

Co-Chairs' Message

The sixth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6): Healthy Planet, Healthy People, was launched in March 2019 at the fourth UN Environment Assembly. This voluminous report focuses on the multiple pathways through which a healthy planet supports healthy people and conversely on the risks for human health posed by the fast deteriorating health of the planet. Among the long list of ongoing damage to life and health from air pollution, water pollution and land degradation, the report warned that zoonosis is already 60 per cent of all infectious disease and that a pandemic could occur.



Since late 2019, the spread of COVID 19 worldwide demonstrates the enormous challenges such a pandemic can cause for both the health care system and the economy, and the difficult choices facing policy makers between these priorities. Even if such choices are for the short-term, which is by no means clear, these are hard, painful and very expensive choices. We hope that, in investing in the recovery process, states and other stakeholders will consider how such painful challenges could be avoided in the future.

In this Technical Summary of GEO-6 we have distilled the science and data in that report and synthesized the information to make it more accessible to policymakers, students and scientists, and, we hope, more useful both for teaching and learning at the university level, and for policy makers considering how to address environmental problems as they seek to engender economic recovery.

In producing the Technical Summary we have sought to weave the many and disparate themes of GEO-6 – the knowledge about and interactions across the multitude of processes that take place in air, freshwater, land and soil, oceans and coasts, and biodiversity – into a coherent narrative about the cumulative damage to the global environment and the need to address the underlying drivers and pressures. The message that emerges, as in GEO-6, is the need for urgent and sustained action leading to transformational change, if nature's contributions to people are to be sustained.

We have used confidence terms throughout the text, to provide some context for decision makers, along with references back to sections in the main report (in curly brackets) for readers who wish to find more detailed information about an issue as set out in Section 1.1 in Chapter 1. In a few places we have referenced scientific publications and findings that have emerged after publication of the main GEO-6 Report, some of which arose out of the report itself.

We hope that the Technical Summary is useful for academics and their students in universities – and others – who would like to have more specific knowledge about sustainable approaches to health and environmental problems related to air, freshwater, land and soil, oceans and coasts, and biodiversity, as described in GEO-6. References to the main report are included, so that the greater detail on these findings within GEO-6 can be easily accessed, if desired.

We also hope that this publication will help generate greater awareness and understanding of the important findings of GEO-6.


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