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**United Nations
Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment
Programme**

United Nations Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment Programme
Fourth session
Nairobi, 11–15 March 2019

**Resolution adopted by the United Nations Environment
Assembly on 15 March 2019**

**4/23. Keeping the world environment under review: enhancing the United Nations
Environment Programme science-policy interface and endorsement of the
Global Environment Outlook**

The United Nations Environment Assembly,

Mindful of the mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme, as outlined in General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972, and other relevant resolutions that reinforced its mandate, including to keep the world environmental situation under review, and recalling Governing Council decision 27/11 of 22 February 2013 on the state of the environment and the contribution of the Environment Programme to meeting substantive environmental challenges,

Recalling the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled “The future we want”,¹ in particular paragraph 88 (d), which called for the Environment Programme to “[p]romote 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”,

Recalling also paragraph 90 of the same document, which called for strengthened assessment activities and improved access to data and information, and noting 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,

Taking note of General Assembly resolution 71/313 of 6 July 2017, on the work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,² in which the Assembly established the global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, and noting that the United Nations Environment Programme is the custodian of 26 of those indicators,

¹ General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex.

² General Assembly resolution 70/1.

Recognizing the potential benefits of a scientifically sound and evidence-based detailed assessment of the state of the environment to raise awareness and inform policy formulation and decision-making in the context of sustainable development,

Recognizing also that there are gaps in our knowledge of the state of the environment resulting from a lack of current data and of information generation and dissemination,

Noting that there is a critical need for Governments to take action to bridge those gaps through building on existing mechanisms and developing capacities for monitoring the state of the environment and producing policy-relevant environmental assessments, which should be based on the use of established and comparable methods for data collection and analysis,

Recalling its resolution 1/4 of 27 June 2014 on the science-policy interface and its decision 3/1 of 6 December 2017 on the extension of the delivery date for the sixth *Global Environment Outlook* report,

1. *Welcomes with appreciation* the flagship sixth *Global Environment Outlook* report and its summary for policymakers, which was reviewed and approved by Member States from 21 to 24 January 2019;³

2. *Expresses appreciation* to the scientists, researchers, authors, peer reviewers, United Nations Environment Programme staff and all others who contributed to the compilation and publication of the sixth *Global Environment Outlook* report;

3. *Requests* the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to continue to provide information from existing and ongoing assessments to guide future policy debates at the United Nations Environment Assembly;

4. *Also requests* the Executive Director to assure the promotion of environmental monitoring and assessment by, and the primacy of a strong science-policy interface within, the United Nations Environment Programme by fostering collaboration with Member States, business and experts, the secretariats of the multilateral environmental agreements, other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, scientific panels and other key partners, such as the United Nations Statistics Division, the United Nations regional commissions and the Group on Earth Observations;

5. *Further requests* the Executive Director to further develop and prioritize a long-term data strategy within the programme of work and budget, in consultation with Governments, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, the secretariats of the multilateral environmental agreements, and international and regional scientific bodies, with particular attention to regular regional and global analysis of the state of and trends in environmental parameters as a basis for, inter alia, the future *Global Environment Outlook* process, in support of the following:

(a) The identification of comparable methods for data collection and analysis and the promotion of their harmonization, taking into account existing standards, including those of the United Nations Statistical Commission System of Environmental-Economic Accounting, in coordination with other parts of the United Nations system and other relevant scientific institutions, building on international environmental data and statistical standards;

(b) The improvement of platforms that provide a repository function, to allow open access to up-to-date, quality-assured, credible and relevant data, including geospatial data, statistics, indicators and data analysis on the environment, including the work of the Global Resource Information Database (GRID) centres;

(c) The provision of tools and policy advice for integrated approaches to support evidence-based decision-making;

(d) The acceleration of efforts to assist Member States in developing their national environmental data management capacities and their environmental monitoring systems with regard to air and water quality, deforestation, marine litter and environmental security, and their ability to use data analysis to support evidence-based decision-making;

³ The designations used and the presentation of the material in the summary for policymakers do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the United Nations Environment Programme concerning the legal status of any country, territory or city or its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. For general guidance on matters relating to the use of maps in publications, please see www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/english/htmain.htm.

- (e) The coordination of efforts with the Group on Earth Observations to fully utilize Earth observations;
- (f) The encouragement of citizen science and its potential contribution as a complementary resource to fill data gaps;
- (g) The underpinning of common country analyses with robust environmental data and statistics, in line with Sustainable Development Goal indicators, by United Nations resident coordinator offices, and the integration of national environmental data management, geospatial information management and statistical capacity into United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks;

6. *Requests* the Executive Director, in accordance with the mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme to keep the world environmental situation under review, to prioritize in the programme of work and budget the preparation of an options document on the future of the Global Environment Outlook process, in broad consultation with Member States, stakeholders and the custodians of other global environmental assessment processes, focusing on the scope and objectives of the Global Environment Outlook process. The consultations for and preparation of the options document will be overseen and managed by a steering committee, to be established under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Assembly and pursuant to the terms of reference and the nomination process set out in the annex to the present resolution. Members of the steering committee may be nominated by Member States or members of the United Nations specialized agencies and will be approved by the Committee of Permanent Representatives. The options document should address the role of the Global Environment Outlook process in regularly preparing independent analyses of the state of and trends in the global environmental situation. The scope and objectives of the Global Environment Outlook process should be informed by the United Nations Environment Programme Guidelines for Conducting Integrated Environmental Assessments. The options document is to be submitted by the steering committee to the Environment Assembly for consideration at its fifth session, to inform a decision on the future form and function of the Global Environment Outlook;

7. *Also requests* the Executive Director to prepare a proposal for science-policy input on the global environment, in consultation with Member States and making use of contributions from relevant stakeholders, in commemoration of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme, in line with the recommendation of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm from 5 to 16 June 1972;

8. *Welcomes* Governments, major groups and stakeholders, United Nations specialized agencies, funds and programmes, the secretariats of the multilateral environmental agreements, and international and regional scientific bodies, to engage in the development of the data strategy of the United Nations Environment Programme and their sharing of appropriate, credible and quality-assured data and information resources to support the environmental dimension of sustainable development assessment processes, to be accessible through an Environment Programme data platform;

9. *Reiterates its request* to the Executive Director to strengthen the policy relevance of the Global Environment Outlook process by measuring progress towards the achievement of internationally agreed environmental goals, to inform relevant global processes and meetings;

10. *Requests* the Executive Director to continue to promote greater coherence and coordination of global assessments undertaken within the United Nations system and in cooperation with relevant international bodies and the secretariats of the multilateral environmental agreements;

11. *Also requests* the Executive Director to report to the Environment Assembly at its fifth session on the implementation of the present resolution.

Annex

Terms of reference of a steering committee for the preparation of an options document on the future Global Environment Outlook process

1. A steering committee will be established to oversee and manage the preparation by the Secretariat of an options document for consideration by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fifth session. The options document will outline the key functions, scope and possible form(s) of the Global Environment Outlook process. The key roles and responsibilities of the steering committee will be:
 - (a) To oversee the consultation process;
 - (b) To ensure that the options are in line with the core mission and mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme;
 - (c) To consult broadly, taking stock of lessons learned from the evaluations of the completed sixth Global Environment Outlook process, the “environment under review” subprogramme and other relevant evaluation processes;
 - (d) To submit the options document, which will include an assessment of the impact of the various options and provide recommendations to the Environment Assembly for consideration at its fifth session.

Process for nominating members of the steering committee for the preparation of an options document on the future Global Environment Outlook process

2. The members of the steering committee may be nominated by Member States or members of United Nations specialized agencies. Nominations will be assessed and approved by the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme.
3. The nomination process aims to identify the best available expertise across a range of disciplines, with geographic and gender balance and a particular emphasis on ensuring full representation from both developing and developed country experts. Nominations should be submitted through the nominations portal on the website of the Global Environment Outlook community of practice.
4. The secretariat will open a secure portal with a template for submitting nominations and the required supporting documentation, namely a curriculum vitae and a cover letter specifying either the Member State or the member of the specialized agency making the nomination. The names, profiles and curricula vitae of all nominees will be made available on the website of the Global Environment Outlook community of practice.
5. The secretariat will only accept nominations from Member States and members of specialized agencies.
6. The deadline for the submission of nominations for the various positions on the steering committee is 30 May 2019. The secretariat may accept late nominations at the discretion of the committee.
7. The following criteria should be applied in nominating and selecting members of the steering committee:
 - (a) Significant documented professional experience in international environmental affairs or international sustainable development;
 - (b) Comprehensive understanding of environmental assessment processes and their role in informing policymakers;
 - (c) Extensive expertise in international policy agenda and assessment work;
 - (d) Previous experience with high-level intergovernmental processes in relation to environmental policy and sustainable development (preferable).