



UNEP RRC.AP/GEO
Expert Meeting on GEO-4

MEETING RECORD

Monday 20th September 2004

1. GEO-4 Expert Meeting was organized to discuss the Uses of GEO reports, the outlines and schedule of the GEO-4 report and to gather suggestions/opinions for the next report. The Meeting was conducted at Siam City Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand on 20-21 September 2004. Participants include a) representatives from national governments of Thailand, China, Japan, Philippines, Malaysia, Kazakhstan, India, Bhutan, and Islamic Republic of Iran, b) Scientists and Experts from organizations in the region including IGES, University of South Pacific, EANET, Global Water Partnership, Hanoi University, GMSARN, and APFEJ, c) UNEP collaborating centres and RING members, namely AIT, TEI, SIC, IGCI, BCAS, DA, TERI, and NIES, d) intergovernmental agencies, namely MRC, ICIMOD, and SACEP, e) regional partners including ESCAP, ADB and IUCN, and f) UNEP staff from DEWA and RRC.AP. (Attachment 1: List of Participant)
2. Dr. Subrato called the meeting to order and invited Mr. Surendra Shrestha, Director of UNEP Regional Resource Centre for Asia and the Pacific to officially open the meeting. Mr. Shrestha welcomed all distinguished participants from the region, including representatives from the national governments, UNEP RRC.AP's collaborating centres in each subregion, partners and resource person from DEWA. He informed the Meeting on the history and importance of GEO process, starting from GEO-1 in 1997, GEO-2 in 1999, GEO-3 in 2002 and this meeting on GEO-4 report, which will be published in 2007. The idea of Sustainable Planet Earth is the action through Policy that is legal, fiscal and technological and Capacity Building. He mentioned key questions for this Meeting, major issues on environment and sustainability and expectations. He emphasized that GEO process is a participatory approach with involvement of stakeholders and collaborating centres in local, national, subregional and regional levels. This should be continued and built on existing process and partnerships.
3. Finally, message of 5 challenges of the region for 21st century was conveyed to the Meeting, focusing on path that this region will take, not on whether it will grow. Those challenges include urbanization issue, emerging issues specific to the region, institutions, paths to sustainable development and regional cooperation. Thank you note was delivered to Mr. Shrestha for his remarks and its useful application to the Meeting. The meeting was asked to do the round table introduction. Then, the objectives of the Meeting and suggested outputs of the Meeting on how to make assessment more relevant to policy makers, how to strengthen scientific base and finally how to strengthen science and policy linkages were elaborated, as well as the detailed the agenda.
4. Dr. Tessa was invited to present on the GEO assessment framework. (Attachment 2: Presentation on GEO Assessment Framework) The comments were on the dissemination of the strategy through other media and more suggestion on how to make the Report a difference. The comment was acknowledged and admitted that problem was how to physically reach policy makers and there would be an outreach unit to response this need. Further items from representatives were on increasing number of collaborating centre in the future and their intensified contribution, and on the capacity within the central government.
5. The presentation on Science Initiative was carried out. (Attachment 3: Science Initiative) Suggestions from participants included the involvement of economists, a set-up of regional scientific advisory committee (SAC) for GEO-4, focus of top 10 global issues for and policy/decision makers to digest due to limited time, and focus on identifying users. More comments were on success of NETLAB and university networks in bridging gap between policy and science in GEO process, importance of adding air pollution as one thematic issue, monitoring system on translation of information received into action by policy/decision makers, and evaluation on how GEO-1 was successfully translated into policies.

6. Responses were that the importance of including financial aspect into science initiative and SAC for GEO has not been set up and that emerging issues would be appeared in GEO Year Book in a specified chapter, which has the similar process as GEO-4 report. Monitoring system was conducted through interviewing main target audience such as ministries officials and there was a working group to check the effective policy implementation around the world. Finally, it was reported that GEO 3 has been useful for policy formulation.
7. There was a question on UNEP strategy in dealing with collapsing process. The response was that there was a proliferation of assessment going on in which to harmonize our work, which was challenge for the meeting and issue for working group discussion. UNEP affirmed that target groups/end-users of GEO reports are governments and ministries, not just university handbook. It was pointed out that suggestion on different products for different target group was good and will be dealt by outreach group. The meeting was informed that thematic challenge was outcomes of the inter-governmental consultation and air pollution was not identified as the assessment gap issue.
8. Further questions covered the issues of natural disaster, linkage between poverty and environment as thematic challenges, challenge and need to build in mechanism for frequent transfer/change of the environmental ministries of all countries, Views about the scientific credibility for the scientific advisory process and suggestions of inventory of scientific experts working at different levels to be organized in theme-wise in the roster of scientific organizations involving in GEO process and need to improve Peer review process, and success of Montreal Protocol.
9. The meeting was informed that focus of the GEO-4 has not been completely designed. Responses included the explanation on natural disaster that was not an thematic challenge outcome from inter-governmental consultation, and acknowledge of the fact in frequently changes/transfers of people in environmental ministries. This was an argument for making comprehensive report or focus on priority issues. And the inventory of Scientist was a good suggestion as it was planned to be strengthened based on thematic science.
10. Peer review process was normally taken place after the draft report was prepared under two components 1) by individual experts and 2) at the regional level. In addition, comment on small percentage of responds will be incorporated in GEO-4 recommendation. Issue of data was raised that is conventional for new and emerging issues. Response from UNEP was the setting of regional data portals (UNEP data portal) would be solution. Last question was whether GEO-1 triggered global reporting initiative and assisted developing countries in the session were unanswered but left for discussion. Before proceeding to the next presentation, it was added on peer review that there was scope for better peer review on policy relevance of GEO. Earlier emphasis on checking data, trends etc. but now the draft will emphasis on policy relevance. The presentation on GEO process in Asia and the Pacific was staged. (Attachment 4: Presentation on GEO process in Asia Pacific)
11. The Meeting was open for question & answer. The first question was on the criteria for authentic reports and the response was addressed in a way that it should be the governmental agencies or national governments or inter-governmental organization and secretariat of conventions who should have those criteria. It was replied that UNEP has guidelines for data. Followed by comments on tracking down of issues and news, social dimension within scientific aspect of data and attempt of GEO-4 to identify hidden people in implementing environmental programmes/their successes/their communities and how to support them with specific guidelines that might yield good case-studies, and proposal on geographical identification of EANET that covers South East Asia and East Asia. Finally, it was emphasized that GEO process is a comprehensive one and case-studies could be captured through UNEP's CC and the issue of geographical boundaries will be considered as suggestion.
12. In the afternoon, the meeting was divided into groups by its character of organizations which were governments, scientists, and partners. (Attachment 5: list of working group for day 1) Each group was provided 2 hours for discussion the given questions (Attachment 6: questions for day1) Each group was called back to report to the Plenary. Dr George Varughese from DA was dominated to chair this session. The invitation of group presentation was made respectively: Group D, Group C, Group B and Group A. (Attachment 7: presentations of working groups).
13. There was one comment on the highlight of UN DESD in the GEO-4. General comments were issues of availability of scientific expertise and worldclass institute in the region (ADB), language of the report, presentation of scientists in higher level meetings with policy/decision makers, identification of policy

from local level to address local environmental problems, GEO's role as early warning to help ministries with policy and measurement of the cost of inaction, issues of urbanization, good (participatory) governance, and finally importance of MEAs document.

14. Chairperson summarized by giving highlights/thoughts to the Meeting on the scale of uses of GEO by direct policy makers at national level at the light level since the government has its own source of data, Civil Society and researchers at very useful level to have dialogue with UN source of data, and finally by local level people at the least useful level since GEO is global report. It was suggested that if data is meant for policy making, there should be a section on policy making and policy effects. The link between global issues and local issues was also focused that GEO should provide the link clearly for the impacts of policy at global level and how it affects local level and vice versa. (vertical link) Cross cutting issues/emerging issues and criteria to define prioritize those issues was concerned. Finally it was concluded the Meeting that linkage between policy and research is very strong and it should be ensured that funding for the scientific community is recognized and scientific community retaining in nations and not the brain drain. Closing of day 1.

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15. The Meeting was welcomed and the first presentation of the day was made: Feedback from users of GEO-3 report (Attachment 8: Presentation on User Feedback). The comment were on high number of users from the internet and that outlook chapter was the least appreciated of all. It was responded that such information was not detailed, but later it would be. The Meeting was continue with the next presentation on GEO-4 Outline (Attachment 9: Presentation on Towards The 4th Global Environment Outlook (GEO-4)), which led to the Group exercise that had broken down the Meeting into 5 working groups. (Attachment 10: list of working group for day 2 and Attachment 11: Exercise for day 2)
16. The comments were on the complexity and sophistication of the model presented, and wider range of end users. However, it was wondered that GEO-4 report would influence policy makers, and it was suggested that activity on Day 2 should have been discussion/questionings on the outlines that was wanted and workable with policy makers. More comment was on time scale and specific objectives on dissemination of the information. The issue of scenarios was raised that GEO-3 had come up with a set of scenarios till 2032 and what is the use of doing another set of scenarios that go on till 2035 (as in GEO-4). GEO-4 should build on the previous scenarios (GEO-3). If the intention is to become more policy relevant, then the document should predominantly deal with policy questions. Which one has worked and why? The Montreal Protocol was raised as an example. The respond was that an advisory group was working on outline and content. They felt that scenarios for GEO-3 were useful for scenarios for GEO-4. They would not repeat same information, but will build on the same in GEO-4.
17. More comment was on the process of GEO that was not adequately utilized. Every single end-user including NGOs and Civil Society was global players, and on the importance of linkages and translation from global to local use. In addition, different governing structure has different actions. Nation can see from GEO report which structure/facilities from GEO that can be used with their own context. It was explained that the process itself has engaged different groups and users and has secondary target audience. Since GEO is the global report, it cannot be simplified down to the grassroots level. Inter-linkages between policy and between levels –global and local is important. There is discussion whether this is inter-linkages should be a different process or should be incorporated in the GEO Process. And, the idea of different products for different users was realized through many versions of report from GEO-3 such as Youth version and GEF.
18. The follow-up question was posed to the Meeting whether different products from the same process or different end-users for the same product from the same process. New issue of criteria for GEO-4 to be unique, for not being to generalized and compromising was raised with support of participants and would be discussed in the Meeting through working group 1 presentation and who would work on Chapter 1. More response was that emerging issues will be in the Report wherever relevant while dissemination of information is a part of process, worked out by an outreach group as mentioned earlier.
19. The Meeting was informed that one purpose of this Meeting was to discuss more on outline. Meeting in June was to discuss and decide outline. The target was to make GEO more action oriented. So GEO

focused more on MDG which have acceptance from all governments of the world. The Meeting was then asked to keep 2032 as the base of the scenario and to wait for the regional expert meeting to comment on the outline. He urged the Meeting to discuss this outline and scope of improvement for each chapter.

20. First comment on outline was on the interesting structure that can be different for more policy relevance model. Chapter 2 and 4 could be merged to present two different parts: one global level and the other on regional level, narrowing down to national level. Second comment was on more details on policy discussion (policy implementation, areas of policy implementation and analysis) for different national governments to see enough relevance with their own country. Third comment was on the matter of criteria to be drawn up for three areas: geographical magnitude of the issue, number of population affected by the issue, and linkage of the issue to the UN MDG.
21. Fourth comment was on the existence of the Executive Summary for policy/decision makers. Fifth comment was mechanism to reach real policy planners/policy experts since they are a rare commodity and reviews was normally done by NGOs and research institutes who were not real policy experts/makers. Sixth comment was suggestion to start working group and make suggestion/comment through their groups and presentation. Seventh comment was to break up chapter 1 and 2. Eighth comment was to combine Chapter 2 and 4, and break up into two parts: global and regional because scenario under the outlook section grow out of past scientific performance. It was recommended not to bring up challenges in the middle.
22. The respond was clarification on content and focus on a few chapters that were mentioned and discussed: Chapter 3 described the flow from the past to the future and provided issues with higher and more analytical approach in response to the need to mainstream environment, and Chapter 5 was on mainstreaming of the environment. The final comment before working group exercise was on the need of having indicators used to report on a specific target. Then, the Meeting was broken into 5 groups and started discussing different chapters.
23. The Meeting was called back to the Plenary in the afternoon and each group presented the outcomes (Attachment 12: presentations of working groups) One comment for Chapter 1 was to elaborate more on suggestion for Question e for Chapter Two. No comment for Chapter Three. One comment was to apply Barbados into Chapter Four. Finally, it was added that mechanisms proposed were broadly outlined and real goals, action and agenda for political masters in next 30 years. General comment for GEO and relationship with other global agendas (such as MDGs) that GEO should not be made in a way that it tries to accommodate all the things. It may be a water-down. GEO should be authoritative and tries to trigger environmental issues. It was commented that GEO should give digestible and chewable information that are needed and suitable for targeted stakeholders through excellent participatory process. It was clarified that Executive summary will be provided and issued as separate document.
24. The Meeting was questioned the meeting how GEO-4 Report could stay focus on environmental issues and step out of Sustainable Development. Comment was that If UNEP wanted to integrate environment in the development planning and development implementation, environment is going to be the main stream towards development, Sustainable development could not be avoided. Comment global community will go to the same direction for sustainable development. UNEP looks at sustainable development through the glass of environment. 50% of the tone of the Report will be on environmental end and the other 50% will be on social and economic ends.
25. It was summarized that Chapter Two more focused on environment and Chapter three which was on cross-cutting issues, focused on implication. Chapter four and five would go into sustainable development issues. It was further questioned on sustainable development, referring back to GEO outline for clarification from group 5 what level of details that were envisaged for instance for reporting on the cost of action and role of inaction/action and role of new institutional arrangement with regard to emerging issues.
26. Response from group 5 was that it was suggested to be reported in parallel form in order to be policy-oriented chapter. For the cost of each of agenda of each action and inaction should be calculated by experts such economists and financials. In the aspect of institutional arrangement, for example, Asian Brown Cloud Project where ESCAP and UNEP have forced countries to come out with something, was a need to formally put into some document as a good opportunity to learn from what have been done.

Also, it needed to be debated at the regional consultation in GEO-4 for producing the great report. Institutional option needed to be put in place.

27. Follow-up questions were on what this above comment would be related to the overall report and previous chapters, whether was to select new emerging issues to make a case or how new arrangement could be formed or it was suggested on new comprehensive coverage of issues. It was referred back to Day 1 exercise and suggested that global transparency process and specific criteria were required to acknowledge many categorized issues and to prioritize them into 5 chapters. Consequently, it was suggested that each chapter should have its own institutional arrangement and it could become action-oriented. And it was added that this particular suggestion could be further discussed in the policy-analysis advisory group.
28. Boarder Question for Chapter 5, two ways to approach for Outlook, environmental trends, cross-cutting issues and SoE were 1) to split environmental trends and policies and 2) to keep environmental policies and discuss trends within different timeframe. And the Meeting was asked question that what suited them best and what effectively useful for them. It was suggested to add more graphics and illustration for policy makers, who have time limits. Final outcomes, one page per issue, as policy breeze can be taken out as separate sheet of policy paper and given to ministers for consideration, which is suitable for translation and combination for different purposes. This suggestion was supported that it should have issue-based fact sheet, very brief and concise, not more than one page. Alternatively, the fact sheet of each policy could be on region-wise and subregion-wise issue.
29. More clarification on the question was requested with the reference to GEO-4 Outline presentation on page 6, slide number 12 (Attachment 9). Chapter 2 of GEO-4 reported on state and trends related to bio-physical aspects and Chapter 3 was more in-depth analysis of the institutional aspects and focusing on human dimension. Chapter 2 and 3 could be broken up in 2 forms, by using time dimension: environmental subject dimension and policy and institution dimension). State and Trends was one chapter and Outlook was another, or Environmental issues was one chapter and Policy was another.
30. Clarification from Group 3 was presented based on temporal dimension, that timeline was one direction and timeline was one direction. Subject or temporal directions might have different obstacles, and discussion was on which direction. Data availability was raised to object the temporal direction. There were supports from the meeting that the Report should go by subject. It was concluded that series of meeting with the methodological groups and the advisory groups will be conducted after this meeting and during the report preparation process in order to discuss opinions from the meetings. The Meeting was called for coffee break.
31. The meeting was called back to the Plenary. Dr. Tessa, on behalf of DEWA, thanked all participants for active discussion and contribution during these two days. Dr Subrato stated the closing remarks by mentioning that this meeting was a start-up activity of GEO-4 Process, on follow-up side, UNEP RRC.AP was coordinating office and willing to maintain this GEO networking. Assistance from all participants was very important in the networking process for data and information, tracking issues in Asia and Pacific. Peer review and sharing experiences process were very important. UNEP RRC.AP really wished to see this networking moving and growing and to product report that has linkages of science and policy as we the meeting had discussed during these 2 days how to strengthen the link. Finally, he thanked all participants for invaluable input and active participation, chairs in each session, Dr Tessa for providing guidance, staff for arrangement and organization of the meeting, and finally wished all participants happy journey back to countries.