

Terms of reference for the UNEP-ISC Foresight Expert Panel

A. Background

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment.

To help navigate current and future uncertainty and disruptive change, while effectively delivering on its mandate, UNEP is looking to put in place a mechanism to establish an institutionalized approach to strategic foresight and horizon scanning with the view to developing an anticipatory and future-oriented culture.

This mirrors the growing interest and demand for foresight that is also reinforced by the United Nations reform agenda and the Secretary-General's report on 'Our Common Agenda', which calls for all UN agencies, as well as all UN member states, to engage foresight practices more deeply and apply the derived insights to address global systemic risks.

This work will also contribute to achieving UNEP's 2022-2023 Programme of Work and Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2025, through the Science-Policy Subprogramme: *Developing and implementing a Strategic Foresight trajectory*.

To achieve these goals, the Office of the Chief Scientist will undertake a series of complementary activities to enhance UNEP's internal capacity and capabilities for applied strategic foresight, futures thinking and environmental horizon scanning. These activities will include:

- a. Developing and implementing of an overarching framework to enhance its foresight function, including a) overall guidance on the methods for a refined, systematic approach and b) appropriate techniques to scan for and interpret early indications of change, anticipate the evolution of potential consequences to the organization and its core workstreams, and an organizational structure to guide strategic planning.
- b. designing and delivering an Environmental Horizon scanning exercise and subsequent development of a first Global Foresight Report.
- c. Establishing an expert panel to support a global Foresight and Horizon Scanning exercise, in close collaboration with UNEP.

B. Purpose

With the view to facilitating implementation of these activities, the UNEP Chief Scientist and the ISC Chief Executive Officer decided to jointly appoint an Expert Panel to provide strategic guidance and

scientific leadership on the design and implementation of the foresight process and of the delivery of the Global Foresight report in 2024 to be published jointly by UNEP and the ISC.

C. Mandate

The Expert Panel is responsible for ensuring that the foresight process and the anticipated output are scientifically robust, draw on the best available knowledge and expert insights, and reflects balanced views of current, emerging and unforeseen future issues related to the environment.

Role of the Foresight Expert Panel

The Panel will comprise approximately 20 distinguished scholars and specialists across the scientific community representing a wide spectrum of disciplines, training and cognitive diversity, recruited from all world regions.

The Panel will be expected to deliver the following:

- Support the systematic identification, detection, interpretation and evaluation of key trends, uncertainties, emerging issues, weak signals of change and opportunities (e.g., technologies and social innovations) that can impact the realization of global environmental outcomes,
- Provide guidance on bodies of evidence and knowledge to be incorporated; and contribute to evidence gathering,
- Advise on the management data and information generated as part of the foresight exercise,
- Participate in collective sense-making sessions including structured debate and prioritization of initial issues and signals and constructed phenomena (through in-person and remote consultation),
- Support the analysis of results from the data gathering (e.g. surveys, literature reviews, consultations, etc.),
- Provide input into / review questionnaires and consultation materials in close consultation with the project team,
- Support the mapping of key stakeholders and potential users,
- Contribute to content development, reviews and other associated inputs as needed,
- Provide feedback on methods and modalities for expert elicitations and stakeholder consultations to ensure that the Global Report and the process of its elaboration is open, inclusive, balanced and evidence-based, and
- Provide guidance to UNEP and the ISC on the overarching framework, design and process to deliver the Global Foresight report.

The mandate of the Panel will be updated by the UNEP Chief Scientist and ISC Chief Executive Officer if needed to support effective and timely delivery of the report. The foresight exercise will be supported by a project secretariat team made of staff and experts designated by UNEP and the ISC.

All deliberations and meetings of the Expert Panel will be conducted in English.

D. Membership of the Foresight Expert Panel

The Panel will comprise approximately 20 distinguished scholars and specialists across the scientific community representing a wide spectrum of disciplines, training and cognitive diversity, recruited from developing and industrialized countries. The Panel members will act in their individual expert capacity, on a *pro bono* basis.

The following criteria shall be considered by UNEP and ISC in approving admission to the Foresight Expert Panel:

1. *Diversity* - Age, gender, disciplinary and geographical balance;
2. *Expertise and active engagement* in:
 - i. environmental issues (including but not limited to climate change, biodiversity and nature loss, pollution, environmental and ecosystem health, land degradation, natural resource depletion, waste, risks);
 - ii. social and technological innovations or solutions to systemic and/or environment issues;
 - iii. the economic, social and ecological drivers of environmental change;
 - iv. the intersection between technological innovation and sustainability issues;
 - v. their impacts for human development, health and wellbeing; and
 - vi. application of knowledge systems (including but not limited to policy).
3. *Expertise gaps* - Special attention will be made to include underrepresented specializations and thematic areas not typically found in the environmental sustainability domain (e.g., behavioural and cognitive sciences, humanities, gender and indigenous perspectives);
4. *Openness to Future-oriented thinking* - Understanding and experience in the application of foresight approaches, methods and tools to inform policymakers and other stakeholders (*Desirable but not exclusionary criteria*);
5. Individuals with *Interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinary and foresight experience* are encouraged to put forward their candidature, however these are desirable, not exclusionary criteria.

The Panel will be chaired by an expert nominated by the Group with due consideration of scientific and technical expertise, as well as expertise in the establishment and operation of international multidisciplinary body and in-depth understanding of policy issues related to the environment and the potential of science to help address them.

In addition to the responsibilities identified in section C, the Chair of the Panel is expected to chair the meetings of the Panel, liaise closely with the project secretariat, and take responsibility for the report writing with support from the secretariat. Certain meetings, however, including for example the structured sense-making sessions, will be moderated/ by a third-party professional appointed by UNEP.

With the exception of third-party professional foresight facilitator(s); the Panel shall not admit any non-members or observers to participate in its work without prior approval by the UNEP Chief Scientist and ISC Chief Executive Officer. The Panel may invite technical experts on an ad-hoc basis to contribute to its work on a time bound basis upon approval by the UNEP Executive Director and ISC Chief Executive Officer.

If a Panel member resigns or is unable to exercise his/her functions, the UNEP Chief Scientist and ISC Chief Executive Officer shall appoint a replacement for the remainder of the term.

E. Duration and meeting arrangements

The working language of the Foresight Expert Panel will be English.

The Panel will work through face-to-face meetings, web-based meetings, hybrid meetings and other electronic interaction, as appropriate. Informal technical consultations may be undertaken as needed.

The Panel will meet as necessary and agreed by its members to give technical input as per an agreed work plan and timetable of milestones which will be developed once the Group is constituted.

The Panel is expected to be established in March 2023 and will be in place until December 2024. The work of the Panel will culminate into a Global Report to be published in 2024. It is expected that the Report together with the insights and recommendations of the Panel will inform the deliberations of the sixth UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-6) February 2024 and the Summit of the Future.

The Panel shall make every effort to take its decisions by consensus. If consensus cannot be reached, the Chair will present the diverging views in the meeting report for consideration by the UNEP Chief Scientist and the ISC Chief Executive Officer.

The Panel will be supported by a Secretariat constituted of staff or designated experts or consultants identified by UNEP and the ISC. The Secretariat will facilitate the interactions between the Panel and the leadership of UNEP and ISC, other organisations as needed as well as provide secretariat support to the meetings of the Panel.

F. Budget

The members, including the Chair, of the Panel will serve on a voluntary basis and will not be compensated for their participation in the work of the Panel. Travel and other costs associated with the face-to-face meetings of the Panel will be covered by UNEP in accordance with UN rules.

G. Code of conduct

The members of the Panel will abide by the UN rules and regulations addressing discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority.

Any Panel meetings and events are professional, respectful, and harassment-free environments for all participants. Members are expected to conduct themselves with integrity and in a manner that is professional, respectful, tolerant and responsible. A zero-tolerance approach will be applied to any form of discrimination or harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority.

If a member experiences behavior pointing to discrimination or harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority, the participant is encouraged to speak to the Chair of the Panel or the Secretariat, in confidence.

All reports and allegations of discrimination or harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority will be handled sensitively and in confidence, while protecting the privacy of the plaintiff. The need for further action will be assessed carefully on a case-by-case basis.

This code of conduct applies to all interactions between members of the Panel, including but not limited to, in-person meetings, teleconferences and e-mail exchanges.

H. Conflicts of interest

A “conflict of interest” refers to any current interest of an individual that could: (a) Significantly impair the individual’s objectivity in carrying out his or her duties and responsibilities related to the Foresight work including the horizon scanning exercise; (b) Create an unfair advantage for any person or organization.

All Panel experts will be asked to fill out a Declaration of Interest and disclose any relevant interests that may include, but are not limited to, employment relationships, consulting relationships, financial investments, intellectual property interests, commercial interests and sources of research support.