A blue and white logo with white text

AI-generated content may be incorrect.A logo of united nations

AI-generated content may be incorrect.**Science and Diplomacy Joint Programme**

**ANNUAL programme NARRATIVE progress report**

**REPORTING PERIOD: 15 june – 31 December 2024**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Programme Title & Project Number | |  | Country, Locality(s), Priority Area(s) / Strategic Results | |
| * Programme Title: Science and Diplomacy Joint Program * Programme Number *:N/A* * MPTF Office Project Reference Number: *140957* | | *(if applicable)*  *Country/Region*  Oceania, Americas, Africa, Asia, Europe, Antarctica | |
| *Priority area/ strategic results* | |
| Participating Organization(s) | |  | Implementing Partners | |
| * Organizations that have received direct funding from the MPTF Office under this programme   United Nations University (UNU)\*  Executive Office of the Secretary-General(EOSG)  United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)  \*Only UNU received funding for the reporting period. | | * National counterparts (government, private, NGOs & others) and other International Organizations | |
| Programme/Project Cost (US$) | |  | Programme Duration | |
| Total approved budget as per project document: | $2,140,000 USD |  | Overall Duration *(months)* | 42,5 |
| MPTF /JP Contribution [[1]](#footnote-2) :  *by Agency (if applicable)* | $87,663USD |
| Agency Contribution   * *by Agency (if applicable)* |  |  | Start Date [[2]](#footnote-3) *(dd.mm.yyyy)* | 18 December 2024 |
| Government Contribution  *Quebec (FRQ)* | $100,000USD |  | Original End Date *(dd.mm.yyyy)* | 15 June 2026 |
| Other Contributions (donors)  *Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo* | $500,000USD |  | Current End date *(dd.mm.yyyy)* | 31 December 2027 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Programme Assessment/Review/Mid-Term Eval. | |  | Report Submitted By | |
| Assessment/Review - if applicable *please attach*  Yes X No Date: *dd.mm.yyyy*  Mid-Term Evaluation Report *– if applicable please attach*  Yes X No Date: *dd.mm.yyyy* | | * Name: David Kelly * Title: Programme Management Officer * Participating Organization (Lead): EOSG * Email address: kellyd@un.org | |

**2024 Annual Reporting for the Science and Diplomacy Joint Programme**

**List of Abbreviations**

* AWP – Annual Work Plan
* DCO – Development Coordination Office
* EOSG – Executive Office of the Secretary-General
* FRQ – Fonds de Recherche du Québec (Quebec Research Fund)
* JP – Joint Programme
* MPTF – Multi-Partner Trust Fund
* RC – Resident Coordinator
* SMG – Senior Management Group
* UN – United Nations
* UNCT – United Nations Country Team
* UNU – United Nations University

**Executive Summary**

In 2024, the Science and Diplomacy Joint Programme leveraged the comparative advantage of the two collaborating entities, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG) and UN University (UNU), to operationalize the Secretary-General’s Scientific Advisory Board and maximize its impact. The Board was established in August 2023 as part of the broader vision outlined in *Our Common Agenda*. The Board comprises 14 distinguished scientists, including seven external experts and seven representatives from the UN system. These members bring expertise spanning artificial intelligence, biosciences, climate science and other critical fields that intersect with global governance and policy.

Since its inception, the Board has played a pivotal role in providing scientific guidance on pressing global challenges. Its first in-person retreat, held in September 2024, facilitated high-level discussions on the intersection of science and policy. Key topics included enhancing access to scientific knowledge and localizing science to ensure its benefits are widely shared.

One of the major outcomes of the retreat was the release of a Statement on Trust in Science, which lays out actionable strategies to enhance the credibility, accessibility and accountability of scientific knowledge. This statement serves as the foundation for future discourse on how science can effectively address urgent global challenges.

Another significant output of the Scientific Advisory Board during 2024 was the operationalization of its Science Brief production process. This involves the inception, development and publishing of the Board’s first two Science Briefs on the topics of neurotechnology and synthetic biology. The Board convened multiple expert roundtables, gathering insights from industry-leading specialists in areas such as deep-sea mining and solar radiation modification to inform and shape the development of forthcoming Science Briefs on these critical topics. Finally, the Board identified a set of priority topics for future Science Briefs, aimed at equipping policymakers with well-informed perspectives on emerging scientific fields.

**Purpose**

*Objectives*

The Scientific Advisory Board seeks to address four science-policy challenges faced by the United Nations system:

* **Advice:** The unavailability of rapid and informed scientific policy advice for decision-making by the Secretary-General and the Senior Leadership of the UN.
* **Scanning:** A gap in advice on emerging scientific opportunities and risks as they relate to delivery of the mandates of UN entities.
* **Coordination:** The disconnection of science advisory expertise that already exists with the United Nations system to decision-making bodies.
* **Connection:** Fragmenting links with multilateral, national and multistakeholder science advisory bodies. The longer-term crisis trust in science, fomented by a loss of shared truth.

*Outcomes*

Each of the four workstreams of the Board has direct impact on the UN system and beyond:

* **Advice:** Expected outcomes are providing science advice in the form of short written policy briefs and long-form reports on key emerging science topics. These reports inform senior decision-making processes such as the Executive Committee, Senior Management Group or multilateral engagements. Resulting in decisions and policies that reflect the best available scientific evidence.
* **Scanning:** Conduct an annual horizon scanning exercise that assesses opportunities, risks and emerging trends in science and technology that affect the mandate delivery of the United Nations. The results of this exercise are shared with senior leadership of the UN to inform decision-making processes and optimized resource allocation strategies.
* **Coordination:** Support UN cross-pillar scientific exchange and spread best practices on provision of science-policy advice to senior leadership and UN Country Teams. Identify capacity gaps across scientific areas within the UN system.
* **Connection:** Facilitate connection between network of scientific advisory bodies and the UN system at the country level. Make science policy material available to the public on the Board’s website. In addition, address over the longer-term the crisis of trust in science, fomented by a loss of shared truth and understanding. Support the development of a common, empirically backed consensus on the public good of facts, science and knowledge. Expected outcomes are more science and evidence-based policy and programmes at the country-level, improving the public availability of science advice on emerging topics.

**Results**

The Board's first in-person retreat in September 2024 resulted in the release of a Statement on Trust in Science, outlining strategies to enhance the credibility, accessibility and accountability of scientific knowledge. Additionally, the Board initiated Science Briefs on neurotechnology and synthetic biology, the first in a planned series of thematic reports and held roundtable sessions on solar radiation modification and deep-sea mining. Generous contributions by public and private sector partners supported the work of the Board.

*Outcomes*

* Strengthened the integration of scientific expertise into UN decision-making, ensuring that policymakers have access to cutting-edge knowledge on pressing global issues.
* Enhanced the credibility, accessibility, and accountability of scientific knowledge through the release of the Statement on Trust in Science, setting a framework for evidence-based policy discourse.
* Advanced discussions on emerging scientific fields, particularly in neurotechnology and synthetic biology, by facilitating high-level engagement through the Board’s Science Briefs and expert roundtables.
* Fostered cross-sector collaboration between UN agencies, academic institutions, industry leaders and policymakers, improving science-policy interface mechanisms.

The primary beneficiaries of this project included the Secretary-General, UN leaders, Resident Coordinators, and other internal stakeholders who received the Board’s products and advice to inform evidence-based policy and programmatic decisions. Additionally, Member State representatives also benefited from the Board’s work. Through its engagement with Member State bodies, such as the General Assembly Group of Friends on Science for Action, the Board provided key insights from its research. The global public benefited from the dissemination of evidence-based science policy materials, including across newly launched social media channels, promoting greater transparency, informed discourse and enhanced scientific literacy.

*Outputs*

* Operationalized the Scientific Advisory Board, bringing together 14 scientists from both within and outside the UN system, as well as leadership representatives of the 11 network institutions, ensuring a broad and interdisciplinary approach.
* Held the first in-person Board retreat in September 2024, enabling in-depth discussions on enhancing scientific accessibility and localizing scientific knowledge.
* Released the Statement on Trust in Science, outlining actionable strategies to improve the credibility, accessibility and accountability of scientific information in policy frameworks.
* Developed and published the first two Science Briefs on neurotechnology and synthetic biology, which provided policymakers with expert-driven analysis on the ethical, security and governance challenges associated with these technologies.
* Conducted multiple expert roundtables, engaging leading specialists, ensuring that Science Briefs are informed by diverse and cutting-edge insights.
* Identified priority topics for future Science Briefs, ensuring that decision-makers are equipped with well-informed perspectives on emerging scientific developments.

*Challenges, Lessons Learned & Best Practices*

Key challenges during the reporting period included the regular convening of science board Members, the establishment of inclusive and diverse groups of scientists to inform deliberations of the initial roundtables, and the securing of sustainable funding.

To address these challenges the Board convened an in-person retreat that was communicated well in advanceto secure the highest possible level of participation. Quarterly calls between UN chief scientists were also instituted to ensure regular participation. To ensure effective roundtables, the Board Secretariat engaged with partners at the Wellcome Trust and McMaster University to solicit evidence-synthesis research from scientists in developing country contexts and ensured broad participation of network experts in the calls. On funding, the Secretariat secured a new major donor that provides 25 percent of annual revenue needs and renewed another donor that provides 10 percent. Further support from the EOSG partnerships team is enabling further resource mobilization activities.

*Qualitative Assessment*

In 2024, the project has contributed to incorporating scientific perspectives into UN policymaking, facilitating interdisciplinary collaboration and supporting global scientific governance efforts. The Board has aimed to enhance senior level decision-making, resource allocation and engagement with global scientific networks. This approach encourages ongoing knowledge exchange, helping the UN remain responsive to emerging scientific challenges and opportunities.

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| **Indicator Based Performance Assessment** | **Achieved Indicator Targets** | **Reasons for Variance with Planned Target (if any)** | **Source of Verification** |
| **Outcome 1: Advice**  **Indicator:** Availability of rapid and informed scientific policy advice for decision-making by the Secretary-General and senior UN leaders  **Output 1:** Production of short-form science policy briefs  **Output 2:** In depth research on key scientific topics ahead of multilateral processes and engagements  **Baseline:** 0 Short form Policy Briefs, 0 in depth Science Briefs  **Planned Target:** 4 short form Policy Briefs, 1 in depth Science Briefs | Developed priority topic list in consultation with Board members, Network institutions, and at the request of UN leadership (UNU, EOSG)  Refined policy brief template (UNU-EOSG)  Conducted evidence synthesis on selected topics (UNU)  Drafted 2 short form policy briefs (UNU)  Develop topic list in consultation with Secretary-General’s front office and individual Board members (EOSG, UNU)  Conduct evidence synthesis on priority topics | 2 science briefs were finalized during the period and a further 5 are in various stages of development. | UNU Research Monitoring System |
| **Outcome 2: Scanning**  **Indicator:** Increased awareness of emerging scientific opportunities as they relate to delivery of the mandates of UN entities  **Output 1:** Annual horizon scanning exercise and mid-year report  **Output 2:** Dissemination of policy briefs with updated section for country-level application to Resident Coordinators  **Baseline:** Horizon scan not published, 0 experts consulted, 0 briefs disseminated to RC system.  **Planned Target:** Horizon scan published, 20 experts consulted, 6 briefs disseminated to RC system | Conducted broad consultation of emerging scientific opportunities and risks with Board members, Network institutions, and external experts as needed (UNU)  Synthesized emerging trends and issues using latest horizon scanning methodologies (UNU)  Draft and circulate annual horizon scanning report (UNU with UN Futures Lab)  Present findings to UN Senior Management Group in April SMG session (UNU-EOSG)  Circulated report findings to UN leadership, presenting update to Senior Management Group as needed (UNU-EOSG)  Monitored science and technology breakthroughs in consultation with Network institutions (UNU). | Circulation of policy briefs with updated sections relevant for resident coordinators was not possible during the period due to funding constraints. | EOSG Tracking |
| **Outcome 3: Coordination**  **Indicator:** Improved coordination and capacity of science- advisory expertise that exists within the UN system along with stronger links to UN decision-making bodies  **Output 1:** Support to UN cross-pillar scientific exchange  **Output 2:** Scientific gap assessment for UN system  **Baseline:** 0 meetings held with UN Chief Scientists, no gap assessment completed.  **Planned Target:** 4 meetings held with UN Chief Scientists, gap assessment completed. | Convened virtual quarterly meetings of UN Chief Scientists to exchange best practices and policies (EOSG)  Coordinated and facilitated in-person Board retreat (EOSG)  Coordinated and facilitated side-event at the Summit of the Future (EOSG). | Conducted regular meetings of UN Chief Scientists, subject to availability. | EOSG Tracking |
| **Outcome 4: Connection**  **Indicator:** Closer links between multilateral, national, and multi-stakeholder science-advisory bodies to support the work of UN Country Teams  **Output 1:** Support for research collaborations and knowledge exchange between scientific Network institutions and UN Country Teams  **Output 2:** Published reports on the website and social media channels  **Baseline:** 0 connections between Network institutions and UN Country Teams, 0 briefings to French-speaking UN country teams, 0 policy briefs published on website.  **Planned Target:** 12 connections between network institutions and country teams, 2 briefings to French-speaking UN country teams, 6 policy briefs published on website. | Facilitated exchanges at international scientific fora and events (EOSG)  Conducted risk review of briefs and long-form reports generated by the Scientific Advisory Board (EOSG), including peer review through the network institutes.  Distributed approved materials on website and through social media channels (EOSG) | Prototype platform for knowledge-sharing collaborations between the Scientific Advisory Board, Network institutions, Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams (EOSG): *This activity is planned for 2025/2026* |  |

1. The MPTF or JP Contribution, refers to the amount transferred to the Participating UN Organizations, which is available on the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](http://mdtf.undp.org) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. The start date is the date of the first transfer of the funds from the MPTF Office as Administrative Agent. Transfer date is available on the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](http://mdtf.undp.org/) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)