

## GEO-6 Highlights: Tuesday, 22 January 2019

The Intergovernmental Meeting on the Sixth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6) resumed on Tuesday, 22 January 2019, to begin a paragraph-by-paragraph reading of the Summary for Policymakers (SPM). In the morning, delegates addressed the first section that describes the GEO-6. In the afternoon, delegates completed discussions on the first section and turned to the second section, which addresses the drivers of, and responses to, environmental degradation.

### SPM Negotiation Procedure

Co-Chair Marek Garztecki (Poland) informed delegates that the draft for the day's consideration incorporates comments submitted in writing by Member States on Monday and Tuesday morning before the start of the meeting.

Ulf Björnholm, UN Environment (UNEP), outlined the procedure for negotiating the SPM, saying GEO-6 assessment Co-Chairs would present an assessment of comments received per section, followed by paragraph-by-paragraph negotiations of the SPM.

Co-Chair Garztecki reminded delegates that the SPM is intended as a policy document adding that, "less is more," and that delegates should seek concise and succinct language.

Ethiopia, for the AFRICAN GROUP, requested French and Arabic translations of the SPM draft, and prompt circulation of drafts to ensure regional consultations use the latest available version.

PALESTINE inquired about suggested text they submitted in Arabic. Pierre Boileau, GEO-6 Secretariat, said that their text would be included after translation.

Delegates deliberated the working procedures for negotiating the SPM at various intervals throughout the day. SWITZERLAND suggested resorting to previously agreed international language whenever possible. CANADA suggested numbering paragraphs to make it easier to follow the amendment process.

ETHIOPIA stressed that this is a state-driven process, and called for the dais to consult states before deleting text. During the reading, several delegates complained about the frequent reopening of "agreed" paragraphs, and Co-Chair Garztecki affirmed that he would ensure acceptance of an amended paragraph before declaring it adopted, after which no further changes would be accepted. GEO-6 Assessment Co-Chair Joyeeta Gupta suggested tasking authors to clean up text in cases where many changes have been made to a paragraph in order to make it less unwieldy, and more grammatically correct while respecting the intent of edits. In the afternoon, Co-Chair Edgar Guittierez (Costa Rica) outlined a proposal that the GEO-6 Assessment Co-Chairs provide clarifications, per paragraph, on whether text submissions from Member States are in line with the 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 in the discussion. Delegates agreed to this proposal.



View of the room during the morning session



Dragan Županjevac, Serbia



Tungalag Ulambayar, Mongolia

### **Section One: What is the Global Environment Outlook?**

GEO-6 Assessment Co-Chair Gupta, said the comments received have been assessed according to their consistency with the GEO-6 report, and on whether they change the meaning of the phrase or omit valuable information. She highlighted that the comments received for this section regard:

- whether to use the phrase “in some regions”;
- how to refer to consumption and production patterns;
- use of terminology such as dematerialization, detoxification and decarbonization; and
- questions on some figures.

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 opined that the GEO is the result of a consultative and participatory process. WOMEN’S MAJOR GROUP suggested deletion of a reference to specific stakeholders, and Co-Chair Garztecki reminded delegates that since this is an intergovernmental process, only Member States can propose amendments.



Ulf Björnholm, UNEP

SWITZERLAND and NORWAY supported using approved language from UNEA, with the US calling for only addressing the current draft text.

Discussing a comment submitted by SOUTH AFRICA 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 policymakers deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Delegates further discussed the timeframe of 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 including the reference “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” and MONGOLIA and SERBIA supported a more general timeframe of 2030 and beyond.

Negotiating text related to environmental changes since GEO-1, 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 and legislation, and BRAZIL’s amendment regarding robust international cooperation.

In the afternoon, the GEO-6 Assessment Co-Chair Gupta said the phrase “in some regions” is not consistent with GEO-6. BRAZIL, opposed by the EU, said this phrase should be retained, as it is consistent with the Rio+20 outcome document, which outlines that some countries would lead the charge in moving towards sustainable consumption and production. The EU suggested using language on sustainable consumption and production from the same document. ARGENTINA, ETHIOPIA and SENEGAL favored addressing impacts of unsustainable human activities.

In a paragraph 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 opposed.

GEO-6 Assessment Co-Chair, **Joyeeta Gupta**, IndiaCo-Chair **Marek Garztecki**, Poland

CANADA, supported by SWITZERLAND, EGYPT, COLOMBIA and DOMINICAN REPUBLIC suggested adding a reference to climate change mitigation and adaptation. SWITZERLAND, supported by the EU, called for action on an unprecedented scale. The EU, supported by EGYPT, opposed a US suggestion to call for “effective” rather than “ambitious” policies. The GEO-6 Assessment Co-Chairs agreed to redraft the language for this section to reflect these changes.

On linkages between the three sustainable development pillars, the Assessment Co-Chairs said they could accept BRAZIL’s proposed language on more ambitious and efficiently implemented environmental policies.

Several delegates reported that the first infographic is complex and difficult to comprehend. ETHIOPIA, supported by COTE D’IVOIRE and INDIA, supported its deletion noting that since it is not in GEO-6 it should not be retained. FRANCE and SRI LANKA supported retaining this figure saying that the supporting text on how the figure should be interpreted would be useful. SOUTH AFRICA said the graph needs to be clarified and expressed concern over the colors, which may not be perceived by some. Pierre Boileau, GEO-6 Secretariat, confirmed that integrative diagrams such as these are useful in explaining key concepts. He also explained amendments made on a footnote to clarify qualitative and quantitative confidence terms and limits used in the GEO-6.

### ***Section Two: What is Happening To Our Environment And How Have We Responded?***

On drivers of environmental change, ARGENTINA, MONGOLIA and DOMINICAN REPUBLIC suggested reference to “unsustainable” development, and the EU and NORWAY, suggested “unsustainable economic development.” SWITZERLAND and CANADA favored making mention of population growth and economic development as drivers of change, with the UK, SWITZERLAND, GUINEA and the DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO agreeing that this is a well-established statement of fact. SENEGAL, KENYA and SERBIA noted that population growth is not necessarily harmful to the environment. MONGOLIA preferred the term “population pressure.” GEO-6 Assessment Co-Chair Joyeeta 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. PALESTINE requested including natural disasters and conflicts as drivers.

ARGENTINA questioned statistics related to the growth of cities, and Gupta justified the source of the figures saying they are published by UN-Habitat. He, 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 and SOUTH AFRICA, but opposed by SWITZERLAND, NORWAY, the EU and INDIA, suggested text to highlight historical responsibility for environmental damage. GEO-6 Assessment Co-Chair Paul Ekins clarified that the reference to the economic approach is a statement of historical fact.

Discussing vulnerability of coastal cities, CANADA, supported by MALDIVES, TUVALU and SAMOA, but opposed by EGYPT, requested specific reference to Small Island Developing States’ (SIDS) vulnerability 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 the challenges of states under occupation. Several delegates requested broadening the text to include other urban settlements such as mega deltas and coastal cities, proposed by EGYPT, and mountains and river valleys by BHUTAN.

On a paragraph describing the threats posed by climate change, ITALY suggested including language referring to the fact that global warming affects the functionality of ecosystems.

SWITZERLAND offered text to streamline the paragraph on migrations. The UK and MONGOLIA called for simplified language to ensure effective communication. 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.”



Pascal Valentin Houénou, Côte d'Ivoire

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

On the state of the environment, GEO-6 Assessment Co-Chair Ekins said the Scientific Advisory Panel (SAP) has advocated for keeping figures cited in the SPM regarding air pollution since they were well established, 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 and Ekins agreed to consider that. Several countries supported changing references of “low-income countries” to “least developed and developing countries.” Ekins said the authors would reevaluate the accuracy of the statements pertaining to the specific examples used.

In a paragraph on local air pollutants, CHILE supported their language, pointing to the contribution of the energy sector to pollution. 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. A representative of the SAP confirmed that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) uses the following categorizations: developed countries, developing countries and emerging economies. CHINA supported including reference to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. NORWAY stressed that the document needs to be usable by policymakers and supported the inclusion of direct statements from the GEO-6. The DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO, GUINEA and SWITZERLAND stressed the need to ensure the SPM remains concise. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION, opposed by the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, underscored that this is not a politically negotiated text, but a science-based paper, urging broad agreement on these terms. Co-Chair Guittierez stressed that the SPM is a summary of the GEO-6, intended to bring the best science to policymakers to use in their decision-making procedures.



Scientific Advisory Panel Co-Chair **Nicholas King**, South Africa



**Cheikh Fofana**, Senegal