[Science and Diplomacy Joint Programme]
ANNUAL PROGRAMME NARRATIVE PROGRESS REPORT
REPORTING PERIOD: 1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2025

Programme Title & Project Number	**Country, Locality(s), Priority Area(s) / Strategic Results**
• Programme Title: Science and Diplomacy Joint Program • Programme Number *(if applicable): 140957* • MPTF Office Project Reference Number:	*(if applicable)* *Country/Region* Oceania, Americas, Africa, Asia, Europe, Antarctica *Priority area/ strategic results*
Participating Organization(s) • 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)	**Implementing Partners** • National counterparts (government, private, NGOs & others) and other International Organizations
Programme/Project Cost (US$) Total approved budget as per project document: $2,140,000 USD MPTF /JP Contribution: $1,091,291 USD *by Agency (if applicable)* Agency Contribution • *by Agency (if applicable)* Other Contributions (donors) *Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo* $1,000,000 USD *CAN-Quebec Research Fund (FRQ)* $200,000 USD **TOTAL:** $1,091,291 USD	**Programme Duration** Overall Duration *(months)* 42,5 Start Date *(dd.mm.yyyy)* 18.December.2024 Original End Date *(dd.mm.yyyy)* 15.June.2026 Current End date *(dd.mm.yyyy)* 31.December.2027
Programme Assessment/Review/Mid-Term Eval. Assessment/Review - if applicable *please attach* ☐ Yes X No Date: *dd.mm.yyyy*	**Report Submitted By** o Name: David Kelly o Title: Programme Management Officer

Mid-Term Evaluation Report – *if applicable please attach* ☐ Yes X No Date: *dd.mm.yyyy*	○ Participating Organization (Lead): EOSG ○ Email address: kellyd@un.org

2025 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 2025, the Science and Diplomacy Joint Programme leveraged the strengths of the three collaborating entities – Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG), UN University (UNU), and United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) – to operationalize the Secretary-General's Scientific Advisory Board and extend its impact. Established in August 2023 under *Our Common Agenda*, the Board brings together 15 distinguished scientists: eight external experts and seven UN system representatives, covering artificial intelligence, biosciences, climate science, and other priority domains at the science-policy interface.

Since its inception, the Scientific Advisory Board has provided decision-relevant scientific guidance on urgent global issues. Through its horizon scanning, the Board identifies emerging scientific and technological developments relevant to global governance, risk, and policy, synthesizing these trends into clear considerations for senior UN leadership.

Building on this work, the Board engaged the Senior Management Group on the science and technology outlook, highlighting key developments and their implications. In parallel, Science Briefs and videos were developed and presented on key topics including Deep-Sea Mining, Solar Radiation Modification, Quantum Computing, Biology of Aging, Verification of Frontier AI, Carbon Dioxide Removal Technologies, and Small Modular Nuclear Reactors. These outputs strengthened the UN's knowledge of emerging technologies and its capacity to respond to scientific advances that are evolving faster than corresponding policy frameworks. Science Briefs also began to be translated into all six official UN languages, with translations of the Synthetic Biology and Neurotechnology briefs published.

The development and publication of Science Briefs drew on expert roundtables with leading specialists, ensuring rigor and practical relevance for UN engagement. The Board also identified priority topics for future Science Briefs to equip policymakers with timely, evidence-based perspectives on emerging fields.

Additionally, a dedicated briefing to the Secretary-General was delivered on the topic of governance implications of neurotechnology and synthetic biology – translating rapid

developments into actionable considerations. To reinforce trust and safeguard the right to benefit from safe and equitable science, a Working Group on Trust in Science was established. To strengthen transparency and outreach, the Secretariat published a quarterly Newsletter highlighting Board activities, expert engagements, and forthcoming priorities.

The Secretariat strengthened engagement with the UN system through meetings with Resident Coordinators and the United Nations Development Coordination Office (DCO), helping to identify how the Board's outputs can better support country-level decision-making. It also convened a meeting with UN Chief Scientists to discuss emerging outputs, priority topics, and opportunities for promoting science across the UN.

At the Board's second in-person retreat, held in September 2025, the Board 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 Open Science, which describes science as a global public good and calls for stronger international cooperation, shared research infrastructure, and equitable access to scientific knowledge to support progress on global challenges and the Sustainable Development Goals.

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, compounded by a longer-term crisis of trust in science driven by the erosion of shared truth.

Outcomes

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

- **Advice:** Provide concise written policy products: short Science Briefs and longer reports feeding senior decision-making (e.g., Executive Committee, Senior Management Group, and multilateral engagements) and supporting policies grounded in reliable evidence.
- **Scanning:** Deliver an annual horizon scanning exercise assessing emerging trends, opportunities, and risks affecting UN mandate delivery – informing leadership decisions and resource allocation.
- **Coordination:** Enable cross-pillar scientific exchange, spread best practices in science – policy advice for leadership and UN Country Teams, and identify capability gaps across scientific domains.
- **Connection:** Strengthen links between national and multilateral science advisory networks and the UN at country level; publish science-policy materials via the Board's website; and, over time, support empirically grounded consensus on the public value of facts, science, and knowledge – enabling stronger evidence-based policy and programmes and improving public access to guidance on emerging topics.

Results

The Board's horizon scanning exercise, Senior Management Group engagements, and published Science Briefs on Deep-Sea Mining, Solar Radiation Modification, Quantum Computing, Biology of Aging, Verification of Frontier AI, Carbon Dioxide Removal Techniques, and Small Modular Nuclear Reactors strengthened the credibility, accessibility, and accountability of scientific knowledge for UN decision-making. The Board also initiated Science Briefs on Mirror Life and AI Deception. Private sector contributions supported delivery of the Board's work. Engagement with Resident Coordinators and UN Chief Scientists helped strengthen coordination and improve

the relevance of the Board's work across the UN system. Translation of Science Briefs into all six official UN languages further expanded the accessibility and reach of these products.

Outputs

- Operationalized the Scientific Advisory Board – convening 14 scientists from inside and outside the UN system, alongside leadership representatives of 11 network institutions – to ensure broad, interdisciplinary input.
- Contributed to Senior Management Group discussions on the science and technology outlook – providing expert-driven analysis of opportunities and risks.
- Developed and published Science Briefs on Deep-Sea Mining, Solar Radiation Modification, Quantum Computing, Biology of Aging, and Verification of Frontier AI, Carbon Dioxide Removal Techniques, and Small Modular Nuclear Reactors.
- Convened expert roundtables with leading specialists to ensure Science Briefs reflect diverse, cutting-edge evidence.
- Convened a meeting with Resident Coordinators and the United Nations Development Coordination Office (DCO).
- Held a meeting with UN Chief Scientists to discuss emerging outputs, priority science-policy topics, and opportunities for coordination across the UN system.
- Advanced the accessibility of the Board's knowledge products through the translation of Science Briefs into all six official United Nations languages.
- Organized the second in-person annual retreat in New York, bringing together Board members and network institutions to review progress, align priorities, and adopt a Statement on Open Science calling for stronger international cooperation and equitable access to scientific knowledge.
- Identified priority topics for future Science Briefs to strengthen policymakers' readiness for emerging developments.

Outcomes

- Strengthened the integration of scientific expertise into UN decision-making, ensuring that policymakers have access to cutting-edge knowledge on pressing global issues.

- Advanced discussions on emerging scientific fields, particularly in Deep-Sea Mining, Solar Radiation Modification, Quantum Computing, Biology of Aging, Verification of Frontier AI, Carbon Dioxide Removal Technologies, and Small Modular Nuclear Reactors by facilitating high-level engagement through the Board's Science Briefs and expert roundtables.
- Developed a social media strategy and advanced the promotion of scientific knowledge across various platforms.
- Deepened cross-sector collaboration among UN entities, academia, industry, and policymakers – strengthening science-policy interface mechanisms.
- Established a Working Group on Trust in Science, to protect the right to benefit from equitable development of science.
- Published a quarterly Newsletter highlighting recent Board activity, expert engagements, and forthcoming priorities.
- Expanded the reach and inclusivity of the Board's knowledge products by supporting the translation of Science Briefs into all six official UN languages.

The primary beneficiaries of this project included the Secretary-General, UN leaders, Resident Coordinators, and other internal stakeholders who used the Board's products to inform evidence-based policy and programmatic decisions. Member State representatives also benefited through engagement with bodies such as the General Assembly Group of Friends on Science for Action. The global public benefited from wider access to evidence-based science-policy materials – supported by newly launched social media channels – strengthening transparency, informed discourse, and scientific literacy.

Challenges, Lessons Learned & Best Practices

Key challenges during the reporting period included convening Board Members regularly, assembling inclusive and diverse expert groups for early roundtables, and securing sustainable funding.

To address these challenges, the Board held an Update Call with members and network institutions alongside exchanges with UN Chief Scientists. To enrich roundtables, the Secretariat worked with

partners at the Wellcome Trust and McMaster University to draw on evidence-synthesis research – particularly from developing country contexts – and ensured broad participation of network experts. On funding, the Secretariat sustained partnership with a major donor supporting annual revenue needs, while EOSG partnership support enabled further resource mobilization.

Qualitative Assessment

In 2025, the project strengthened the integration of scientific perspectives into UN policymaking, advanced interdisciplinary collaboration, and reinforced engagement with global scientific networks. Through horizon scanning, Science Briefs, and targeted briefings, the Board supported senior-level decision-making and helped the UN remain responsive to emerging scientific risks and opportunities.

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 Briefs **Output 2:** In depth research on key scientific topics ahead of multilateral processes and engagements **Baseline:** 4 Science Briefs **Planned Target:** 6 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 9 short form policy briefs (UNU) Prepared and delivered a dedicated briefing to the Secretary-General on neurotechnology and	9 Science Briefs were finalized during the period and 2 more are in development	UNU Research Monitoring System

	synthetic biology (EOSG, UNU) Conduct evidence synthesis on priority topics (UNU)		
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 **Output 2:** Planned dissemination of policy briefs to Resident Coordinators **Baseline:** Horizon scan published, several experts consulted **Planned Target:** Horizon scan internally published, 20 experts	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-EOSG) Draft and circulate annual horizon scanning report (UNU-EOSG)		EOSG and UNU

consulted, 9 briefs disseminated to RC system	Presented findings to UN Senior Management Group in April SMG session (EOSG) Disseminated 9 policy briefs to Resident Coordinators Monitored science and technology developments in consultation with Network institutions (UNU)		
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	Convened virtual quarterly meetings of UN Chief Scientists to exchange best practices, discuss emerging outputs and priority topics, and strengthen coordination of science-policy advice across the UN system (EOSG)	Conducted a meeting of UN Chief Scientists, subject to availability	EOSG Tracking

Output 2: Scientific gap assessment for UN system **Baseline:** 0 meetings held with UN Chief Scientists **Planned Target:** 4 meetings held with UN Chief Scientists			
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	Facilitated exchanges at international scientific fora and events (EOSG) Established a Working Group on Trust in Science to develop practical recommendations and engagement pathways (EOSG) Conducted risk review of briefs and long-form reports generated by the Scientific	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 2026.* 26 connections were made between network institutions and country teams, 2 briefings to French-speaking	

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:** 24 connections between network institutions and country teams, 2 briefings to French-speaking UN country teams, 6 policy briefs published on website	Advisory Board (EOSG), including peer review through the network institutes Distributed approved materials on website, through social media channels, and via the quarterly Newsletter (EOSG) Held a progress meeting with the private sector partner to review deliverables, align upcoming priorities, and discuss continued collaboration and resource mobilization (EOSG) Supported broader dissemination and accessibility of approved	UN country teams, a total of 9 policy briefs published on website, all briefs were fully translated into all official UN languages.	

	materials through translation of Science Briefs (EOSG)		