

GEO-6 Technical Summary Foreword

In 2019, UNEP released the sixth edition of the Global Environment Outlook at the Fourth UN Environment Assembly. The Report underscored the fact that a healthy planet is necessary for healthy people and called for the urgent transformation of economies, energy and food systems to better protect air, freshwater, land and soil, oceans and coastlines, and nature itself. The global pandemic COVID-19 has demonstrated the interconnected nature of the planet's life support systems and that we cannot return to business as usual. And the good news is that in building back better, we can ensure both a healthy environment and healthy people.

This comprehensive environmental assessment, which was awarded the 2020 Award for Environmental Science from the Association of American Publishers demonstrates that the solutions to meet internationally agreed environmental goals require a systems approach, rather than a continuation of our current approach which looks at each of these issues as separate and distinct.

As we confront the climate and nature emergency and seek to end unprecedented and rapid environmental degradation, it is evident that current policies to achieve internationally agreed environmental goals will be insufficient. More urgent and sustained action is required to address the environmental dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Importantly, our analysis has identified a variety of pathways to this transformation whether it is by transitioning to meat-light or no-meat diets or electrifying the vehicle fleet. Current projections show that about 50 per cent more food will be needed to feed a population of up to 10 billion by 2050. At the same time, the environmental impact of food production needs to decrease significantly to mitigate land degradation, chemical pollution, climate impacts and biodiversity loss associated with the food sector. Our agreed health and environmental goals must be achieved not only through social and technological change, but also with a significant reduction of food wastage and losses.

I hope policymakers, academic institutions and researchers will find that this Technical Summary, as a complement to the Summary for Policymakers, published in 2019, provides useful insights for governments looking to develop rapid, far-reaching and just policies to address the environmental challenges that are so powerfully outlined in the sixth Global Environment Outlook.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Inger Andersen'.

Inger Andersen
UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director
United Nations Environment Programme

