Science Division

Our Ref: UNEA/GEOSC/pb/WS3 January 4, 2022

'Future of GEO' Steering Committee Workshop Report, November 08-11, 2021

The Steering Committee on the Future of GEO met at its third virtual workshop on November 8 to 11 2021 then had two extra workshop sessions on November 15 and November 16, 2021. Agenda items included:

1. Opening of the final workshop of the Steering Committee on the future of GEO
2. Adoption of agenda
3. Agreement on the organization of work and method to be used for the workshop
4. Overview of the future of GEO process so far
5. Updating of the draft resolution text for the future of GEO
6. Discussion on the UNEA working document "Options for the Future of the Global Environment Outlook: Final report of the Future of GEO Steering Committee to UNEA 5.2"
7. Re-consideration of the draft resolution text for the future of GEO in view of the discussions on the draft UNEA 5.2 working document on the future of GEO.
8. Update on UNEA 5.2 preparations and expectations for the Future of GEO resolution
9. Discussion and approval of supplementary material and Annexes
10. Any other business

On these agenda items:

- The Secretariat expressed gratitude for the Steering Committee for its diligent and hard work throughout the UNEA-5 intersession period and assured it its support for this final milestone of its work.
- The Steering Committee reviewed the whole text of its final report to UNEA 5.2 on the Future of GEO. In doing so, the Committee collectively agreed on the whole draft and approved it as its final report for UNEA 5.2.
- The Committee considered the feasibility study of GEO and the outcome of its consultation process in its discussions and decisions during the workshop sessions.
- The Steering Committee agreed on providing the feasibility study report and the report from its consultation process as supplementary material to its official report hence as working documents for UNEA 5.2. The Committee would approve the two reports aimed to be send for UNEA as working documents on a no-objection-basis where a 48 hours period will be used by the Steering Committee to approve the material to supplement its report for UNEA through email.
- The Steering Committee received guidance from the Secretariat on the potential format of UNEA-5.2 (in-person with rotating representatives negotiating resolutions to observe COVID-19 guidelines) and decided that it would be useful to draft a resolution on the future of GEO collectively with view of a country or group of countries sponsoring it.
- The Steering Committee considered the draft resolution text that had been prepared and reviewed by the Committee prior to the workshop on the future of GEO in its broad aspects without making any major changes during the workshop session.

- The Committee agreed to hold *a friend of the Chair group* to further discuss a draft resolution on the future of GEO. Such a group would be open to and include all interested Steering Committee members and would continue its deliberations immediately after the workshop of the Steering Committee.

Rapporteur	**Signature**
Mr. Rafael Monge Vargas	RAFAEL VIRGILIO MONGE VARGAS Firmado digitalmente por RAFAEL VIRGILIO MONGE VARGAS Fecha: 2022.01.05 12:35:48 -06'00'

Summary of the workshop

The workshop was chaired by the bureau of the Steering Committee. Bureau members took turns to chair different sessions of the workshop on different days the workshop. A three-hour online session was held on each of the workshop day with the two parts of each workshop session split by a five minutes break.

Day one

Opening of the final workshop of the Steering Committee and adoption of agenda

The meeting started with opening remarks form the chair of the Steering Committee. The bureau member chairing the opening session thanked the Steering Committee members for attending the workshop and their diligence in the work on the Future of GEO. The chair on behave of the Steering Committee expressed its satisfaction with the feedback received during the broad consultation process on the Future of GEO feasibility study and reiterated that these inputs would be valuable in the Committee's deliberations and decisions during this workshop. After adopting the agenda of the workshop, the floor was handed to the Secretariat for its opening remarks. Mr. Jian Liu, Director of the Science Division at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) welcomed Steering Committee members to their final workshop. In his remarks, he thanked the Steering Committee for advancing with the work on the development of the Options Paper regardless of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the unfavorable dynamics of discussing a GEO resolution in the opening session of UNEA-5. He further thanked the co-chairs and the bureau and all the members of the Steering Committee for the hard work accomplished since the inception meeting of the committee in Prague late October 2019. Reflecting on the Committee's objectives of this final workshop, Mr. Jian Liu reminded the Committee that they are strategically placed now with the work done in the past year and the feedback from the successful consultations on the feasibility study just concluded to deliver the most effective GEO options and alternatives for the resumed session of the fifth United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5). He assured the Steering Committee of the support from the Secretariat and wished it a productive workshop highlighting that this was a very important milestone in the development of a future GEO.

Agreement on the organization of work and method to be used for the workshop, updating of the draft resolution text for the future of GEO and start of discussion and approval of the UNEA working document "Options for the Future of the Global Environment Outlook: Final report of the Future of GEO Steering Committee to UNEA 5.2"

After opening remarks from the UNEP's Science Division director: Mr Jian Liu, the Committee agreed on considering the draft resolution text and its final draft working document to UNEA on a line by line modality. It was decided that the Committee will highlight and square-bracket the disputed aspect of

the draft for further discussions in the final session of the workshop scheduled. The Committee then considered the draft resolution text in its broad aspects without making any major changes. It was agreed that that draft of the resolution will be re-considered by the Steering Committee after its full deliberation on the UNEA final document "Options for the Future of the Global Environment Outlook: Final report of the Future of GEO Steering Committee to UNEA 5.2. The Steering Committee then started discussions and edits on the draft UNEA working document and considered it in detail up to the start of Chapter 3 of the report: *Overall approaches to the design of the future GEO.* The Committee made comments and edits in its discussion of the draft and agreed to return on the schematic of alternatives, options and suggestions for the future of GEO when the options to be presented are agreed. Having exhausted the time set up for this opening session of the workshop, the Committee agreed that it will resume the second day of the workshop with continuation of discussions on its UNEA's final report.

Day two

Continuation: Discussion and approval of the UNEA working document "Options for the Future of the Global Environment Outlook: Final report of the Future of GEO Steering Committee to UNEA 5.2"

The meeting started with a recap from the bureau of the Steering Committee on the progress and agreements made by the Steering Committee on the first session of the workshop. The Committee then continued with the discussions and edits on its draft final report to UNEA and reviewed it in detail up to Section 4.2. The Committee agreed to start its following session with discussion on the Hybrid option of the proposed governance alternatives. Further, the Committee decided that it will re-consider the planning and budgeting information as presented in Table 1 of its draft report after full discussion of the governance issues. The scoping of assessments text in the same table will also be re-considered by the Steering Committee if necessary based on its discussion on the procedures. It was further agreed that a summary of the governance alternatives be made by the co-chair of the Committee to clearly illustrate the differences and similarities across the alternatives. Additionally, the Committee agreed that the alternatives will henceforth be renamed from numerical to alphabetical to avoid any confusion that may arise in relation to the assessment options. The Committee agreed that it would resume the third session of the workshop with continued discussions on the draft final report to UNEA.

Day three

Continuation: Discussion and approval of the UNEA working document "Options for the Future of the Global Environment Outlook: Final report of the Future of GEO Steering Committee to UNEA 5.2"

The third session of the Steering Committee workshop started with an update from the Secretariat on the progress made in the workshop so far. The Committee had considered half its draft final report for UNEA in the previous two sessions of the workshop. Having only two more sessions remaining on the planned workshop for the Steering Committee to consider two other important agenda items in its workshop after a detailed discussion on the working document, the Secretariat proposed a potential extra session of the Steering Committee workshop in case the Committee will be time constraint to complete its work by the fourth session planned for the workshop.

The Steering Committee then continued with its discussions and edits on the draft final report to UNEA and reviewed it in detail starting with a presentation on the table of GEO governance alternatives as agreed in the second session of the workshop. After a detailed discussion on the differences and similarities of the proposed alternatives the Committee decided that the Secretariat would clean up and share a fresh table that indicates the differences and organization on the three

proposed governance alternatives based on discussions from the Steering Committee in this session. Further, based on the discussions on the governance alternatives the Steering Committee decided that it would revise the Costing table (Table 2) to reflect the discussions on the governance alternatives.

Update on organisation of UNEA-5.2 and expected deliveries by the Steering Committee

UNEP's governance office provided a brief on the preparations of UNEA 5.2 and expectations form the Steering Committee work. In his update, Mr. Ulf Bjornholm from the Secretariat's governance affairs office updated the Steering Committee that:

- The resumed session of UNEA-5 will take place from February 28, 2022 to March 2, 2022 (3 days). This will be preceded by an Open-Ended session of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECPR) for five days scheduled to happen from February 21 to February 25, 2022.
- The plan is to have the resumed session of UNEA and the OECPR in person with rotating representatives negotiating resolutions to observe COVID-19 guidelines
- To date there are 15 draft resolutions already proposed for negotiations and decision in the upcoming UNEA 5.2. Eventually there may be more. There is need to ensure the Steering Committee is thorough in its work to ensure that UNEA negotiations on the future of GEO resolution is straightforward and time effective.
- The Steering Committee could have the resolution presented at the OECPR and ensure that the deliberations on the Future of GEO are pre-considered and discussed by member states before deliberations at UNEA sessions.
- The resolution on future of GEO should be tabled by a member states and seconded by other member states.

On this issue the Steering Committee members were encouraged to consider the draft resolution and sponsor or co-sponsor the resolution to UNEA. This will help in the negotiations of the resolution. The Committee agreed that it would resume the fourth session of the workshop with continued discussions on its draft final report to UNEA from Section 6.

Day Four

Continuation: Discussion and approval of the UNEA working document "Options for the Future of the Global Environment Outlook: Final report of the Future of GEO Steering Committee to UNEA 5.2" and Re-consideration of the draft resolution text for the future of GEO in view of the discussions on the draft UNEA 5.2 working document on the future of GEO.

The session started with an update from the Secretariat on the progress made in the workshop so far in relation to the remaining Agenda items. Although the Steering Committee has made significant progress on the discussion of the UNEA working document, two important items remain. It was agreed than an extra session of the workshop be set up on Monday 15 November 2021 to allow the Committee to finish its work.

The Steering Committee then decided to continue the consideration for its final document and then discuss the creation of a small group of 'Friends of the Chair' which would help move the draft resolution on the Future of GEO forward for eventual submission to UNEA 5.2. That agenda item was therefore removed from the workshop agenda since the small group to be created would take on this role to finalize the resolution. Steering Committee members were therefore invited to express

interest in joining this group and start its work mid of the following week. Comments on the draft resolution text from the Steering Committee were also still welcomed.

Discussion and approval of supplementary material and Annexes

The Steering Committee also agreed on removing the final item in its workshop agenda (discussion and approval of supplementary material and Annexes) and approve the supplementary material and Annexes aimed to be send for UNEA on a no-objection-basis where a 48 hours period will be used by the Steering Committee to approve the material to supplement its report for UNEA through email.

The Steering Committee then continued with the discussions and edits on the draft final report to UNEA and reviewed it in detail starting with Section 6 of the report where it had stopped in the previous session. In its discussion the Steering Committee agreed that the costing table will be further adjusted in the next version of the draft to cater for any double counting that may have occurred. The Tables in the draft will also be re-numbered to reflect the suggested edits made by the Steering Committee so far. The Committee concluded the session with discussion on Section 6.4 of the draft final report and agreed that the Secretariat would propose text to conclude that section and be considered by the Steering Committee at its extra session. Additionally, revised text will be provided for the *Added Value* element of the section. The Committee agreed that it would hold an extra session of the workshop with continued discussions on the draft final report to UNEA from Section 6.7 of the report on Monday 15 November 2021 at 2PM (EAT).

Extraordinary Session of the Steering Committee workshop.

This extraordinary session was scheduled to conclude the work of the Steering Committee from its original agenda. The session started with an update from the Secretariat on the progress made in the workshop so far in relation to the remaining Agenda items. The Steering Committee had made significant progress on the discussion of the UNEA working document and agreed to have this extraordinary session to conclude its deliberations on the working document. The Committee decided to continue with its first consideration of its working document and then re-consider other outstanding sections that it had highlighted or bracketed in the previous workshop sessions for further consideration in its second reading.

In its reconsideration of the draft, the Steering Committee re-evaluated the revised schematic on the future of GEO and made key improvements needed for it. Further, the Steering Committee decided that the Secretariat will compare the revisions made in the draft against the suggested decisions in the second round of its consideration and provide a harmonized version for the Committee. Further, the Steering Committee agreed to keep the executive summary in its final report. The Secretariat was tasked with revising the executive summary text to ensure consistency with the Committee's agreement on the draft report on key components. That revised draft would be discussed on a second extra session to be scheduled on Tuesday 16, November 2021.

To this effect, the Committee agreed to meet on a second extraordinary session of the workshop to discuss and approve the executive summary of its final report to UNEA. That second extra session was to be the final session of the Committee and planned to be short compared to its previous sessions. The session would be for 1.5 hrs. starting at 2PM (EAT).

Second Extraordinary Session of the Steering Committee workshop.

On this session the Steering Committee agreed on its final report to UNEA on the Future of GEO. The session focused on the executive summary of the final report with the Steering Committee reviewing its sections in detail.

The Committee concluded its workshop after 1.5 hrs. of deliberations and agreed that the revised draft would be shared by the Secretariat as a clean version for its approval. The Secretariat would also share other working documents to accompany the Steering Committee's report i.e. the feasibility study report and the results of the consultations, for an approval by the Committee on a no-objection basis. The Committee further agreed that a meeting to re-consider the draft resolution text on the future of GEO will be held on Wednesday 17 November 2021 at 5PM-6PM (EAT). The friends of the chair group will be open to all members of the Steering Committee to join and share inputs. The meeting ended with a vote-of-thanks from the bureau of the Steering Committee which was grateful for all the work that the whole Steering Committee had done to the conclusion of this workshop.

Conclusions

The main objectives of the final workshop of the Steering Committee were fully achieved:

- The Steering Committee discussed in detail all aspects of its final report to UNEA on the Future of GEO, edited it and approved it as its final report on the Future of GEO options as requested by the UNEA 4 resolution.
- The Committee was fully updated on the UNEA 5.2 modalities and expected role of the Steering Committee work.
- The Steering Committee strategized on how to advance with the draft resolution on the future of GEO and other supplementary material essential for informed deliberations and decision for UNEA 5.2.

Having no other business, the final workshop of the Steering Committee was adjourned at 1537hrs (EAT)

Action Items

- The Secretariat to submit the final agreed draft of the Steering Committee for editing, translation and submission to UNEA 5.2
- The Steering Committee to call for *friend of the chair group* to re-consider a draft resolution on the future of GEO
- Members of the Steering Committee to consider sponsoring the future of GEO resolution for UNEA 5.2
- The Secretariat to prepare meeting Summary for the workshop

Participants List

First name	Last name	Affiliation	Nominated by
Sebastian	Jan Konig	Swiss Federal Office for the Environment,	Switzerland
Marek	Haliniak	Ministry of the Environment, Poland	Poland
Cathy (alternate)	Maguire	European Environment Agency (EEA)	European Union
Marcos	Serrano	Ministry of Environment Chile	Chile
Mona	Westergaard	Ministry of Environment and Food	Denmark
Andrew	Stott	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs-UK	United Kingdom and Northern Ireland
Keisuke (alternate)	Takahashi	Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES)	Japan
Toral	Patel-Weynand	US Forest Service	USA
Salla	Rantala	Finnish Environment Institute	Finland
Nino	Gokhelashvili	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia	Georgia
Ivar Andreas	Baste	Norwegian Environment Agency	Norway
Rafael	Monge Vargas	Ministry of Environment and Energy	Costa Rica
Huang	Yi	Peking University	China
Anna	Mampye	Ministry of Environment	South Africa
Chatchai	Intatha	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Thailand	Thailand
Anshu	Singh	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate change, Government of India	India
Narges	Saffar	International Affairs & Conventions Center, Department of Environment	Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Marcel	Kok	Environment Assessment Agency (PBL)	The Netherlands
Kazuhiko	Takeuchi	Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES)	Japan
Isaac	Dladla	Eswatini Environment Authority	Swaziland
Jerome	Sebadduka Lugumira	National Environment Management Authority (NEMA)	Uganda
Najib	Saab	Arab Forum for Environment & Development (AFED)	Lebanon
Mery	Harutyunyan	Ministry of Environment	Armenia
Ambinintsoa Lucie	Noasilalaonomenjanahary	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development	Madagascar
Charles	Lange	National Environment Management Authority (NEMA)	Kenya
Claudia	Kabel	German Environment Agency	Germany
Keri (alternate)	Holland	US Department of State	USA

Absent

First name	Last name	Affiliation	Nominated by
Ouedraogo	Desire	Ministry of Environment, green economy and climate change	Burkina Faso
Nadia	Chenouf	Ministry of the Environment and Renewable Energy	Algeria
Christine Okae	Asare	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	Ghana
Akzan	Shiranov	Ministry of Energy	Kazakhstan
Jock	Martin	European Environment Agency (EEA)	European Union
Paul (alternate)	Lucas	Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL)	The Netherlands
Celso	Moretti	Agricultural Research Corporation	Brazil
Carlos (Alternate)	Cordero Vega	Ministry of Environment and Energy	Costa Rica
Niki (alternate)	Rust	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs-UK	United Kingdom and Northern Ireland
			Bahrain
			Saint Lucia
R S K	Doolwalage	Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment	Sri Lanka
Deepa (alternate)	Liyanage	Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment	Sri Lanka
Mira	Zovko	Ministry of Environment and Energy	Croatia
Ivana	Stojanovic	Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism	Montenegro
Nisha Xiomara	Ramsahai Chin		Trinidad and Tobago

Annex I: Final report of the Steering Committee on the Future of GEO approved by the Future of GEO Steering Committee

VERSION 1.22

Options for the Future of the Global Environment Outlook: Final report of the Future of GEO Steering Committee to UNEA 5.2

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Executive Summary

The Steering Committee is providing this final options report to UNEA to assist it in determining the future of the Global Environment Outlook (GEO). The Committee has worked over a 2-year period and consulted Member States, stakeholders and assessment experts and explored the approaches, alternatives, options and suggestions for the future of GEO as set out below and as further detailed in the supporting documentation and evidence gathered. Based on this work, the Steering Committee would like to suggest that UNEA takes into consideration the following rationale and findings which may inform the design of the future GEO process.

Rationale for the analysis of the future of GEO

a) The need to fulfil UNEP's science-policy mandate from General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) of keeping under review the world environmental situation; of promoting the contribution of the relevant international scientific and other professional communities to the acquisition, assessment and exchange of environmental knowledge and information; and on providing policy guidance and recommendations;

b) The role of credible, relevant and legitimate intergovernmental and expert-led assessments in promoting dialogues between the science and policy communities and support decision-making on environmental issues to achieve the transformation to a sustainable future as set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);

c) That the Global Environment Outlook (GEO) process, since its inception in 1995, has generated flagship reports, informed decision-making and contributed to key Governing Council and UNEA decisions and the strengthening of UNEP's science-policy interface, including by mobilising in-kind support from experts and partner institutions;

d) Its resolution 4/23 where it established a steering committee, under its auspices to oversee the consultations for and preparation of the options document on the future of the GEO process; and

e) The inputs received and prepared through the consultative process as analysed in the options document submitted by the Steering Committee for the future of the GEO.

Overall approach to the design of the GEO process

a) The objective of GEO is to keep the world environmental situation under review to periodically inform and support collective and individual action by UN Member States[1], stakeholders and other actors, while strengthening UNEP's science-policy interface;

b) The aim of the GEO process is to achieve this objective through a set of mutually supportive functions comprised of undertaking intergovernmental and expert-led assessments and providing support to intergovernmentally agreed needs and terms for capacity building, knowledge generation and policy making;

c) The design of GEO should be guided by the principal criteria set out in the options report for ensuring mandate consistency, relevance, legitimacy, credibility, accessibility, added value and overall feasibility; and

d) The key steps in the intergovernmental and expert-led GEO process set out in the options document is vital to achieving the objectives, functions and principal design criteria for GEO.

[1] Collective action refers to action under Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other environmental processes such as the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.

Alternatives for the governance and implementation structures for the GEO process

Four common governance and implementation components could be achieved through three alternative approaches (labelled A1, A2 and B), under the auspices of UNEA, each with a differing level of authority:

(a) **Open ended sessions of representatives from Member States and accredited observers of UNEA** *responsible* for advising or endorsing the process, planning, budgeting, initiation and clearance of GEO assessments and other deliverables through:
   (i) *Alternative A1 and A2 - Requesting* the Executive Director to convene ad-hoc consultative and meetings for providing advice on the GEO process (as for GEO-6); or
   (ii) *Alternative B - Establishing* an ad-hoc open-ended subsidiary body responsible for overseeing the GEO process;

(b) **An advisory or executive body** *responsible* for presiding over the open-ended sessions, for providing procedural, administrative and financial oversight and representing the GEO process and to be *composed* to ensure disciplinary, gender and geographical balance[2]. The body could be established through:
   (i) *Alternative A1 - Requesting* the Executive Director to appoint an inter-governmental and multistakeholder advisory group (25 -30 members) (as for GEO-6) or
   (ii) *Alternative A2 - Establishing* an inter-governmental and multistakeholder (accredited observers) steering group, (25 -30 members) under the auspices of UNEA (as per the Future of GEO Steering Committee)[3] or
   (iii) *Alternative B - Requesting* the subsidiary body to elect a bureau of government officials, possibly with representatives from observers, (10 -15 members)

(c) **A multidisciplinary expert body** *responsible* for presiding over expert meetings, providing scientific oversight, selecting experts, and representing the GEO process, to be composed to ensure disciplinary, gender and geographical balance[4]. The body could be established through
   (i) *Alternatives A1 and A2 - Requesting* the Executive Director to appoint a multidisciplinary advisory group (25 members) (as for GEO-6) or
   (ii) *Alternative B - Requesting* the subsidiary body to appoint a multidisciplinary expert panel (25 experts)

(d) **The implementation structure,** managed by the Secretariat, could include:
   (i) Author Teams of independent experts from all UN regions and with a proven publishing and research record, for undertaking time-bound assessment processes in accordance with the approved scope (design), including in the use of literature from all UN regions and in other UN languages.
   (ii) Task Forces to guide the development and implementation of methodologies and the undertaking of functions other than assessments, such as capacity building.
   (iii) Collaborative centres and Technical Support Units (TSU) provided by partner institutions outside UNEP to support specified time-bound author teams or expert driven tasks.

[2] Members should have: - a) ability to carry out the assigned responsibilities; - b) scientific environmental expertise in both natural and social sciences; - c) scientific, technical or policy expertise and knowledge of the main elements of the GEO's work; - d) experience in communicating, promoting and incorporating science into policy development processes; and - e) ability to both lead and work in international scientific and policy processes.
[3] could be selected from nominations by Member States or members of United Nations specialized agencies as assessed and approved by the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme.
[4] Ibid 7

Approaches for developing procedures, planning, budgeting, scoping and conducting assessments as well as supporting capacity building, knowledge generation and policy making

UNEA may wish to consider the assessment options (comprehensive, thematic and synthesis)[5] or potential hybrid options and task the governance structure of GEO to:

a) initiate a process for the establishment of a set of procedures, to be agreed by Member States, that reflects the objectives, functions, criteria and process set out above.
b) develop a rolling work plan and time-bound budget and initiate the next GEO assessment to address identified needs, priorities and emerging issues, based on inputs from Member States, stakeholders and experts
c) Identify the needs and terms for support to capacity building, knowledge generation and policy making, and to plan and budget services for addressing those needs in partnership with relevant institutions.

Administrative, collaborative and financial issues

UNEA may wish to request the Executive Director to administer the GEO process, including by*:*

a) providing adequate, predictable and stable financial resources from core funds, including the Environment Fund, by allocating sufficient human resources for its UNEP Secretariat and by fostering in-house contributions and expertise,
b) facilitating partnerships with collaborating centres and assistance from technical support units, and where appropriate
c) facilitating the mobilization of extra-budgetary resources for the process, including by establishing a dedicated trust fund.

[5] For greater clarity, these are:

- Option 1: A comprehensive global integrated environmental assessment with regional specificity every four years; or
- Option 2: Thematic assessments, as and when needed;
- Optoins 3: Syntheses of relevant global assessments

1 Purpose and structure of the options report

Following nearly two years of deliberations presented, the Future of GEO Steering Committee, established as a subsidiary body by the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) through its Resolution 4/23, is pleased to provide this final options report to UNEA to assist it in determining the future of the Global Environment Outlook (GEO).

The report is structured to highlight the rationale for a decision on the preferred options for the "Future of GEO" that UNEA may wish to consider and provide potential decision points for UNEA in four key areas related to:

a) determining the overall orientation of GEO in terms of its objectives, functions, design criteria and process;
b) establishing the governance and implementation structure for GEO;
c) requesting the relevant governance and implementation structures to develop procedures, undertake assessments and address needs in capacity building, knowledge generation and policy support; and
d) considering how best to resource and administer the GEO process to ensure its objectives can be delivered in a timely and cost-effective manner.

To assist UNEA in its decision making, the Steering Committee has provided a more detailed analysis of the options and their implications, pros and cons in this final options report. The report is supported by a detailed background paper, an interim report, a detailed feasibility study and the results of two comprehensive consultations with Member States, stakeholders and assessment experts. The main supporting evidence from these supporting documents is referenced in this final options report, where it is most relevant.

2 Rationale for a decision on the future of GEO

UNEA may, as part of the decision-making on the future of GEO, wish to be mindful of the science-policy mandate of UNEP, which is anchored in the core function assigned to the Governing Council of UNEP in 1972 of keeping under review the world environmental situation. This founding mandate also includes the function of promoting the contribution of the relevant international scientific and other professional communities to the acquisition, assessment and exchange of environmental knowledge and information and the functions related to providing policy guidance and recommendations.[6]

UNEA may also wish to recognise the role of credible, relevant and legitimate intergovernmental and expert led assessments in promoting dialogues between the science and policy communities and support decision-making on vital environmental issues to achieve the transformation to a sustainable future as set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The role of the GEO process and its series of six previous comprehensive GEO assessments is summarised in part II of the Future of GEO Steering Committee's interim report[7] to UNEA 5.1 and its

[6] The function is set out in General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII).
[7] Available at https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/34993/Doc24K2002774-2.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

accompanying background document[8]. In its first three publications GEO was an expert and partnership-based integrated assessment. The process has, since Global Environment Outlook 4, taken on the complex features of intergovernmental and expert led assessments. The analysis of the results from the consultation in 2020 annexed to the interim report showed that a continuation of the GEO process was favoured by an overwhelming majority of the Member States (114 out of 116, or 98%), assessment experts (96%) and stakeholders (94%) that responded to the consultation.

UNEA may as part of the rationale for its decisions wish to recognise that the Global Environment Outlook (GEO) process, since its inception in 1995, has generated flagship reports, informed decision-making and contributed to key Governing Council and UNEA decisions while also strengthening of UNEP's science-policy interface, including by mobilising in-kind support from experts and partner institutions. It may also wish to recognize that a large portion of Member States, stakeholders and assessment experts support the continuation of a GEO process.

In considering the findings of the current report, UNEA may wish to recall its resolution 4/23 where it established a steering committee, under its auspices, to oversee the consultations for and preparation of the options document on the future of the GEO process. It may also wish to welcome the inputs received through the consultative process.

3 Overall approaches to the design of the future GEO

After significant deliberations, both in the preparation of the interim report and the feasibility study, the Steering Committee has developed **a schematic of the overall GEO process and how the proposed alternatives, options and suggestions fit within it** (Figure 1). The schematic reaffirms that GEO is an intergovernmental and expert-led assessment process under the purview of UNEA, which is a key supporting element in UNEP's science policy interface (illustrated within the box in Figure 1). The GEO process draws from an evidence base that includes the Global Environmental Data Strategy, requested under Resolution 4/23, the World Environment Situation Room, the Global Environmental Monitoring System (GEMS), the SDG indicators and statistics work, the GLOBE and GRID networks, the UNEP-led and UN-led assessments, the body of peer reviewed scientific literature, monitoring data, global and regional modelling efforts and other knowledge systems, such as indigenous and local knowledge (ILK).

The schematic reflects the proposal that the GEO process could take place in accordance with agreed procedures which could be developed as proposed in Section 4 below. The schematic presents the components and the alternative approaches to governance, budgeting and implementation structures that are further described and analysed in Section 5.1 below.

[8] Available at https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/34954/INF18%20UNEP-%20UNEA5%20INF18.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

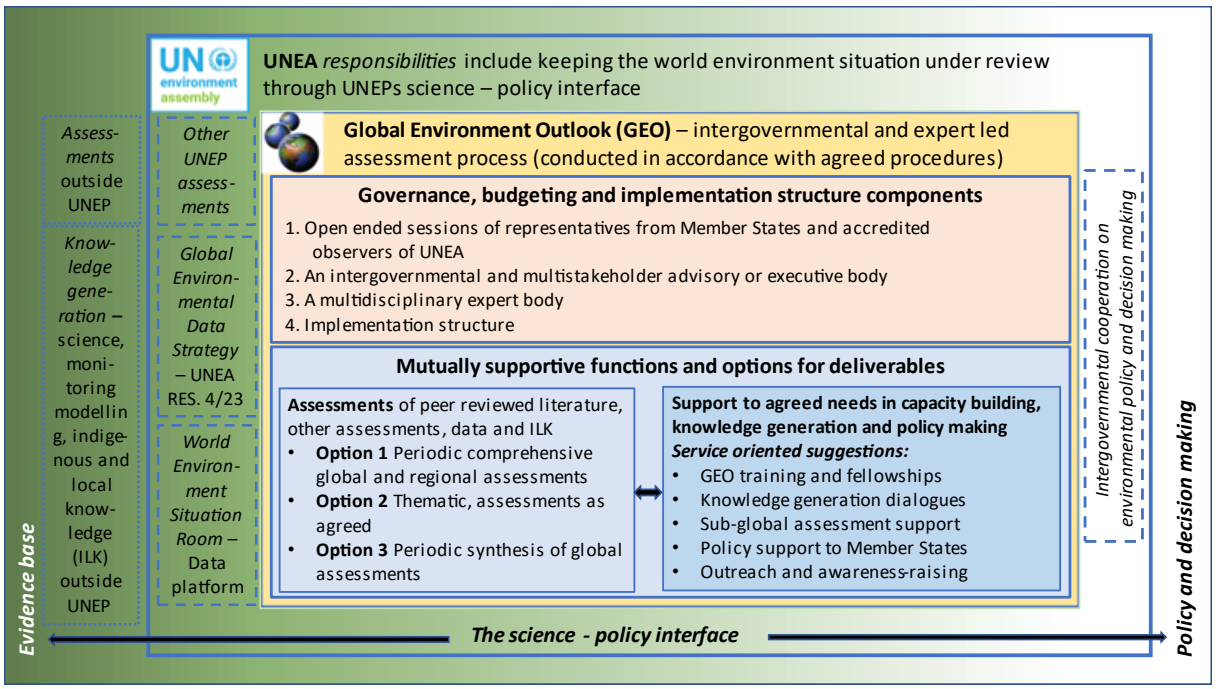


Figure 1: Schematic of alternatives, options and suggestions for the future of GEO as an intergovernmental and expert-led assessment process under the purview of UNEA situated in UNEP's science policy interface.

Finally, the schematic presents options and suggestions related to the implementation of GEO's enabling and mutually supportive functions which enhance the assessment function and UNEP's science-policy interface through the provision of support to agreed needs in capacity building, knowledge generation and policy making. A new development compared to the interim report is that the service-oriented approach (option 3 in the interim report) is no longer considered as an independent option, but is now a set of enabling and enhancing service-oriented suggestions that would support all options presented under the assessment function. It should be noted that the assessment options are not necessarily mutually exclusive either, and that they could be conducted individually or in combination (hybrids). The Steering Committee considered that this reconfigured approach better reflected the options for the future GEO assessment process. This change from the previous interim report findings is consistent with UNEP's science-policy interface and with the science-policy interfaces of other assessment processes (e.g. IPBES, IPCC). The options and suggestions are further described and analysed in section 6 below.

3.1 Future of GEO objectives and functions

Given the overwhelming support for the continuation of GEO, The Steering Committee suggests, in line with its interim report, that the GEO process should reflect the science-policy mandate of UNEP and have the following objective:

The objective of GEO is to keep the world environmental situation under review in order to periodically inform and support collective and individual action by UN Member States[9], stakeholders and other actors, while strengthening UNEP's science-policy interface.

UNEA may wish to affirm this objective and that the aim of the GEO process is to achieve it through a set of mutually supportive functions comprised of undertaking intergovernmental and expert-led assessments while providing support to intergovernmentally agreed needs and terms for capacity building, knowledge generation and policy support. In performing this function, the GEO process would thoroughly review, analyse and synthesize existing knowledge by regularly undertaking credible, legitimate and relevant assessments of science and other information, with the intention of promoting informed and effective action on the environment by Governments and other stakeholders. The results of the Future of GEO 2020 consultation process identified support for a robust status and trends analysis, cooperation with scenario- and model-development communities, strengthening of policy analysis, policy support, consolidated data-sharing, capacity-building in the science-policy interface and outreach to communicate assessment findings.

3.2 Principal criteria for the design of the future GEO

In conducting its analysis for the future of GEO the Steering Committee identified 7 principal criteria that should be met by future GEOs. These criteria were presented in part III of the interim report and set out below:

(a) Mandate consistency and comparability across editions of GEO.

(b) The relevance (or salience) of GEO in terms of responding flexibly to the needs of Member States and stakeholders, for example on improving the effectiveness of environmental policy.

(c) The legitimacy of GEO as an assessment accepted by Member States and stakeholders as authoritative, through unbiased, representative and defensible procedures that are balanced with regard to geography and gender.

(d) The credibility of GEO as a robust and rigorous assessment based on scientifically accepted methods and analysis from multiple sources.

(e) The accessibility of GEO, meaning that its outputs and the underlying knowledge base and environmental data are accessible by Member States and stakeholders to support policymaking, decision-making and strengthening of the science-policy interface.

(f) The added value of GEO, in terms of ensuring that it responds to the UNEP mandate, and that it avoids duplication with other global assessment processes, while addressing interlinkages and cross-cutting issues and identifying gaps and emerging issues.

(g) The overall feasibility of GEO, including continuity of operations for the periodic production of the report, in terms of the implications for administrative, financial and collaborative structures and other initiatives in the UNEP science-policy interface.

UNEA may wish to acknowledge that the design of GEO should be guided by the principal criteria set out above.

[9] Collective action refers to action under Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other environmental processes such as the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.

3.3 The intergovernmental and expert-led GEO process

UNEA may wish to recognise **that the key steps in the intergovernmental and expert-led GEO process are vital** to achieving the objectives, the functions and the principal design criteria set out above. These steps include:

Table 1: Key steps in the intergovernmental and expert-led GEO process

(a) Planning and budgeting. The GEO process would identify global environmental issues to be addressed on the basis of input provided by Member States and stakeholders. This would inform the development of a rolling work plan and time-bound budget considered or adopted (paragraph by paragraph), depending on the governance option chosen, by Member States for assessments and support to intergovernmentally agreed needs and terms for capacity building, knowledge generation and policy making.
(b) Scoping of assessments would be initiated by Member States based on a short pre-scoping document. The detailed scoping document would be drafted by independent experts and be adopted (endorsed paragraph by paragraph) by Member States in dialogue with experts and in the presence of regional and global stakeholder observers. The document would determine the timing, the geographic and thematic coverage, user needs, target audience, the outline, evidence base, and associated functions (capacity building, knowledge generation and policy support), the size of the author team and the detailed time-bound budget. The scoping document would serve as a basis for a decision by Member States on whether to initiate the assessment or not.
(c) The nomination and selection of experts. Geographic, disciplinary and gender balanced assessment author teams and expert task forces for other deliverables are selected through a credible process, preferably by a multidisciplinary oversight body. Experts would be selected on the basis of their merits and qualifications from nominations by Member States and relevant stakeholders.
(d) Assessments of the state of knowledge are undertaken by a gender, disciplinary and geographically balanced team of independent experts acting in their personal capacity. They undertake a collective and iterative review, synthesis, analysis, critical evaluation and judgement that are policy relevant, including confidence levels, of available knowledge from existing assessments, peer reviewed scientific literature and other relevant knowledge sources and knowledge systems. Assessment drafts are subject to review, consultation and clearance as outlined below. The Summary for Policymakers (SPM) highlights key messages and findings with confidence statements and references to the analysis in the relevant chapters of the full report.
(e) Review and consultations. The draft assessment chapters and Summary for Policymakers would normally be subject to at least one round of review by experts, governments and stakeholders. The review of the SPM may also involve review and consultations with Member States and stakeholder observers.
(f) Avoidance of conflicts of interest and treatment of errors. Measures would ensure the disclosure and avoidance of "conflict of interest" whereby: either be significantly impair the individual's objectivity in carrying out his or her duties and responsibilities within the GEO process; or create an unfair advantage for any person or organization involved in the GEO process. Measures would also ensure that possible errors in assessment reports are investigated and rectified in a timely manner.
(g) Clearance processes The Summary for Policymakers would be developed by a subset of authors of the assessment, published in their name and be *approved* by Member States in a separate session under the auspices of UNEA (endorsed line by line) in dialogue with these authors and in the presence of stakeholder observers. A full assessment report, if prepared, would typically be *accepted* by Member States (it signifies that the material has not been subjected to detailed discussion and agreement by Member States, but that it nevertheless presents a comprehensive and balanced view of the subject matter). Other deliverables such as full synthesis reports, strategies, plans, guides and tools would be cleared through *adoption* by Member States (endorsed paragraph by paragraph). UNEA may subsequently wish to endorse GEO products approved or adopted by Member States.

All key steps set out in table 1 contribute to the principal design criteria such as mandate consistency, accessibility, added value and overall feasibility of the GEO process. Steps a, b, e and g in the process in particular contribute to achieving the relevance and legitimacy of GEO, while steps c, d, e, and f are

especially vital for the credibility of GEO. The alternative governance and implementation structures presented in section 4 below are also largely a function of the process. The process, furthermore, applies to all assessment options set out in section 6 below as well as the suggested capacity building, knowledge generation and policy support functions in section 7 below. The resources needed for each of these key steps is a key factor in the costing and feasibility analysis of the assessment options and support functions presented in Section 8 below.

4 Alternative governance and implementation structures for GEO

UNEA may wish to establish a governance and implementation structure for GEO tailored to the key steps in the GEO process. In its interim report, the Steering Committee identified the alternative governance approaches set out in Sections 4.1 and 4.3 below. To respond to the outcomes of the 2021 Future of GEO consultation, an additional possible hybrid solution is described in section 4.2. A comparison of the common governance components and alternatives is presented in Table 2. All three alternatives would be governed under the auspices of UNEA, either directly or through the management of the GEO process by the Executive Director. The secretariat and implementation structure set out in 4.4 would be the same for all governance alternatives.

Table 2: Comparison of governance alternatives for the GEO process

Common components	Alternative A1	Alternative A2 (hybrid)	Alternative B
1. Open ended sessions of representatives from Member States and accredited observers of UNEA *responsible for* advising or endorsing the process, planning, budgeting, initiation and clearance of GEO assessments and other deliverables (see table 1)	Ad-hoc **consultative meetings** *convened* by the Executive Director of UNEP would provide advice (as for GEO-6)	Ad-hoc **consultative meetings** *convened* by the Executive Director would provide advice (as for GEO-6)	Ad-hoc open-ended **subsidiary body** *established* by UNEA (new)
2. An advisory or executive body *responsible* for presiding over the open-ended sessions, for providing procedural, administrative, and financial oversight and representing the GEO process. To be *composed* to ensure disciplinary, gender and geographical balance[10]	An inter-governmental and multistakeholder **advisory group** (25 -30 members) *appointed* by the Executive Director (as for GEO-6)	An inter-governmental and multistakeholder (accredited observers) **steering group**, (25 -30 members) *established* under the auspices of UNEA (as per the Future of GEO Steering Committee)[11]	A **bureau** of government officials, possibly with representatives from observers, (10 -15 members) *elected* by the subsidiary body (new)
3. A multidisciplinary expert body *responsible* for presiding over expert meetings, providing scientific oversight, selecting experts, and representing the GEO process. To be composed to ensure	A multidisciplinary **advisory group** (25 members) *appointed* by the Executive	A multidisciplinary **advisory group** (25 experts) *appointed* by the Executive director of UNEP (as for GEO-6)	A multidisciplinary **expert panel** (25 experts) *appointed* by the subsidiary body (new)

[10] Members should have: - a) ability to carry out the assigned responsibilities; - b) scientific environmental expertise in both natural and social sciences; - c) scientific, technical or policy expertise and knowledge of the main elements of the GEO's work; - d) experience in communicating, promoting and incorporating science into policy development processes; and - e) ability to both lead and work in international scientific and policy processes.

[11] [could be selected from nominations by Member States or members of United Nations specialized agencies as assessed and approved by the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme.]

disciplinary, gender and geographical balance[12]	Director of UNEP (as for GEO-6)		

4.1 Alternative A1: Intergovernmental meetings and advisory bodies convened by the Executive Director of UNEP

UNEA may wish to request the Executive Director of UNEP to continue to convene ad-hoc open-ended consultative meetings of Member States and accredited observers to UNEA and establish advisory bodies for the GEO process. The open-ended consultative meetings would be akin to those convened and constituted for the fourth, fifth and sixth instalments of GEO. The meetings would work in accordance with the UNEA rules of procedures and be responsible for the development and oversight of the implementation of the GEO procedures (if so decided) and the intergovernmental oversight of the GEO process as set out in Table 1. The Executive Director would be responsible for establishing an intergovernmental and stakeholder advisory group on managerial issues[13], and a multidisciplinary advisory panel for scientific oversight, akin to those set up for the sixth instalment[14]. Both bodies would be composed with the view of ensuring disciplinary, gender and geographical balance across the five United Nations regions.

4.2 Alternative A2 (hybrid): A steering group akin to the Future of the GEO steering committee

A variation of alternative A1 which also could serve as a hybrid between alternatives A1 and B could be to establish a steering group akin to the Future of GEO Steering Committee for providing intergovernmental oversight of the process and for presiding over open-ended consultative meetings in Alternative A1. Such a steering group would be established under the auspices of UNEA and could replace the intergovernmental and stakeholder advisory group and work alongside the multidisciplinary science advisory panel proposed in Alternative A1. The members of the steering group could be selected through a number of processes, including from nominations by Member States or members of United Nations specialized agencies as assessed and approved by the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme.

4.3 Alternative B. A standing ad-hoc open-ended subsidiary body for GEO under UNEA

Alternatively, ***UNEA may wish to establish a standing ad-hoc open-ended subsidiary body of Member States and accredited observers*** that would be responsible for overseeing the role of GEO in the UNEP science-policy interface. The body would be acting as a subsidiary decision-making body of UNEA in accordance with the UNEA rules of procedure and be responsible for developing and overseeing the implementation of GEO procedures (if so decided) and the intergovernmental oversight of the GEO process as set out in Table 1. The body would assume the functions performed by the open-ended intergovernmental consultative meetings convened for the fourth, fifth and sixth instalments of GEO as reflected in alternatives A1 and A2.

[12] Ibid 7
[13] Composed of 25 to 30 high-level government representatives from all six UNEP regions, as well as 8 to 10 key stakeholders.
[14] Composed of 25 distinguished scientists

The subsidiary body would elect its officers from each United Nations region that would constitute its Bureau. It could have representation from among key stakeholders if so decided. The subsidiary body would also establish a multidisciplinary expert panel that could consist of a limited number of independent experts from each UN region tasked with providing scientific oversight. The membership of the Bureau and the panel would be selected with the view to ensure disciplinary, gender and geographic balance across the five United Nations regions. The Bureau and the expert panel would work together to provide oversight of the implementation of the GEO process set out in Table 1, in accordance with agreed procedures (if established). The Bureau and the expert panel would undertake roles similar to the ones of the high-level intergovernmental and stakeholder advisory group and the science advisory panel of the sixth GEO.

4.4 The Secretariat and implementation structures

Both alternatives and their hybrid would be supported by a ***Secretariat***. UNEP's Executive Director would provide the Secretariat for future GEO processes as part of UNEP's science-policy interface. The Secretariat would provide the technical support needed for the chosen governance and implementation structure that would be set out in the GEO procedures (if developed), including supporting the evidence base[15], day to day management and administration of processes, budgets and funds needed for the implementation of the GEO process and procedures.

The chosen governance and implementation alternative could, in addition, make use of all or some of the following implementation structures (whose financial and administrative implications are considered in section 6 below):

a) *Author Teams* of independent experts from all UN regions and with a proven publishing and research record, for undertaking time-bound assessment processes in accordance with the approved scope (design) , including in the use of literature from all UN regions and in other UN languages. Teams will normally consist of one or more co-chairs, a number of coordinating lead authors, lead authors, and contributing authors, review editors and reviewers.

b) *Task Forces* to guide the development and implementation of methodologies and the undertaking of functions other than assessments, such as capacity building.

c) *Collaborative centres and Technical Support Units (TSU)* provided by partner institutions outside UNEP to support specified time-bound author teams or expert driven tasks. Collaborative centres would normally be commissioned and funded by the UNEP Secretariat, while TSUs would normally be supported financially by Member States but work under supervision of UNEP Secretariat. TSUs would provide in-kind support to the assessment process, including support for identifying peer reviewed literature in other UN languages, but could also receive agreed financial support from other sources.

4.5 Implications, pros and cons

The governance alternatives and implementation structures would be key to implementing the procedures and achieving the criteria set out in section 3.2 above. Alternative B, and to a somewhat

[15] Which includes peer-reviewed literature, national peer-reviewed assessments, UNEP-led and UN-led assessments, the World Environment Situation Room, and elements of knowledge generation within and outside of UNEP, including the Global Environmental Monitoring System (GEMS), the SDG indicators and statistics work, as well as key partnerships with the GLOBE and GRID networks, being embedded in UNEP's Global Environmental Data Strategy.

lesser extent the possible hybrid solution in alternative A2, may, as a subsidiary body of UNEA, have a higher standing than a consultative meeting and advisory bodies established by the UNEP Executive Director, and therefore better fulfil criterion (c) on legitimacy. Alternative B may, as a standing body, offer more continuity than Alternative A1 and therefore better meet criterion a) on mandate consistency and comparability.

The two alternative approaches (A1 and B) and the hybrid (A2) all involve the use of intergovernmental and stakeholder meetings in combination with expert meetings, and therefore would be quite similar in terms of financial consequences. Costs would mainly include supporting meeting preparations. The costs of the operation of both approaches would depend on the size and frequency of meetings and the financial and administrative consequences of options related to the scope, utility and timing of assessments (considered below in section 6). Member States and partners may also opt to host meetings and contribute to reducing overall costs. The annual cost estimate for the common governance components for all alternatives is 0.27 million USD for intergovernmental oversight and scientific oversight (see Table 3).

5 Establishment of agreed GEO procedures

The Steering Committee noted in its interim report that ***UNEA may wish to initiate a process for the establishment of a set of procedures, agreed by Member States,*** based on experience from past GEO processes and other relevant processes. The GEO-6 process was for instance, guided by documents prepared by the secretariat on scientific credibility and by the Scientific Advisory Panel on drafting processes and the use of confidence statements. The development of agreed GEO procedures was generally favoured in the 2020 consultation. The Steering Committee has conducted initial work on a set of procedures as a resource for its analysis. This work reflects the proposed objectives, mutually supportive functions, principal design criteria and the intergovernmental and expert-led process outlined in section 3 above. The work is based on current GEO practices as well elements from the agreed procedures in IPCC and IPBES. This is in anticipation of future cooperation with other such assessment processes.

These procedures could primarily reflect GEO's objectives, functions, principles, structures and the intergovernmental aspects of the planning, scoping, review and clearance processes. Such a set of agreed procedures could be complemented by technical guidelines, in line with the approach in previous GEOs. The guidelines could cover aspects such as nomination and selection of experts, preparation of material, assessment of confidence and how to address possible errors and conflicts of interest.

The procedures would need to be agreed by representatives of Member States with expertise in these matters, through a process possibly involving reviews and the consideration by intergovernmental meetings dedicated to the task. The procedures would have to be tailored to the directions set out by UNEA on the overall approach, governance and implementation structures, assessment options and other approaches for GEO. The existing draft compilation by the Steering Committee could be used as a resource for a tailored input to such a procedures development process.

5.1 Implications, pros and cons

The financial, administrative and collaborative consequences of the preparation of draft procedures for consideration by member states are considered moderate, given that initial work has happened which builds on existing intergovernmental practices and agreed language. However, there would be costs associated with a review and associated intergovernmental meetings of member state experts for the consideration of the procedures. As such, ***UNEA may wish to task the governance and implementation structure of a future GEO with the further development of these procedures***. Such considerations could be undertaken alongside other tasks and could therefore be incorporated into costs associated with the governance and implementation structure (see section 4.5 above). Member states may need two meetings to reach agreement on the GEO procedures. Member States may in the interim decide that the GEO process be guided by preliminary work on the procedures already developed by the Steering Committee.

6 Assessment options

The results of the broad consultation process in 2020, presented in the interim report, found a broad range of issues which could typically be included within the scope of GEO assessments, including:

a) analysis of environmental status and trends, including projected environmental changes;
b) progress towards internationally agreed environmental goals and targets
c) current and projected risks to human well-being from environmental change;
d) impact of environmental change on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals
e) interlinkages across scales and geographic regions;
f) policy gaps in meeting internationally agreed environmental goals;
g) the effectiveness of policy responses in differing developmental contexts;
h) potentially successful policy approaches, with examples of how scarce resources can be mobilized; and
i) actions and policy options needed in the transformation to a sustainable future.

More specifically, the GEO assessments, as UNEP's flagship report, should provide input to UNEA resolutions and decisions such as on UNEP's Medium-term Strategy, as well as the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) as well as resolutions and decisions of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEA), relevant regional bodies and individual Member States. The assessments could analyse and integrate evidence from existing science, data and knowledge, and findings from other relevant assessments, including information from other knowledge systems such as indigenous and local knowledge, needed to address the environmental issues of concern.

The assessments would follow the process described in Table 1 on scoping, nomination and selection of authors, preparation and review of assessment drafts and clearance of the Summary for Policymakers.

The estimated costs for the three assessment options are summarised in Table 3, where they are combined with the anticipated costs for governance and implementation as well as any supportive functions that may be requested. It should be noted that the precise costs would be dependent on the planning and scoping of each assessment.

6.1 Option 1. Comprehensive global integrated environmental assessments, with regional specificities, every four years

The Comprehensive global GEO assessment with regional specificities option is characterised as follows:

(a) **Scope:** The scope could in principle address the broad range of issues presented above as pertaining to all assessment options and be undertaken every four years. The global and regional dimensions would be addressed as agreed in the planning and scoping stage of the GEO process either as:
   (i) A global assessment where the regional aspects are integrated in the analysis.
   (ii) A global assessment where the regions are assessed in separate chapters or sections as has happened in the past GEO's.
   (iii) A staggered approach of separate comprehensive regional assessments followed by a comprehensive global assessment, as in GEO-6.

(b) ***Evidence base***: existing assessments, scientific literature, grey literature, data, models and scenarios, national reports, and other knowledge systems, such as indigenous and local knowledge that are relevant to the agreed scope.

6.2 Option 2. Thematic assessments, as and when needed

The thematic GEO assessment option is characterised as follows:

(a) **Scope:** The scope could in principle address thematic environmental issues, communicate the science of GEO to specific actors (e.g. youth, cities, business) or improve guidance on methodological aspects of the broad range of issues presented above as pertaining to all assessment options. It would address issues not covered by existing intergovernmental assessments. For example, an assessment of the environmental impact of COVID-19 or new emerging issues which may need consideration. Regional aspects would normally be integrated in the global analysis. A thematic assessment may typically take two years to produce.

(b) ***Evidence base***: existing assessments, scientific literature, grey literature, data, models and scenarios, national reports, and other knowledge systems, such as indigenous and local knowledge that are relevant to the agreed scope.

6.3 Option 3. Syntheses of global assessments

The option where GEO periodically synthesizes the findings of relevant assessments is characterised as follows:

(a) **Scope:** The scope could in principle address the broad range of issues identified above as pertaining to all assessment options but in practice be determined by the scope of existing relevant assessments and their interlinkages, and could be supplemented by additional analysis, working with the other assessment bodies as needed. Regional aspects would normally be integrated into the global analysis. A synthesis may typically take two years.

(b) ***Evidence base***: primarily use of existing assessments with limited use of additional high impact scientific literature to update or complement the analysis as relevant to the agreed scope.

6.4 Implications, pros and cons

A comparison of options is presented in Table 3. All options would follow a process which is key to ensuring that the assessments are relevant, legitimate, and credible (criteria b, c and d) as explained in

section 3.2. The options meet the other principal criteria for the design of the future GEO in the following manner:

Mandate consistency: All options would be consistent with the mandate of UNEA though they would differ in the coverage and scope of their analysis of environmental issues. The scope and process of option 1 (comprehensive) would be similar to earlier comprehensive GEO assessments, and this would ensure comparability across editions of GEO. Option 2 (thematic) would be similar to previous GEO thematic processes (e.g. the Gender GEO) but with a full Summary for Policymakers. A number of thematic assessments have been produced under the GEO banner but none of them has been an intergovernmental and expert-led assessment. Option 2 (thematic), due to a limited coverage, and option 3 (synthesis), due to dependence on available assessments, may address the UNEA mandate somewhat less comprehensively and make GEO less comparable with previous instalments. However, assessments under option 2 (thematic) and option 3 (synthesis) could be planned to complement each other in support of the UNEA mandate. In addition, the synthesis approach in option 3 could be scoped to include information beyond existing assessments.

The added value of GEO: All options would follow a process which ensures that GEO responds to the UNEP mandate, and that it avoids duplication with other global assessment processes, while addressing interlinkages and cross-cutting issues and identifying gaps. Option 1 (comprehensive) would be well placed to address the interlinkages across environmental issues. It would draw on findings of other assessments for its content and avoid duplication through careful scoping, implementation, use of authors familiar with other assessments as well as interaction and communication with other assessment processes. Option 2 (thematic), in focusing on gap filling and emerging issues, would be well placed to complement the broader body of existing assessments. Option 3 (synthesis) would amplify the findings of other assessments and add value by addressing their interlinkages and presenting them in a broader context, supported by high-impact peer reviewed literature as agreed.

The accessibility of GEO: All options would help ensure that GEO outputs and the underlying knowledge base and environmental data are accessible by Member States and stakeholders, though, depending on the scoping, option 1 (comprehensive) might address accessibility by providing comprehensive information, while options 2 (thematic) and 3 (synthesis) would do so by being more focused and targeted. The scoping process for the assessment and the clearance process for the Summary for Policymakers under all options help enhance accessibility of assessment findings and support policy making, decision making and the science-policy interface. Assessment findings and the underlying knowledge base and environmental data can, under all options, be made available on UNEPs World Environment Situation Room and other similar platforms and be complemented by dynamic infographics and accessible near real-time data updates and horizon scanning analysis.

The overall feasibility of GEO: All options would ensure the continuity of operations for the periodic production of the GEO report, as well as for the administrative, financial and collaborative structures and other initiatives in the UNEP science-policy interface. Option 3 (synthesis) and to some extent option 2 (thematic) would imply a leaner process and downscaled operation compared to option 1 (comprehensive) and consequently be less expensive than option 1 (see table 3). Their contribution to the continuity of operations for the periodic production of the report would be contingent on planning. The cost differences across the options would vary according to the agreed scope and planned frequency of assessments.

Table 3 Costing and comparison of the three assessment options

OPTION AND PREPARATION TIME	ANNUAL ASSESSMENT PREPARATION COST (USD)	ANNUAL GOVERNANCE COSTS (USD)	ANNUAL COSTS FOR CAPACITY BUILDING, KNOWLEDGE GENERATION AND POLICY SUPPORT (USD)	TOTAL ANNUAL COST (USD)	TOTAL COST, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT DURATION (USD)
1) Comprehensive global and regional integrated environmental assessment with regional specificities (3 year process)	2.68 million *	135,000 for (intergovernmental meetings + 137,200 (expert oversight)	0.9 million	3.85 million	11.55 million
2) Thematic assessments (as and when needed (2 year process)	2.57 million **	135,000 for intergovernmental meetings + 137,200 (expert oversight)	0.9 million	3,74 million	7.48 million
3) Synthesis of global assessments (2 year process)	2.18 million ***	135,000 for intergovernmental meetings + 137,200 (expert oversight)	0.9 million	3.35 million	6.7 million

Table notes: * Based on a scenario similar to GEO-6. Cost elements include: 1 expert scoping meeting and 4 author meetings, stipends, partnership agreements, software licenses, communications, digital platform, document production, layout and translation. Total cost is USD 8.05 million.

** Based on a scenario of COVID-19 thematic assessment. Cost elements include: 1 expert scoping meeting, 3 author meetings stipends, partnership agreements, software licenses, communications, digital platform, document production, layout and translation. Total cost is USD 5.14 million.

***Based on a scenario of the Making Peace with Nature Report. Cost elements include: 1 expert scoping meeting, 2 author meetings stipends, partnership agreements, software licenses, communications, digital platform, document production, layout and translation. Total cost is USD 3.26 million.

All amounts are approximations based on past GEO processes, governance models and capacity building efforts.

All assessment options could be combined with the other options, as hybrids and as assessments which complement each other.

UNEA may therefore wish to consider the above assessment options or potential hybrid options and task the governance structure of GEO to develop a rolling work plan and time-bound budget and initiate the next GEO assessment to address identified needs, priorities and emerging issues, based on inputs from Member States, stakeholders and experts. Such a plan would also be instrumental in identifying and addressing the need for supporting functions as identified below. The provision of such supporting functions in capacity building, knowledge generation and policy-making is key to meeting the broader science-policy needs of Member States and for the design of the intergovernmental and expert-led GEO assessment process while strengthening the foundation for GEO over the longer term.

7 Capacity building, knowledge generation and policy support functions

The analysis conducted by the Steering Committee and the broad consultations identified that GEO, in addition to its assessment function, would also encompass enabling and mutually supportive functions, namely, support to agreed needs in capacity building, knowledge generation and policy-making. A key function of the GEO process is to facilitate the identification of Member States needs and agree on how

they could be best supported through GEO itself or through other processes within or outside UNEP. The exact needs may depend on the assessment option or combination of assessment options chosen by UNEA.

UNEA may wish to request the chosen governance and implementation structure to identify the needs and terms for capacity building, knowledge generation and policy support functions and to plan and budget activities for addressing those needs in partnership with relevant institutions. Consequently GEO would build on the experience from past GEO processes and other initiatives to initiate the development of an approach for identifying the needs as well as a service oriented approach for addressing those needs in accordance with the GEO process elements set out in Table 1. Suggestions for such an approach include the following activities:

a) Integrating capacity building in the GEO process through fellowships, training, exchanges, dialogues and consultations.
b) Working with partners to address capacity building and support needs in the science-policy interface outside the GEO process, including through supporting sub-global assessments.
c) Undertaking dialogues with research, modelling, scenario and data communities to address knowledge generation needs identified in the GEO processes.
d) Working with indigenous and local communities on the generation and use of Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK).
e) Identifying tools and approaches for using GEO findings in support of policymaking as requested by Member States and stakeholders.
f) Conducting outreach and awareness-raising (incl. supporting products).

It is estimated that the annual cost of a range of such activities could be 0.9 million USD, as detailed in the feasibility study (see analysis in feasibility study, INF doc XX):

This approach to providing these support functions would add value to and not duplicate other initiatives and would be coordinated closely with them. The GEO process would support – and collaborate with – other global environmental assessments, likely through the Adhoc Global Assessments Dialogue, in developing shared tools and data platforms, including conceptual frameworks, scenarios and integrated models, to promote synergies across assessments and to support capacity-building.

7.1 Implications, pros and cons

The provision of the above support functions is key to meeting the criteria, in particular on mandate consistency, added value and overall feasibility of GEO (criteria a, f and g). Capacity building in the assessment process is essential for ensuring that the assessments are legitimate, relevant, credible and accessible (criteria b, c, d and e). Capacity-building to meet agreed needs for enhancing the science-policy interface more generally also helps strengthen the foundation for the GEO process, as do dialogues on knowledge generation, which are also critical for the long-term relevance and credibility of assessments (criteria b, and d). Outreach, awareness-raising and provision of agreed policy support are key to enhancing the impact of the GEO process by supporting the relevance and accessibility of the assessments (criteria b and e).

8 Administrative, collaborative, and financial issues

Typically, the largest cost elements for producing intergovernmental and expert-led assessments are:

a) salaries for Secretariat staff;
b) disbursements to cover intergovernmental and expert meetings; and
c) costs for substantive and expert support during the assessment process.

A summary of estimated costs associated with governance and implementation of the intergovernmental and expert-led GEO assessment process is available in the feasibility study presented in information document XX for ease of comparison. For these costs, UNEP is able to provide USD 1 million to USD 1.2 million per year from core funding[16] to support the GEO Secretariat[17,18]. However, the analysis conducted by the Steering Committee in its feasibility study identified the annual resource mobilization needs, over and above core funding, to be in the range of an additional USD 2.3 to 2.9 million per year. These amounts will be dependent on decisions on the rolling work plan.

UNEA may wish to request the Executive Director to administer the GEO process, including by providing adequate, predictable and stable financial resources from core funds, including the Environment Fund, by allocating sufficient human resources for its UNEP Secretariat and by fostering in-house contributions and expertise, by facilitating partnerships with collaborating centres and assistance from technical support units, and where appropriate by facilitating the mobilization of extra-budgetary resources for the process, including by establishing a dedicated trust fund to support the implementation of the GEO process in accordance with a time-bound budget agreed by Member States.

It should be noted that the above investments typically result in the following immediate types of administrative benefits and returns:

a) Investments in expert processes such as GEO generate pro-bono in-kind contributions from about up to 1000 experts, government representatives and potentially also from partner institutions contributing directly to the assessment process. These in-kind contributions have been estimated to be in the same order of magnitude as the direct costs of the assessment process, providing an immediate return on the initial investments.

b) Investments in ensuring credibility, relevance and legitimacy, including visibility, in the GEO processes enhances dialogues between science and policy communities on issues vital for the substantive and political role UNEA is playing as the authoritative voice for the world's environment. This return is critical for UNEAs standing in the international environmental governance architecture.

c) Investments in policy relevant assessment products and processes promote knowledge generation and support actions for the transition to a sustainable future. Such a transition is critically dependent on enhanced knowledge and understanding of how society can restore and respect Earth's finite capacity to support human well-being.

[16] Core funding includes Regular Budget, Environment Fund and predictable extrabudgetary resources
[17] This includes salaries for extrabudgetary staff and other reporting costs.
[18] In addition, salaries for regular UNEP staff, are funded from Regular Budget and Environment Fund.

8.1 Implications, pros and cons

Planning, budgeting and scoping is key to predictability of funding, to the stability of the process, ensuring cost savings, for maintaining the GEO community and for ensuring the above returns. The establishment of a time-bound budget and work plan agreed by Member States, through the governance and implementation structure, and a dedicated trust fund for GEO would allow the collection of voluntary contributions from a wide range of donors, thereby providing stability and predictability of funding before each assessment process starts. This would allow the assessment process to be clearly planned out in advance, resulting in reduced travel and meetings costs while dates for the delivery of the assessment could be clearly planned and supported by sufficient communications and outreach efforts.

Annex II: Final version of the feasibility study approved by the Future of GEO Steering Committee

Feasibility study on the financial, administrative and collaborative consequences of the recommended options and approaches for the Future of GEO

Table of Contents

Overview and context

The United Nations Environment Assembly initiated, in its Resolution 4/23[19], an intergovernmental consultative process to propose options for the future of the Global Environment Outlook (GEO). An options document which includes an assessment of the impact of the various options and recommendations, is to be submitted to the Environment Assembly for consideration at its resumed fifth session (UNEA 5.2) in 2022 to inform a decision on the future form and function of GEO.

The United Nations Environment Programme mandate and the place of GEO in the science-policy interface is summarised in part II of the Future of GEO Steering Committees interim report[20] to UNEA 5.1 and its accompanying background document[21]. The analysis of the results from the consultation in 2020 annexed to the interim report showed that **the continuation of the GEO process was favoured by an overwhelming majority of Member States (114 out of 116 responses, or 98%), assessment experts (96%) and stakeholders (94%).**

This feasibility study builds on and complements the interim report and accompanying background document. It will serve as an input to the final report on options and approaches for the future of GEO by the Steering Committee to UNEA 5.2.

The study is structured as follows. Firstly, it provides an overall approach to and criteria for the design of the future GEO within UNEP's mandate. The identification of options and recommendations has been informed by 7 key criteria presented in part III of the interim report and set out in section 2.3 below. This is followed by considerations on the need for procedures agreed by Member States for the intergovernmental expert led GEO assessment process (section 2). Next, the approach for assessing the financial, administrative and collaborative functions of future GEOs is set out (section 3) and applied to the governance and implementation structure alternatives proposed by the Steering Committee (section 4). This is followed by an assessment of the financial and administrative consequences of the three different assessment options and the capacity-building, knowledge generation and policy-making support services (section 5). Finally, the feasibility study briefly explores any synergies, pros and cons associated with the different options and alternatives (section 6).

Overall approaches to the design of the future GEO as proposed by the Steering Committee

Keeping the world environmental situation under review is a key mandate for UNEP. Doing this effectively and efficiently in today's context requires a well-defined approach and process supported by a well-designed governance and implementation structure. Such an approach needs to be based on a clear objective. The Steering Committee suggested the following o**bjective for the GEO process** in its interim report (with minor edits):

The objective of GEO is to keep the world environmental situation and outlook under review in order to periodically inform and support action by UN Member States, stakeholders and other actors, while strengthening UNEP's science-policy interface.

[19] Available at http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/28486/K1901170.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y
[20] Available at https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/34993/Doc24K2002774-2.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
[21] Available at https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/34954/INF18%20UNEP-%20UNEA5%20INF18.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

After significant deliberations, both in the preparation of the interim report and this feasibility study, the Steering Committee has developed **a schematic of the overall GEO process and how the proposed alternatives, options and suggestions fit within it** (Figure 1). The schematic presents the GEO as an intergovernmental and expert-led assessment process under the purview of UNEA situated in UNEPs science policy interface. The GEO process draws from an evidence base that includes the following elements:

a) The Global Environmental Data Strategy requested under Resolution 4/23, which is still in development, but which is expected to have a significant supporting function for assessments.
b) The World Environment Situation Room, which has been a key supporting element for assessment processes in the past but is expected to expand and deepen its support for assessments in the future.
c) Elements of knowledge generation within and outside UNEP, including the Global Environmental Monitoring System (GEMS), the SDG indicators and statistics work, as well as key partnerships with the GLOBE and GRID networks.
d) The collection of UNEP-led and UN-led assessments that collate, analyse and assess specific environmental issues, such as climate change (IPCC), biodiversity (IPBES), resource extraction and use (IRP) and chemicals and waste management.
e) The body of peer reviewed literature on the environment which helps fill gaps and provide the latest scientific understanding on many of these issues.

The schematic reflects the proposal that the GEO process takes place in accordance with agreed procedures as further detailed and analysed in section 2.2 below. The schematic presents two alternative approaches to governance, budgeting and implementation structures that are further described and analysed in section 4.1 below.

Finally, the schematic presents options and suggestions related to the implementation of GEOs mutually supportive functions which comprise the assessment function and the provision of support to agreed needs in capacity building, knowledge generation and policy making. A new development compared to the interim report is that the service-oriented approach (Option 3 in the interim report) is no longer considered as an independent option, but as a set of enabling and enhancing service-oriented suggestions that would go along with all options under the assessment function. It should be noted that the assessment options are not necessarily mutually exclusive either, and that they could be conducted individually or in combination. The Steering Committee considered that this reconfigured approach better reflected the current and envisaged future practices in the GEO assessment process. This change from the previous interim report findings is consistent with UNEP's science-policy interface and with the science-policy interfaces of other assessment processes (e.g. IPBES, IPCC). The options and suggestions are further described and analysed in section 5 below.

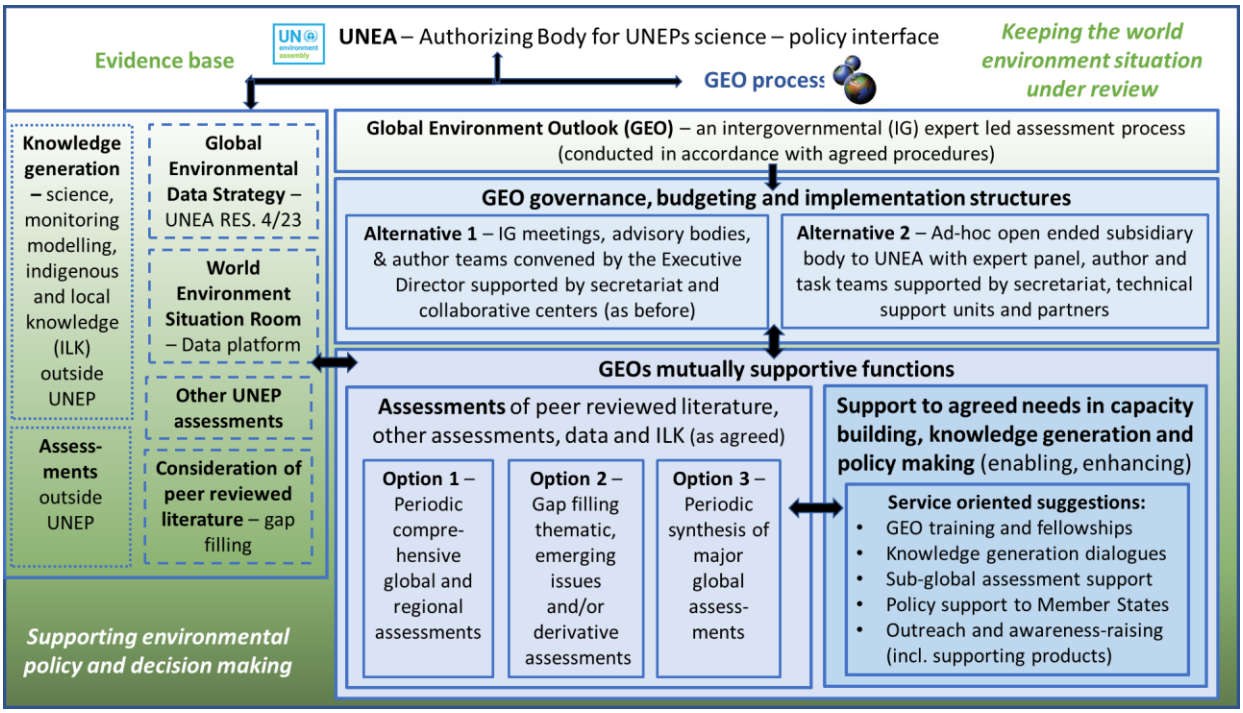


Figure 1: Schematic of alternatives, options and suggestions for the future of GEO as an intergovernmental and expert-led assessment process under the purview of UNEA situated in the science policy interface.

Criteria for analysing the design of the future GEO

The identification of options and recommendations has been informed by 7 key criteria presented in part III of the interim report and set out below:

(h) Mandate consistency and comparability across editions of GEO.

(i) The relevance (or salience) of GEO in terms of responding flexibly to the needs of Member States and stakeholders, for example on improving the effectiveness of environmental policy.

(j) The legitimacy of GEO as an assessment accepted by Member States and stakeholders as authoritative, through unbiased, representative and defensible procedures that are balanced with regard to geography and gender.

(k) The credibility of GEO as a robust and rigorous assessment based on scientifically accepted methods and analysis from multiple sources.

(l) The accessibility of GEO, meaning that its outputs and the underlying knowledge base and environmental data are accessible by Member States and stakeholders to support policymaking, decision-making and strengthening of the science-policy interface.

(m) The added value of GEO, in terms of ensuring that it responds to the UNEP mandate, and that it avoids duplication with other global assessment processes, while addressing interlinkages and cross-cutting issues and identifying gaps and emerging issues.

(n) The overall feasibility of GEO, including continuity of operations for the periodic production of the report, in terms of the implications for administrative, financial and collaborative structures and other initiatives in the UNEP science-policy interface.

Development of procedures agreed by Member States for the intergovernmental and expert led GEO assessment process

The Steering Committee noted in its interim report that the United Nations Environment Assembly is responsible for overall oversight and governance of the GEO process and can establish the procedures and subsidiary governance and implementation structures that it deems necessary. As part of the GEO process, UNEA may wish to establish a flexible set of procedures, agreed upon by Member States, based on experience from past GEO processes and other relevant processes. The development of such procedures was generally favoured in the 2020 consultation.

The objectives of such a set of procedures would be to ensure relevance, legitimacy and credibility in the GEO process and to balance its different mutually supportive functions, taking full advantage of the opportunities of digital meetings, work platforms and technologies.

The procedures would be tailored to the governance and implementation structure and the options and approaches for GEO chosen by UNEA. The elements of the GEO process to be considered in the procedures are set out in Table 1 but may vary somewhat depending on the approach chosen by UNEA.

Table 1: Key steps in the intergovernmental expert led GEO assessment process

(a) **Planning and budgeting.** The GEO process would identify and prioritize global environmental issues of concern to be addressed on the basis of input provided by Member States and stakeholders. This would inform the development of a rolling work plan and budget adopted (endorsed paragraph by paragraph) by Member States for assessments and support to agreed needs in capacity building, knowledge generation and policy making.
(b) **Scoping of assessments** would be initiated by Member States based on a short pre-scoping document. The detailed scoping document would be drafted by independent experts and be adopted (endorsed paragraph by paragraph) by Member States in dialogue with experts and in the presence of stakeholder observers. The document would determine the timing, the geographic and thematic coverage, user needs, target audience, the outline, evidence base, and associated functions (capacity building, knowledge generation and policy support), the size of the author team and the detailed budget. The scoping document would serve as a basis for a decision by Member States on whether to initiate the assessment or not.
(c) **The nomination and selection of experts.** Geographic, disciplinary and gender balanced assessment author teams and expert task forces for other deliverables are selected through a credible process, preferably by a scientific oversight body. Experts would be selected on the basis of their merits from within nominations from Member States and relevant stakeholders.
(d) **Assessments of the state of knowledge** are undertaken by a gender, disciplinary and geographically balanced team of independent experts acting in their personal capacity. They undertake a collective and iterative review, synthesis, analysis, critical evaluation and judgement of policy relevance and confidence levels of available knowledge from peer reviewed scientific literature and other relevant knowledge sources and knowledge systems. Assessment drafts are subject to review, consultation and clearance as outlined below. They are published as scientifically referenced chapters of the full reports under the name of the authors. They consist of several chapters, which present the state of knowledge accompanied by confidence level statements and a Summary for Policymakers (SPM). The SPM highlights key messages and findings with confidence statements and references to the analysis in the relevant chapters of the full report.
(e) **Review and consultations.** The draft assessment chapters would normally be subject to two rounds of expert peer review and the Summary for Policymakers (SPM) subject to one such round. Both documents

would be subject to one round of review by governments and stakeholders. The review of the SPM may also involve consultations with Member States and stakeholder observers.
(f) **Avoidance of conflicts of interest and treatment of errors**. Measures would ensure the disclosure and avoidance of "conflict of interest" whereby an individual could: either significantly impair the individual's objectivity in carrying out his or her duties and responsibilities for the GEO; or create an unfair advantage for any person or organization. Measures would also ensure that possible errors in assessment reports are investigated and rectified in a timely manner.
(g) **Clearance processes** The Summary for Policymakers would be developed by a subset of authors of the assessment, published in their name and be *approved* by Member States (endorsed line by line) in dialogue with these authors and in the presence of stakeholder observers. The full assessment report would be *accepted* by Member States (it signifies that the material has not been subjected to detailed discussion and agreement by Member States, but that it nevertheless presents a comprehensive and balanced view of the subject matter). Other deliverables such as full synthesis reports, strategies, plans, guides and tools would be cleared through *adoption* by Member States (endorsed paragraph by paragraph).

The recommended key steps of the GEO process in Table 1 are contingent upon the establishment of agreed unbiased, representative and defensible procedures that are balanced with regard to geography and gender. The steps are key to meeting the criteria for the design of the future GEO in the following manner:

a) Mandate consistency: the steps in the process would be similar to earlier comprehensive GEO assessments ensuring consistency and comparability across editions of GEO and be fully consistent with the mandate of UNEA.

b) The relevance (or salience) of GEO: the planning and budgeting, the scoping, the review and the clearance steps would ensure the relevance (or salience) of GEO in terms of responding flexibly to the needs of Member States and stakeholders, for example on improving the effectiveness of environmental policy.

c) The legitimacy of GEO: the planning and budgeting, the scoping, the review and the clearance steps would ensure that the GEO assessment is accepted by Member States and stakeholders as authoritative.

d) The credibility of GEO: the scoping, selection of experts, and assessment steps would ensure that the GEO is a robust and rigorous assessment based on scientifically accepted methods and analysis from multiple sources.

e) The accessibility of GEO: the steps in the process would ensure that the GEO outputs and the underlying knowledge base and environmental data are accessible by Member States and stakeholders to support policymaking, decision-making and strengthening of the science-policy interface.

f) The added value of GEO: the steps in the process would help ensure that the GEO responds to the UNEP mandate, avoids duplication with other global assessment processes, while addressing interlinkages, cross-cutting issues and identifying gaps.

g) The overall feasibility of GEO: the steps in the process would ensure the continuity of operations for the periodic production of the report and collaboration with other structures and initiatives in the UNEP science-policy interface. The process is key for long term planning and ensuring the predictability in funding for the GEO process which is critically important for stability of the process and vital for ensuring the above-mentioned returns.

UNEA may wish to initiate and frame a process for the development of such procedures. The Steering Committee has compiled an initial draft of a possible set of intergovernmental expert-led scientific assessment procedures for the future GEO. The draft is based on current GEO practices, agreed procedures in IPCC and IPBES and the proposed approaches for the design of the future GEO process. The procedural philosophy, structure, and key elements are consistent with those of IPCC and IPBES, in anticipation of facilitating future cooperation between the three assessment processes.

The existing draft could be used as a basis for further consideration once amended to reflect UNEAs decision on the future form and function of GEO. Further development of the draft would require detailed consideration by representatives of Member States with expertise in these matters, including review and consideration by a dedicated intergovernmental meeting.

The financial, administrative and collaborative consequences of the preparation of draft procedures for consideration by Member States is considered moderate, given that a first draft is available which builds on existing intergovernmental practices and agreed language. However, as there would be costs associated with a review and associated intergovernmental meetings of Member State experts for the consideration of the procedures. As such, UNEA may wish to task the governance and implementation structure of a future GEO with their further development. Such considerations could be undertaken alongside other tasks and could therefore be incorporated into costs associated with the governance and implementation structure (see section 4 below). Member states may need one or two meetings to reach agreement on the GEO procedures. This could potentially delay the next GEO-cycle unless Member States decided to proceed with the process for instance guided by a preliminary version of the procedures in the interim.

Approach to assessing the financial, administrative and collaborative consequences of the approaches for the design of GEO

Investments and return

Assessing the overall feasibility of GEO (Criterion (g) in section 2.3) requires that the different alternatives, options and suggestions for the Future of GEO are assessed for their administrative, financial and collaborative consequences, including potential benefits and implications. The Future of GEO Steering Committee has reviewed different approaches for costing and analysing these elements and has drawn on the experience of the recent GEO-6 assessment process. The approach used in the feasibility study is set out below.

Typically, the largest cost elements for producing intergovernmental expert led assessments are:

a) salaries for Secretariat staff;
b) disbursements to cover intergovernmental and expert meetings; and
c) costs for substantive and expert support during the assessment process.

It should be noted that the above investments typically result in the following immediate types of administrative benefits and returns:

Investments in the expert process generate pro-bono in-kind contributions from a large number of experts, government representatives and potentially also from partner institutions contributing directly to the assessment process. These in-kind contributions have been estimated to be of the same order of magnitude as the direct costs of the assessment process, providing an immediate return on the initial investments.

Investments in ensuring credibility, relevance and legitimacy in the GEO processes enhances dialogues among science and policy communities on issues vital for the substantive and political role UNEA is playing as the authoritative voice for the world's environment. This return is critical for UNEAs standing in the international environmental governance architecture.

Investments in policy relevant assessment products and processes promote knowledge generation and support actions for the transition to a sustainable future. Such a transition is critically dependent on enhanced knowledge and understanding of how society can restore and respect Earth's finite capacity to support human well-being.

Secretariat staff salaries

The Secretariat functions are key to the successful implementation of the GEO process as set out in section 4. Methodologies for costing of Secretariat staff salaries are well established and are used in UNEP's budgeting processes when establishing projects for activities such as GEO. The critical factor affecting costs is the size of the core Secretariat administering the GEO process and the staff time contributions from subject matter experts outside the core Secretariat. Estimates of staff costs have been based on the amounts of staff salaries in the current GEO project as it pertains to the GEO core team and other experts.

Meeting costs

In person and virtual intergovernmental and expert meetings are needed during the assessment process for dialogues, collective analysis and to meet key milestones and deliverables set out in the GEO process (see Table 1). Since most outside experts and Member State representatives contribute to the assessment process on a pro-bono basis, in-person meetings (rather than contracted dates for deliverables) help establish sign-posts in the assessment process when certain steps in the process must be completed.

Virtual meetings have proven very useful during the pandemic and may in future replace some in-person meetings leading to significant cost and time savings. However, in-person meetings are still important for the negotiation of complex issues among Member States. They are also essential in the expert stage of the assessment. They enable dedicated time to work on assessment drafts, collaboration with other authors, joint meetings and informal interactions among authors and experts within and across chapters. This enhances the coherence of the overall narrative across draft chapters and summaries and also provides a key opportunity for the Secretariat to communicate and obtain feedback on key administrative and process details related to the assessment process.

The key cost elements for meetings, which have been largely standardized by the Secretariat, and are well understood, include:

a) Staff time for meeting preparations including the preparation and translation of documentation and time spent on travel preparations for the meeting participants (these elements are typically captured in the overall staff costs for the project).
b) Travel and accommodation for participants from eligible countries to intergovernmental meetings in accordance with UNEP practices and for all experts not able to fund themselves to author and task force meetings.
c) Rental costs of venue, hospitality (e.g. tea and coffee), conference services and interpretation.
d) Preparing outreach materials and conducting outreach events associated with the meeting.
e) Secretariat travel and accommodation to provide support during the meeting.
f) Travel, accommodation and staff costs for technical support unit or collaborating centre staff participation in the meeting (collaborative partners).

Substantive and expert support during the assessment process

A unique feature of the GEO process compared to other intergovernmental expert lead assessment processes is the recognition that, although all experts participating in the process contribute on a 'pro-bono' basis, there are often unanticipated costs associated with the participation of experts who take on a coordination role within the drafting process. These coordination roles include co-chairing of key decision-making bodies and the management of the drafting process for individual chapters of the assessment report. For these experts, a small total stipend (between 3 and 10 thousand dollars depending on role assumed by the expert) is provided to cover any of these unanticipated costs. This helps authors and experts:

- Justify their participation in the assessment process with their senior management.
- Defer any costs associated with their time away from their family or office.
- Defer the costs of any supporting staff's time to ensure that key deliverables are produced on time.

In other assessments, such unanticipated costs for coordinating experts and travel costs for experts from developed countries have been met by the country or the institution the expert is working for, or by the experts themselves. This approach has been known to occasionally limit participation of experts. The GEO approach helps reduce such obstacles to recruiting top expertise and ensuring geographical and gender balance.

In addition to these stipends, the Secretariat will within the GEO project plan often negotiate, fund and enter into small agreements with specific collaborating centres to ensure timely and expert support on key issues covered in the assessment. This expertise is often obtained to complement the Secretariat and help support author teams process wise and analytically through providing access to data and analysis tools that might not be readily available to experts in their institutions. Similarly, IPBES and IPCC use Technical Support Units (TSUs) that are provided by contracted partner institutions to provide such support. TSUs are typically selected by the Secretariat based on offers from Member States and institutions and are sometimes provided partly or fully pro-bono.

Financial and administrative consequences of the approaches for governance and implementation structure proposed in the interim report

The key steps in the GEO process necessitate a clear governance and implementation structure geared towards implementing agreed procedures. In its interim report, the Steering Committee identified the following alternative governance approaches:

Alternative 1: Intergovernmental meetings and advisory bodies convened by the Executive Director of UNEP

The Environment Assembly may wish to request the Executive Director of UNEP to continue to convene open-ended intergovernmental (IG) and multi-stakeholder consultative meetings and establish advisory bodies for the GEO process, similar to those established for the sixth instalment (GEO-6). The open-ended intergovernmental consultative meetings with stakeholder observers would be akin to the meetings convened for the fourth, fifth and sixth instalments of GEO[22]. The meetings would work in accordance

[22] Composed of 25 to 30 high-level government representatives from all six UNEP regions, as well as 8 to 10 key stakeholders.

with the UNEA rules of procedure, roles and responsibilities and be responsible for the GEO procedures and the intergovernmental tasks set out in Table 1. The Executive Director would also establish a high-level intergovernmental and stakeholder advisory group as the GEO oversight and steering group, and a science advisory panel, akin to those set up for the sixth instalment[23]. Both bodies would be composed with the view of ensuring disciplinary, gender and geographical balance across the five United Nations regions. They would work together to provide oversight of the implementation of the GEO process set out in Table 1, in accordance with established procedures.

Alternative 2. A standing ad-hoc open-ended subsidiary body for GEO under UNEA

The Environment Assembly may wish to establish a standing ad-hoc open-ended subsidiary body of Member States and accredited observers that would be responsible for overseeing the role of GEO in the UNEP science-policy interface. The body would be acting as a subsidiary decision-making body of UNEA in accordance with the UNEA rules of procedure and be responsible for the GEO procedures and the intergovernmental tasks set out in Table 1. The body would subsume the functions performed by the open-ended intergovernmental consultative meetings convened for the fourth, fifth and sixth instalments of GEO as reflected in alternative 1.

The subsidiary body would elect its officers from each region that would constitute its executive arm which in addition, could also have representatives from among stakeholders. The subsidiary body would also establish a multidisciplinary expert panel that could consist of a limited number of independent experts from each region tasked with providing scientific oversight. Both the executive arm and the panel would be composed with the view of ensuring disciplinary, gender and geographical balance across the five United Nations regions. The subsidiary body's executive arm and the expert panel would work together to provide oversight over the implementation of the GEO process set out in Table 1, in accordance with established procedures. The executive arm and the expert panel would undertake roles similar to the ones of the high-level intergovernmental and stakeholder advisory group and the science advisory panel of the sixth GEO. A possible set of terms of reference for such a subsidiary body with the responsibilities of its officers and expert panel members and guidance for their selection are set out in Annex 1 to this document. The Annex could be used as a resource for a resolution by UNEA should it decide to establish a subsidiary body for GEO.

Both alternatives would be supported by a ***Secretariat***. UNEP's Executive Director would provide the Secretariat for future GEO processes as part of UNEP's science-policy interface. The Secretariat would provide the technical support needed for the governance and implementation structures that would be set out in the GEO procedures (if developed), including day to day management and administration of processes, budgets and funds needed for the implementation of the GEO procedures.

Both approaches would be key to implementing the procedures and achieving the criteria set out in section 2.1 above. Alternative 2 may, as a subsidiary body of UNEA, have a higher standing than a consultative meeting called by the UNEP Executive Director and therefore better fulfil criterion (c) on legitimacy. A higher standing may also attract more expertise, participation and funding, which would give alternative 2 advantages over alternative 1 regarding the criteria d) credibility, b) relevance and f) overall feasibility. Alternative 2 may furthermore, as a standing body, offer more continuity than alternative 1 and therefore better meet criterion a) on mandate consistency and comparability.

The two alternative approaches both involve the use of intergovernmental and stakeholder meetings in combination with expert meetings, and therefore would be quite similar in terms of financial consequences (see Table 2). Costs would include supporting meeting preparations (see section 2 above).

[23] Composed of 25 distinguished scientists

The costs of the operation of both approaches would depend on the size and frequency of meetings and the financial and administrative consequences of options related to the scope, utility and timing of assessments (considered below in section 5). While the cost elements for the two approaches are the same, alternative 2 may attract more participants and may therefore prove more costly. Member states and partners may also opt to host meetings and contribute to reducing costs.

Table 2: Costing estimates of Governance Alternatives 1 and 2

Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Key Deliverables	cost element description	Average cost /yr	total cost	notes
Intergovernmental oversight (common to all options)						
Intergovernmental and stakeholder involvement (governance alternative 1 and 2)	3 year process	**Objectives/outputs:** Appointment of officers for the executive/advisory arm and expert panel and clearance of: GEO procedures; a rolling plan; scope of assessment(s); budget for assessments and other deliverables and line approval of SPM(s) as well as managerial oversight in production	2 meetings (at 4 days) of its executive/advisory (25 members) arm 73,800)	147,600	442,800	Based on scenario similar to GEO-6
Scientific oversight (common to all options)						
Expert advice and scientific oversight	3 year process	**Objectives/outputs:** Selection of authors and reviewers for the assessment and expert for other deliverables, scientific oversight and advice in the production process	1 expert meeting (4 days) (25-30 members) (124,600)	124,600	373,800	Based on scenario similar to GEO-6

Both alternatives would, in addition, make use of all or some of the following implementation structures (whose financial and administrative implications are considered in section 5 below):

a) *Author Teams* of independent experts for undertaking time-bound assessment processes in accordance with the approved scope (design). Teams will normally consist of one or more co-chairs, a number of coordinating lead authors, lead authors, and contributing authors, review editors and reviewers.

b) *Task Forces* to guide the development and implementation of methodologies and the undertaking of functions other than assessments, such as capacity building.

c) *Collaborative centres and/or Technical Support Units (TSU)* provided by partner institutions outside UNEP to support specified time-bound author teams or expert driven tasks. TSUs could be supported financially by Member States but work under supervision by the UNEP Secretariat. TSUs would provide in-kind support to the assessment process but could also receive agreed financial support from other sources.

Financial and administrative consequences of the future of GEO assessment options and suggestions for support services

The analysis by the Steering Committee and broad consultation process found that issues to be considered in the scope of GEO assessments could include:

a) analysis of environmental status and trends,
b) including projected environmental changes; progress towards internationally agreed environmental goals and targets;
c) current and projected risks to human well-being from environmental change;
d) impact of environmental change on the implementation of the SDGs;
e) interlinkages across scales and geographic regions;
f) policy gaps for meeting internationally agreed environmental goals;
g) effectiveness of policy responses in differing developmental contexts;
h) potentially successful policy approaches with examples of how scarce resources can be mobilized; and
i) actions and policy options needed in the transformation to a sustainable future.

More specifically, the GEO assessments could provide input to UNEA, the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, and the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR), Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEA), relevant regional bodies, individual Member States and society at large. The assessments could analyse and integrate evidence from existing science, data and knowledge, and findings from relevant assessments, including information from indigenous and local knowledge systems, needed to address the environmental issues of concern.

The exact coverage of the assessments would be decided through the scoping process set out in Table 1. The process would determine the timing, geographic and thematic coverage, user needs, target audience, the outline, evidence base and associated functions (capacity building, knowledge generation and policy support), the size of the team of independent authors and the detailed budget. The scoping would furthermore identify key aspects of an appropriate assessment option like: areas of priority and emerging issues to be targeted to address changing environmental conditions and policy priorities, taking account of other assessment activities and findings, and/or allowing for comparison of the state of knowledge across assessments over time. The assessments would factor in areas of expertise covered by other assessments to avoid duplication of effort. Finally, the scoping would determine the administrative and financial implications of the assessment based on the number of experts involved, the number of meetings to be convened, the use of digital technologies and the Secretariat and technical support needed.

The assessments would then generally follow the process set out in Table 1, including for nomination and selection of authors, preparation and review of assessment drafts and clearance of the Summary for Policymakers. The process is key to ensuring that the assessments are relevant, legitimate, credible and accessible (criteria b, c, d and e) but also contributes to meeting the other criteria for the design of GEO as explained in section 2.2. The three overall assessment options identified below could be undertaken individually or in combination in accordance with an adopted rolling plan and budget.

The estimated costs for the three assessment options are summarised in Table 3 and focuses on the costs related to implementation of the options. It should be noted that the exact cost would be dependent on

the exact planning and scoping of each assessment. As all options are intergovernmental and expert-led assessments and would incur the governance costs set out in Table 2 these have not been included. Furthermore, Table 3 does not cover estimations of costs related to the activities for provision of capacity building, knowledge generation and policy support services associated with the assessments. These costs and importance for achieving the criteria for design of GEO are presented in section 5.4 below.

Table 3: Cost estimates for the implementation of the assessment options

Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Key Deliverables	cost element description	Average cost /yr	total assessment costs (USD)	notes
Assessment Option 1						
Comprehensive GEO	3 year process	**Objectives/outputs:** fully intergovernmental process to produce a global integrated environmental assessment every 4 years, including approved SPM.	1 expert scoping meeting and 4 author meetings, stipends, partnership agreements, software licenses, communications, digital platform, document production, layout and translation	2,681,800	8,042,400	Based on scenario similar to GEO-6
Assessment Option 2						
Thematic GEO	2 year process	**Objectives/outputs:** fully intergovernmental process to produce a thematic integrated environmental assessment including approved SPM at a frequency to be determined.	1 scoping meeting, 3 author meetings stipends, partnership agreements, software licenses, communications, digital platform, document production, layout and translation	2,570,600	5,141,200	Based on scenario of COVID-19 thematic assessment
Assessment Option 3						
Synthesis GEO	2 year process	**Objectives/outputs:** fully intergovernmental process to produce a synthesis of major global assessments, including approved SPM at a frequency to be determined.	1 scoping meeting, 2 author meetings stipends, partnership agreements, software licenses, communications, digital platform, document production, layout and translation	2,175,333	4,350,666	Based on scenario of Making Peace with Nature Report

Option 1. Comprehensive global and regional integrated environmental assessments every four years

The Comprehensive global and regional GEO assessment option is characterised as follows:

(c) **Process**: the assessment would follow all steps in the GEO process as set out in Table 1.

(d) **Scope:** The scope could in principle address the broad range of issues presented above as pertaining to all assessment options and be undertaken every four years. The global and regional dimensions would be addressed as agreed in the planning and scoping stage of the GEO process either as:

(i) A global assessment where the regional aspects are integrated in the analysis.

(ii) A global assessment where the regions are assessed in separate chapters or sections as has happened in the past GEO's.

(iii) A staggered approach of separate comprehensive regional assessments followed by a comprehensive global assessment as happened in GEO-6.

(e) ***Evidence base***: existing assessments, scientific literature, grey literature, data, models and scenarios, national reports, and indigenous and local knowledge of relevance to the agreed scope.

Option 1 is distinguished from Option 2 by having a broader scope which addresses environmental issues comprehensively and in an integrated manner and not theme by theme. It is distinguished from Option 3 by addressing regional aspects and not having an evidence base primarily limited to existing assessments.

Option 1 would follow a process which is key to ensuring that the assessments are relevant, legitimate and credible (criteria b, c and d) as explained in section 2.2. Otherwise, Option 1 meets the other **criteria for the design of the future GEO** in the following manner:

a) Mandate consistency: the approach would be fully consistent with the mandate of UNEA. The scope and process would be similar to earlier comprehensive GEO assessments, and this would ensure consistency and comparability across editions of GEO.

f) The added value of GEO: the process would ensure that the GEO responds to the UNEP mandate, and that it avoids duplication with other global assessment processes, while addressing interlinkages and cross-cutting issues and identifying gaps. The assessment would be well placed to address the interlinkages between environmental challenges and their contributions to reaching the ensemble of integrated and indivisible Sustainable Development Goals. As a comprehensive assessment it has a higher risk than Options 2 and 3 of partially duplicating efforts in other assessments, but the risk could be reduced through careful scoping, implementation, use of authors familiar with other assessments and interaction with other assessment processes.

g) The overall feasibility of GEO: the option would ensure the continuity of operations for the periodic production of the report, and in terms of the implications for administrative, financial and collaborative structures and other initiatives in the UNEP science-policy interface. Option 1 would be the most expensive option, but the cost difference amongst options would vary according to the agreed scope and the frequency of assessments. Option 1 could also be combined with the other options as set out in a rolling plan and budget agreed by GEO's governing structure to address the needs of Member States.

Option 2. Focused thematically-based assessments

The thematic GEO assessment option is characterised as follows:

(c) **Process**: the assessment would follow all steps in the GEO process as set out in Table 1.

(d) **Scope:** The scope could in principle address thematic issues, specific actors (e.g. youth, cities, business) or methodological aspects of the broad range of generic issues presented above as pertaining to all assessment options. It would address issues not covered by existing intergovernmental assessments. For example, an assessment of the environmental impact of COVID-19 or new emerging issues which may need consideration. Regional aspects would normally be integrated in the global analysis. A thematic assessment may typically take two years.

(e) ***Evidence base***: existing assessments, scientific literature, grey literature, data, models and scenarios, national reports, and indigenous and local knowledge of relevance to the agreed scope.

Option 2 is distinguished from Option 1 and Option 3 by having a narrower scope which address environmental issues theme by theme and not in such a comprehensive and integrated manner. It is also distinguished from Option 3 by not having an evidence base primarily limited to existing assessments.

Option 2 would follow a process which is key to ensuring that the assessments are relevant, legitimate, credible and accessible (criteria b, c, d, and e) as explained in section 2.2. Otherwise, Option 2 meets the other **criteria for the design of the future GEO** in the following manner:

a) Mandate consistency: The approach would be fully consistent with the mandate of UNEA. A number of thematic assessments have been produced under the GEO banner but none of them has been intergovernmental and expert-led assessments. Option 2 would be an addition to the GEO process. Option 2, due to a limited coverage, may address the UNEA mandate somewhat less comprehensively and make GEO less comparable with previous instalments. However, assessments under this option could be planned to complement each other in support of the UNEA mandate.

b) The added value of GEO: the process would ensure that the GEO responds to the UNEP mandate, and that it avoids duplication with other global assessment processes, while addressing interlinkages and cross-cutting issues and identifying gaps. The thematic assessments would carry little risk of duplicating other assessments, rather they would add to and complement other assessments.

c) The overall feasibility of GEO: the option (especially if it is the sole option implemented) would imply a slightly leaner process and downscaled operation than Option 1 and therefore contribute less to the continuity of operations for the periodic production of the report than Option 1. The option would be less expensive than Option 1, but the cost difference may vary with the agreed scope and the frequency of assessments. Option 2 could also be combined with one of the other options in a rolling plan and budget as thematic assessments could be requested as and when needed.

Option 3. Synthesize the findings of relevant global assessments

The option where GEO periodically synthesizes the findings of relevant assessments is characterised as follows:

(c) **Process**: the assessment would generally follow all steps in the GEO process as set out in Table 1. In IPBES and IPCC the Summary for Policymakers of a synthesis report is *approved* by Member States (endorsed line by line) and the full synthesis report *adopted* by Member States (endorsed paragraph by paragraph) as it is normally a shorter and more policy oriented document than the full assessment reports which are accepted by Member States (i.e. is not subject to line by line or paragraph by paragraph endorsement). In that sense the synthesis report clearance process would require more intergovernmental attention than the other options. Also, it is estimated to need fewer author meetings than the other options, as it is normally a shorter document.

(d) **Scope:** The scope could in principle address the broad range of issues presented above as pertaining to all assessment options. Regional aspects would normally be integrated in the synthesis analysis. The scope would in principle be confined to the findings and key conclusions of relevant assessments, and analyses of the systemic links between different thematic areas. Synthesis reports in IPBES and IPCC are written in a non-technical style suitable for policymakers and address a broad range of policy-relevant questions and therefore do not necessarily include formal confidence level statements. Synthesis reports consist of a full report which references underlying assessments and other relevant scientific literature and a Summary for Policymakers. A synthesis may typically take two years.

(e) ***Evidence base***: existing assessments with limited use of additional high impact scientific literature and grey literature to update or complement the picture as relevant to the agreed scope.

Option 3 is distinguished from Option 1 and 2 by being a shorter and more policy-oriented document, by using a more limited evidence base primarily limited to existing assessments, a less extensive expert process and a more extensive intergovernmental clearance process.

Option 3 would follow a process which is key to ensuring that the assessments are relevant, legitimate, credible and accessible (criteria b, c, d and e) as explained in section 2.2. With a more extensive intergovernmental clearance process and less extensive expert process than the other options, it may perform higher on legitimacy and lower on credibility. The latter could be countered by focusing the synthesis on evidence from assessments with high credibility. Otherwise, the option meets the other **criteria for the design of the future GEO** in the following manner:

a) Mandate consistency: The approach would be fully consistent with the mandate of UNEA, but due to a more limited evidence base, it may not address the mandate as comprehensively as Option 1. If this option is the sole one implemented, then it could potentially be less comprehensive than earlier GEO assessments making it more difficult to ensure consistency and comparability across instalments of GEO than in the case of Option 1.

f) The added value of GEO: the process would ensure that the GEO responds to the UNEP mandate, and that it avoids duplication with other global assessment processes, while addressing interlinkages and cross-cutting issues and identifying gaps. The synthesis would carry little risk of duplicating other assessments. Rather, it would amplify the findings of other assessments (to the extent that is needed) and add value by putting them in a broader context (to the extent that such content can be derived from existing assessments supplemented by gap filling).

g) The overall feasibility of GEO: the option (especially if it is the sole option implemented) would imply a slightly leaner process and downscaled operation than Option 1, therefore its contribution to the continuity of operations for the periodic production of the report would be contingent on planning. Option 3 would be the least expensive option, but the cost difference may vary with the agreed scope and frequency of the other options. Option 3 could be combined with Option 2 in a rolling plan.

Capacity building, knowledge generation and policy support services

The analysis of the Steering Committee and the broad consultations identified that GEO, in addition to the assessment function, could also encompass mutually supportive functions, namely, support to agreed needs in capacity building, knowledge generation and policy-making. A key function of the GEO process is facilitating the identification of Member States needs in relation to these functions and agreeing on how they best could be supported through GEO itself or through other processes within or outside UNEP. The exact needs may depend on the assessment option or combination of assessment options chosen by UNEA and are best identified after UNEA has made a decision. Consequently GEO would build on the experience from past GEO processes and other initiatives and initiate the development of an approach for identifying the needs and a service oriented approach for addressing those needs in accordance with the GEO process elements set out in Table 1. Suggestions for such an approach include the following activities costed in Table 4:

a) Integrating capacity building in the GEO process through fellowships, training, exchanges, dialogues and consultations.
b) Working with partners to address capacity building and support needs in the science-policy interface outside the GEO process, including through supporting sub-global assessments.
c) Undertaking dialogues with research, modelling, scenario and data communities to address knowledge generation needs identified in the GEO processes.
d) Working with indigenous and local communities on the generation and use of Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK).

e) Identifying tools and approaches for using GEO findings in support of policymaking as requested by Member States and stakeholders.

f) Conducting outreach and awareness-raising (including by producing supporting products).

The approach would add value to and not duplicate other initiatives and would be closely coordinated with them. The GEO process would support – and collaborate with – other global environmental assessments in developing shared tools and data platforms, including conceptual frameworks, scenarios and integrated models, to promote coherence and synergies across assessments and to support capacity-building.

The provision of support functions for agreed needs in capacity building, knowledge generation and policy-making are key to meeting the criteria. All help advance the mandate consistency, added value and feasibility of GEO (criteria a, f and g). Capacity building in the assessment process is essential for ensuring that the assessments are relevant, legitimate, credible and accessible (criteria b, c, d and e). Capacity-building to meet agreed needs in relation to enhancing the science-policy interface more generally also helps strengthen the foundation for the GEO process, as do dialogues on knowledge generation which is also critical for the long-term relevance and credibility of assessments (criteria b, and d). Outreach and provision of agreed policy support are key to enhancing the impact of the GEO process by enhancing their relevance and accessibility (criteria b and e).

Table 4: Estimated costs for suggested examples of capacity building, knowledge generation and policy support functions

Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Key Deliverables	cost element description	Average cost /yr	total cost	notes
Capacity building, knowledge generation and policy support services						
Capacity building programme	1 year process	**Objectives/outputs:** Develop GEO educational material and manage a fellowship programme.	3 consultancies, 2 meetings, production costs.	686,200	686,200	Based on scenario of developing a global science-diplomacy programme
Science-policy seminar series	1 year process	**Objectives/outputs:** Develop and deliver learning material on the GEO findings and their implication for national policy.	1 consultancy, 1 meeting, online platform + in-person meetings.	192,200	192,200	Based on scenario one basic science-policy seminar that can be adapted to different national policy circumstances
Support for national and sub-national GEO-type assessments	3 year process	**Objectives/outputs:** Completed GEO-type assessment to support national or sub-national policy making on the environment.	1 consultancy, 1 meeting, and support from the regional economic commission every year.	116,200	348,600	Based on scenario of support to Latin American countries (3 countries per year).

Possible synergies and comparisons

The feasibility study has aimed at presenting, analysing and comparing the future of GEO governance alternatives, the assessment options and the suggestions for capacity building, knowledge generation and policy support services. Table 5 presents a summary of estimated costs associated with governance and

implementation of the intergovernmental and expert-led GEO assessment process for ease of comparison.

The governance alternatives and the assessment options are all designed to be fully consistent with the mandate of UNEA and meet the criteria for the design of GEO although the degree to which may vary somewhat between them. However, all alternatives, options and suggestions are contingent on the GEO process set out in Table 1, and the process could best be secured through the establishment of a set of GEO procedures agreed by Member States.

The alternatives for governance and implementation structures both meet the criteria, but the establishment of the subsidiary body in alternative 2 is considered to have a slight advantage over alternative 1 which is a continuation of the current GEO practice. The two alternative approaches both involve the use of intergovernmental and stakeholder meetings in combination with expert meetings, and therefore would be quite similar in terms of financial consequences. Costs would include supporting meeting preparations. The costs of the operation of both approaches would depend on the size and frequency of meetings and the financial and administrative consequences of options related to the scope, utility and timing of assessments.

Assessment Option 1 (comprehensive global assessments with regional specificity) and Option 2 (thematic assessments) are quite similar in process and perform well in regard to relevance, legitimacy, credibility and accessibility (criteria b, c, d and e). Option 3 (synthesis assessment) also performs well against these criteria, but the process implies a slightly more extensive intergovernmental clearance process and less extensive expert process than the other options. Therefore Option 3 may be stronger regarding legitimacy and less so regarding credibility.

The main differences between the three assessment options are related to their scope and evidence base. Option 1 (comprehensive global assessments with regional specificity) is distinguished from Option 2 (thematic assessments) by having a broader scope which addresses environmental issues comprehensively and in an integrated manner and not theme by theme. Option 3 (synthesis assessment) is distinguished from the others by being a shorter more policy-oriented document, with an evidence base which is primarily limited to existing assessments.

The Steering Committee's interim report noted that what is now the three assessment options were not mutually exclusive and could be considered complementary within a rolling work plan on GEO-type assessments. For example, a synthesis GEO could become quite similar to a comprehensive global assessment if additional peer reviewed literature were incorporated in the synthesis process in order to fill gaps and complement the narrative of the synthesis report. Moreover, GEO thematic assessments could support either the comprehensive global and regional assessment processes or the synthesis assessment processes, if scoped and timed appropriately.

UNEA may therefore wish to consider retaining all assessment options and task the governance structure of GEO to apply them in accordance with a rolling plan to address identified needs, priorities and emerging issues. Such a plan would also be instrumental in identifying and addressing the need for supporting services as identified in Table 5 below. The provision of such supporting services in capacity building, knowledge generation and policy-making is key to meeting the criteria for the design of the intergovernmental and expert led GEO assessment process and strengthening the foundation for GEO in the long term.

Table 5: Summary table of estimated costs associated with governance and implementation of the intergovernmental expert led GEO assessment process

Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Key Deliverables	cost element description	Average cost /yr	total cost	notes
Intergovernmental oversight (common to all options)						
Intergovernmental and stakeholder involvement (governance alternative 1 and 2)	3 year process	**Objectives/outputs:** Appointment of officers for the executive/advisory arm and expert panel and clearance of: GEO procedures; a rolling plan; scope of assessment(s); budget for assessments and other deliverables and line approval of SPM(s) as well as managerial oversight in production	2 meetings (at 4 days) of its executive/advisory (25 members) arm 73,800)	147,600	442,800	Based on scenario similar to GEO-6
Scientific oversight (common to all options)						
Expert advice and scientific oversight	3 year process	**Objectives/outputs:** Selection of authors and reviewers for the assessment and expert for other deliverables, scientific oversight and advice in the production process	1 expert meeting (4 days) (25-30 members) (124,600)	124,600	373,800	Based on scenario similar to GEO-6
Assessment Option 1						
Comprehensive GEO	3 year process	**Objectives/outputs:** fully intergovernmental process to produce a global integrated environmental assessment every 4 years, including approved SPM.	1 expert scoping meeting and 4 author meetings, stipends, partnership agreements, software licenses, communications, digital platform, document production, layout and translation	2,681,800	8,042,400	Based on scenario similar to GEO-6
Assessment Option 2						
Thematic GEO	2 year process	**Objectives/outputs:** fully intergovernmental process to produce a thematic integrated environmental assessment including approved SPM at a frequency to be determined.	1 scoping meeting, 3 author meetings stipends, partnership agreements, software licenses, communications, digital platform, document production, layout and translation	2,570,600	5,141,200	Based on scenario of COVID-19 thematic assessment
Assessment Option 3						
Synthesis GEO	2 year process	**Objectives/outputs:** fully intergovernmental process to produce a synthesis of major global assessments, including approved SPM at a frequency to be determined.	1 scoping meeting, 2 author meetings stipends, partnership agreements, software licenses, communications, digital platform, document production, layout and translation	2,175,333	4,350,666	Based on scenario of Making Peace with Nature Report
Capacity building, knowledge generation and policy support services						
Capacity building programme	1 year process	**Objectives/outputs:** Develop GEO educational material and manage a fellowship programme.	3 consultancies, 2 meetings, production costs.	686,200	686,200	Based on scenario of developing a global science-

						diplomacy programme
Science-policy seminar series	1 year process	**Objectives/outputs:** Develop and deliver learning material on the GEO findings and their implication for national policy.	1 consultancy, 1 meeting, online platform + in-person meetings.	192,200	192,200	Based on scenario one basic science-policy seminar that can be adapted to different national policy circumstances
Support for national and sub-national GEO-type assessments	3 year process	**Objectives/outputs:** Completed GEO-type assessment to support national or sub-national policy making on the environment.	1 consultancy, 1 meeting, and support from the regional economic commission every year.	116,200	348,600	Based on scenario of support to Latin American countries (3 countries per year).
Other supportive activities						Could include dialogues with research, data, monitoring and scenario and modelling communities on priorities for knowledge generation

Annex I: Terms of reference for a possible subsidiary body of GEO with responsibilities for its officers and experts and guidance for their selection

Any accredited observer of UNEA which is qualified in matters covered by the authorising body, and which has informed the Secretariat of its wish to be represented at sessions of the body, may if UNEA so decides participate as an observer. To facilitate communication, cooperation, nomination of experts and review of reports and other material, Member States would likely need to designate GEO national focal points responsible for liaising with the UNEP Secretariat. The body would typically undertake the following functions[24] as directed by UNEA:

(a) Acting as a subsidiary decision-making body of UNEA in accordance with the UNEA rules of procedure and the roles and responsibilities given to it regarding the scoping, initiation and clearance of GEO activities and products, including for accepting assessments and approving their summaries for policymakers;

(b) Selecting the officers of the subsidiary body for GEO, which will constitute its ***executive arm***, taking due account of the principle of geographical and gender balance across the five United Nations regions, based on criteria, a nomination process and length of service to be decided by the body. The body may also select a limited number of representatives from among its observers, if it so decides, to serve on the executive arm in their capacity as alternates or observers.

    (i) The executive arm could carry out the following ***functions*** as directed by the subsidiary body for GEO:

        a. The functions of the co-chairs include the following:

            1. Presiding over meetings of the subsidiary body for GEO;
            2. Chairing the executive arm;
            3. Representing GEO as its co-chairs.

        b. The functions to be carried out by the vice-chairs include the following:

            1. Serving as rapporteur of the subsidiary body for GEO;
            2. Participating in the work of the executive arm;
            3. Acting as the representative of GEO as Vice-Chair as necessary.

        c. The executive arm would carry out the following functions:

            1. Promote the relevance (or salience) of GEO in terms of responding flexibly to the needs of Member States and stakeholders, for example on improving the effectiveness of environmental policy;
            2. Promote the legitimacy of GEO as an assessment accepted by Member States and stakeholders as authoritative, through unbiased, representative and defensible procedures that are balanced with regard to geography and gender;
            3. Provide administrative and financial oversight including for the development and implementation of the rolling programme of work;
            4. Support the multidisciplinary expert panel in carrying out its functions;

[24] Adapted from IPBES

(ii) The following ***guidelines*** could be taken into account in the processes for nominating and selecting the officers that will serve as the co-chairs and vice-chairs of the subsidiary body for GEO and constitute its executive arm:

a. Ability to carry out the agreed functions of the co-chairs and vice-chairs;

b. Scientific environmental expertise with regard to both natural and social sciences among the officers of the subsidiary body for GEO;

c. Scientific, technical or policy expertise and knowledge of the main elements of the GEO's programme of work;

d. Experience in communicating, promoting and incorporating science into policy development processes;

e. Ability to both lead and work in international scientific and policy processes

(c) Selecting members of the ***multidisciplinary expert panel*** or any other subsidiary body as relevant, taking due account of the principle of geographical and gender balance across the five United Nations regions, based on criteria, a nomination process and length of service to be decided by it.

(i) The Expert panel could carry out the following ***functions*** as directed by the subsidiary body for GEO:

a. Promote the scientific credibility of GEO as a robust and rigorous assessment based on scientifically accepted methods and analysis from multiple sources;

b. Promote conceptual, analytical and scientific consistency and rigour in the development and implementation of the long-term rolling programme of work;

c. Preside over expert scoping meetings, task forces, workshops, and expert groups for other reports and deliverables;

d. Select experts based on merits in accordance with agreed procedures with a view to ensure geographical, gender and disciplinary balance;

e. Representing GEO as its expert panel;

f. Support the executive arm in carrying out its functions;

(ii) The following ***guidelines*** could be taken into account in the processes for nominating and selecting the expert panel:

a. Ability to carry out the agreed functions of the expert panel;

b. Scientific environmental expertise with regard to both natural and social sciences;

c. Scientific, technical or policy expertise and knowledge of the main elements of the GEO's programme of work;

d. Experience in communicating, promoting and incorporating science into policy development processes;

e. Ability both to lead and work in international scientific and policy processes.

Annex III: Final analysis of the Future of GEO consultation results approved and submitted by the Future of GEO Steering Committee

Analysis of results from the broad consultation on the feasibility study for the Future of the GEO

Table of Contents

Introduction

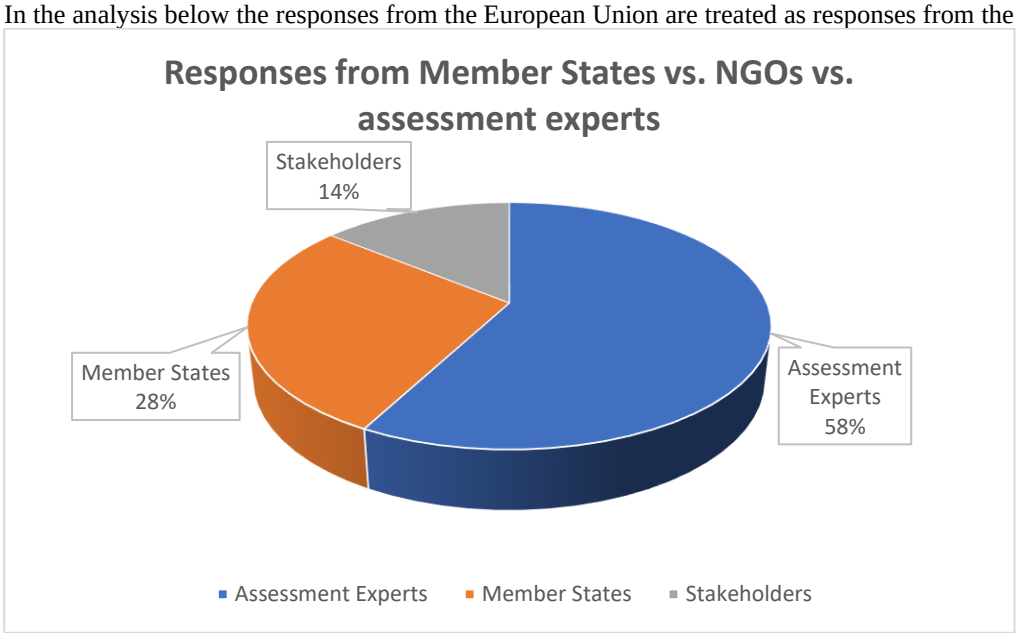
This document provides a brief synopsis of the key results of the consultation on the findings of the feasibility study for the Future of the GEO process, which examined the financial, administrative and collaborative consequences of the recommended options and approaches. The analysis is meant to inform the deliberations of the Future of GEO Steering Committee at its November workshop.

Diversity of responses

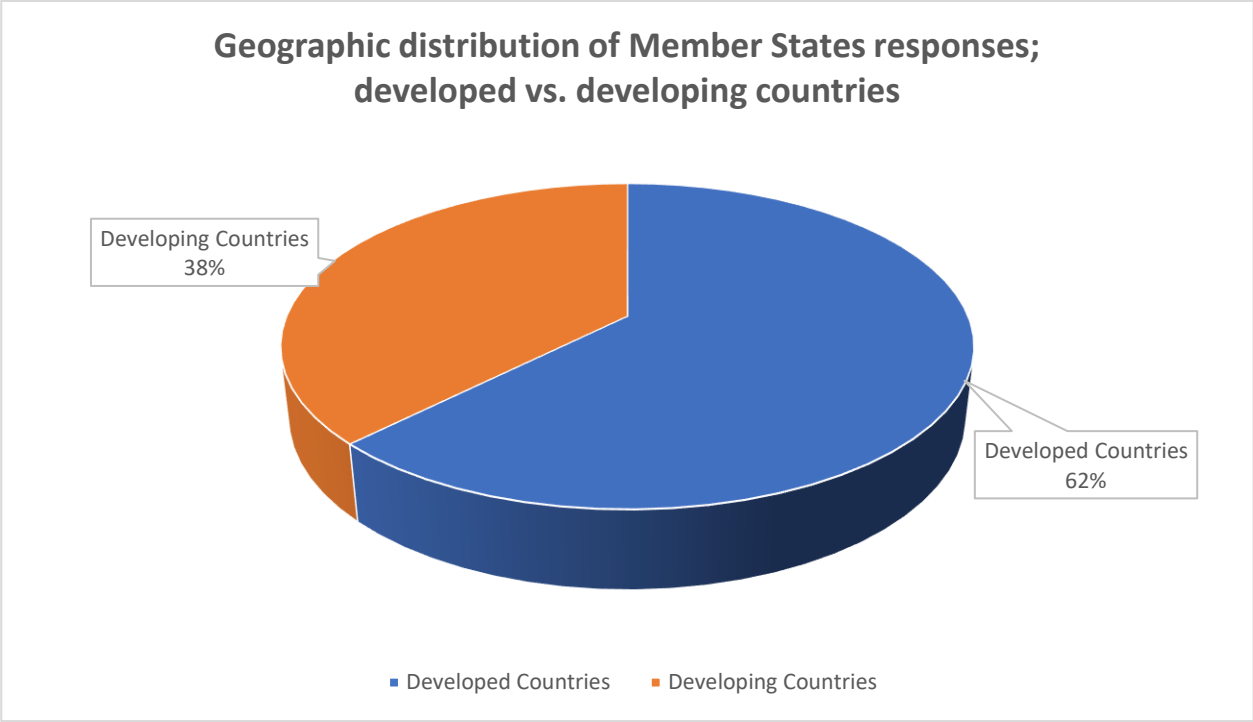
The Future of GEO consultation period began on October 4, 2021 and ended October 22, 2021. It was supported by a feasibility study report prepared by the Steering Committee on the Future of GEO and an interim report that the Committee had submitted to the opening session of UNEA-5 in February 2021. The entire consultation occurred online due to the global pandemic. Four orientation webinars were organized to assist participants to better understand the context and purpose of the consultation and to understand the consultation tools (mainly the questionnaire which was made available in all 6 UN languages) that were being used.
Some brief highlights of the consultation include: there were 167 participants in the webinars, 172 questionnaires were completed, there were 47 consolidated responses vs. individual responses, 125 independent written responses were also submitted. The European Union and its Member States (EU+ MS) provided a consolidated response for this consultation. In this analysis, the EU+ MS input has been treated as 27 responses rather than one for accuracy of the analysis. In addition to these highlights, efforts were made by the Secretariat to encourage responses from a wide range of countries and experts. In all, 2 reminders were sent by the Secretariat during the consultation to ensure a diversity of responses were received.

Distribution of responses from Member States vs. NGOs vs. assessment experts

In the analysis below the responses from the European Union are treated as responses from the 27 Member States.



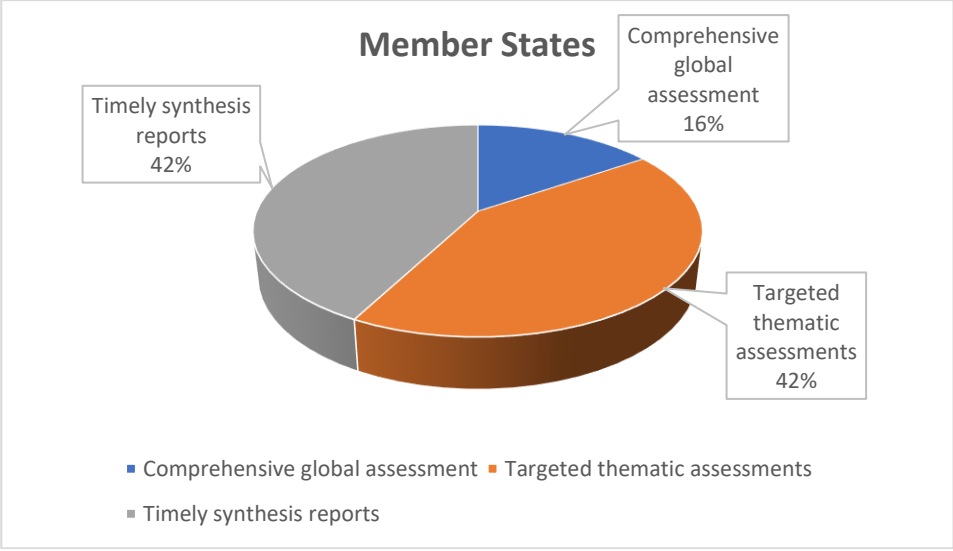
Geographic distribution (developed vs. developing countries) for Member States responses received

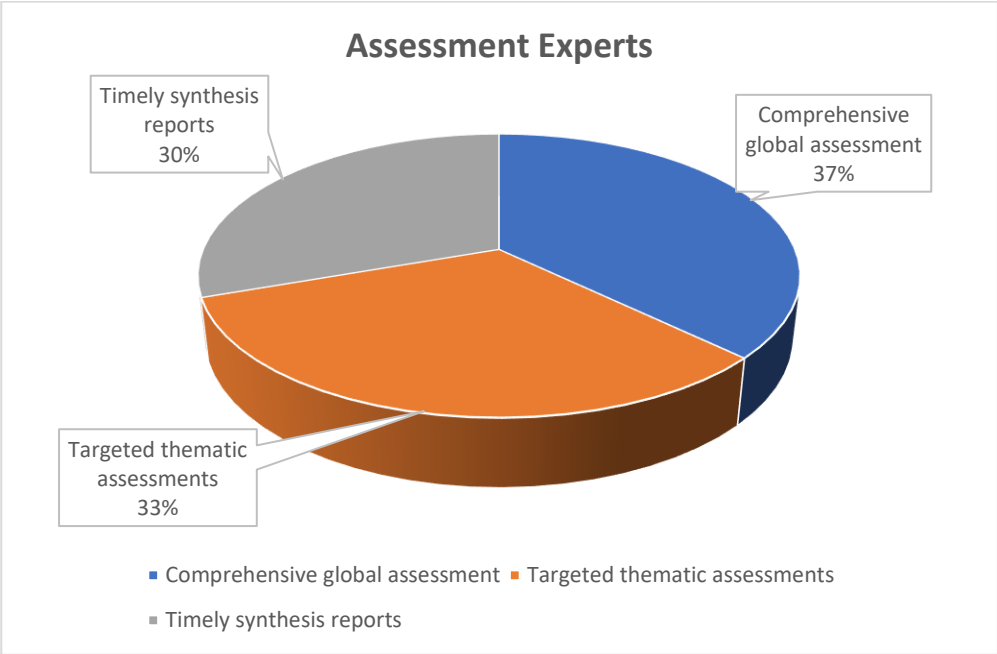


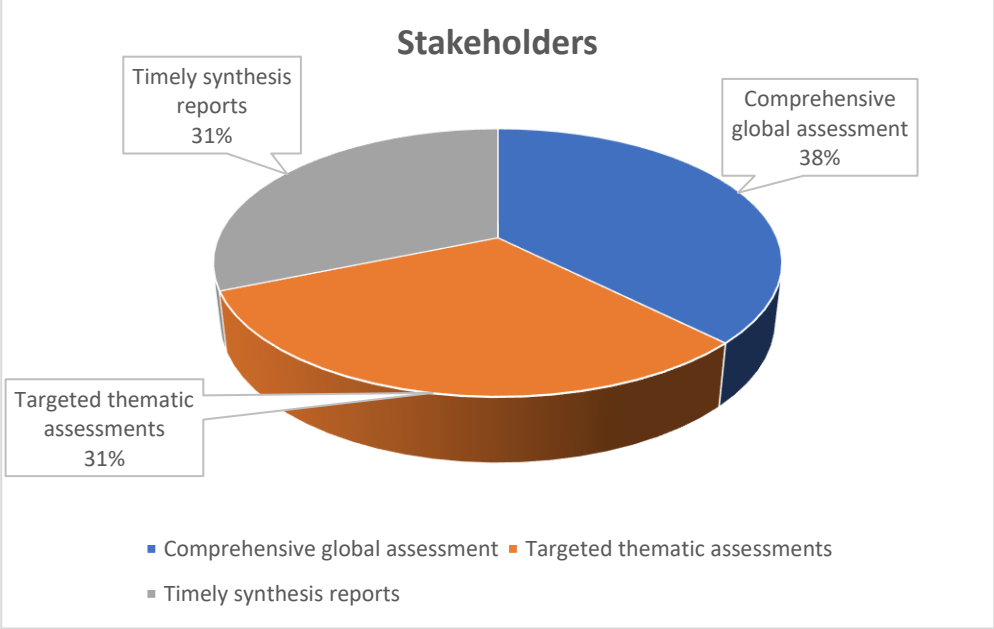
Responses from the feasibility study questions

Choices on the preferred GEO assessment options of immediate priority

Of the consultees, Member States favored the options of timely synthesis reports and targeted thematic assessments over comprehensive assessments. Assessment experts and stakeholders were almost equally split over the choice of future GEO assessment options with a marginal preference of assessment experts and stakeholders for comprehensive global assessments.







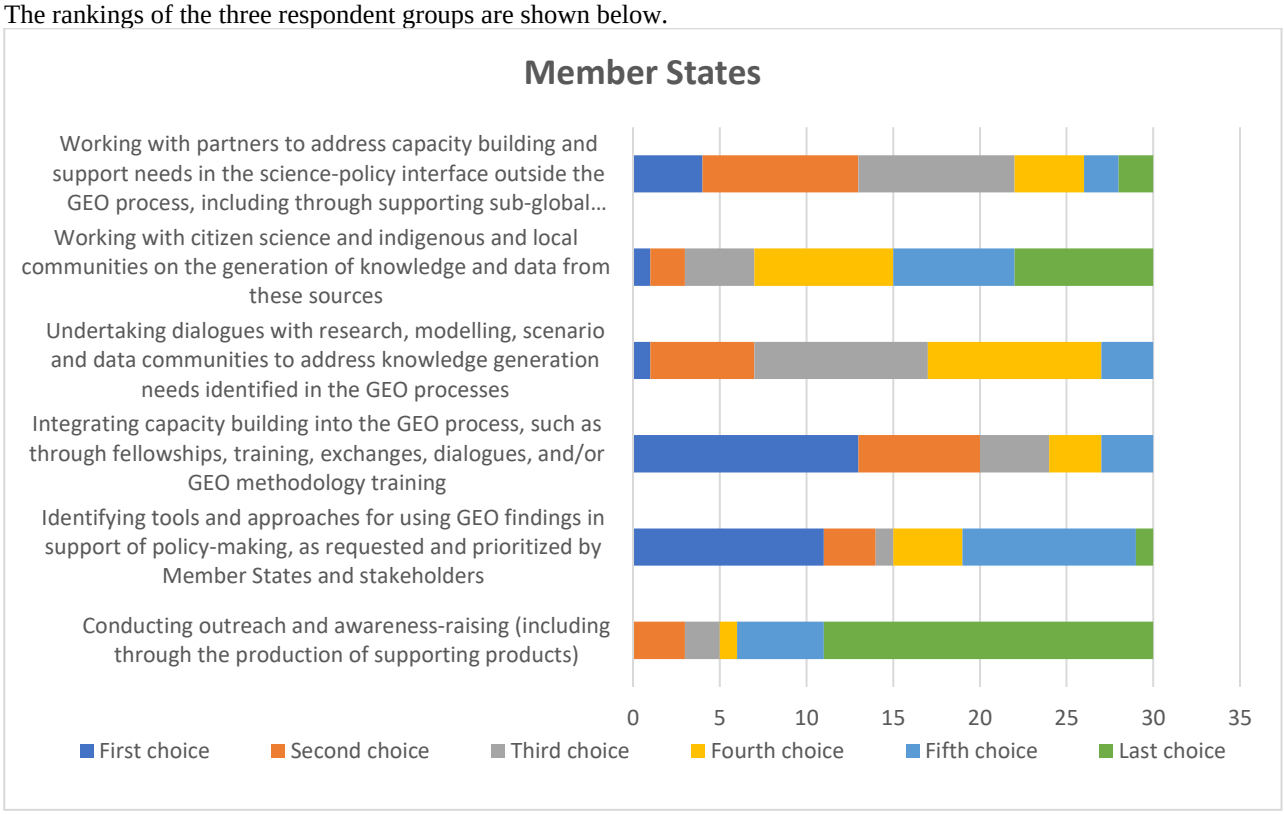
Ranking of collection of GEO support services

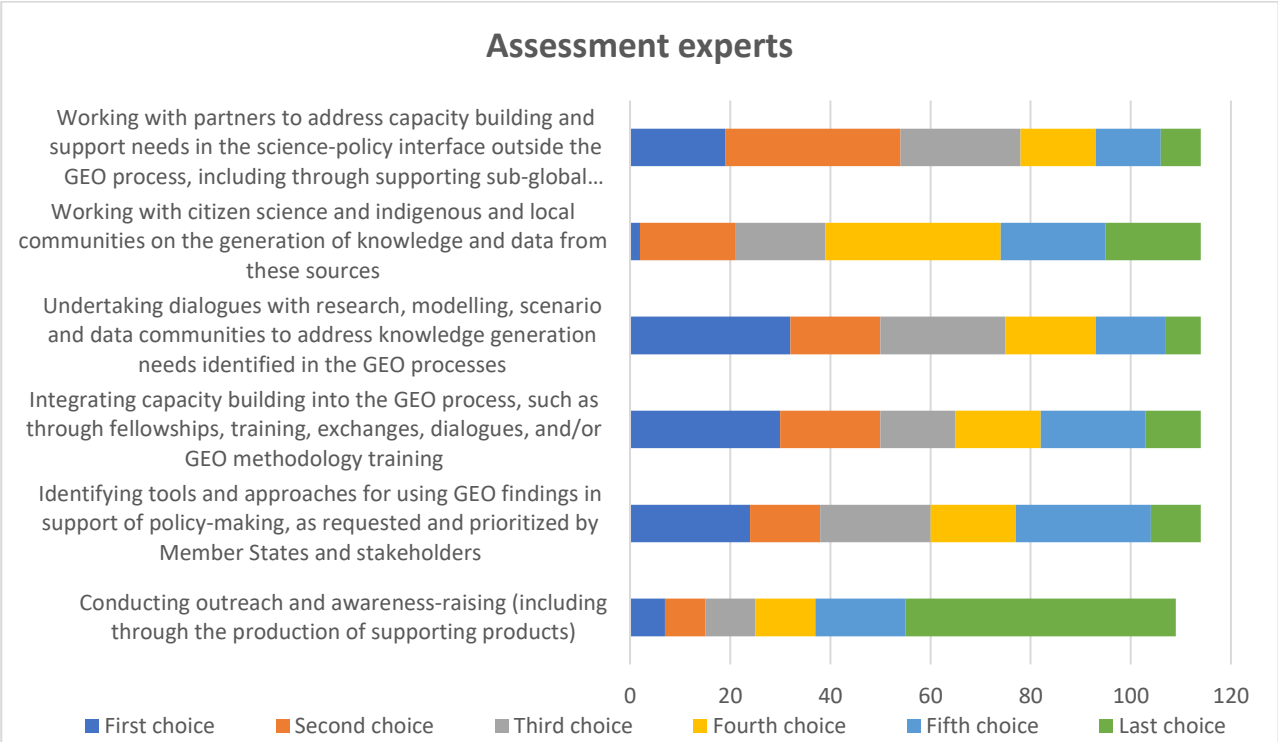
Consultees felt collectively that GEO's support services should be prioritized as below;

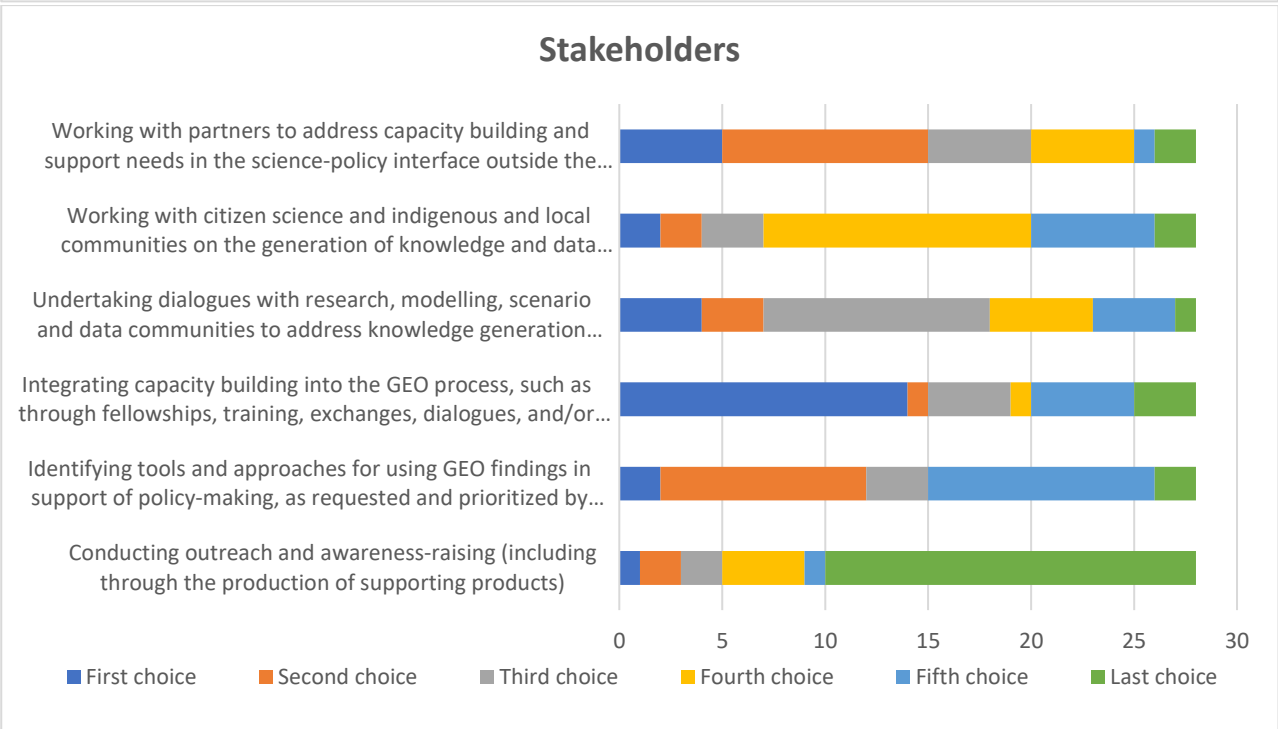
1. Integrating capacity building into the GEO process, such as through fellowships, training, exchanges, dialogues, and/or GEO methodology training
2. Working with partners to address capacity building and support needs in the science-policy interface outside the GEO process, including through supporting sub-global assessments
3. Undertaking dialogues with research, modelling, scenario and data communities to address knowledge generation needs identified in the GEO processes

4. Working with citizen science and indigenous and local communities on the generation of knowledge and data from these sources
5. Identifying tools and approaches for using GEO findings in support of policy-making, as requested and prioritized by Member States and stakeholders
6. Conducting outreach and awareness-raising (including through the production of supporting products)

The rankings of the three respondent groups are shown below.



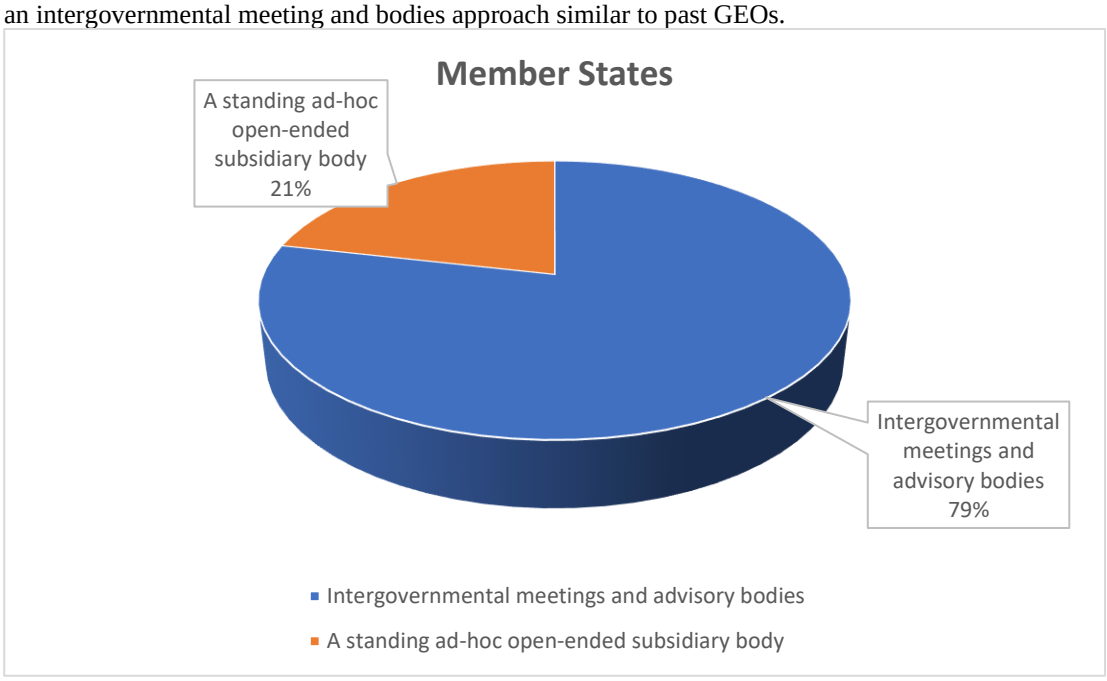


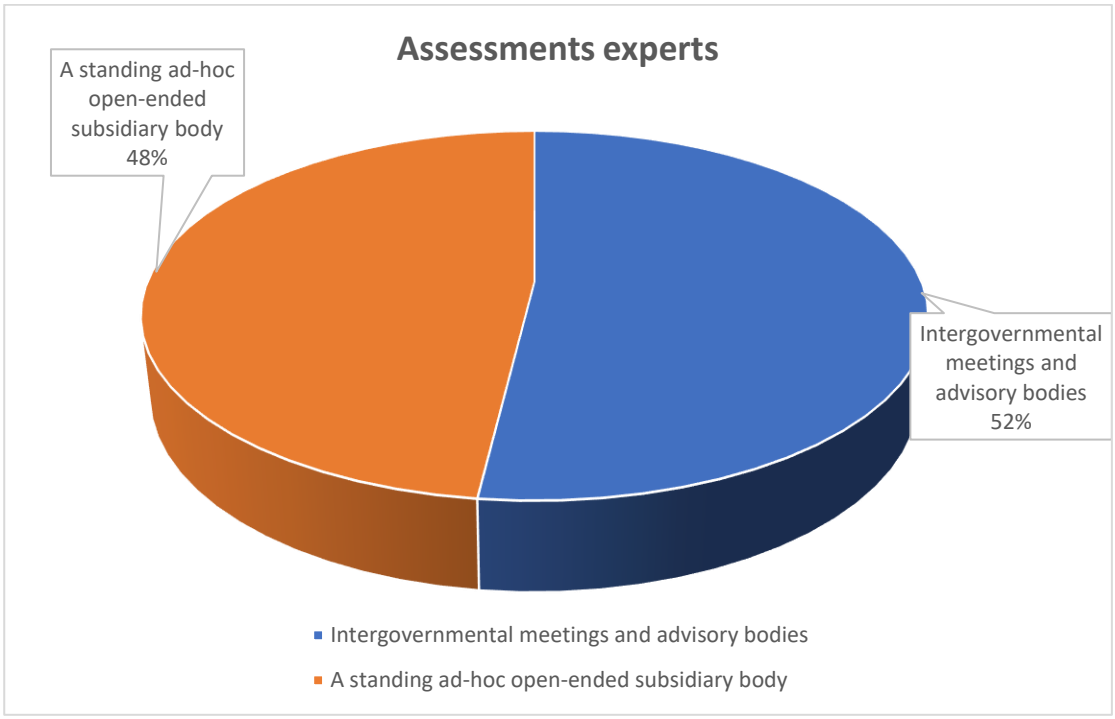


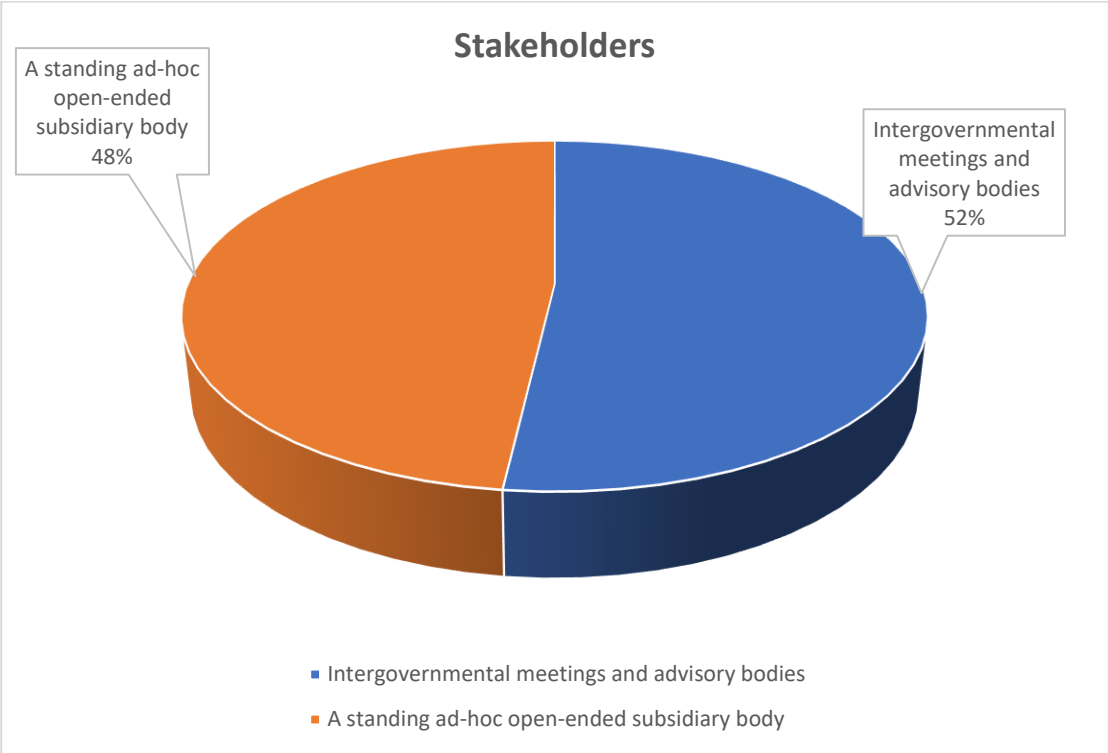
Choices on the preferred GEO's governance approach

Of the consultee groups, Member States strongly supported the governance model of intergovernmental meetings and advisory bodies (alternative 1) over the model of a standing ad hoc open-ended subsidiary body (alternative 2).

Stakeholders and assessment experts were almost evenly divided between the two options. In general consultees prefer an intergovernmental meeting and bodies approach similar to past GEOs.







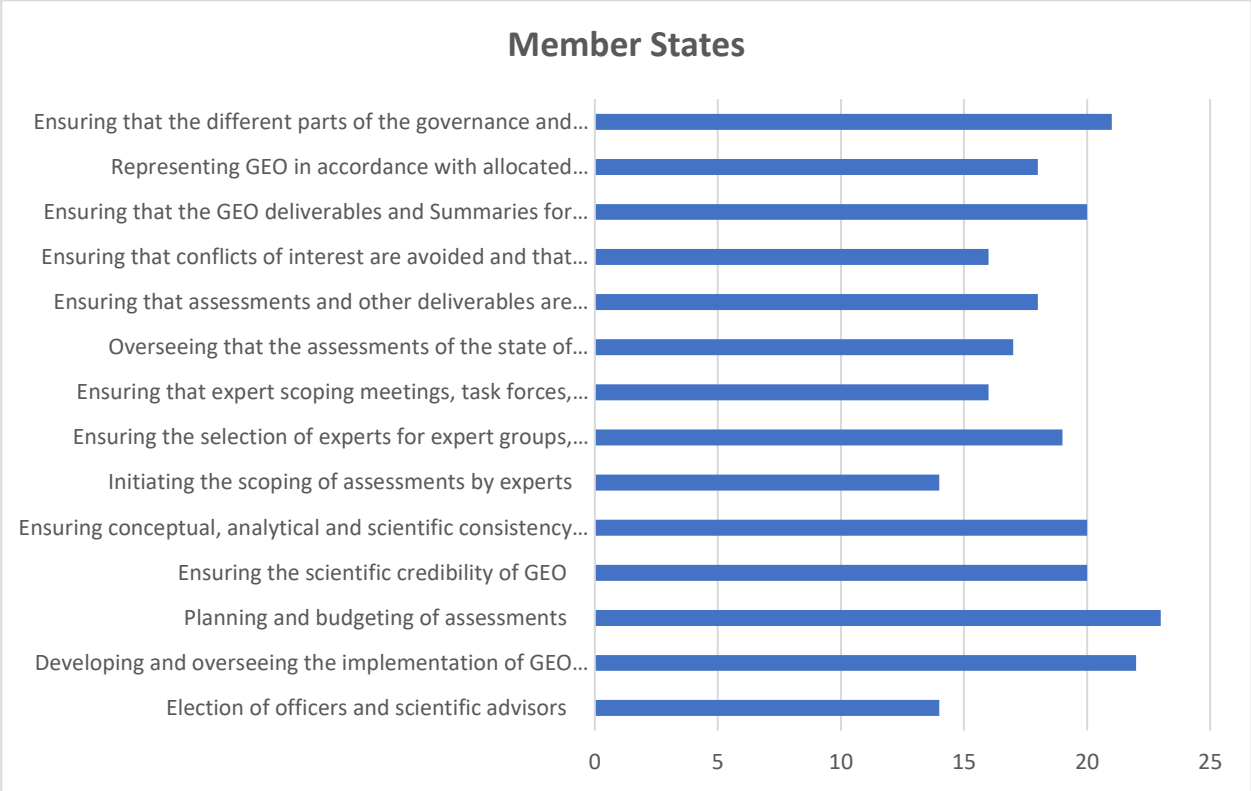
Choices on potential functions for the Governance and Implementation body of GEO

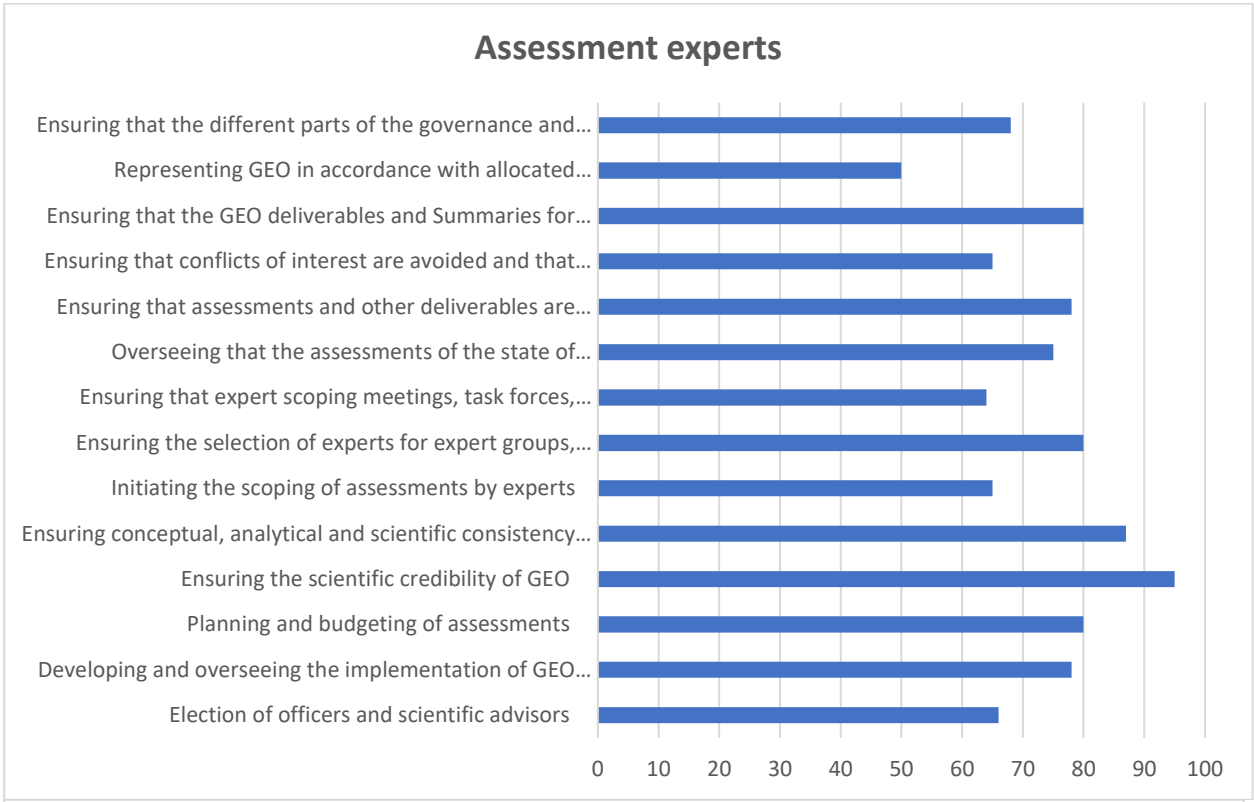
Most consultees favored most of the roles provided in the questionnaire. Overall consultees felt that GEO's governance roles should be prioritized as below;

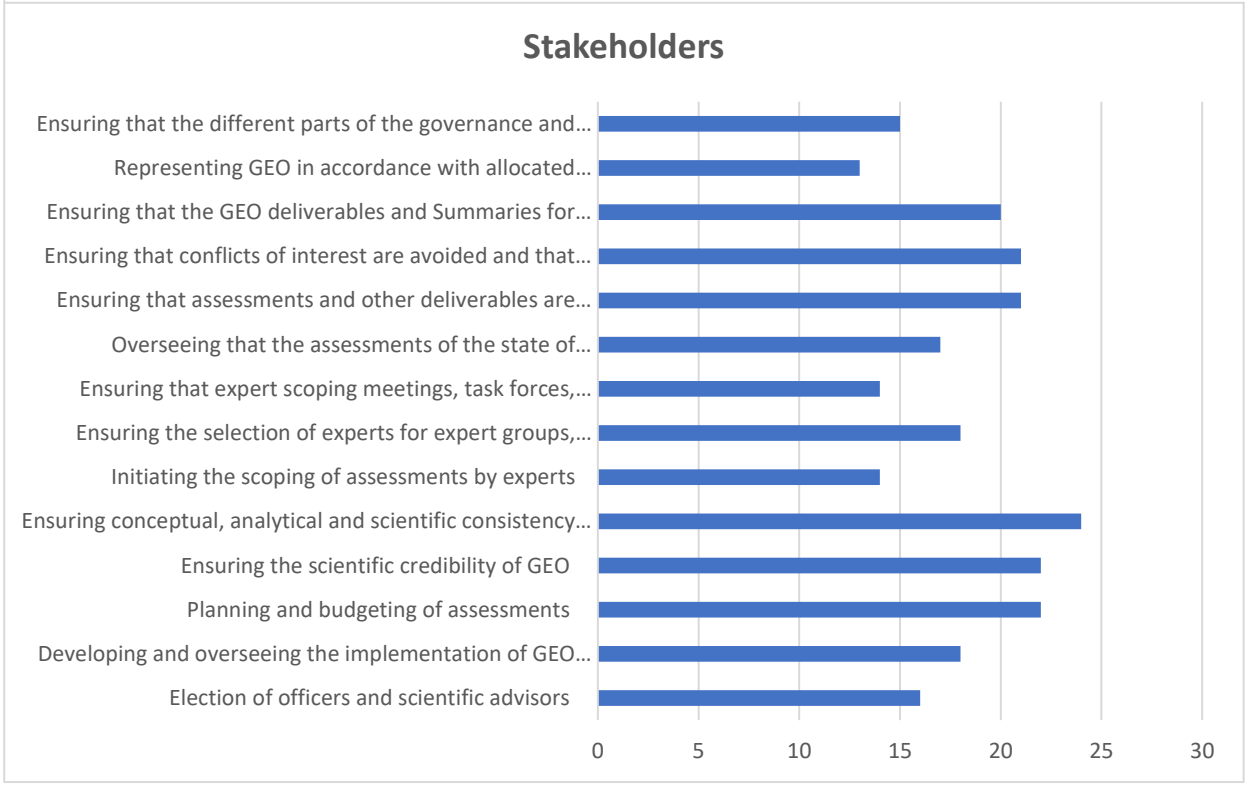
1. Ensuring the scientific credibility of GEO as a robust and rigorous assessment based on scientifically accepted methods and analysis from multiple sources;
2. Ensuring conceptual, analytical and scientific consistency and rigour in the development and implementation of the long-term rolling programme of work;
3. Planning and budgeting of assessments and support to agreed needs in capacity building, knowledge generation and/or policy making;
4. Ensuring that the GEO deliverables and Summaries for Policy Makers are cleared following due process
5. Developing and overseeing the implementation of GEO procedures;
6. Ensuring the selection of experts for expert groups, author teams and task forces on the basis of the merits of experts from nominations provided by Member States and relevant stakeholders.
7. Ensuring that assessments and other deliverables are subject to expert peer review and reviews by Member States and stakeholders;
8. Overseeing that the assessments of the state of knowledge are undertaken by a gender, disciplinary and geographically balanced team of independent experts acting in their personal capacity
9. Ensuring that the different parts of the governance and implementation structure acts in a mutually supportive manner in carrying out its functions;
10. Ensuring that conflicts of interest are avoided and that possible errors are investigated and addressed;

11. Election of officers and scientific advisors as applicable based on agreed guidelines and approaches;
12. Ensuring that expert scoping meetings, task forces, workshops, and expert groups for other reports and deliverables are presided over;
13. Initiating the scoping of assessments by experts;
14. Representing GEO in accordance with allocated responsibilities;

The preferences of the three respondent groups are shown below.

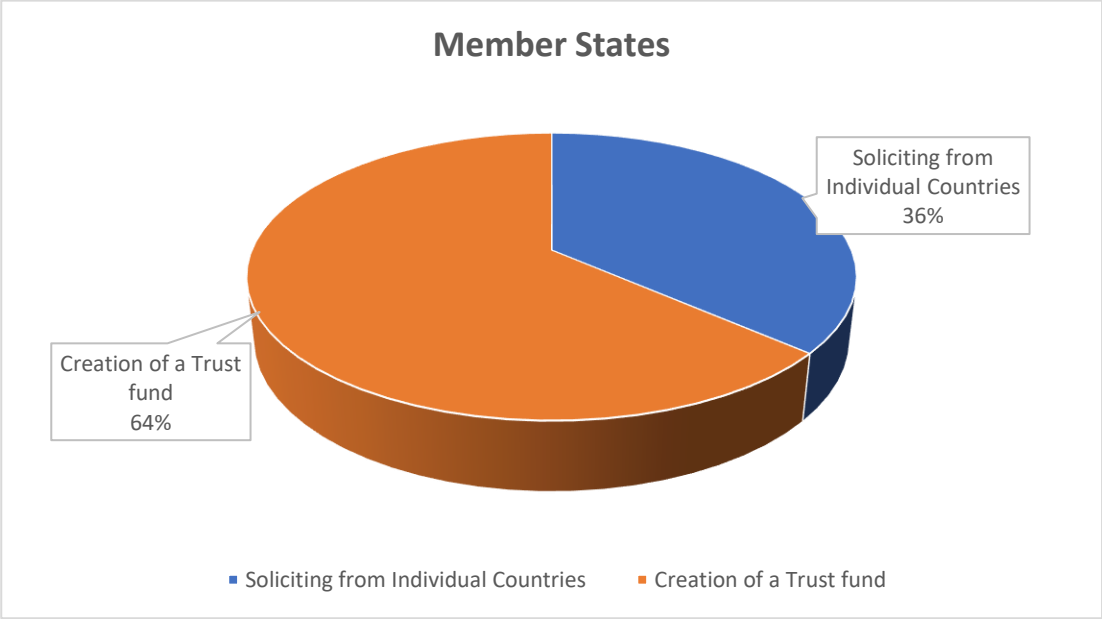


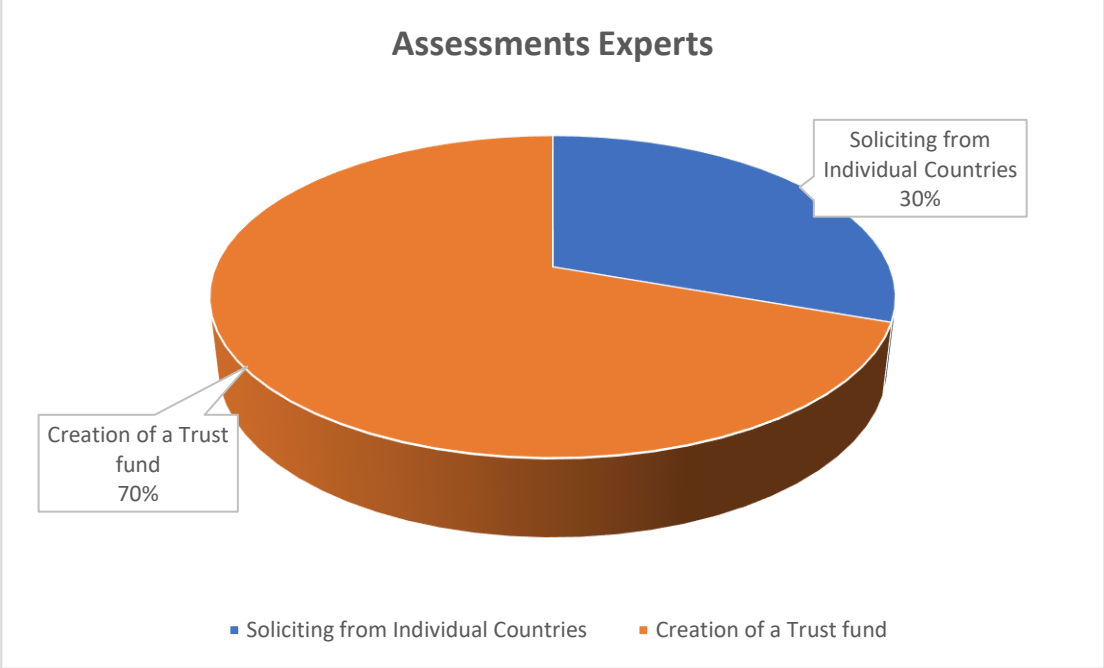

Assessment experts
Ensuring that the different parts of the governance and...
Representing GEO in accordance with allocated...
Ensuring that the GEO deliverables and Summaries for...
Ensuring that conflicts of interest are avoided and that...
Ensuring that assessments and other deliverables are...
Overseeing that the assessments of the state of...
Ensuring that expert scoping meetings, task forces,...
Ensuring the selection of experts for expert groups,...
Initiating the scoping of assessments by experts
Ensuring conceptual, analytical and scientific consistency...
Ensuring the scientific credibility of GEO
Planning and budgeting of assessments
Developing and overseeing the implementation of GEO...
Election of officers and scientific advisors
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

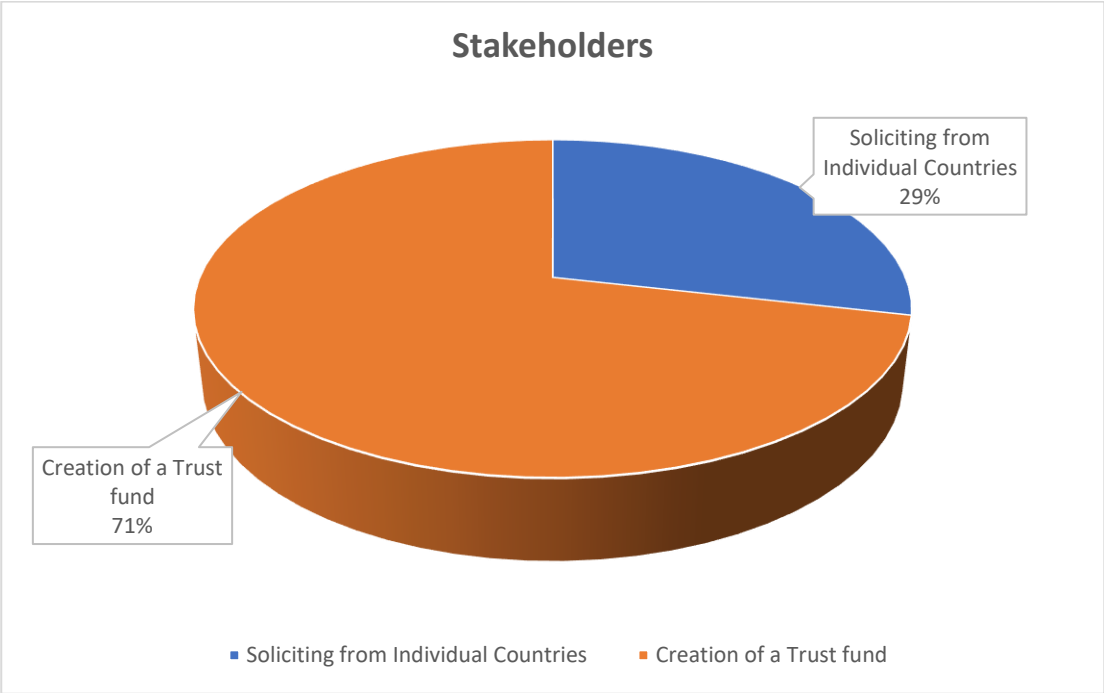

Stakeholders
Ensuring that the different parts of the governance and...
Representing GEO in accordance with allocated...
Ensuring that the GEO deliverables and Summaries for...
Ensuring that conflicts of interest are avoided and that...
Ensuring that assessments and other deliverables are...
Overseeing that the assessments of the state of...
Ensuring that expert scoping meetings, task forces,...
Ensuring the selection of experts for expert groups,...
Initiating the scoping of assessments by experts
Ensuring conceptual, analytical and scientific consistency...
Ensuring the scientific credibility of GEO
Planning and budgeting of assessments
Developing and overseeing the implementation of GEO...
Election of officers and scientific advisors
0 5 10 15 20 25 30

Choices on mechanisms best placed to enable voluntary contributions from Member States and other donors

In general, all consultees preferred creation of a trust fund over soliciting funds from individual countries. Assessment experts and stakeholders were marginally more favor of a trust fund than Member States.

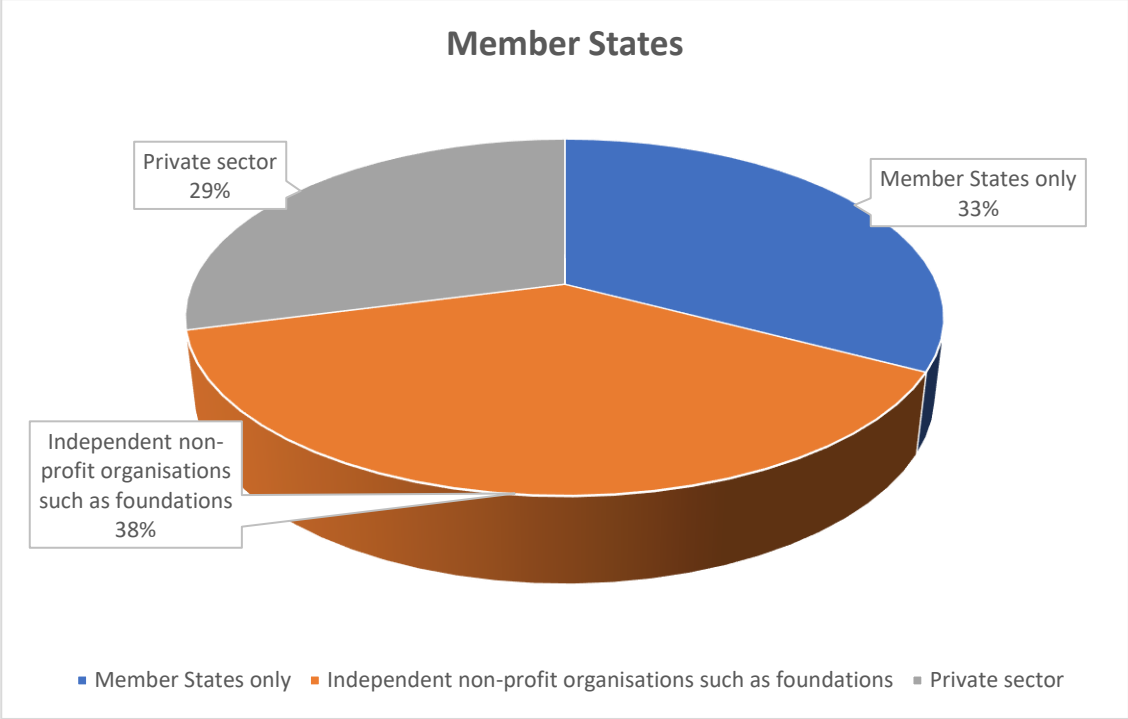


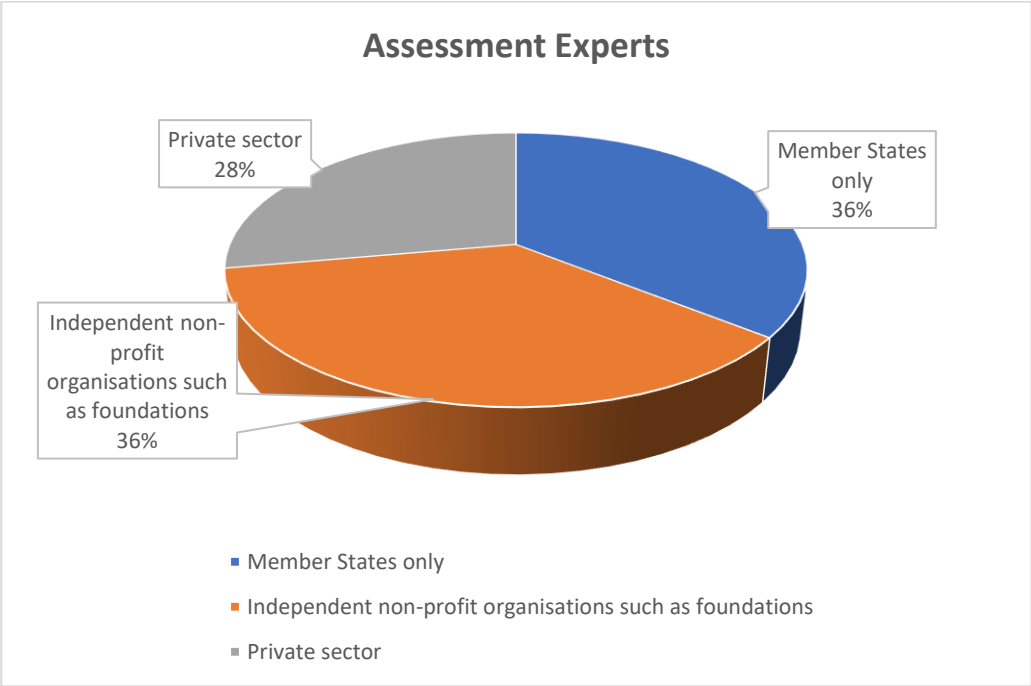


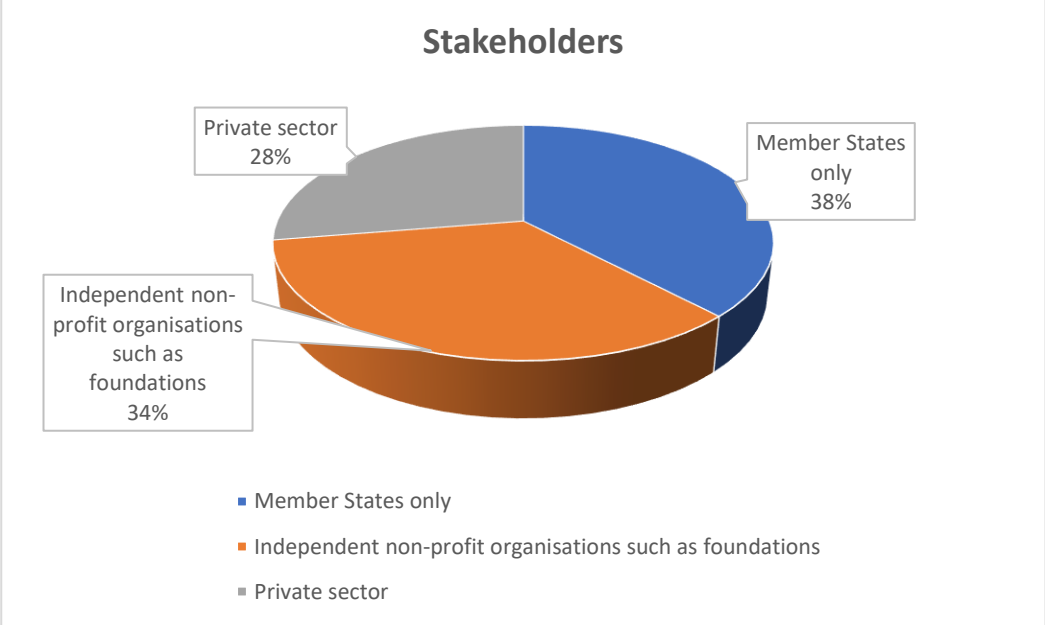


Choices on type of organization from which GEO should be allowed to solicit funds

Consultees generally favored soliciting funds from all three sources of suggested funding.

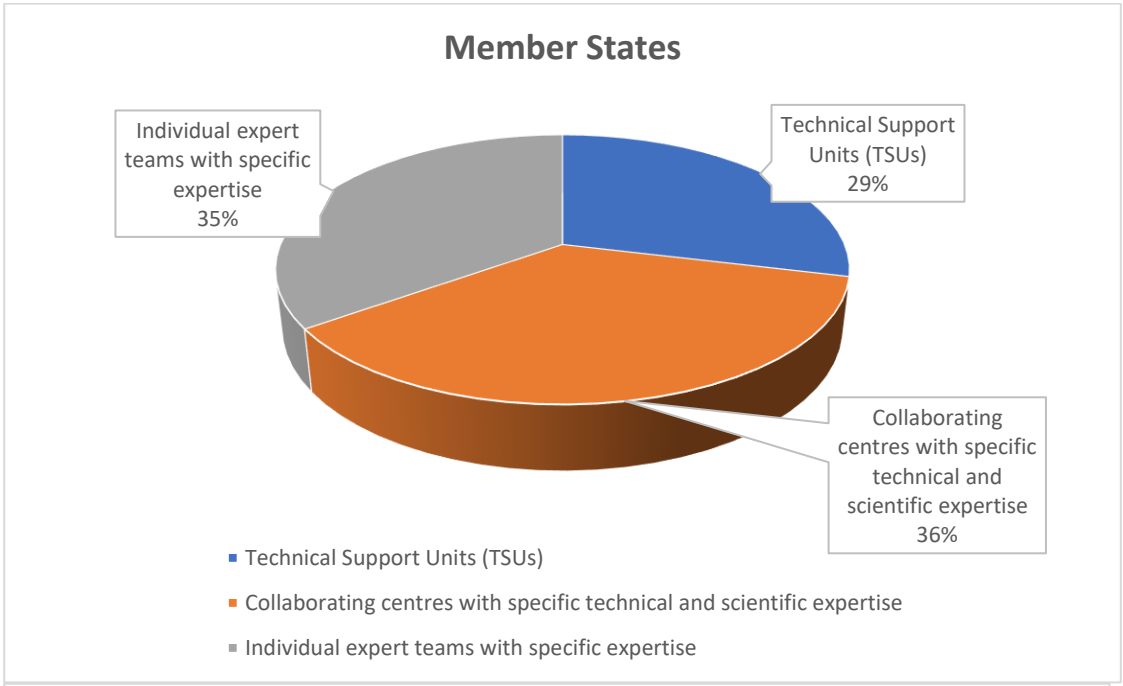


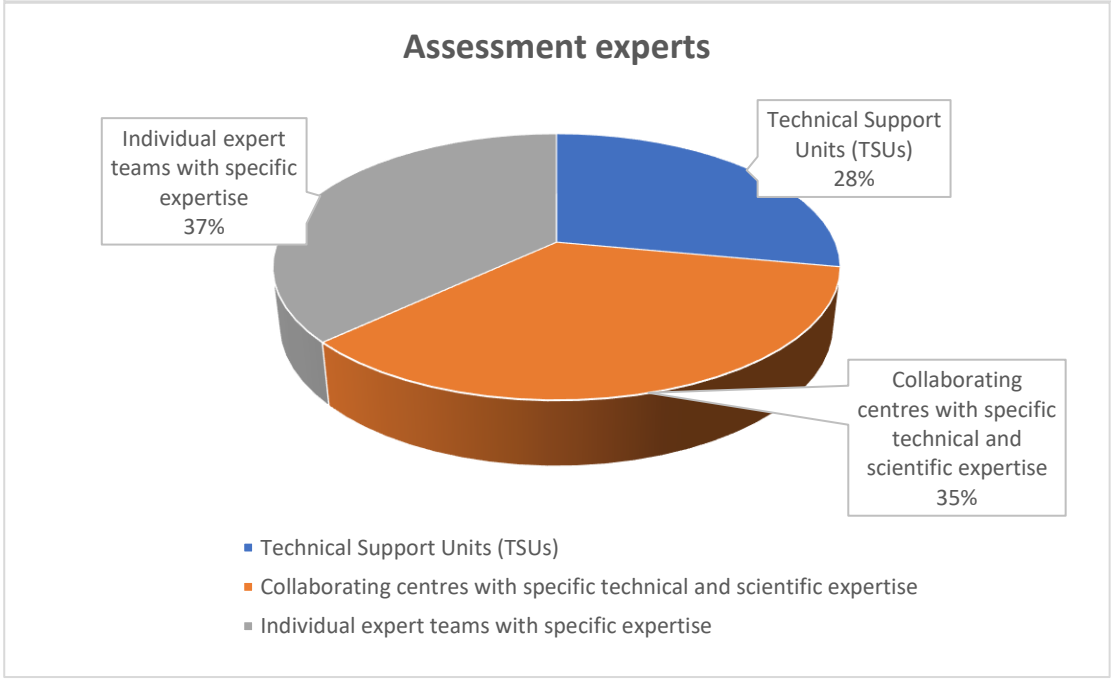


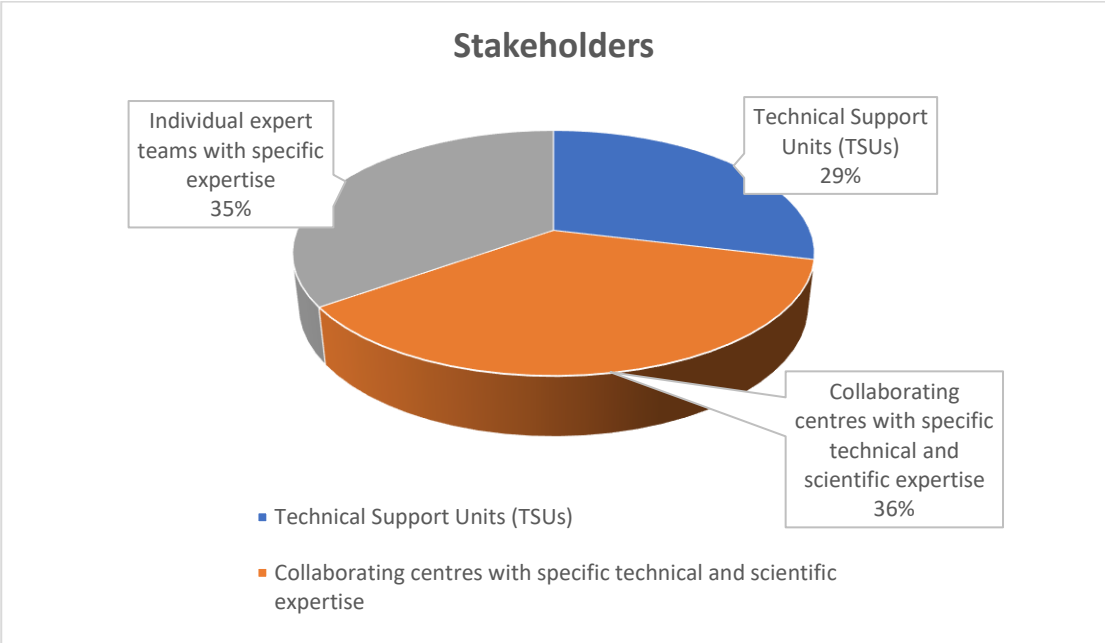


Choices on type of collaborators and collaborative institutions for future GEO

Consultees generally favored all the three collaboration options suggested.


Member States
Individual expert teams with specific expertise 35%
Technical Support Units (TSUs) 29%
Collaborating centres with specific technical and scientific expertise 36%
Technical Support Units (TSUs)
Collaborating centres with specific technical and scientific expertise
Individual expert teams with specific expertise


Assessment experts
Individual expert teams with specific expertise 37%
Technical Support Units (TSUs) 28%
Collaborating centres with specific technical and scientific expertise 35%
Technical Support Units (TSUs)
Collaborating centres with specific technical and scientific expertise
Individual expert teams with specific expertise

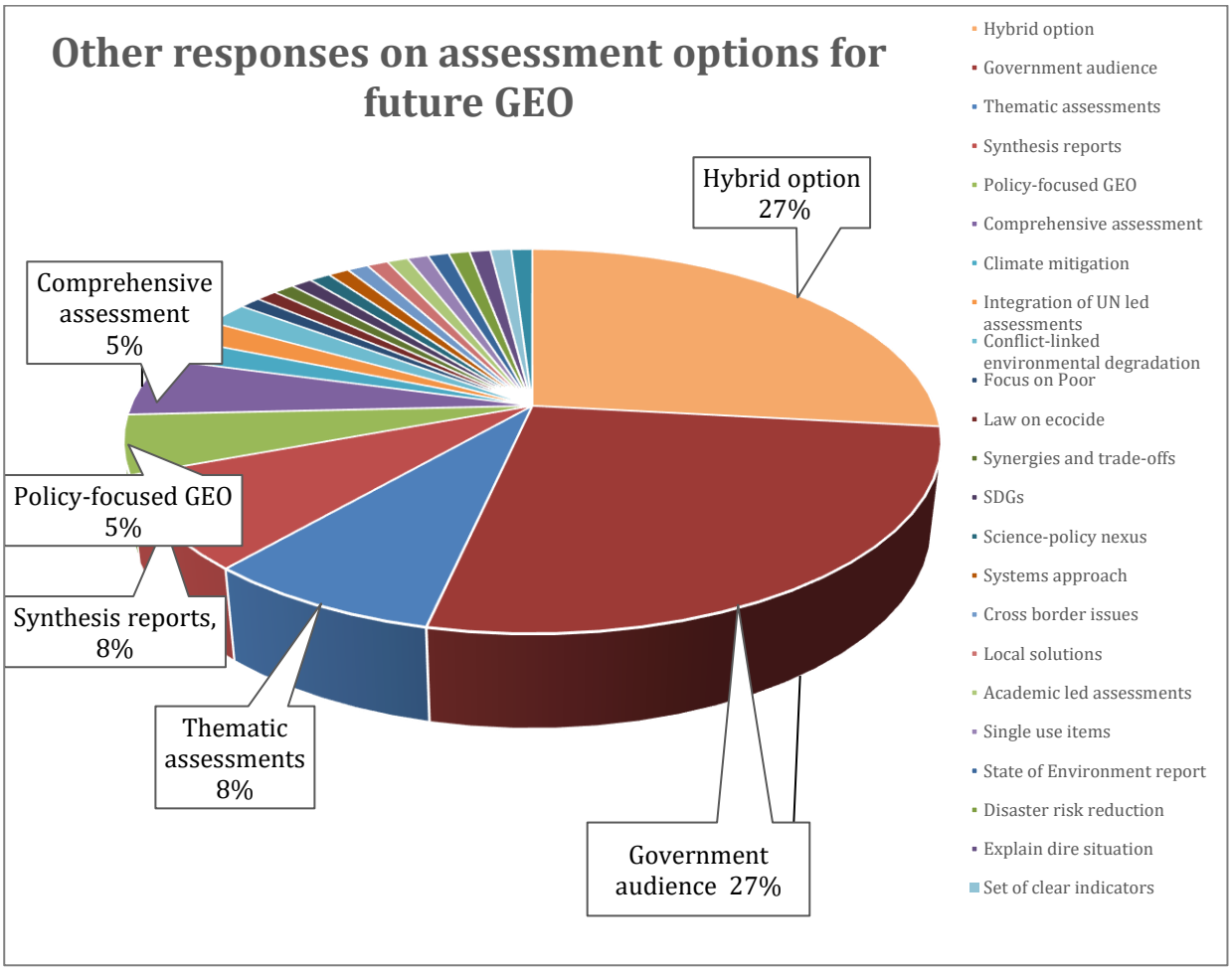


Other suggestions

Within the questionnaire participants were invited to provide additional ideas and suggestions in free text boxes. The written responses were analyzed and tagged to a number of categories. The results are presented in a consolidated form from all three groups of respondents. Where longer responses from a participant were received covering a range of themes, these were regarded as separate responses. A selection of direct quotes from respondents is shown in *italics.*

Other responses on Assessment options for future GEO

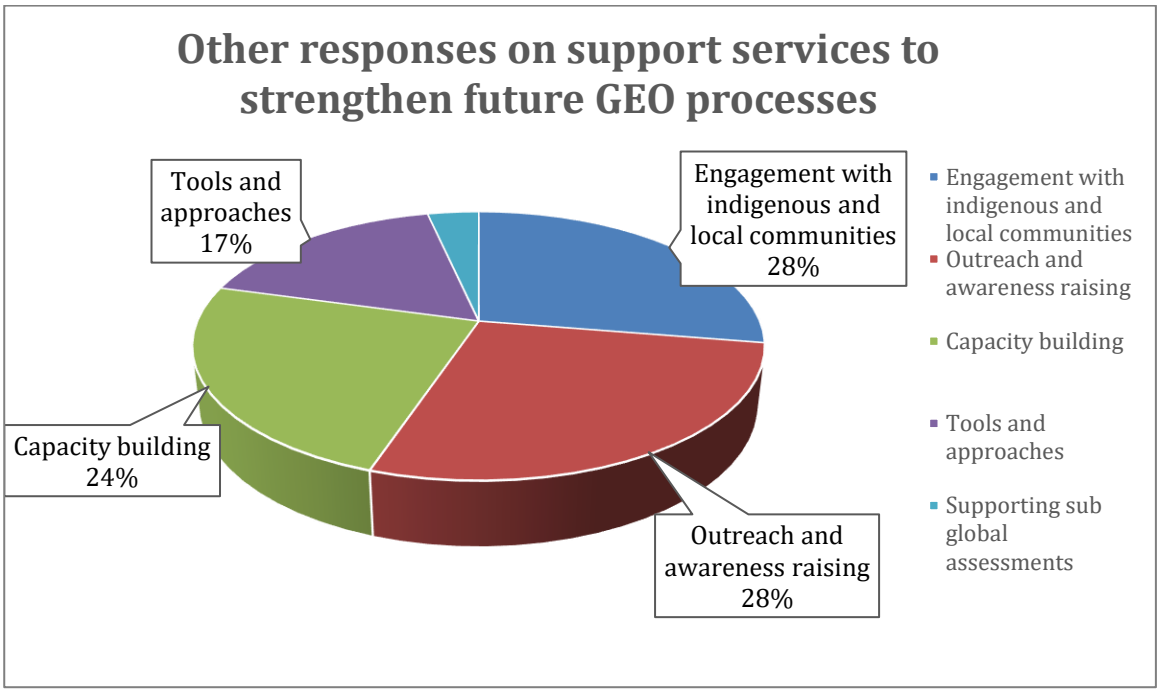
Of the categories of responses received relating to assessment options, 27% suggested consideration of a hybrid option of combining the synthesis option with the thematic/gap filling option; 27% also commented that government was the primary audience for GEO. Targeted assessments were favored in 19% of responses and timely synthesis responses in 8%. A total of 5% of responses mentioned the distinctiveness of GEO in analysing policy and wanted to see that continue. Almost all of the remaining responses took the opportunity to add suggestions for thematic assessments.



"New and novel themes may come up and gaps may remain that require specific attention and assessment. Therefore ideally the 'synthesis option' should be combined with the 'thematic/gap filling option' allowing for flexibility and ensuring the full range of environmental issues is covered in a balanced and authoritative manner."
"A missing piece in the assessment landscape is the rigorous evaluation of the effectiveness of policies."
"I think that current overlaps and potential co-operation between environmental bodies is a must and GEO, IPCC and IPBES in particular should seriously work for a more common agenda…… without the burden of heterogenous and dispersed priorities and efforts."

Other responses on support services to strengthen future GEO processes

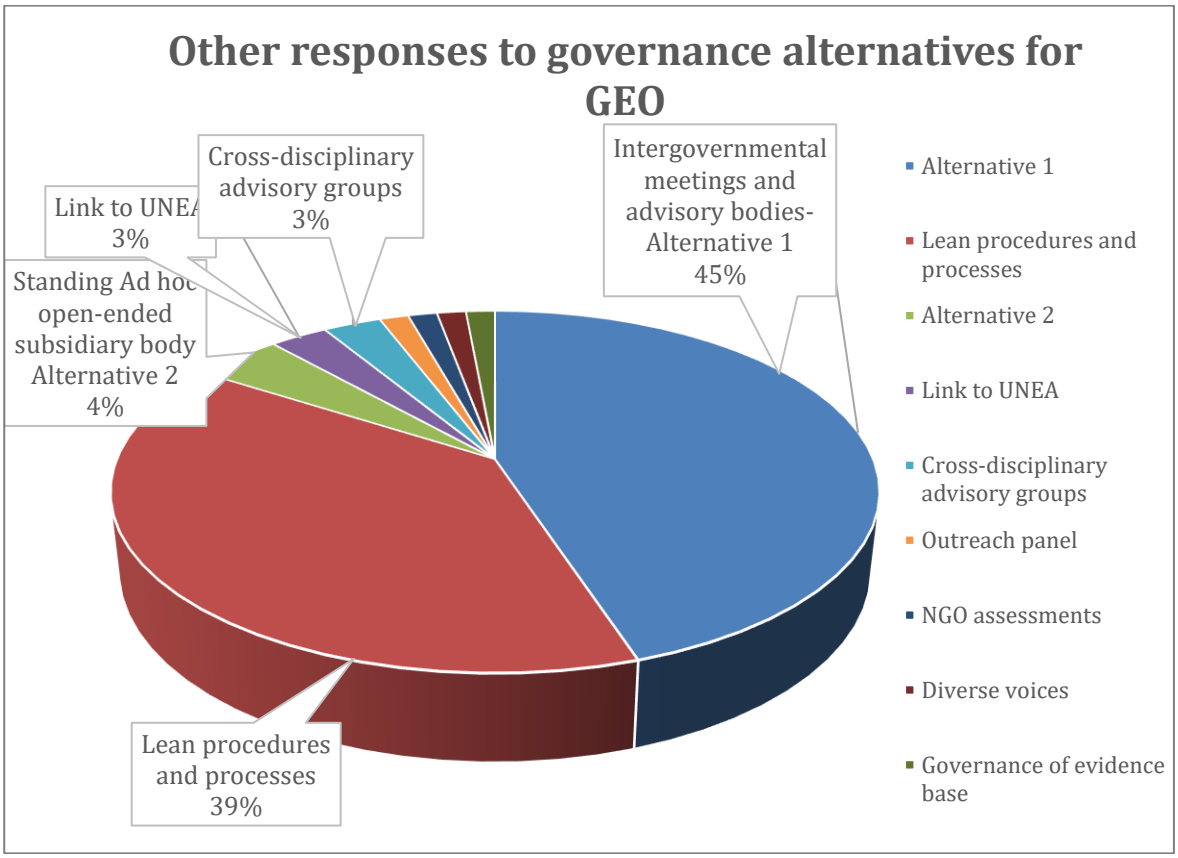
Far fewer comments were made on this question but 28% of responses placed strong emphasis on working with both indigenous and local communities both for purpose of access to knowledge and also on implantation and follow up action. An equal proportion of responses (28%) mentioned the importance of outreach and awareness raising, especially in the light of lower profile of GEO compared with other global assessments. Capacity building was mentioned in 24% of responses both to help engagement with GEO itself and also in sub-global assessments.



"The role of indigenous knowledge should be addressed more robustly, with indigenous communities participating not merely in an ex-post consultative/approval role but proactively where there is co-generation of knowledge (integrating indigenous and scientific perspectives) cycled back in to the GEO process"
"Opportunities for increasing the outreach of GEO findings beyond the policy and scientific ommunities should be strengthened."
"Not all of the functions here are unique to roles for GEO and could be performed through other UNEP processes. Those which directly support GEO and its impact should be prioritized.

Other responses on governance alternatives for future GEO

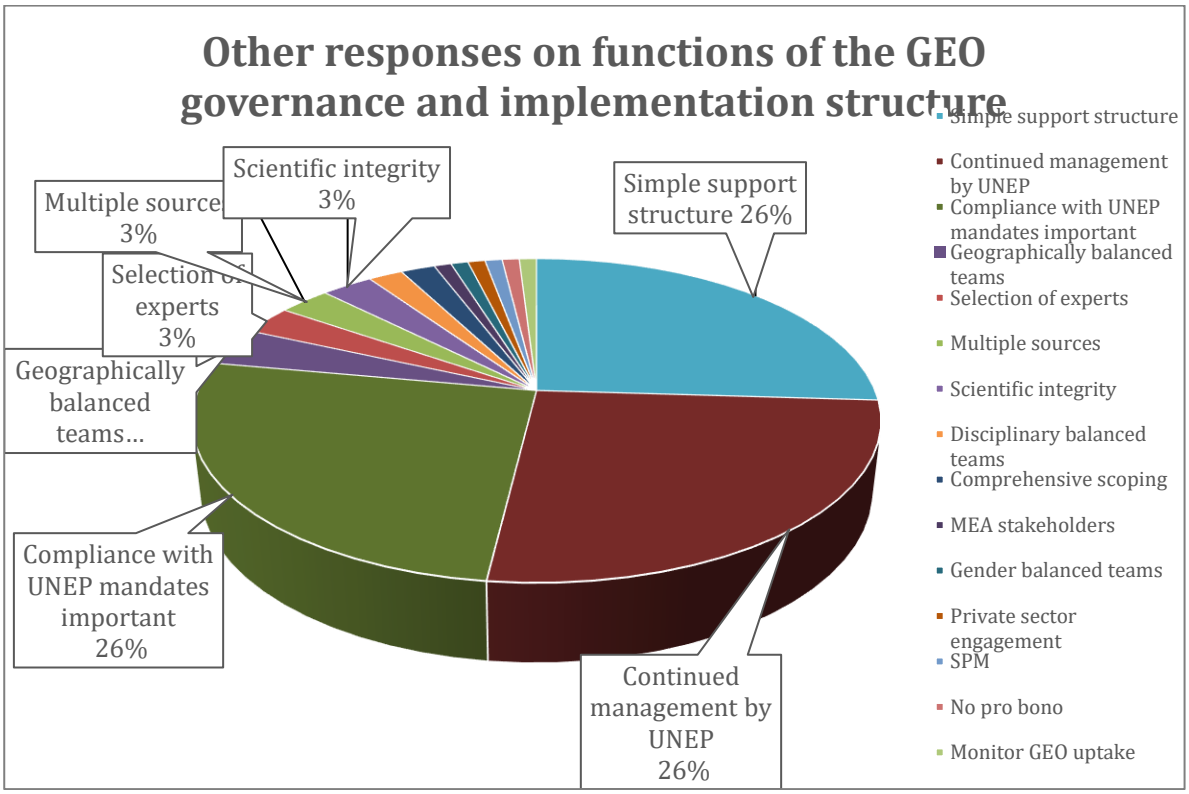
Intergovernmental meeting and advisory bodies – Alternative 1 – was supported in 45% of the comments compared with 4% for the standing ad-hoc open-ended subsidiary body – Alternative 2. This preference is mirrored in the main questionnaire results. The importance of lean procedures and processes was mentioned in 39% of responses, 3% of responses mentioned the importance of links to UNEA and a further 3% wished to see expert groups bringing in cross disciplinary expertise from social scientists as part of Alternative 1.



"An approach that introduces methodologies and processes that resemble the ones of IPCC and IPBES would be less flexible, more costly and would risk frictions with the mandates of UNEP and UNEA….Creating a permanent subsidiary body to oversee the role of GEO would most likely create frictions with the regular work of the Science Division that is underpinning the service-oriented pillar…"
"I support Alternative 1 but have concerns about the [proposed] team of 25 distinguished scientists. Any panel…MUST include experts from who have some experience in working across the science-policy interface spanning ecological, economic and social science fields."

Other responses on functions of the GEO governance and implementation structure

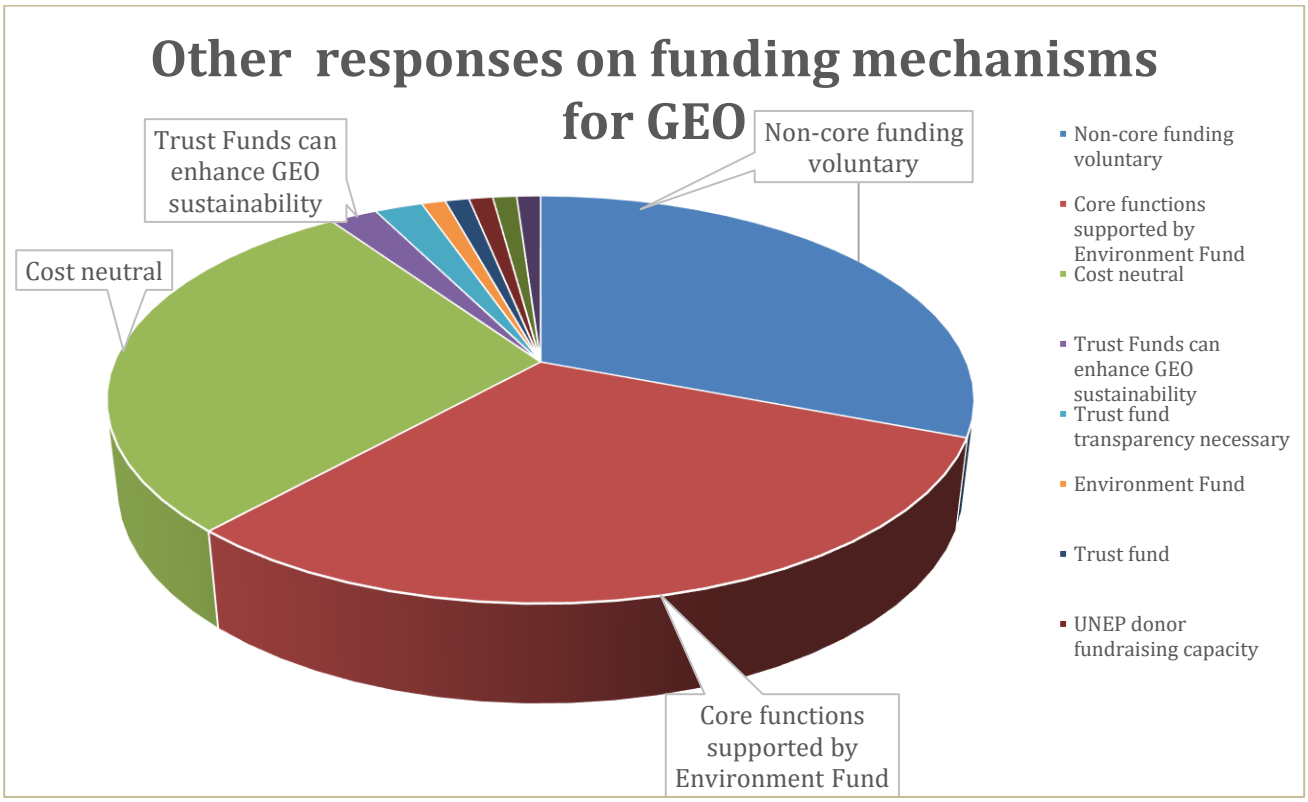
Of the categories of responses relating to the functions of GEO's governance and implementation, 26% of comments related to a wish to see simple support structures, 26% wanted continued management of the GEO process by UNEP and 26% noted the importance of compliance with UNEP mandates.
Further groups of recurring comments included 3% wishing to see geographically balanced teams of experts, 3% focusing on transparency, rigor and broader selection of experts, 3% emphasizing multiple sources including from evidence not in English and from indigenous and local knowledge, and 3% identifying what they perceived as tensions between presenting science and the political processes of negotiating text, and pressures to present data and results in a favorable light.



"Protecting the scientific integrity of GEO is paramount. Member State involvement should not undermine or dilute the scientific nature of the assessment."
"There needs to be a more open transparent and accountable call for experts beyond asking Member States and the usual same old institutions."
"We agree there is a function in managing budgets. Greater clarity is needed …. on the relationship between the management of the budgets under the different governance options and the body that will provide overall oversight and adoption of GEO's budget"

Other responses on funding mechanisms for GEO

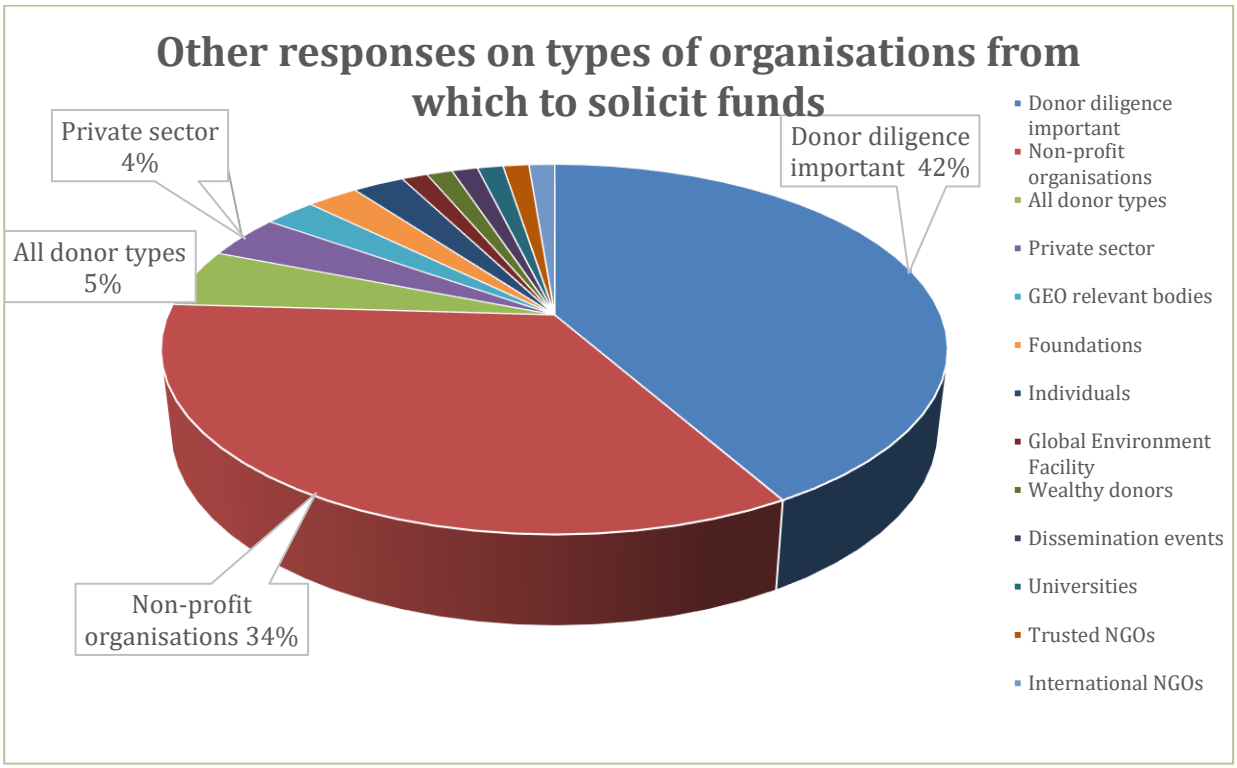
The most recurrent theme of responses under funding mechanism for GEO focused on voluntary funding providing for non-core GEO activity (31%) and core functions of GEO being supported by UNEP's Environment Fund. The importance of GEO being cost neutral occurred in 29% of responses. Other responses noted the need for transparency of the Trust Fund option if additional non-Member State contributions are sought.



"The key word here is 'trust' which ever option you choose."
"Further detail is needed on how the core budget is determined and how the changes in the core budget due to decisions taken will affect the voluntary contributions needed."

Other responses on types of organization from which to solicit funds

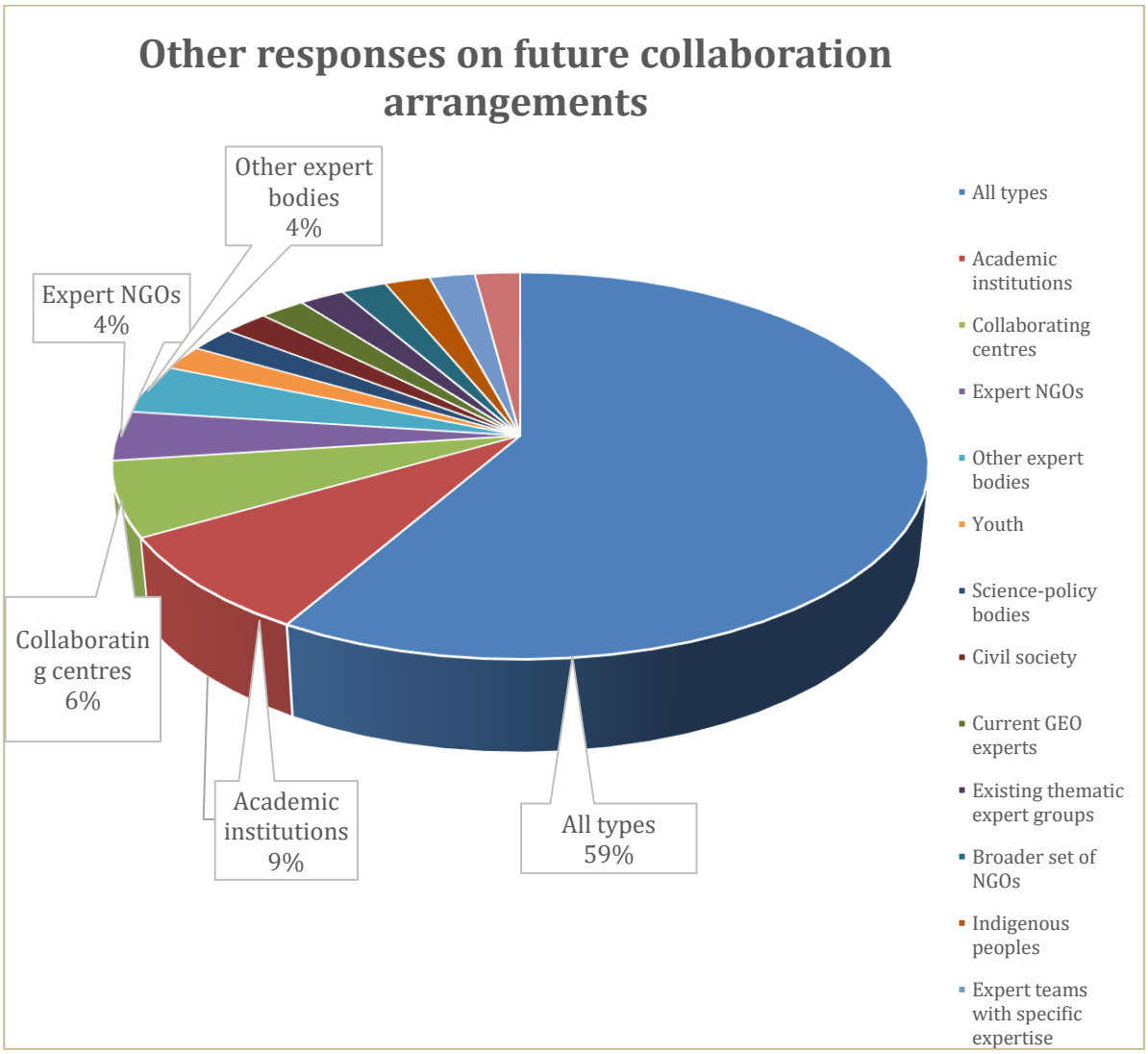
Of the categories of responses relating to the types of organisation from which to solicit funds most comments (41%) related to the importance of donor diligence in respect UNEP's reputation, the credibility of GEO, possible conflicts of interest and potential undue influence. A further 35% of responses supported funding from non-profit organizations, with 5% supporting all of the donor categories in the questionnaire and 4% mentioning the private sector as a source.



"As a key product of UNEO, GEO should be funded within resources of the Environment Fund, and additional support from relevant stakeholders may be considered as long as they in line with any existing funding principles and guidelines established for UNEP."

Other responses on future collaboration arrangements

Of the categories of responses relating to future collaboration arrangements, 59% of responses felt that all kinds of partners should be considered, with 9% mentioning academic institutions, 6%, 6% collaborating centres, 6% expert NGOs and 4% other expert bodies. Responses did not include any suggestions of categories of partners with whom GEO should not work.



"New partnerships may be needed both thematically, geographically and functionally."
"Any expert group which is outside of the academic world will create a weakness in credibility."

Annex IV: Final revised Agenda of the Future of GEO Steering Committee workshop and its extra sessions

UNITED NATIONS

EP

UNEP/GEO-SC/WS-3

Distr.: General
05 November 2021

Original: English

United Nations Environment Programme

Final Workshop of the Future of GEO Steering Committee
8 – 11 November 2021 and extra sessions on 15 and 16 November 2021- 14h00 – 17h00 each day of the workshop session (Nairobi time)

see meeting links in the invitations

Provisional Annotated Agenda

Item 1: Opening - The co-chairs and secretariat will give their opening remarks

Item 2: Adoption of agenda
Supporting document: Provisional annotated agenda
Discussion/decision: Adoption of agenda for the final workshop of the Steering Committee on the future of GEO

Item 3: Agreement on the organization of work and method to be used for the workshop
Supporting document: Annotated agenda. Briefing by the secretariat and co-chairs
Discussion/decision: The Steering Committee agreement on how to proceed with its deliberations in the four sessions of the workshop

Item 4: Overview of the future of GEO process so far
Supporting document: No document.
Discussion/decision: The Steering Committee is invited to share general comments and observations on the future of GEO process so far to aid in its final deliberations as the Committee concludes its work

Item 5: Updating of the draft resolution text for the future of GEO
Supporting document: Draft resolution on the Future of GEO

Discussion/decision: Agreement on broad aspects/elements of the draft resolution to be considered by the Steering Committee in its drafting of the future of GEO resolution

Item 6: Update on UNEA 5.2 preparations and expectations for the Future of GEO resolution

Supporting document: Verbal debrief by the UNEP governance office

Discussion/decision: The Committee is fully briefed on what is expected in terms of the documentation and process in preparation of the final documents and resolution for UNEA 5.2.

Item 7: Discussion on the UNEA working document "Options for the Future of the Global Environment Outlook: Final report of the Future of GEO Steering Committee to UNEA 5.2"

Supporting document: Revised draft UNEA-5.2 working document "Options for the Future of the Global Environment Outlook: Final report of the Future of GEO Steering Committee to UNEA 5.2" following review by the Committee

Discussion/decision: The Committee is invited to consider broad aspects of the draft.

Item 8: Re-consideration of the draft resolution text for the future of GEO in view of the discussions on the draft UNEA 5.2 working document on the future of GEO.

Supporting document: Draft resolution on the Future of GEO and draft revised UNEA working document "Options for the Future of the Global Environment Outlook: Final report of the Future of GEO Steering Committee to UNEA 5.2"

Discussion/decision: The Committee is invited to re-consider the development of a possible draft UNEA-5 resolution after initial discussion on the UNEA working document.

Item 9: Any other business