

**Summary Report**  
**16th Executive Committee Meeting**  
**Geneva, 21-22 September 2009**  
**(As accepted at the 17<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee meeting)**

## **1 GENERAL BUSINESS**

Mr Datong Zhao, representing the GEO Co-Chair from China, chaired the meeting. He welcomed the delegates by noting the large amount of work ahead and the importance of preparing for the 2010 Ministerial Summit. He then invited opening statements from the other GEO Co-Chairs.

The Co-Chair from South Africa, Mr Philemon Mjwara, acknowledged the large amount of work reflected in the documents produced by the Target Task Team (T3), the Monitoring & Evaluation Working Group (M&E) and the Secretariat; noted the importance now of making progress on the preparations for the Ministerial Summit; and observed that the documents for the meeting show that GEO is starting to operate as a well functioning organization.

Ms Manuela Soares, representing the GEO Co-Chair from the European Commission, reiterated the EC's strong commitment to GEO. She welcomed the advances made by the various GEO processes while highlighting the need to pay attention to the implementation of the core strategic elements that demonstrate the real benefits of Earth observations and GEOSS. She also highlighted the importance of the report that the 2010 Ministerial Task Force will make to the GEO-VI Plenary on its initial proposals.

The GEO Co-Chair from the United States, Ms Shere Abbott, stated that as host government the US was preparing actively for the GEO-VI Plenary meeting in Washington DC. She observed that the Executive Committee meeting would serve as a critical opportunity for laying the groundwork for the Plenary.

### **1.1 Adoption of Agenda (Document 1)**

The Secretariat Director, Mr José Achache, introduced the draft agenda. He noted that the issue of the Executive Committee's report to the GEO-VI Plenary should be added under agenda item 11.2 (GEO-VI agenda and documents). The US Co-Chair proposed that the Co-Chairs meet over lunch to discuss GEO-VI and asked that the issue of the calendar of Executive Committee meetings be included under agenda item 13 (any other business). The EC suggested that in the future the agenda should indicate the status of each document and whether it was for discussion, acceptance, etc. South Africa proposed taking agenda item 5 (M&E) immediately after item 3 (Target Task Team), as these issues were linked. With these changes, the Committee adopted the agenda.

### **1.2 Approval of Summary Report of the 15<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee Meeting (Document 2)**

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The Secretariat Director introduced the document. South Africa noted a minor error. With this correction, the Summary Report was approved.

### **1.3 Review of Actions from Previous Meetings (Document 3)**

The Secretariat Director introduced the document and summarized the various closed, ongoing and pending actions. The EC expressed concern about Actions 13.8, 14.3 and 15.4, asking whether the Work Plan Management document sufficiently addresses how the relationship between the Committees and the Secretariat can be strengthened. The meeting Chair asked the Secretariat to take note of the comments for the updated Review of Actions to be presented to the 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Executive Committee.

## **2 SECRETARIAT OPERATIONS AND TRUST FUND**

### **2.1 Secretariat Operations Report (Document 4)**

The Secretariat Director presented the document, highlighting outreach, the new contacts-management database and activities for supporting the Work Plan. He noted the pending departure of seconded experts from South Africa and the US and of one contractor, which would bring the number of staff down to 18. He thanked China for extending the secondment of the Chinese expert until end-2010, and noted that he had sent a letter to Principals requesting that they consider seconding an expert. Argentina raised the possibility of supplementing the core Geneva-based staff with seconded experts located in their home country.

Norway welcomed the report and asked for additional information on the previous week's Committee meetings in Melbourne. South Africa stated that it expected to be able to second a new expert following the departure of the current incumbent; he also congratulated the Secretariat on its new brochures. Australia noted the need for the contacts database to assist with reaching national delegates. Korea announced its intention to provide a new seconded expert in 2010. The EC thanked the Secretariat staff for the work it had achieved and expressed concern about whether the level of staffing would be adequate for a growing work load. China also welcomed the report and suggested that future reports be more finely structured to make them easier to read.

The Chair thanked Korea and South Africa for offering new secondments, and the Secretariat Director invited these countries to hold early discussions on the skills that would be most useful. The meeting discussed the pros and cons of having one or more seconded staff located in their home countries. Australia highlighted the need to focus the Secretariat's efforts on the main priority outcomes.

The chair concluded that the meeting accepted the report as presented and asked the Secretariat to continue working on the issue of how to maximize the value of seconded experts.

### **2.2 Report on Income and Expenditure Jan-August 2009 (Document 5)**

The Secretariat Director presented the document. He summarized the income and expenditure over the year 2009, pointing out that the expected annual income of CHF 3.3 million was below the agreed minimum threshold of CHF 3.5 million and well below the optimum level of CHF 4.5 million. In addition, the opening balance for 2010 of CHF 1.7 million was on track to be lower than the CHF 2 million that had been agreed as optimal. This was a sign that the savings accumulated over the past several years was gradually being run down. Finally, he noted that a private foundation has, for the first time, made a contribution to the GEO Trust Fund.

Australia noted that the Trust Fund reserve was indeed declining. Norway stated that it would now be able to fulfil its commitment of making a financial contribution. The EC said that, subject to its internal approval procedures, it expected to at least maintain its current level of contribution through 2013 and would explore whether it could make an increase from 2011. The meeting noted that both the Euro and the US dollar had declined against the Swiss franc in recent years. China suggested that it would be useful to show the opening balance for each year in Table 5. The Secretariat Director invited all GEO Members to make their pledges in advance of the Plenary meeting if possible, as recommended by the Informal Finance Task Team.

The document was accepted, and the Chair asked the Secretariat to take note of the comments made. He reminded Members that contributions to Trust Fund are essential to the success of GEO.

### **2.3 Informal Finance Review Team Report (Document 6)**

The Co-Chair of the Review Team, Ms Sue Barrell of Australia, presented the document. She noted the importance of capturing succinct ideas that could be presented to the Plenary. Members should be encouraged to commit to a regular contribution, to increase their present level of contribution, and/or to make their pledges early. Members should also be reminded of the financial situation a few months before each Plenary meeting. She noted that the increasing profile and success of GEOSS would be the best advertisement for attracting more funds.

The Chair thanked the Informal Finance Review Team for its report. He welcomed its suggestions while asking for clarification about the intention behind recommendations nos. 4 and 5. Australia explained that the Review Team had tried to “look outside the box” and brainstorm about fresh ways to increase contributions to the GEO Trust Fund by demonstrating the added value of a successful GEOSS, or to decrease expenditures from the Trust Fund. Norway welcomed the report but also expressed concern about recommendation no. 4, stressing the importance of keeping the GEO Trust Fund for Secretariat operations separate from financial support for GEOSS implementation. He also observed that GEO is not always visible in many key UN and other forums (such as the G20), which can make it more difficult for GEO representatives to make the argument for funding within their own governments.

The Secretariat Director said that recommendation no. 4 had value but perhaps could be more clearly formulated to make it clear that it is addressing additional sources for GEOSS implementation. The Secretariat Director said that this also raised the issue of the Secretariat’s role in contributing to GEOSS implementation. He wondered whether the GEO Secretariat could be more directly involved in Task management in support of GEOSS implementation.

Australia noted concern about the work load of the Secretariat if it also takes on tasks associated with GEOSS implementation. The EC did not agree with the Secretariat Director’s suggestion regarding a possible role for the GEO Secretariat in GEOSS implementation, advising caution, in particular if this involvement would generate additional resources for the Trust Fund, since this would require a change to the Rules of Procedure with regard to the function and duties of the GEO Secretariat. Norway explained that the Secretariat was facilitating the implementation work of Norway and other members of the Task on forest carbon monitoring; he also noted that the ability to link GEOSS implementation to high-level policy objectives was critical to efforts to attract funds to GEO. The EC said that for the Plenary the message that the Trust Fund was not adequately financed needed to be presented up front in the document, and more strongly and more clearly.

China stated that contributions to the Trust Fund needed to avoid conflict with the GEO data sharing principles. South Africa observed that the document really had two parts, one on increasing the cash contribution to supporting the Secretariat’s activities (recommendations 1, 2 and 3) and one on

funding GEOSS implementation (nos. 4 and 5); for clarity, these two parts could perhaps be more clearly separated. He also supported highlighting the financial problems facing the Trust Fund.

Ms Barrell proposed responding to the comments made by including a new preamble to the document emphasizing the pending financial crisis. Nos. 4 and 5 could be dropped, with parts of no. 4 incorporated into no. 3. The Chair noted that this approach seemed agreeable, and he asked the Review Team to take note of the discussions and continue working on the document. The meeting agreed that the mandate of the Informal Finance Review Team should expire after it delivered its report to GEO-VI.

The US noted the need to address the “business model” of GEO, and others observed that the role of the private sector would also need to be discussed in one forum or another.

### **3 TARGET TASK TEAM (T3) REPORT (Document 7)**

Following some introductory comments by T3 Co-Chair Johnson Owaro, T3 Co-Chair Greg Withee made a presentation on the document. He described the 14 newly revised targets and their associated outcomes. Based on the Executive Committee’s comments and the work of the final T3 meeting, to be held on Wednesday, 23 September, the T3 aimed to finalize the document, submit it to the GEO-VI Plenary meeting and then, if appropriate, to publish them.

The US welcomed the comprehensive set of revised targets and made some further recommendations concerning the climate, health and energy targets. The EC said these small amendments were acceptable but urged the need to finalize the process. Norway made a suggestion on the agriculture target. South Africa expressed appreciation for the document but queried how the M&E Work Group’s process for measuring results would relate to the revised targets. The Russian Federation made a suggestion concerning the weather target.

The Chair thanked the Task Force and asked it to consider the comments made when it finalized the document for Plenary.

### **4 GCI/IOC TASK FORCE (Documents 8 and 9)**

The Task Force Co-Chair, Mr Alan Edwards, presented the two documents. He noted that the Task Force had been appointed by the Executive Committee and not by Plenary, and that its mandate was now expiring. He stated that the consolidated requirements document, issued in March 2009, provides the outline specifications for an operational GCI that supports interoperability and delivers trusted information. Usability testing continues, with a GCI Verification Test planned to take place by 15 November. He then summarized the 19 recommendations of the IOC-TF on long-term GCI operations. Key issues needing attention include quality control, software licensing, sustaining the commitment by the providers of GCI components, the need for a decision on whether to have a single or multiple clearinghouse and/or web portal, and strengthening the GEOSS content. Mr Edwards suggested that in the period leading up to the 2010 GEO Ministerial there would be a need for either the Task Force, or a similar entity, to facilitate the implementation of an operational GCI in advance of the 2010 Ministerial and to work closely with the Data Sharing Task Force.

Australia observed that the GCI is absolutely critical to the success of GEO and that an agreement is needed on the next steps. Australia said the document needs to be made easier to understand. A decision is also needed on whether to continue with the current voluntary arrangements and on whether GEO should “own” the GCI.

The Russian Federation urged the development of a document describing the resources available via GEOSS and the frequency with which these resources are accessed. Argentina highlighted the importance of capacity building. Australia noted that for GCI to deliver the needed interoperability for the whole of GEOSS as envisaged, there needed to be a clear pathway to support access to real time data. South Africa noted the value of a multi-level document to meet the needs of diverse sets of readers; the Task Force may need to finalize the process and the document for presentation to Plenary. The EC agreed and noted the importance of taking a decision on the mandate of the Task Force, and presenting the recommendations made by the IOC-TF to Plenary.

The Chair summed up the discussions and noted the need for ensuring the long-term, sustainable operation of the GCI. He asked the Task Force to take note of the points raised and to rework the document, in particular to make it more accessible for decision-makers at the GEO-VI Plenary, who will need to decide on the next steps.

**Action 16.1: The IOC-TF to prepare an extended version of the current Executive Summary, including a small number of "strategic recommendations" for discussion at Plenary, with some short supporting text.**

## **5 REPORT OF THE M&E WORKING GROUP (Document 10)**

The Working Group Co-Chair, Mr Charles Baker, presented the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework Document and the Summary Plan for the First Evaluation. He explained that the current summary is to be developed into a detailed plan by the Evaluation Team that is to be formed in a few months. He pointed out that most of the monitoring functions for the M&E process were already being undertaken by the Secretariat, such as the Work Plan Progress Reports and the Task Sheet updates. The M&E Working Group hopes to establish a set of performance indicators in mid-2010 to further improve the monitoring process. The first evaluation will focus on the Cape Town Declaration but also on the Strategic Targets. Next steps are to recruit an evaluation team and draft a detailed evaluation plan. The GEO Secretariat should put out a call for nominations before the GEO-VI Plenary. The Working Group requested the Executive Committee to endorse its draft Framework Document, its draft summary plan, and its strategy for recruiting members of the evaluation team.

In response to questions, Mr Baker stated that none of the Working Group's three co-chairs have expressed interest in becoming a co-chair of the evaluation team. He explained that the evaluation process would rely on telecommunications to reduce travel costs and that, assuming a sufficiently large membership, the evaluation team would not be overloaded with work.

The Chair emphasized that the evaluation process was important for GEO's future and to understanding and communicating the real outcomes from GEO. The EC supported the Working Group's proposals, urged that the team be in place in time for GEO-VI, and expressed concerns about the implied work load for the Secretariat. South Africa suggested that more clarity was needed so that it would be widely understood that the M&E exercise is tied to the updated targets. He questioned how any newly developed indicators for this exercise would differ from the targets. Australia cautioned that the exercise not be too detailed and process driven and that it not discourage the voluntary contributors to GEOSS.

The meeting accepted the report and asked the Working Group to work with the Secretariat and to liaise with the Targets Task Team to prepare a report for the GEO-VI Plenary meeting.

**Action 16.2 – Secretariat to write to Principals before GEO-VI requesting early nominations to a new Evaluation Task Team.**

## **6 2009-2011 WORK PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND UPDATE**

### **6.1 2009-2011 Work Plan Progress (Document 11)**

### **6.2 2009-2011 Work Plan Annual Update (Document 12)**

Ms Alexia Massacand of the Secretariat presented the two Work Plan documents. She highlighted three key trends: the implementation of GEOSS in Africa, the push towards improving the availability of and access to data, and user engagement, which is building in particular on the development of new Communities of Practice.

She summarized the process for the Work Plan update, which has included two rounds of review, one technical and the other official. The proposed updates are relatively minor and include the creation of three new Tasks. The document will be presented to GEO-VI for acceptance as a living document.

The US thanked the Secretariat for an excellent presentation and observed that the documents reflect the incredible amount of work that has been accomplished. South Africa concurred with this sentiment and noted that it is possible now to start seeing the elements and value-added of GEOSS coming together. The EC agreed. The EC also noted that it was now extremely important that the following actions referred to in the Work Plan be rapidly implemented by the GEO Secretariat, ideally before the GEO-VI Plenary: the designation of the SBA's Overarching Task mentors by the GEO Secretariat; the drafting of the "letter of acknowledgement", which should then be sent to the task leaders; the implementation of an improved Task monitoring and reporting system. Norway said that the structure of the Work Plan does not always make it possible to see connections, so that for example forest activities appear in two different places.

The Chair thanked the Committee participants and asked the Secretariat to take these comments into account in facilitating the Work Plan implementation.

**Action 16.3: Secretariat to designate mentors for the SBA Overarching Tasks.**

**Action 16.4: Secretariat to draft the "letter of acknowledgement" referred to in the Guide to Work Plan Management annexed to the Work Plan and then to send this to the Task leaders.**

### **6.3 Data Sharing Task Force (Documents 13 and 14)**

Mr Alan Edwards, as Co-Chair of the Task Force, presented the two documents. He noted that the wide geographical representation of the Task Force co-chairs, who are from China, the EC, India, Japan and the US, plus the original Task Team. The Task Force would like the data-sharing implementation guidelines to be presented to the GEO-VI Plenary meeting for endorsement, after which it will start to prepare an action plan for the 2010 Ministerial Summit, building upon these guidelines. The aim is to enable Ministers to move beyond the consideration of guidelines to address the practical actions that the GEO Members will need to take to implement the data-sharing principles within GEOSS.

The Task Force aims to interact with the Committees, Task teams, the GEOSS Common Infrastructure, and the GEO Biodiversity Observation Network and other major GEO teams as it works on harmonizing the data sharing procedures. In addition to a concise action plan, it will prepare supplementary documentation. The Task Force believes it should focus on practical solutions for issues where some early progress can be made. Pricing policies, the primacy of data as a public good, the need to reduce time delays in disseminating information, the issue of the re-distribution of data, and a mechanism for recognizing the rights of the originators of data are all important and must be addressed.

The meeting discussed several issues and the value of highlighting specific data sets, such as CBERS and Landsat. The Chair proposed that the meeting endorse the Terms of Reference and request the Task Force to draft a document for GEO-VI, and this was agreed.

#### **6.4 Joint Committees Report**

Ms Sue Barrell presented the report on behalf of the co-chairs of the Committees. She noted that the Committee meetings in Melbourne the previous week had been well attended.

She then reviewed the various detailed issues raised at the meeting of the C4 about the draft C4 guidelines and other issues: the proposed leadership clause restricting the co-chairs of the C4 to Executive Committee Members created a constraint, because not all eligible Committee co-chairs were willing to co-chair the C4; the word “member” needs to be better defined as it is currently ambiguous; clarification is needed on whether the C4 reports to the Executive Committee and/or Plenary; it is unclear whether or not the Executive Committee would like reports from individual Committees; the User Interface Committee expressed reservations about using Communities of Practice to guide Overarching Tasks; the proposal for holding a Tasks Symposium was a good one but should be delinked from the choice of achievements for the 2010 Ministerial and held later than January 2010; and the Standards and Interoperability Forum is having problems obtaining the necessary resources to support its activities.

Norway said that the GEO schedule tends to be centred on the Committees and not on Work Plan implementation, which may be an impediment to progress; he argued that the role of the C4 is not to set the GEO agenda for implementation. Members of the Executive Committee asked for the C4’s document, which had just become available, to be distributed to the meeting. The Secretariat Director supported a strong role for the Communities of Practice.

The EC noted that the discussion was linked to the next agenda item, to which the meeting now turned its attention.

### **7 C4 GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING OF COMMITTEES TO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (Document 15)**

The US presented the document, which it had prepared with the other Co-Chairs. The meeting discussed the importance of ensuring that the four GEO Committees benefit from a light, informal mechanism for sharing information, coordinating their work, identifying gaps in the implementation of the Work Plan, and exploiting synergies; it was recognized that this mechanism should not result in the creation of an additional management layer in GEO.

The meeting then considered how the Committees should report to the Executive Committee using the mechanism of the C4 forum. The aim is to ensure that the Executive Committee remains informed about the activities of the Committees without imposing a heavy reporting burden. It was proposed that the Executive Committee recommend that the Committees (i) organize a co-located meeting once a year; ii) schedule this meeting well in advance of the following meeting of the Executive Committee; (iii) coordinate their reporting to the Executive Committee by producing a single consolidated written document; and (iv) identify an appropriate individual from one of the Executive Committee’s member countries to deliver the report and make an oral summary to meetings of the Executive Committee.

The US proposed that a more fully developed document be drafted to provide clearer guidance to the Committees on how to report to the Executive Committee. This document will be submitted for consideration at the 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Executive Committee.

**Action 16.5 – The US, with support from the Secretariat, to develop a new document for ExCom-17.**

## **8 ROLE OF PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS AND OBSERVERS (Document 16)**

South Africa presented the document. He explained that the Executive Committee had been tasked with preparing a note to clarify what GEO expected of Participating Organizations. This was needed to ensure that, in an expanding GEO, Participating Organizations continued to add value to GEOSS. It was recalled that national organizations should contribute to GEOSS through their national frameworks.

During the discussion of the document, China noted the value of asking potential new organizations to explicitly describe the added value that they could bring and supported sections 1, 2 and 3 of the document. France agreed with the general document and noted the general importance of engaging relevant global organizations in GEO. The EC generally supported the document, in particular the guidance given in Section 5 to the GEO Secretariat regarding the information to be requested from Participating Organisations when submitting an application. The US suggested that the expected role of organizations should be better clarified in the document. Argentina, China and South Africa proposed that South Africa present a document to Plenary based on the first three sections of the current document while deleting the text on national reporting shown in square brackets in the current text. South Africa agreed that sections 4 and 5 could be deleted.

The Committee asked South Africa to fine-tune the document for GEO-VI, keeping the first three sections. Sections 4 and 5 will be reconsidered by the 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Executive Committee. Based on these changes, the Committee accepted the revised document.

**Action 16.6 – The Executive Committee to reconsider sections 4 and 5 of the current document at its 17<sup>th</sup> meeting.**

## **9 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP (Document 17)**

The Chair summarized the history of the issue of Executive Committee membership and invited the EC to present the document. The EC said that the document explored two options for the way forward, plus presenting the status quo. It noted that at its previous meeting the Executive Committee decided the paper should identify these two options: the first option being to increase the Asian caucus by one member, as requested by that caucus; the second option being to increase each caucus by one member.

The US stated that it had long supported option 1 as the most effective solution for addressing the concerns of the Asia/Oceania caucus while maintaining a small and effective membership. Norway noted the risk that allowing one caucus to increase its membership may lead to similar requests from other caucuses. Reflecting on what the Executive Committee had discussed during its last meeting, Norway also asked if it might not be better to split the Asia/Oceania caucus into two, keeping three seats in the Committee for Asia and one for Oceania. Uganda observed that the Committee needed to make a recommendation to the Plenary and that it should support option 1 and clearly explain why. Uganda could also support a modified new version of option 1 as proposed by Norway. Australia and Argentina also supported option 1.

The EC requested clarification on whether the two options should be retained in a revised version of the document with a statement of preference, whether only the preferred option should be presented, or if the three options presented at the 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Executive Committee should be included in the Plenary document. Norway agreed that option 1 should be put forward while referencing the other options. The US cautioned against reopening the full range of options. The Secretariat Director suggested presenting option 1 in the document while having other ideas in mind for the Plenary discussions if needed. The Chair noted that, since GEO works on consensus, it would not be easy for the Plenary to reach a decision with more than one option formally on the table. Russia said that he believed the choice should be between one additional member for each caucus or the status quo.

The meeting then discussed the overall process for decision making by the Plenary on this issue. South Africa reminded the Committee that its original mandate was to present the Plenary with options. Uganda suggested that the revised document should fully explain the reasoning behind the Committee's recommendation of option 1. The Committee decided that the best approach would be to indicate that the Committee recommended option 1, although there was not a full consensus, and to indicate the other options. The EC will revise the document for Plenary on this basis.

**Action 16.7 – The EC to revise the document on Executive Committee membership in accordance with the outcome of the discussions and circulate this to Executive Committee members for approval in advance of submitting this document to Plenary.**

## **10 INVOLVING THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN GEO AND GEOSS (Document 18)**

The Secretariat Director introduced the document. The document describes a number of illustrative models of how various kinds of companies and sectors might be engaged more fully in GEOSS in a manner that respects GEO's mandate to support Earth observations as a public good. He asked the Committee whether the Secretariat should continue to explore this issue along these lines.

The Chair opened the discussion by suggesting that the document could be fine-tuned and presented to the Plenary as an information document. The US Co-Chair welcomed the document. She pointed out that much private sector engagement happens at the national level, noted that any efforts to attract funds from the private sector must not violate GEO principles, and stated that the names of specific companies used as examples in the document should be removed. Russia said while companies can be engaged in GEOSS implementation, strictly speaking they would not be formally engaged in GEO, and that "cooperation" may be a better word than "engagement".

Australia said that the issue should be further discussed by the Executive Committee before it was presented to the Plenary. France said that it is important to have the private sector involved in using GEOSS, but it might be more difficult for it to participate in building, operating and financing GEOSS; in addition, parts of the private sector are already engaged, notably via IEEE and OGC. China agreed that the private sector can and should contribute to GEOSS but, given that GEO is an intergovernmental body, it may be wise to have more discussion before advancing the issue to Plenary. Norway welcomed a discussion on the private sector. The EC suggested that the meeting thank the Secretariat for the paper, which provides an excellent starting point for an important and necessary discussion, and return to the issue at a future meeting.

The Chair summarized the discussion and on behalf of the Committee requested the Secretariat to continue working on the document and to present a revised version to the 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Executive Committee.

**Action 16.8 – Secretariat to continue working on the issue of private sector cooperation and present a revised paper to the 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Executive Committee.**

## **11 GEO-VI**

### **11.1 Update on preparations (Document 19)**

The US Co-Chair presented the item. She noted that the GEO-VI Exhibition space was oversubscribed. She encouraged Plenary participants to stay for the entire week to attend related events, such as the meeting of the Health Community of Practice and the IGOS-GEO Symposium. She thanked the Government of France for its contribution to organizing the Symposium reception and the Government of Canada for hosting the GEOSS in the Americas Forum on Coastal Zone Management at their embassy. She concluded by expressing confidence that GEO-VI will be a productive Plenary meeting.

The Secretariat Director noted that the private sector's enthusiastic response to the Exhibition was a sign of its growing interest in GEOSS. The meeting thanked the US Government for its active preparations for the Plenary.

### **11.2 Agenda and Documents (Document 20)**

The US proposed a number of revisions to the draft GEO-VI Plenary agenda and described the various side events that had been scheduled.

The Secretariat Director suggested that while the Plenary may want to have a broad discussion on the 2010 Ministerial Summit, the detailed preparations would best be addressed by the 2010 Ministerial Task Force, which is meeting before the Plenary in late October. He also expressed concern about changing the traditional approach to national and regional reports, which offer GEO Members an important opportunity to highlight their contributions to GEOSS and to be recognized for their work.

Australia agreed with the point about national reports and, with the EC, supported a supplementary option for written submissions. The meeting discussed a number of possible ways to further restructure the agenda. China noted the need to add an item regarding the hosting of GEO-VII and the 2010 Ministerial Summit. The EC asked whether the Executive Committee Report to the Plenary would be handled as before, with the document finalized on the eve of the Plenary, and this was agreed.

## **12 PREPARATION OF 2010 MINISTERIAL SUMMIT (Document 21)**

The Secretariat Director presented the document. He noted that the Task Force had now been established, with 19 members having been nominated so far. In a teleconference held on 9 September, the Task Force agreed to hold its first meeting in Geneva on 22-23 October, followed by a second meeting on 20-21 January 2010. A document based on the October discussions will be developed immediately after the meeting and submitted to the Plenary.

He then briefly described the three substantive proposals included in document 21 as a way of stimulating the discussion. These were the development of 2010 baseline indicators in most or all societal benefit areas, the organization of symposium for all Task teams, and the creation of a "wise persons" consultative group. The participants discussed the potential for the various ideas and how

they might or might not contribute to the Summit. The Executive Committee welcomed the document and could see value in the development of 2010 baseline indicators, whilst noting that this process should not be limited to just 2010. With regard to the other proposals, the Committee could not clearly see how they contributed to the preparations for the 2010 Ministerial.

South Africa stated that the next step was for the Task Force to get to work and then report its initial thinking to the Plenary. The Secretariat should draft a document reporting the results of the October Task Force meeting. The Executive Committee agreed that it was paramount that, at the half-way stage through GEOSS implementation, the Ministerial Summit should see evidence of tangible value-adding outcomes emerging from GEOSS in a 'system of systems' context.

The Secretariat Director stated that it should be formally noted in the minutes that the People's Republic of China will host GEO-VII and the 2010 Ministerial Summit. Due to its plans to host an important international meeting on climate change in 2010, the Republic of Korea has offered to withdraw its offer to serve as host. He thanked China and Korea for the constructive outcome of their discussions.

**Action 16.9 –The 2010 Ministerial Task Force, working with the Secretariat, to draft a report on its initial proposals following the meeting and then submit this to Plenary.**

### **13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

China noted the importance of starting to plan the exact dates for the GEO-VI Plenary meeting and the 2010 Ministerial Summit. To avoid clashing with other relevant international meetings, it was noted that late October, the first week of November, or early December may be suitable. The Chair asked the Secretariat to circulate a list of important meetings so that a decision could be taken. The Secretariat Director suggested that the decision be taken at the 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Executive Committee.

The US raised the issue of the calendar for the Executive Committee meetings, proposing to reduce the number to twice a year, in June/July and just before the November Plenary. The EC preferred to keep three meetings, in March/April, September and November, in particular for the year 2010 due to the Ministerial. The Chair proposed that this issue be revisited at the 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Executive Committee.

The meeting Chair thanked the participants for a constructive meeting and invited his fellow GEO Co-Chairs to make their concluding remarks. The South Africa Co-Chair thanked the participants and the Secretariat and applauded once again the Work Plan progress report, which made it clear that GEOSS implementation is starting to have a real impact. The US Co-Chair reiterated her pleasure in welcoming the GEO community in Washington DC in November. The EC highlighted the importance of the preparations for the 2010 Summit, which will be a vital opportunity for demonstrating the impact and effectiveness of GEO and GEOSS.

The meeting was adjourned.

**Action 16.10 – Secretariat to circulate a list of important meetings so that a decision on scheduling GEO-VII and 2010 Summit can be taken at the 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Executive Committee.**