efficiently implemented environmental policies.

Several delegates reported that the first infographic on planetary and human health is complex and difficult to comprehend. Ethiopia, supported by Côte d'Ivoire and India, supported its deletion, noting that since it is not in the GEO-6 report it should not be retained. France and Sri Lanka supported retaining this figure, suggesting adding supporting text on how the figure should be interpreted. Boileau confirmed that integrative diagrams such as these are useful in explaining key concepts.

On Thursday, delegates reviewed the section again, noting minor editorial amendments.

Final SPM Text: The final text for this section contains an introduction to the GEO-6, under the theme: "Healthy Planet, Healthy People." This section also describes the GEO-6, highlighting functions, aims, and focus.

Section Two: What is Happening to Our Environment and How Have We Responded?

Drivers of environment change: Argentina, Mongolia, and Dominican Republic suggested reference to "unsustainable" development, and the EU and Norway, suggested "unsustainable economic development."

Switzerland and Canada favored mentioning population growth and economic development as drivers of change, and, with the UK and Switzerland, suggested that this is a well-established fact. Senegal, Guinea, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, and Serbia noted that population growth is not necessarily harmful to the environment. Mongolia preferred the term "population pressure." Co-Chair Gupta clarified that the report lists population growth as a driver without prescribing how to address it. She suggested accepting Chile's suggestion on uneven distribution of drivers and impacts of population growth, and Brazil's inclusion on the insufficient pace of responses.

Argentina questioned statistics related to the growth of cities, and Co-Chair Gupta explained they were published by UN-Habitat. Argentina, supported by South Africa and Egypt, suggested consistency in using the terms "developing and least developed countries."

On economic development, Brazil, supported by the African Group, but opposed by Switzerland, Norway, and the EU, suggested text to highlight historical responsibility for environmental damage.

On the vulnerability of coastal cities, Canada, supported by Maldives, Tuvalu, and Samoa, but opposed by Egypt, requested specific reference to small island developing states' vulnerability



View of the room during the meeting

to sea-level rise. Senegal, with Tuvalu, called for a specific reference to climate change and extreme weather events as drivers of change in coastal cities. Palestine called for including natural disasters as drivers, and citing the challenges of states under occupation. Several delegates requested broadening the text to include other urban settlements, with Egypt proposing mega deltas and coastal cities, and Bhutan suggesting mountains and river valleys.

On the threats posed by climate change, Italy suggested including language outlining that global warming affects the functionality of ecosystems.

Argentina said text from the Human Rights Council regarding the vulnerability of women and children should be used. Palestine requested adding reference to “refugees as a result of wars and disasters.”

The EU agreed with the US suggestion to delete the adjective “deadly” as a way to refer to levels of impacts, and delegates agreed to use the term “high.” Switzerland noted that the reference “sometimes adverse” is unclear.

State of the environment: Air: Co-Chair Ekins said the Scientific Advisory Panel had advocated for keeping figures regarding air pollution in the SPM since they were based on well-established data, and accepted Canada’s proposed reference to fine particulate matter. India, Afghanistan, Egypt, South Africa, and Ethiopia proposed deleting the map on air pollution-related deaths.

On local air pollutants, Chile supported pointed to the contribution of the energy sector to pollution. On Thursday, delegates called for a formulation that indicates that electricity



Cheikh Fofana, Senegal

may also be produced from renewable sources, which do not contribute to emissions.

China, supported by India and Bhutan, requested replacing “pollutants” with “forcers” for coherence with the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, which refers to short-lived climate forcings. Switzerland, supported by the EU, stressed that policy makers are more familiar with “pollutants.” Co-Chair Ekins suggested, and delegates accepted, using both, and defining “forcers” in the glossary.

Argentina, supported by South Africa and India, called for consistency in the economic categorization of countries, with Dominican Republic calling for a footnote justifying these categories. Several countries supported changing references of “low-income countries” to “least developed and developing countries.” A representative of the Scientific Advisory Panel confirmed that SPM is coherent with categorizations by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change: developed countries, developing countries, and emerging economies.

Delegates agreed to include text from Brazil on anthropogenic greenhouse gases, and Italy on impacts of fossil fuels on air pollution.

Argentina, with Egypt, requested deletion of a reference to 1.5°C of global warming, preferring 2°C. Several opposed, including the EU, Norway, and Switzerland who urged the use of agreed language from the Paris Agreement, as it is also consistent with the GEO-6 report.

Biodiversity: Norway proposed using the broad title “Biota/Biodiversity,” with Boileau noting that the GEO-6 report deals with biodiversity and not all biota. Brazil called for eliminating “political language” related to biodiversity loss. Switzerland and the US, supported by the EU, Canada, and Norway, highlighted strong scientific evidence that a major biodiversity extinction event is in progress.

South Africa called for stronger language that establishes a clear linkage between biodiversity and human health, and Chile called for clarity on the linkages between resource extraction, biodiversity, and human health.

Delegates called for consistency in the use of the terms “native and non-native invasive species,” to clarify that not all invasive species are alien.

Discussing pressures on biodiversity, Canada, supported by the EU, but opposed by Brazil, called for the inclusion of agriculture as an additional threat to biodiversity. Brazil, citing the GEO-6 report, proposed including agricultural subsidies, but the US opposed. The EU called for deleting references to land use, as this excludes marine environments. South Africa called for a reference to illegal trade in wildlife, and the UK noted that overexploitation is not only linked to illegal practices.

On values of biodiversity, Argentina objected to economic valuation methods, with Co-Chair Gupta noting that the text is consistent with the GEO-6 report. Argentina urged including “multiple values” rather than “economic valuation” of biodiversity. Delegates agreed to keep the GEO-6 report’s language on the economic valuation of biodiversity.

Norway requested the inclusion of marine litter as mentioned in the GEO-6 report. Brazil proposed text to clarify text fair



Zerubabel Getachew, Ethiopia

and equitable benefit sharing, in line with the Convention on Biological Diversity and the GEO-6 report's citations.

Oceans and coasts: Co-Chair Ekins presented the amendments to the section on drivers of change in oceans and coasts, including requests by:

- Canada to include ocean pollution and ocean acidification;
- Switzerland to link increased atmospheric temperature with ocean temperature;
- Norway to replace “fish stocks” with “marine living resources”;
- Egypt to include governance approaches and financial resources for implementation;
- Chile on including the precautionary approach for emerging technologies; and
- Chile, Argentina, and Brazil to clarify the definition of “blue economy.”

On climate change impacts on oceans, delegates agreed to refer to all, and not just tropical, coral reefs, and with France to refer to integrated coastal zone management.

On the role of oceans in the global economy, delegates agreed to Norway's suggested text on the need to invest in fisheries monitoring and gear technologies.

Discussing ways to minimize the impacts of fishing on ecosystems, Argentina, supported by many developing countries, but opposed by the US and Switzerland, proposed referencing technology transfer. Co-Chair Ekins noted it does not appear in this section of the GEO-6 report. Argentina also proposed removing a reference to improved governance, which the EU and Norway opposed.

On marine pollution, Argentina, preferred the terminology “marine litter, including plastics and microplastics,” with the Democratic Republic of the Congo suggesting “marine plastic litter,” and Guinea and the US supporting “plastic litter.” Norway, supported by Switzerland, Pakistan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, called for clarity in paragraphs pertaining to land- or sea-based sources of marine litter. eSwatini and Kenya called for including inland water sources of marine pollution. Delegates agreed to have separate sections on marine litter, microplastics, and ghost fishing gear.

Argentina further called for language on enhanced cooperation to address plastic pollution. The UK preferred retaining a reference to area-based measures to monitor management and restoration efforts.

On the principle drivers of change facing oceans and coasts, Argentina proposed qualifying “improved governance approaches” with “under the framework of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)” and qualifying the “precautionary approach” with “in accordance with international obligations.” The US and Switzerland opposed the UNCLOS insertion, and the authors pointed out that the GEO-6 report's discussion of improved oceans governance addresses instruments beyond UNCLOS.

Brazil proposed striking the reference to improved governance and keeping the language on more effective compliance and enforcement.

Land and soil: Niger and Senegal expressed concern that soil degradation is not highlighted. Mongolia supported the use of the term “livelihoods” over “food.”



Harouna Ramata Abba Kiari, Niger

Co-Chair Gupta noted Brazil's proposed qualifier “in some parts of the world” did not align with the GEO-6 report that characterizes deforestation as a global phenomenon.

Regarding suggestions from Montenegro on constructed areas under land management, Argentina on the role of enhanced plant genetics, and Norway on payment for ecosystem

services, Co-Chair Gupta noted that there is no basis for these in the underlying scientific report. Finland suggested adding a reference to nature-based solutions. Delegates accepted Switzerland's proposed substitution of “agricultural soil” for “farmland” in language on land-use planning. Palestine proposed a new text on land-use in occupied territories.

Freshwater: Delegates focused on text describing the pressures on water resources. Delegates agreed to accept Chile's proposal to include water pollution as a stressor on water resources. Argentina, supported by Brazil, suggested “unsustainable economic development.” Co-Chair Ekins suggested “current patterns of economic development.” Gabon recommended qualifying population growth with “uncontrolled,” and urbanization with “unmanaged.” Afghanistan suggested including language noting that since water resources are unevenly distributed, the impacts of pressures are also unevenly distributed. Delegates accepted Canada's suggestion to add health impacts to outcomes of slow-onset disasters, and changed the qualifier on increased migration to “in most regions.”



L-R: Fernando Coimbra, Brazil; Martin Gronda, Argentina; and Vinicius Trindade, Brazil

On water quality, Switzerland called for a general reference to the decline in water quality globally. Japan supported retaining



Sibylle Vermont, Switzerland

a reference to freshwater plastic pollutants, with the EU suggesting referring to microplastics.

Madagascar called for references to persistent organic pollutants. Brazil and Argentina preferred including a reference to the inappropriate use of fertilizers as a water quality stressor, with Chile proposing the inclusion of nutrients. The US, Canada, and others suggested referring to “nutrients” instead of

“fertilizers.” Senegal stressed the need to include sanitation issues.

Delegates agreed to Canada’s insertion on the positive impacts of access to water for women in developing countries, and to Norway’s suggestion to include more sustainable management of surface and groundwater. Norway’s text on promoting water-use efficiency was reformulated to include broader water management.

Delegates accepted Switzerland’s suggestion to highlight the role of wetlands in contributing climate mitigation and adaptation, and water quality. Co-Chair Ekins presented reformulated text on peatlands that takes into account pristine peatlands in countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Norway urged including restoration measures such as rewetting.

Brazil, supported by Côte d’Ivoire, Argentina, and Guinea requested deletion of circular economy approaches as a part of good governance. Brazil favored sustainable production and consumption approaches, noting that it incorporates circular economy approaches. Switzerland suggested that a discussion of the circular economy approach is suitable in a section on freshwater because it includes a wide range of water management.

Delegates accepted Norway’s proposed new paragraph on the role of MEAs in embedding integrated water resources management in legislation, and on the need for investment in standardized water data.

On pollutants affecting water quality, Brazil suggested qualifying nutrients and pesticides with “inappropriate use of,” but Canada and Switzerland objected, noting that the SPM text reflected a statement of fact drawn from the GEO-6 report.

Cross-cutting issues: Argentina suggested that the text implies that Antarctica is part of the global commons, but Co-Chair Gupta noted that the text refers only to polar regions in general.

Argentina, opposed by the EU and Switzerland, proposed substituting “global consumption, especially urban” for “urban

footprint.” Montenegro proposed referencing various sustainable development indicators. Co-Chair Gupta confirmed that the proposal is inconsistent with the GEO-6 report.

On gender equality in relation to environmental protection, Madagascar suggested including additional language on access to land, information, and technology. On education, Georgia urged strengthening language that described how informal education on sustainable development is vital for facilitating lifestyle changes.

On climate change as a cross-cutting issue, Argentina, supported by Chile and Niger, suggested that a strong link has not been established between climate change, human mobility, and conflict. The EU, Switzerland, Maldives, Georgia, and Canada preferred retaining the statement on this issue, with Jordan and Iran calling for a separate paragraph as a way to particularly highlight the issue. Palestine suggested including text regarding the vulnerability of peoples under occupation. Kenya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Georgia, Egypt, and the US suggested deleting references to specific vulnerable regions and populations.

On policies to address resource exploitation, delegates agreed to accept Argentina’s suggestion to qualify circular economy as only one of the approaches to sustainable development.

Responding to a question on global energy consumption statistics, an Assessment author said the data were drawn from the International Energy Agency’s World Energy Outlook, which takes into account the nationally determined contributions submitted under the Paris Agreement.

On synthetic and hazardous chemicals, Co-Chair Gupta noted that the authors had drafted a new paragraph, which includes issues related to chemicals management under the relevant MEAs. The EU, supported by the Russian Federation and Madagascar, urged highlighting nanotechnology as an emerging issue.



Sebastian Gil, EU

The EU, US, and Canada debated how to refer to risks involving nanotechnology. India called for the inclusion of the relevant SDG target related to chemicals management. Senegal, supported by the Russian Federation, proposed also addressing electronic waste. Delegates accepted EU language that characterized gaps in assessing and

regulating harmful chemicals as “significant,” Kenya’s proposed insertion on the need for public awareness, and Brazil’s addition of insufficient means of implementation to this list.

On resources and materials, delegates accepted Norway’s new paragraph on the long-term benefits of resource efficiency. Delegates accepted reformulated language on the projected rise in global energy consumption offered by Singapore, which

notes that much of the rise is attributed to expected increases in developing economies' consumption.

Final SPM Text: The final text for this section contains information on: what is happening to our environment, and how have we responded, including on drivers of environmental change, mega trends, and governance challenges. It also contains information on the state of the environment with regards to air, biodiversity, oceans and coasts, land and soil, freshwater, and cross-cutting issues.

Section Three: Effectiveness of Environmental Policies

Co-Chair Ekins proposed that the Netherlands' suggestion to include carbon taxes could not be included, since the introduction only refers to policies evaluated in the case studies in the GEO-6 report. Delegates accepted the UK proposal to cite the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) as a regulatory approach. Georgia suggested adding a reference to the role of MEAs. Armenia proposed adding a call to evaluate methodologies for assessing natural resources.

On policy diffusion, delegates accepted Argentina's submission to consider national circumstances. Argentina, Ecuador, Senegal, and Guinea supported inclusion of text on public participation. Canada, supported by Madagascar, suggested gender-inclusive approaches for more effective policies.

On the inadequacy of environment departments to enforce environmental policy, the US suggested linking this with text on integrative environmental management measures.

Senegal called to include environmental impact assessments as a means to streamline environmental issues in development plans.

Delegates accepted Canada's deletion on a reference to policies that are unresponsive to changing conditions, and accepted a UK amendment identifying policy gaps in pollution control, efficiency improvement, and planning.

On meeting the SDGs and internationally agreed environmental goals, delegates accepted Italy's suggestion on the reconfiguration of production systems and structure.

Regarding successful environmental governance models, delegates accepted South Africa's recommendation to include compliance to strengthen environmental governance.

On greater application of the precautionary approach to reduce risks from breaching environmental thresholds and limits, Brazil called to delete language related to the breaching of environmental thresholds and limits, noting that this was subjective. Switzerland stressed the importance of including a call for a greater application of the precautionary approach in the prevention of environmental risk.



Pascale Collas, Canada

Final SPM Text: The final text for this section contains information on, *inter alia*:

- policy innovation and design;
- policy scaling up and diffusion;
- multi-level governance;
- an integrated approach;
- consideration of environmental aspects in other sectors;
- the need for transformative change; and
- application of the precautionary principle.

Section Four: Changing the Path We Are On

Need for urgent, sustained and inclusive actions: India and South Africa suggested the message on not meeting



Stuart Mangold, South Africa

internationally agreed goals should be reformulated positively, so politicians do not "devalue the SDGs," and suggested emphasizing that the SDGs will not be met unless something is done to change the business-as-usual scenario.

Regarding the need for urgent action, the EU and South Africa opposed Switzerland's suggestion to substitute "reducing greenhouse gases" for "climate action," noting the latter includes adaptation.

Transformative change and an integrated approach: Argentina, with Brazil, called for substituting "low-carbon or carbon-free" technologies with "low-greenhouse gas," in text outlining the targets for climate change, air pollution, and sustainable energy for all. Argentina, supported by India, but opposed by the EU and Switzerland, said there is too much focus on agriculture's impacts.

Several delegates including Argentina, Brazil, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, objected to the use of "green infrastructure" in reference to biological resources. Some preferred using the SDG language, "sustainable and resilient infrastructure." Switzerland proposed, and delegates agreed, to the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024 terminology, "ecological infrastructure," which is also used in the GEO-6 report.

Discussing synergies between specific measures and sustainability targets, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, South Africa, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo objected to a suggestion to lower agricultural production, saying that this would compromise socioeconomic sustainability. They also objected to promotion of less meat-intensive diets. Brazil, opposed by Germany, urged for the inclusion of bioenergy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Innovation for systemic transformation to achieve environmental goals: Brazil requested, and delegates agreed to include other forms of regional cooperation, including triangular, North-South, and South-South.

Benefits that will result from following more sustainable future pathways: Egypt requested text to ensure existing



Participants negotiating text

financial resources are not compromised, in order to ensure investments in policies that address environmental issues. Several delegates including the EU, the US, and Côte d'Ivoire, supported a formulation by Co-Chair Gupta that calls for ensuring funding for sustainable development. Delegates were later unable to agree on a call for the mobilization of existing and additional financial resources for sustainable development. Brazil proposed including language relating to the implementation of SDG 17 (global partnerships for sustainable development).

Final SPM Text: The final text on this section contains information on:

- the need for urgent, sustained and inclusive actions;
- the need for transformative change and an integrated approach;
- innovation for systemic transformation to achieve environmental goals; and
- benefits from following sustainable future pathways.

Section Five: Knowledge for Action

Delegates agreed that the Bureau would incorporate changes this section, which includes paragraphs on: data and knowledge for effective action; opportunities from emerging data sources; and the way forward. Delegates agreed to retain a reference highlighting the importance of traditional knowledge as an underutilized resource that can complement science-based knowledge.

Final SPM Text: The final text for this section contains information on improved data and greater knowledge enable better and more effective actions and solutions in more places, opportunities from emerging data sources and the earth-human systems modeling revolution, and the way forward.

Consideration of the Key Messages of the SPM

On Thursday evening, Co-Chair Garztecki introduced a two-page document containing key messages drawn from the SPM, explaining that the Secretariat had incorporated comments received from delegates throughout the week, and suggesting a paragraph-by-paragraph reading.

Views diverged on whether GEO-6 delegates should negotiate this document, or if it is best considered at UNEA-4. Co-Chair Garztecki, suggested, and delegates agreed, to entrust any redrafting to the Co-Chairs, who, with the support of the

Bureau, GEO-6 Secretariat, and High-level Intergovernmental and Stakeholders Advisory Group would prepare a Co-Chairs' Summary to be circulated to UNEA-4, alongside the GEO-6 report and SPM.

Statement by the Intergovernmental Meeting and Closure of the Meeting

On Thursday evening, delegates adopted the report of the meeting, which was presented orally by meeting rapporteur Aziza Geleta Dessalegn, Ethiopia.

During the closing session, several delegations thanked the Bureau, High-level Intergovernmental and Stakeholders Advisory Group, and GEO-6 authors for their work to ensure the SPM's adoption.

In his closing remarks, Jian Liu, UNEP Chief Scientist, thanked delegates for all their work in approving the SPM. Co-Chair Soprano closed the meeting at 10:14 pm.

Upcoming Meetings

UNCCD CRIC 17: The Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) assists the Conference of Parties (COP) of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and is an integral part of the Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System (PRAIS). **dates:** 28-30 January 2019 **location:** Georgetown, Guyana **contact:** UNCCD Secretariat **phone:** +49 228 815 2800 **fax:** +49 228 815 2898/99 **email:** secretariat@unccd.int **www:** <https://www.unccd.int/convention/committee-review-implementation-convention-cric/cric17-28-30-january-2019-georgetown>

30th UN-Water Meeting: The 30th UN-Water meeting will take place at the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) headquarters in Rome, Italy. The items include: the final report of the UN-Water SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2018 on Water and Sanitation and the Public Dialogue, update on the World Water Development Report 2019 and 2020, and the presentation of the World Water Quality Assessment. **dates:** 31 January - 1 February 2019 **location:** Rome, Lazio, Italy **www:** <http://www.unwater.org/>

Fourth Session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-4): UNEA-4 will focus on the theme, "innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production," particularly: better global environmental data and partnerships; sustainable and efficient resource management; and robust engagement of civil society, citizens and academia in promoting innovative approaches. UNEA-4 will consider and possibly endorse GEO-6. **dates:** 11-15 March 2019 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **contact:** UNEP **www:** <http://web.unep.org/environmentassembly/>

Second Session of the Intergovernmental Conference on BBNJ: The second session of the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) on an international legally-binding instrument under the UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) follows the first session, which took place in September 2018. Delegates are expected to consider, *inter alia*, a document by IGC President Rena Lee aiming to facilitate focused discussions

and text-based negotiations. **dates:** 25 March - 5 April 2019
venue: UN Headquarters **location:** New York City, US **contact:**
 UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea **email:**
 doalos@un.org **www:** <https://www.un.org/bbnj/content/second-substantive-session>

First Global Conference on Synergies between the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement: The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the UNFCCC will convene the first global multi-stakeholder conference on synergies between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change that will serve as an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on SDG 13 (climate action) ahead of in-depth review of SDG 13 by the High-level Political Forum in 2019. **dates:** 1-3 April 2019 **location:** Copenhagen, Denmark **www:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2019#preparation>

Third Meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG3) of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM): The OEWG will meet to consider the results of the first two meetings of the intersessional process addressing the possible post-2020 platform for addressing chemicals and waste, and to prepare for the Fifth International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM5). **dates:** 2-4 April 2019 **location:** Montevideo, Uruguay **contact:** SAICM Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-917-8273 **fax:** +41-22-797-3460 **email:** saicm.chemicals@unep.org **www:** <http://www.saicm.org/About/OEWG/OEWG3/tabid/5984/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development 2019: The fifth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD) will take place on the theme, ‘empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality’. The Forum is convened by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in collaboration with regional organizations and the UN System. The Forum seeks to advance implementation of both the SDGs and Africa’s Agenda 2063. **dates:** 16-18 April 2019 **location:** Morocco **contact:** ECLAC **www:** <https://www.uneca.org/arfsd2019>

Basel Convention COP 14, Rotterdam Convention COP 9, and Stockholm Convention COP 9: The 14th meeting of the COP to the Basel Convention, the ninth meeting of the COP to the Rotterdam Convention and the ninth meeting of the COP to the Stockholm Convention will convene back-to-back. **dates:** 29 April - 10 May 2019 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **contact:** BRS Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-917-8271 **fax:** +41-22-917-8098 **email:** brs@brsmeas.org **www:** <http://www.brsmeas.org/>

Seventh Session of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Plenary (IPBES 7): The seventh session of the plenary of IPBES-7 will consider, *inter alia*: the report of the Executive Secretary on the implementation of the first work program for the period 2014-2018; the global assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem services; review of the Platform at the conclusion of its first work program; the Platform’s next work program; and institutional arrangements. **dates:** 29 April - 4 May 2019 **location:** Paris, France **contact:** IPBES Secretariat **email:** secretariat@ipbes.net **www:** <https://www.ipbes.net/event/ipbes-7-plenary>

14th Session of the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF 14): UNFF 14 will discuss, *inter alia*: implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030; monitoring, assessment and reporting, including progress on the development of global forest indicators; enhancing global forest policy coherence and a common international understanding of sustainable forest management; progress on the activities and operation of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and availability of resources; and enhanced cooperation, coordination and engagement on forest-related issues. **dates:** 6-10 May 2019 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UNFF Secretariat **phone:** +1-212-963-3401 **fax:** +1-917-367-3186 **email:** unff@un.org **www:** <http://www.un.org/esa/forests/>

49th Session of IPCC: This meeting will approve the 2019 Refinement to the 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories. **dates:** 8-12 May 2018 **location:** Kyoto, Japan **contact:** IPCC Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-730-8208/54/84 **fax:** +41-22-730-8025/13 **email:** IPCC-Sec@wmo.int **www:** <http://www.ipcc.ch>

56th Meeting of the GEF Council: The GEF Council will approve projects to realize global environmental benefits in the GEF’s focal areas, provide guidance to the GEF Secretariat and implementing agencies, and discuss its relations with the conventions for which it serves as the financial mechanism. **dates:** 10-13 June 2019 **location:** Washington D.C., US **contact:** GEF Secretariat **phone:** +1-202-473-0508 **fax:** +1-202-522-3240/3245 **email:** secretariat@thegef.org **www:** <https://www.thegef.org/council-meetings>

High-level Political Forum 2019: The Forum will address the theme, “empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality.” It will conduct an in-depth review of SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 13 (climate action), and SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), in addition to SDG 17 (partnerships for the Goals), which is reviewed each year. Among other items, the Forum will consider the Global Sustainable Development Report, which is issued every four years. **dates:** 9-18 July 2019 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Division for SDGs **fax:** +1-212-963-4260 **www:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2019>

For additional meetings, see <http://sdg.iisd.org>

Glossary

GCO	Global Chemicals Outlook
GEO	Global Environment Outlook
GRULAC	Latin America and Caribbean Group
MEA	Multilateral environment agreement
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SPM	Summary for Policy Makers
UNCLOS	UN Conference on Law of the Sea
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEP	UN Environment
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change