

Summary Report
27th Executive Committee Meeting
Geneva, Switzerland, 19-20 March 2013
(As accepted at the 28th Executive Committee meeting)

Day 1: Meeting commenced at 10:00

1 GENERAL BUSINESS

The meeting was chaired by the GEO Co-Chair representing the European Commission (EC), Mr Rudolf Strohmeier. He opened the meeting by welcoming Argentina and Estonia to the Executive Committee. He went on to say that, as the GEO community moves towards the Ministerial Summit in January 2014, the EC is faced with several important decisions. In particular, a number of assessments will need to be made to secure the endorsement of the European Parliament and continued engagement in GEO. These assessments will need to show that participation in GEO is bringing benefits to Europe. In the domain of data sharing, the EC has been making great efforts to promote full and open access to data and information. He encouraged other partners in GEO to do likewise, in order to demonstrate to the political masters that data sharing is advancing, and that investments in GEO do bring about benefits, growth, job creation and ultimately societal benefits. He noted that Europe has made substantial investments to advance GEOSS implementation, on the order of €200 million (€140 million from the EC, with an additional €60 million from individual Member States), while contributions from the EC to the GEO Trust Fund have amounted to over €5 million since 2005. He affirmed the EC's commitment to supporting GEOSS implementation and to strengthening cooperation at the international level. In this regard, the EC requests the Secretariat to ensure that the work is properly managed, and that funds are wisely spent. The EC supports the respective roles and responsibilities of the Secretariat and Executive Committee, and asks the Secretariat to be vigilant in following the established Rules of Procedure, to allow proper functioning of the Secretariat with broad policy guidance coming from the Executive Committee. He concluded by thanking everyone for their attention, and then invited the other Co-Chairs to make their opening remarks.

Mr Li Jiahong, the Co-Chair representing the People's Republic of China, expressed his pleasure at attending the meeting. He noted that, subsequent to the call for members at the GEO-IX Plenary in Brazil, China has responded by assigning experts to the various working groups as preparations for the GEO-X Plenary and Ministerial Summit get underway. He also commented that China has been promoting a GEO Data Center of China in order to commemorate progress made in data sharing across Southeast Asia, especially in the developing countries. He concluded by stating that China is committed to GEO and wished everyone a successful meeting

Mr Philemon Mjwara, the Co-Chair representing South Africa, welcomed Argentina and Estonia to the Executive Committee, as well as the Acting Co-Chair from the United States, Mr Peter Mulrean. He noted that he was looking forward to the discussion in response to the report submitted by the Post-2015 WG, for which South Africa is also a Co-Chair. He looked forward to learning about progress on GEOGLAM (GEO Global Agricultural Monitoring) and GFOI (Global Forest Observing Initiative), and in the domain of data sharing, as well as the work done by the Implementation Boards (IBs). In particular, he hoped to reexamine some of the key recommendations that have been produced by the Monitoring & Evaluation Working Group (M&EWG). Lastly, he wished to express his continued appreciation of the work accomplished by the Secretariat under the leadership of the Director.

In addition to acting as the Co-Chair from the United States, Mr Peter Mulrean, noted his function as Deputy Permanent Representative of the US Mission in Geneva to the United Nations Organizations. He delivered greetings from Dr Kathryn Sullivan who was not able to attend the Committee meeting due to last minute schedule changes. Mr Mulrean affirmed that the US is committed to building a bright future for GEO, and commended GEO for the way it has worked to advance data sharing and put this issue on the political map the way no other organization has done. He commented that the opportunity now is right to engage with the multi-stakeholder Earth observation community, and that being located in Geneva is an appropriate place to find new partners since it is the hub of so many international organizations that take action on the ground. He further noted that there are many models of multi-lateral organizations to learn from, and again, Geneva is a good place to look around for best practices and partnerships. He encouraged the Secretariat to seek out new alliances and strengthen partnerships for continued success.

1.1 Adoption of Agenda (Document 1)

The Secretariat Director, Ms Barbara Ryan, proposed moving discussion of agenda item 5 ahead of item 4, due to schedule constraints of some Executive Committee members.

The US clarified that Document 9 was for information (and not consultation).

The EC noted that the M&EWG currently has no co-chairs and proposed this issue be considered under item 4.5.

The Chair noted that the agenda was accepted subject to these modifications, and wished to underscore that, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure, all documents for consideration during an Executive Committee meeting should be released at least 15 calendar days prior to the meetings.

1.2 Summary Report of the 26th Executive Committee Meeting (Document 2 – for acceptance)

The Chair noted that, in the absence of any comment, the report was accepted.

1.3 Review of Actions from Previous Executive Committee Meetings (Document 3 – for consultation)

The Secretariat Director presented the document and reviewed items that either had been closed since the 26th Committee meeting, or were still open.

Action item:

- 24.7 – closed given the uncertainty of New Zealand’s continued leadership of the effort;
- 24.10 – closed (see document 5);
- 26.1 – closed (see document 13);
- 26.2 – closed (see document 14);
- 26.3 – closed (see document 15);
- 26.4 – closed (IBs have confirmed recommendations, or rejected if no longer relevant);
- 26.5 – closed (has become part of ongoing Secretariat functions);
- 26.6 – closed (see document 3).

The EC, noting the emphasis placed on engaging the private sector during the post-2015 discussions at the GEO-IX Plenary, enquired as to the status of the Plenary action on the Secretariat to create a forum for exchange with the private sector. The Secretariat Director responded that the Secretariat had been engaged in conversations with representatives from the private sector on this issue, and has developed

a preliminary proposal on how to move forward. Mr Giovanni Rum, from the Secretariat, is staffing both this issue and the Ministerial WG to ensure discussions in each venue are coordinated, as increasing the visibility of the private sector at the Ministerial Summit is desired.

Action 27.1 – Secretariat to draft plan for launch of private sector forum. [28th Executive Committee]

2 UPDATE FROM THE POST-2015 WORKING GROUP (DOCUMENT 4 – FOR CONSULTATION)

Mr Mmboneni Muofhe, Co-chair of the Post-2015 WG (PWG) presented the PWG update (document 4).

The Chair then suggested that, for the discussion, comments be presented first on the content itself of document 4, and second on the process for endorsement at the Ministerial, with a particular focus on Recommendation 5 (Governance) at the end.

Discussion

Content

The EC expressed appreciation for the efforts of the PWG and the draft recommendations it had developed. Based on previous experience with the Data Sharing Action Plan, a good document model to follow for obtaining Ministerial endorsement is to produce an executive summary, followed by a more detailed justification with key recommendations that can be folded into the Ministerial Declaration. The EC was pleased to see that recommendation 2 lies between strategic directions 2.1B and 2.1C from the PWG Interim Report, as agreed at GEO Plenary-IX. The EC found that, although important to look for complementarities with UN agencies and the importance of the Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS) notwithstanding, it is preferable not to make specific lists as there are other important initiatives that would also need mentioning. The EC thus proposed that the bracketed text making reference to GFCS in recommendation 2 be removed. With respect to recommendation 4, the EC suggested reframing the Societal Benefit Area (SBA) terminology to something more appealing to the public and political masters, and a suggestion would be “Societal Challenges.” The EC welcomed recommendation 7 and reiterated the need to launch the private sector forum. At the same time, the EC observed there is no doubt that GEO is going to remain an international partnership, largely driven by governments, and thus the private sector cannot be seen as playing a forcing role in the governance of GEO. With respect to recommendation 3, from the perspective of the Data Sharing Working Group (DSWG), it should not be assumed that the Data Sharing Principles will remain the same post-2015. Even though much has been accomplished, consideration should be given to modifying the 4th bullet, giving emphasis to building on what has been accomplished in this regard.

The UK thanked the PWG Co-chairs and Secretariat, and reiterated its support for document 4. The UK echoed the remarks made by the EC and agreed the specific mention of GFCS in recommendation 2 should be removed, noting that such references could appear in the Annex. The UK also agreed that the SBA terminology should be reviewed, and the M&E WG recommendations on SBA modifications be taken into consideration.

The US noted the need to align the Post-2015 GEOSS implementation interval, as both 2015-2025 (PWG) and 2016-2026 (MWG) are being used. With regard to recommendation 1, the US saw two distinct issues: the first being sufficient funding of the Secretariat to carry out its duties, which may require exploration of all possibilities, including virtual secondments. The second issue centers on funding for GEO Work Plan (WP) implementation. Although GEO Members and Participating Organizations (POs) are sponsors of the WP, it is a fact that some activities are dormant due to lack of

resources to implement them and they should be pruned to insure the WP stays current. With respect to GFCS, the US has been supportive and sees great potential as it matures. During the recent Inter-Commission Group (ICG) meeting of the WMO Integrated Global Observing System (WIGOS), US GEO Alternate Principal, Dr Kathryn Sullivan, presented distinct examples of how GEOSS can form building blocks of GFCS. Based on these remarks, the US proposed that the Secretariat develop a paper to define how GEOSS can collaborate with GFCS. However, the US agreed with the EC and UK in not singling out GFCS in recommendation 2. The US supported the notion of improving collaboration with other UN agencies, and finds that the explicit references to this effect made in recommendations 2, 4, and 6 is sufficient. Otherwise, the US supported retaining the bracketed language in recommendations 5, 6, and 8.

China observed that, with respect to recommendation 6, developing countries make up the majority of the world, yet most have weak Earth observation capacities. Thus, capacity building is very important and an active mechanism or model should be built to do this effectively, one in which developed countries help developing countries organize continuous training, technology sharing, like the 'Dragon' program a cooperation between ESA and the National Remote Sensing Center of China (NRSCC). China suggested that GEO should act as a channel to build such a global mechanism and a clear description of this mechanism should appear in this document. Also, regional cooperation among developing countries is encouraged to reach regional goals for GEOSS implementation.

With regard to recommendation 7, China suggested flexible and vigorous mechanisms should be explored to bring resources to GEO, especially among the private sector (including big, multi-national corporations). GEO should try to understand private sector interests regarding future markets in terms of Earth observations. Any investments and profit motive should be identified and placed in the full context of GEO, an intergovernmental and non-profit organization. To avoid conflict and changing the intergovernmental nature of GEO, China suggests engagement of the private sector should be negotiated within the framework of the government where the corporation is based. A similar set of rules could apply to the not-for-profit sector.

With regard to recommendation 8, China noted the classification into resources for Secretariat operations, and for the GEOSS implementation. Noting that funds for Secretariat operation have remained steady, the key issue is raising the resources necessary for GEOSS implementation as outlined in the Work Plan. The latter is currently resourced through a combination of domestic projects and funding from among the Member countries and, although the resourcing mechanism is voluntary, GEO should explore all contribution mechanisms (especially for the case of GEOSS implementation).

Japan noted its appreciation for the PWG report and underlined that, for GEO to evolve while providing a good foundation for activities related to global initiatives, emphasis should be placed on 1) recognizing and accounting for interdisciplinary approaches, and 2) early involvement of stakeholders (including the private and non-profit sectors) in GEO activities. Therefore, Japan proposed to modify the language of the first paragraph in recommendation 2 to:

“Considering *that* the increasing demand for Earth observations needed to address future challenges and inform Decision Makers for managing the Earth's environment and resources in a sustainable way requires a transdisciplinary approach and broad involvement of stakeholders, GEO post-2015 will focus on: ...”

Canada commented that, as a member of the PWG, it supported the recommendations in general, and wished to emphasize the need to use language compelling for Ministers. Regarding the content and process, Canada finds there is still a lot of work to be done in parallel to support the draft recommendations, including the development of a substantive agenda for the Geneva Ministerial.

South Africa observed that, since Mr Muofhe was Co-chair of the PWG, it obviously supported the draft recommendations as presented. At the same time, South Africa queried whether it might be useful to step away and imagine those who are looking at GEO from the outside. Everyone present is

in a comfort zone that wants to see GEO continue, but perhaps there is the need to stretch beyond the comfort zone. For example, recommendations made by the M&EWG have not yet been fully considered, which include: 1) the idea of conducting comprehensive gap analyses (an expensive and time consuming endeavor, yet it could be a deal-breaker in terms of having a functioning GEOSS or not), which the PWG could perhaps explore and make proposals on how it could be done, and 2) shutting GEO down if sufficient resources cannot be raised to make a functioning GEOSS.

The Chair commented that, from the eyes of a relative newcomer to GEO, he questioned what Ministers would actually do with the draft recommendations and whether he/she would fully understand them. He suggested that, in order to move forwards, it would be helpful to have some sort of narrative describing a fully functioning GEOSS that would attract politicians and not scientists, that this must be seen as an exercise in outreach and communication.

Mr Gilles Ollier responded that, as Co-chair of the PWG on behalf of the EC, on the specific point of the narrative, the PWG had debated this issue and all agreed on the need to provide a convincing case to the Ministers for the continuation of GEO. With this in mind, the PWG had developed an option paper for the GEO-IX Plenary as requested, which then transformed into the current draft recommendation paper, based on feedback from Plenary. As mentioned in the Cover Note to document 4, the justification for the recommendations contained in the Annex need to be more fully developed; aside from this, there had not been time to develop an additional narrative. Also, the GEO-IX Plenary requested that a “Case for GEO” document be drafted, so it is not clear in which context this narrative should be done and thus guidance from the Executive Committee was sought on whether the PWG or the MWG, or some other writing team should develop this narrative.

The Secretariat Director commented that the timing for the narrative for GEO is quite urgent and therefore, saw it as falling under the purview of the MWG. Hence, a first draft of the *Case for GEO* appears as an annex to the Update from the MWG (document 5, annex). (provide hot link here)

The UK added that stronger language had been originally included in the recommendations, but some members of the PWG were not comfortable with that language. Also, the issue of gap analyses has come up repeatedly, but the exact type of analyses remains elusive. Gap analyses could be, for example, related to the architecture for connecting systems, or it could be in terms of gaps in observing systems. This is important to clarify since the nature of the gap analyses will have implications for Ministerial acceptance.

South Africa commented that the general sense from GEO-IX Plenary was that an evolutionary process is being pointed to for GEO post-2015, something that may call for more than a purely voluntary, bottom-up process, a view seemingly supported by recommendations from the evaluations of the M&EWG.

The US observed that, although the narrative should touch all aspects of GEO, including making the case for GEO in diverse fora and showing the relevance of GEO to outside groups, GEO must be careful to strike the correct balance between ambition and realism, about what is actually achievable, and avoid overselling its objectives.

Process

Mr Muofhe opened this portion of the discussion by drawing attention to recommendation 9, which provides a general outline of the proposed way forward after the Geneva Ministerial in 2014.

In response to a request from South Africa for clarification on the Ministerial process, Secretariat support to the MWG, Mr Giovanni Rum, confirmed that the draft Ministerial Declaration will be negotiated at the cabinet level in July.

The Chair reiterated that a narrative giving a “big picture” perspective to the Ministers should be drafted, a narrative that links to recommendation 9. Ideally, the narrative would contain a “step-wise”

approach as to how GEOSS should progress, and make it clear to Ministers that they have a choice regarding the level of government commitment to GEOSS implementation post-2015.

Mr Ollier clarified that, with respect to recommendation 9, the language had been kept intentionally general to leave the point open for discussion and not give the appearance of a *fait accompli* to the Executive Committee. Work on redrafting the 10-year Implementation Plan (IP) would occur between 2014-2015, prior to the 2015/2016 Ministerial, and high-level expertise will be required, just as was done at the outset of the original IP.

The Chair questioned at what point GEO would receive a mandate to revise the IP. He suggested it will be easier to obtain a political mandate from the Ministers if they are presented with concrete ideas at the Geneva Ministerial of what could be achieved with GEOSS implementation in the next 10 years.

The US observed that, although it agrees on the importance of developing a vision for GEOSS with enough detail to ascertain the implications with respect to resources, it is not clear that GEO has a political mandate prior to the Geneva Ministerial to do so. The narrative or vision for GEOSS needs to be carefully crafted so it does not give the appearance of pre-engineering.

The Chair wondered what level of ambition should GEO seek in laying out the vision for GEOSS, whether this should take the form of an annex to a Ministerial document, a 10th recommendation, or a separate narrative document altogether. In any case, the vision should be based on a narrative laying out different paths for GEOSS implementation, which would seek the political mandate to move forward with details. Additionally, given the short amount of time between the Geneva and 2015/2016 Ministerials, the Chair questioned whether there would be sufficient time to develop a new GEOSS IP for endorsement at the 2015/2016 Ministerial.

South Africa observed that, under lessons learnt, perhaps it is sufficient to detail the added-value of GEO. One option for the GEOSS narrative would be to maintain the current level of activities which may not represent full GEOSS implementation, nevertheless provides a credible indication of resources required. Other examples could be offered to portray ideas for GEOSS, along with an analysis of what it would really cost to provide, for example, the Earth observations necessary to sustain food security, a major political preoccupation currently. The mandate would thus be sought from the Ministers for the green light to proceed in implementation of the desired GEOSS post-2015 from among different scenarios.

Mr Muofhe clarified that recommendation 9 assumed, theoretically, there would be approximately 2 years between the Geneva (January 2014) and 2015/2016 Ministerials. The PWG had estimated the effort required to produce a new IP taking the preparation of the original IP as a model. Moreover, the PWG acknowledged the need for more work to be done on fleshing out various options for resourcing, appropriate governance model, etc, as outlined in the Cover Note to document 4, but the PWG needed to draw on outside expertise to accomplish this work.

The UK cautioned that the PWG should not be asked to overstep its mandate. The PWG was asked to present options for GEO post-2015 to GEO-IX Plenary, which it did. The Plenary responded by asking the PWG to develop recommendations based on preferred options, which it did. The PWG indeed recognizes that a series of papers are needed to flesh out some issues, but it also recognized that it does not have the full expertise required to do so at this point.

The Secretariat Director commented that the proposal made by South Africa is logical, but she was unsure whether it would deliver the desired results. The previous Executive Committee meetings have gone through options produced by the PWG, and GEO-IX Plenary requested the PWG produce recommendations based on preferred options. The Ministers should be presented with the story of the “grand experiment” that GEO has embarked upon. The Director proposed that the *Case for GEO* (annex to document 5), though not perfect, might be the place to tell this story. With the Chair’s permission, the Director then proceeded to read the *Case for GEO*, and she concluded by noting that, on a subliminal level, the document communicates options: a choice between a best-efforts

organization or a more binding UN-style organization. Finding a way to let the various Members of GEO tell their own stories might prove to be the main selling point.

The US acknowledged that more time is required to fully develop the implications of the recommendations. It also agreed with the thrust of the *Case for GEO*, which should feature narratives from governments indicating how they have benefitted from GEO and GEOSS implementation. Extrapolating into the future, this narrative could be indicative of further potential societal benefits, depending on the level of government commitment to pathways for GEOSS implementation. As a point of process, the US wished for the Executive Committee to have a chance to respond to the revised document produced by the PWG after consideration of Committee guidance from this meeting, prior to the document going to GEO Principals for comment.

South Africa noted that the discussion appears to be coalescing around several issues: 1) seeking the endorsement for GEO to continue; 2) framing the process such that its substance would be sufficiently attractive to draw Ministers to Geneva; and 3) using creative thinking in order to overcome resource constraints.

The Chair wondered, given time constraints, whether such a narrative for GEOSS post-2015 could be produced quickly enough so that Ministers at the Geneva Ministerial could have a perspective of different pathways leading to a fully functioning GEOSS, and the resources required to achieve it. He then proposed moving on to the next phase of the discussion, centered on recommendation 5 (Governance), and returning to this question later.

Recommendation 5 (Governance)

The Chair posed the question, as GEO evolves, whether the current governance structure is adequate, or if GEO should perhaps move towards a more UN-style structure, or something different yet. The Chair acknowledged that perhaps recommendations surrounding governance were indeed outside the scope of the PWG.

The Secretariat Director asked for clarification whether, in the arguments surrounding a new model of environmental governance for the future, GEO should continue to position itself differently from the UN model by adhering to an alternative, less formal approach to governance until given a mandate to do things differently. The important benchmarks for GEO's governance structure should be about impacts, such as whether GEO improves food security and how developing countries benefit from GEOSS.

The US agreed that the discussion needs to demonstrate societal benefits deriving from the current governance model.

Mr Ollier recalled that there was a consensus within the PWG following debates as to whether GEO should move towards a UN-style organization, and that consensus was "no." Moreover, at a higher-level, GEO Plenary-IX also responded to this question with a consensus "no." Thus, the possibility exists that any compromise can be easily blocked at any point, but this has not been the case since there are very few in the GEO community calling for a move towards UN-style governance. There is a call for closer collaboration with other organizations with mandates in Earth observations, including the UN. He then sought clarification on whether to retain the text in brackets in recommendation 5, noting the PWG had not reached consensus on this issue.

The US supported retaining the bracketed text in recommendation 5, noting that if the PWG is tasked with considering other options on governance, this endeavor needs to be linked with developing the case for GEO. Outsiders who have experience in managing multi-lateral organizations should be consulted by the PWG.

The EC commented that if GEO is going as far as asking the Ministers for guidance on the direction GEO should take post-2015, some type of roadmap needs to be developed now, one that offers ideas and choices which will then have a bearing on development of the new IP. The Ministers can weigh in

and then call for the establishment of a full-fledged IP which they can endorse in 2015/2016. In any event, the main concern is to attract Ministers and give them something to do.

The US agreed, stating that it needs to be made clear to Ministers that the results envisioned and, therefore likely to be achieved, will be based on the level of resources invested, which is something they can influence.

Russia remarked that GEO needs to think in terms of a dynamic process for the next 10-year period, and that attractive arguments for Ministerial consideration should include information about GEOSS users, number of users of GCI, and resources.

China noted that GEO is an intergovernmental organization, which is reflected not only by the Summit, Plenary, Executive Committee, but also by the implementation of GEOSS. The process of carrying out Tasks in the Work Plan involves voluntary mechanisms, similar to an academic organization: contributors are asked to voluntarily join a Task Team, and contribute on a voluntary and non-judicial basis. Although this mechanism is flexible, there is no pressure and no clear responsibility; some Members are able to obtain funding from their government, but most cannot because the implementation of these Tasks is often not within the scope of a governmental channel. China suggests striking a balance between this voluntary flexible mechanism and support via governmental channels, with the latter playing a much greater role in the future implementation GEOSS.

The Secretariat Director asked for clarification on what the Executive Committee was asking the PWG to do at this point.

South Africa responded by noting everyone respected and recognized the mandate of the PWG. However, it sensed the Committee was proposing something different: it will not be enough to ask Ministers to prolong a program that is, in a sense, coming into its twilight years. Rather, the Committee seemed to be suggesting that a different process was needed, one in which a small, independent writing group should be established that could develop a “straw man” vision for GEOSS implementation post-2015, and produce a map that analyzes how high and how steep the road ahead will be.

The UK then wanted clarification on whether the PWG should go forward with the 5-6 information papers it proposed to develop, as outlined in the Cover Note, or if that work was now superseded by this new proposed roadmap/narrative.

The US responded that, in its view, the PWG should carry on with its work on the information papers.

Japan suggested a new writing group was not needed for development of a roadmap, but rather the PWG or MWG should be used in order to economize time and make use of their experience.

The EC added that the mandate of the PWG was generic enough such that this new task of developing a roadmap with scenarios for GEOSS post-2015 could be accommodated within it.

Mr Ollier requested clarification as to: 1) who would actually produce the proposed roadmap, which appeared to be a combination of options proposed for GEOSS implementation post-2015, as well as an assessment of what has been achieved; and 2) at what level this document would be promoted to Ministers. In his view, the MWG would be more appropriate for developing the proposed roadmap.

The Chair concluded by recalling the Cover Note to document 4 stated that “wider consultation is needed” for which information papers are to be developed on the 5 proposed topics. He agreed these topics are indeed important, but the process being proposed now would take too much time. A document that seeks guidance from Ministers on these five topics needed to be produced as quickly as possible, and he requested Co-chairs of the WGs and the Secretariat to resolve this issue and report back to the Executive Committee the following day.

[The GEO Co-Chairs, as well as Co-chairs and members of the PWG and MWG, and the Secretariat met during the morning coffee break on the following day to continue the discussions and find a way forward. The following Summary details the main conclusions.]

Summary

With respect to the Update from the Post-2015 Working Group (document 4), the Executive Committee requested the PWG:

- revise the recommendations (document “B”) such that GEO-jargon is kept to a minimum, bearing in mind the Ministers are not likely to be familiar with the language as it now stands;
- carry on with its plans as outlined in the Cover Note to document 4, to use outside sources with experience and expertise on key topics (resources, relationship with participating organizations, governance, private sector, GEOSS architecture) to complete the justification of recommendations;
- strike the bracketed text contained in the first bullet point of Recommendation 2 (GEO Strategic Objectives) making reference to GFCS;
- retain the bracketed text contained in Recommendations 5 (Governance), 6 (Engagement with developing countries), and 8 (Resourcing);
- recast the Preamble so that it is reinforced with a political message that will attract the attention of Ministers, possibly in reference to what GEO will do differently post-2015 (i.e. address food and water security concerns). This reinforcement could include "top line" messages drawn from a strengthened "*Case for GEO*" document (to be drafted by the MWG). The Preamble should also include references to past achievements of GEO.

Beyond these modifications, the Executive Committee requested the addition of an "Implementation Plan Analysis" document. This document will lay out potential pathways to achieve the desired end state for GEOSS in the post-2015 time frame as agreed at GEO-IX in Brazil, and within the frame of the recommendations proposed in the post-2015 document B. The document will thus aim to help governments understand what they are committing to with respect to GEOSS implementation post-2015, to provide a measure of the implications of what they are endorsing, and give them a chance to weigh in on the choice. This document will be drafted by a small writing team drawn from members of the Executive Committee, led by the United States, and will form part of the information documents contained within the Ministerial portfolio. The PWG is requested to take note of the development of this document and insure that the content harmonizes with the recommendations developed for endorsement in the Ministerial Declaration.

Action 27.2 – Revise Post-2015 WG Recommendations

- circulate to Executive Committee Co-chairs for review, with cc to full Executive Committee [15 April; review period ends 22 April]
- circulate to GEO-Principals for comment [30 April; comment period ends 20 May]

Action 27.3 – Solicit nominations for “Implementation Plan Analysis” writing team from among Executive Committee members [A.S.A.P.]

Action 27.4 – Prepare communiqué defining GEOSS collaboration with GFCS [15 May]

3 PREPARATIONS FOR GEO-X AND MINISTERIAL SUMMIT

3.1 Update from the Ministerial Working Group (Document 5 – for consultation)

3.2 Actions and Lessons from GEO-IX and previous Ministerial Summits (Document 5 – Enclosure 3)

Dr José Romero, Head of Section of the Federal Department of Environment, Transports, Energy and Communications (DETEC), Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN), Switzerland, delivered the MWG presentation.

The UK expressed its appreciation to the MWG for its efforts and agreed that a major outcome of the Ministerial should be the continuation of GEO, plus endorsement of the next two years of the current IP. The UK noted that the Case for GEO in the Preamble of the report submitted by the PWG resembles the Case for GEO in the Annex of document 5. Finally, the UK commented on the need to avoid confusion with the Report on Progress produced by IBs and the Secretariat.

The US remarked on the need for GEO to have two Ministerial Summits within the space of two years relevant to Ministers. Doing so requires a clear division of labor and approach to developing these 2 Ministerial Summits. Bearing in mind that the goal is to give Ministers options to respond to and the need to strengthen the Case for GEO, there should be some flexibility in naming the documents, as well as a holistic approach in involving other bodies from the GEO community.

Regarding the format for the Ministerial, China indicated its preference for separate Ministerial statements as opposed to a round-table panel discussion. This setting might place some Ministers at a disadvantage in terms of having to communicate in English and would thus render achieving a consensus difficult. China would prefer having the time to prepare statements in advance.

South Africa asked if any analysis had ever been conducted of the way in which exhibitions have showcased GEOSS, and whether they were successful at communicating its objectives.

The UK stated it would like the discretion to choose who the best high-placed individual would be to engage and promote GEO at the Geneva Ministerial, as this individual in fact may not necessarily be a Minister.

The EC remarked that it had been interesting to have local citizens and school children participate in the exhibition at the Beijing Ministerial, and wondered if something similar would be possible for the Geneva Ministerial. Dr Romero responded that the MWG will explore this idea, since Geneva is considered a low-risk city, access to the venue by the public should not be a problem. The EC noted that, based on previous experience where security conditions may preclude public participation during the Ministerial, at least the exhibition could be open to the public in advance and on Plenary days.

Action 27.5 – Prepare draft Ministerial Folder [28th ExCom]

4 GEOSS IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 GEO 2012-2015 Work Plan Implementation (Document 6 – for consultation)

Secretariat Work Plan Coordinator Dr Alexia Massacand provided a summary overview of progress that has been achieved across GEOSS since the GEO-IX Plenary. In particular, she noted that Infrastructure Task IN-01 (Earth Observing Systems) is red mainly because of the lack of a global framework to expand *in-situ* networks. Also IN-01 Component 3 (Promotion and Coordination across Surface-based and Space-based Observing Systems) is lacking a Point of Contact (PoC). On the other hand, coordination of space-based observations is progressing well, thanks to the virtual constellations of CEOS. With regard to IN-02 (Earth Data Sets), she mentioned that efforts are being made to make the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) data available through the

GEOSS Common Infrastructure (GCI). She also mentioned that the new Discover and Access Broker (DAB) developed as part of IN-03 (GEOSS Common Infrastructure) now makes over 14 million datasets accessible through the GEO Portal. She noted that Norway has now stepped up as PoC for ID-05 (Catalyzing Resources for GEOSS Implementation), and that Italy had likewise come forward as Task Coordinator for EC-01 (Global Ecosystem Monitoring). Finally, she noted that progress was being made on the global atlas for energy under Task EN-01 (Energy and Geo-Resources Management).

The EC commented that the difficulty with IN-01 is both technical and strategic. Deployment of *in-situ* stations world-wide is difficult because they are expensive. The EC is proposing less costly solutions to advance this issue, such as using citizen observatories. Research and innovation should focus on making use of smart phones, laptops, etc, as *in-situ* monitoring stations. This and other low-cost technologies should be exploited more fully.

The US stated it hopes the Work Plan Symposium (WPS) can build upon the progress highlighted in the presentation synopsis. For example, the Blue Planet Task is calling for resolution to interoperability issues in connecting data portals, and the hope is that this will be taken up at the WPS by the appropriate bodies, and concrete steps taken as an outcome. The US also sees GEO as upstream of GFCS rather than other way around, GEO being the more mature initiative.

The EC observed that, with the progress of a large number of Tasks portrayed as green, it will be difficult to convince a Minister to contribute additional resources.

Dr Massacand responded by noting the Work Plan has been designed to address Strategic Targets, trying to lay out which tasks are necessary to advance the Targets by 2015, and optimize contributions in this regard. She noted that there has been an effort to tie citizen observing systems into the Work Plan (Tasks IN-01 and IN-04), an area where the recent EC project on citizen observatories could be of strong support. With regards to GFCS, she observed that the GFCS-Implementation Plan is under development, which means there is room to shape it as the complementarities with GEO are identified. There is the potential for overlaps as GEO is developing and disseminating information in the nine Societal Benefit Areas and supporting thereby the development of services.

The Secretariat Director remarked that, at least at the international level, the distinction is that GEO is primarily focused on coordination of observations, whereas GFCS is primarily focused on providing services. It should be noted, however, that GFCS does include an observations component, so the early work connecting the WMO Information System (WIS) and the GEO GCI will help advance GFCS and GEOSS implementation. Clearly, duplicate efforts must be avoided, and in this regard, GFCS could make more use of the Communities of Practice that GEO has cultivated.

China observed that most Tasks need further actions from GEO Members and POs with regard to funding or data resources to reach fruition, but especially with long-term funding. For example, with Task SB-02 (Global Land Cover), the Chinese government through the Ministry of Science and Technology is providing funding to this project. However, now that this project is reaching the end, there is a question as to who will support the continuation of this activity. China, fortunately, will support the project for one more year, but longer term funding is in question. In any case, long term steady support is important for all Tasks to reach their full potential -- a challenge that needs to be resolved in the next phase of GEO post-2015.

Dr Massacand thanked the members for their comments and noted that the Global Land Cover Task (SB-02) had indeed taken off last year, through the leadership of China. A key achievement over the past year has been bringing the community together and achieving new levels of coordination through the GEO Work Plan. This is evident in the Synoptic Table at the beginning, designed to provide a more synthetic approach as requested by the Executive Committee, including an emphasis on salient issues.

The EC commented that it would perhaps be worthwhile to develop a compendium of success stories based on Work Plan progress reports, and Dr Massacand responded that she will support the MWG in identifying showcase material along these lines.

[Agenda items were not covered sequentially from this point on, due to time constraints on the part of presenters].

4.2 Implementation Boards: Sprint to Summit 2013-2014 (Document 9 – for consultation)

Mr Rifat Hossain (WHO), HE-01 Task Coordinator and Societal Benefits IB Co-chair, gave the presentation on the plans for the Sprint to Summit (S2S). He noted that all IBs are in support of S2S, and one of their main concerns was the proliferation of national and regional data portals which should be aligned with the GEO Portal. He reiterated the willingness of the IBs to work with MWG on defining showcases of GEO success stories. He concluded by commenting that he continues to work within the WHO to move in the direction of becoming a PO in GEO.

China noted it will contribute materials on CMACast, Global Land Cover, and GEOGLAM, and also other materials as needed by the IBs.

The Chair welcomed the plans and presentation, noting its support for the launch of the S2S, and wished to acknowledge the added datasets to GEOSS Data-CORE. He underscored the need to have scenarios for Ministerial showcases depicting the added-value of GEO and GEOSS, and urged that demonstrators be defined as soon as possible, or by the end of April at the latest.

4.3 Progress in the Implementation of Recommendations from GEOSS Evaluations (Document 10 – for consultation)

Mr Giovanni Rum (Secretariat support to M&E WG) gave the presentation and noted, as a result of Plenary-IX feedback, the addition of column F “Rating of Implementation Response” in the “DETAILED ASSESSMENT AND RATING OF IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSE” table in the proposed “Progress in the Implementation of the Recommendations from GEOSS Evaluations” annual report. Mr Rum noted that column D “Current Status” will be provided by the Secretariat and IBs.

The UK expressed appreciation for the new format, and with respect to the terminology for column F suggested the addition of another category, such as “recommendation superseded”, perhaps in some combination with the “unable to assess” category.

The EC also expressed its approval of the proposed format, and went on to query whether the members of the Executive Committee would be able to fill the Co-chair position left by the departure of Craig Larlee.

The US responded it had identified a potential candidate. However the US also did not want the candidate to also end up as the “next single point of failure”, and noted that travel support is a challenge under the current financial conditions, especially if Co-chairing the M&EWG involved up to three meetings per year. The US urged a reengineering of the process by which the WG can function, suggesting more effective use of electronic means such email, teleconferences and WebEx to conduct its business.

The Secretariat Director noted that Craig Larlee will be taking personal vacation time to participate in the WP Symposium, so his assistance will extend to early June.

The Chair indicated that the EC too will look to its caucus to see if a candidate could be identified for nominations. The Chair took note of comments and the need to revisit this issue relatively soon as a solution is needed by the July time-frame. The Chair also requested the Secretariat to issue a call for M&E WG Co-chair and membership nominations.

Action 27.8 – issue call for nomination of M&E WG Co-chairs and additional members [28th ExCom]

Meeting adjourned at 17:00***IN-CAMERA EXECUTIVE SESSION SUMMARY***

At 17:15 an *in-camera* Executive Session, requested by the Secretariat Director, was convened. Executive Committee Principals or Head of Delegations were asked to participate.

The specific issue that precipitated the call for this Session was the fact that some concern had been expressed regarding the advertisement of two posts in the Secretariat – one for a Senior Administrative Manager and one for a Senior External Relations Manager. The fact that this action had caused some concern indicated that there may not be a common understanding between the Secretariat Director and the Executive Committee regarding respective roles and responsibilities.

The Secretariat Director redistributed information related to the issue at hand – a letter describing the context for the Session, the Secretariat organizational chart, the request for secondments sent in October 2012, projected salaries and employee benefits for 2013, and the GEO Rules of Procedure for the Secretariat and Executive Committee.

Each Member then expressed his or her views regarding the respective roles and responsibilities of the Secretariat and Executive Committee. There was agreement that the Executive Committee is responsible for setting parameters and issuing policy and programme guidance between the Plenaries when broad strategic guidance is provided, and that the Secretariat Director is responsible for day-to-day execution of that guidance which includes management and organization of the Secretariat.

With the post-2015 era closely approaching, several points were highlighted – the fact that we are entering a political environment as compared to a scientific or technical environment, yet much of our work has been focused on the latter, the importance of a good strategy for engaging the private sector, benchmarking other organizations' budget presentations particularly in regard to highlighting capacity building expenditures, and ensuring both financial accountability and transparency into Secretariat operations.

The Committee appreciated the fact that all Members shared their views during the Session and looked forward to bringing this best-practice into the routine meetings of the Executive Committee.

The Session ended at 18:45.

Day 2: Meeting commenced at 09:00**5 SECRETARIAT OPERATIONS****5.1 Secretariat Operations Report (Document 11 – for consultation)**

The document was reviewed by the Secretariat Director who noted the inclusion of bulleted “outcomes” in response to requests from the Executive Committee for a more synthetic analysis of Secretariat activities. She also noted that Japan, the US, and South Africa are negotiating the terms for potential secondments which, when brought to fruition, would bring the Secretariat nearly back in line with the maximum historic level of secondments (circa 2007/2008). With the distribution of an erratum sheet containing two additional Secretariat missions (initially omitted), she explained an anticipated meeting with the US National Science Foundation (NSF) had not occurred as planned due to the pending departure of the director. The goal of the meeting would have been to, using the EC’s FP7 and Horizon 2020 programmes as examples, exploring a closer alignment of existing resources and research funds from the US with GEO’s Work Plan for acceleration of GEOSS implementation. This action could be implemented by requested potential grantees to state how the results of their projects would advance GEOSS implementation. The mobilization of additional resources, albeit desirable, is not mandatory. Otherwise, she noted that all the other meetings on that particular mission took place and were at the Assistant-Secretary level. Finally, in terms of Secretariat staffing, the Director noted that the contract for Dr Douglas Cripe had been extended through the end of February 2014, and that Mr Espen Volden and Ms Tomoko Mano will likely have their secondments extended for one additional year.

In response to a clarification sought from the US regarding status of fixed-term positions set to expire in 2014, the Secretariat Director responded that, in accordance with WMO policy, these positions are renewed pending availability of resources and satisfactory performance, and therefore almost automatically. She acknowledged that display of “expiration dates” of fixed-term renewable contracts could give the impression of instability when in fact this is not the case. She explained that the Trust Fund reserve (CHF 2 million) required by WMO was to cover salaries in the event insufficient voluntary contributions are received from GEO Members. Without this reserve, WMO is unable to assume the liability for buying out contracts if GEO ceases operations. The US then commented that there may be another way to represent these positions with the understanding that they technically can be terminated, but are generally renewed. The US requested the Secretariat to explore options by considering how other organizations portray these positions.

The EC questioned whether desired outcomes can be implemented by a limited number of staff on the Secretariat. Taking the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) as an example, given current Secretariat staffing levels, the EC wondered if it is feasible to maintain contacts and cross-check on delivery of promises. A mechanism should be in place to insure that there is follow-up from the Secretariat.

The Secretariat Director responded that, given the voluntary nature of GEO, the Secretariat relies on commitments from its Members and POs, citing the recent example of Italy nominating a Coordinator for the Task EC-01 (Global Ecosystem Monitoring). With respect to the CBD, in the interest of clearly defining “trade space,” a policy construct is being put in place whereby GEO can provide harmonized products that they can then advance through their policy and programmatic channels. She added that persistence is necessary with respect to resource mobilization. Moreover, the Secretariat cannot do everything but rather should rely on others on the landscape to help, as long as the message is clear and consistent. Finally, she remarked that better use of an information system would help with increasing the effectiveness of communications and resource mobilization.

The EC commented that it would be helpful to know, in advance, when Secretariat staff goes on mission. It would also help if mission reports were made available after completion of a mission, such that, when key contacts are made, the GEO community can help with follow-up. The EC further noted that, in the context of the post-2015 discussion, there has been some discussion of establishing a virtual secretariat, as not everyone may need to be based in Geneva.

The Director responded that, although she agreed more timely notification of missions would be helpful to the GEO community, she has been reluctant to require mission reports as she has not observed that the true benefits of doing so outweigh the costs. The Secretariat will evaluate how a balance can be reached to maximize relevant information sharing and minimize ineffective reporting. Moreover, there has been an effort to involve those outside the Secretariat to represent GEO where Secretariat staff cannot be present. Regarding a virtual Secretariat, she was cautiously optimistic about this proposal. Developing and ensuring a consistent message throughout a virtual Secretariat is a challenge, especially given the difficulties observed of doing so in-house at the current time. She felt more analysis was needed to identify the best way of leveraging individual talent in the GEO community, exterior to the Secretariat.

Japan remarked that involvement of GEO is necessary in arenas of regional and global affairs, such as the Belmont Forum or Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum (APRSAF) where not everyone is aware of GEO. They would like to encourage the Secretariat to continue this type of outreach and collaboration. Moreover, the Secretariat efforts should be concentrated in domains that are core-central, such as data sharing and interoperability.

The Director responded that she had also paid a courtesy call to the International Council for Science (ICSU) in connection with their Future Earth initiative. She agreed that the Secretariat must do a better job reaching out to regional and global initiatives such as the Belmont forum. In keeping with some advice she received early in her career: “Own what you must, influence what you can”, she believed GEO should strive to better define its trade space vis-à-vis initiatives such as Eye on Earth, Future Earth, the Belmont Forum, etc.

Action 27.9 - Explore alternatives for reporting on Secretariat fixed-term positions [28th ExCom]

5.2 2012 Draft Financial Statements (Document 12 – for information)

The document was reviewed by the Secretariat Director. She mentioned that all GEO Principals will be contacted regarding potential increases in contributions to the Secretariat Trust Fund, and also that it is the Swiss Federal Audit Office that is currently performing financial audits of the Trust Fund.

The EC commented on the presentation of the figures, noting the Executive Committee had previously requested that funds earmarked for certain specific purposes (e.g. GFOI) not be mixed with general contributions to the Trust Fund as this makes it difficult to obtain a clear picture of the true financial situation. Moreover, the EC was very concerned to see expenditures exceeding income, noting that, with a relatively small budget, going from a strong financial position to a weak one could happen quickly. The EC also expressed concern at the recent hiring of external short-term contractors; in their view, if certain portions of work cannot be accomplished within Secretariat, the Director should first turn to the GEO community to see if the work could be out-sourced as an in-kind contribution. Only if no one can help should external contracts be resorted to. Regarding its pledge, the EC noted its fiscal policies do not allow fulfillment until the March-April time-frame each year.

South Africa wished to clarify that its contribution had been ZAR 2 million, not 1.9 million (although the conversion to Swiss francs was correct)

The US expressed regret that its complete contribution had yet to be transferred. The US echoed the request from the EC to see two line-items accounting for special initiatives and the general Trust fund. The US also noted that it wished to see separate accounting of the 15% budget reserve set aside for

overhead costs (7% for WMO, 7-8% for Secretariat administrative costs) as the current financial statement still merges these figures together. The US was also concerned about increases in costs and wondered what options might be available to lighten the draw on the Trust Fund while exploring creative alternatives for Member and PO resource contributions.

The Secretariat Director responded by saying that separate accounting for the special initiatives will begin in 2013. This decision will ensure that the 2012 financial report is consistent throughout, rather than implementing a new accounting practice with only two months remaining in the fiscal year. She assured the Committee that separate accounting for special initiatives (e.g. GEOGLAM and GFOI) and the general Trust Fund will be reported starting 1 January 2013. In regard to the issue of external contracts, she remarked that she will strive to make fuller use of capabilities within the GEO community, although she noted that the response from GEO Members to the call for secondments issued in October 2012 was less than optimal. She apologized for the incorrect figure related to South Africa's contribution, and will have it rectified immediately. She responded that it was not her understanding that a decision on the 15% overhead rate had been made, but can implement it as of 1 January 2013 if affirmed by the Executive Committee. A paper can be prepared for the July Executive Committee meeting on this issue. Finally, she noted that contributions to the Secretariat Trust Fund arrive throughout the year while expenditures start on January 1st. For countries with fiscal years that coincide with the calendar year or before, we will ask that contributions be made in the first quarter. Otherwise the Secretariat is forced to tap into carry-over funds, until the pledges are received later in the year.

Action 27.10 – prepare proposal on 15% budget reserve for WMO and Secretariat administrative overhead [28th ExCom]

Action 27.11 – clarify working capital reserve recommendation for Executive Committee [28th ExCom]

5.3 Secretariat Performance Indicators (Document 13 – for acceptance)

The document was reviewed by the Secretariat Director, who noted the indicators had been developed by the Secretariat and refined by Craig Larlee (Co-chair, M&E WG). She felt the previous indicators were pedestrian and did not provide truly meaningful information, so the new set identified four core Secretariat duties while building on the primary functions of the Secretariat as described in the Rules of Procedure.

The UK agreed the new set was an improvement over what had been in existence, and wanted to insure the indicators were substantive (points 12 and 13, for example, should be more concerned with quality than quantity).

The EC remarked that the indicators were principally quantitative in nature, and that qualitative indicators were also needed. The EC wondered which policy objectives were targeted with these indicators, and whether the experiences of other inter-governmental organizations had been taken into consideration.

Canada acknowledged the points raised by the UK and EC. At the same time, while recognizing the indicators were not perfect, Canada suggested going ahead and putting them to use with refinements to be applied along the way. The important point was the need to report on the Secretariat's performance in a quantifiable way, and thus Canada recommended using the indicators presented, with a view to improve them over time.

Japan appreciated the quantitative nature of the indicators, noting how difficult it can be to measure performance of a Secretariat, and found them useful. Japan also noted that the more qualitative aspects of Secretariat performance were already captured in the Secretariat Operations Report.

5.4 Progress on GEOGLAM Implementation (Document 7 – for consultation)

Mr Joao Soares from the Secretariat delivered the presentation on GEOGLAM progress.

The Secretariat Director noted that the German Agricultural Ministry has expressed interest in GEOGLAM and is willing to fund a few workshops for this initiative, and the Asian Development Bank is already providing financial support to the Asian Rice Monitoring component of GEOGLAM.

Japan remarked that it will contribute soil moisture and precipitation data to GEOGLAM projects. Japan is also promoting the African Water Cycle Coordination Initiative. Its 4th Symposium will be held later this year in Japan. Japan further recognized the importance of the 6th GEOSS Asia-Pacific meeting held recently in Ahmedabad, India, and wished to express appreciation to the Secretariat for its support, and to the local organization committee for making these conferences so successful.

China appreciated the progress made on GEOGLAM, and noted it will continue to provide Fengyun and Huanjing satellite data in support of the initiative, as well as data from the CBERS-3 satellite which is planned for launch in April 2013. In addition, the Ministry of Science and Technology of China has funded a project to support the work, starting at the beginning of this year. Although a framework of promoting GEOGLAM is in place, specific definition of governance, principles of finance and product sharing should be made as soon as possible to keep Task implementation running smoothly.

The EC commented that GEOGLAM is an important flagship initiative of GEO and is taking its implementation very seriously. The EC was pleased to note the progress being made, and the EC wants to support GEOGLAM through the FP7 process. The EC had two comments to make: 1) because impacts of agricultural practices on the environment are starting to gain attention, they suggested that cultivation impacts be better addressed within GEOGLAM; and 2) that a more robust Implementation Plan be developed. The Global Forest Observation Initiative (GFOI) has developed an Implementation Plan which could serve as a model. Document 7 makes no mention of timing and drafting of such a plan. The proposed governance structure seems too heavy with a Steering Committee, Implementation Committee, and a Coordinator located at the Secretariat. With limited resources available, perhaps this structure should be lightened to just a Steering Committee and Secretariat coordination. The IBs could also make a substantial contribution to the coordination. Finally, the EC would encourage more of an emphasis on *in-situ* contributions, so that GEOGLAM is not just about remotely-sensed observations.

The UK was pleased to see so many users from local organizations involved in GEOGLAM, and asked how satellite data could be better integrated with *in-situ* data, and if this would involve more work and more interest. The UK expressed concern about coordination being located within the Secretariat as there had been considerable discussion surrounding this point at previous Executive Committee meetings, and the consensus had been that this would be an interim solution until it could be transitioned to a host organization.

The EC added there was a need to orient activities much more along consumer demands, to focus on speculation that happens between harvest seasons, as this is a huge problem for developing nations.

The Secretariat Director recalled that it had been the G20 Agriculture Ministers who first endorsed GEOGLAM and encouraged a partnership with the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS). The G20 Declaration provides a policy directive, as compared to GFOI which has resources for coordination, and is striving to strengthen its linkages with UNFCCC for a policy directive. GEO could have a comparable global monitoring initiative for each SBA. If one looks to the success story in the Weather SBA and examines the European Centre for Medium-range Weather Forecasting (ECMWF) chart showing improvements in the 3-, 5-, 7-, and 10-day forecasts in both the Northern and Southern Hemispheres over the past 30 years, one will find similar, albeit nascent conditions in the other SBAs – international coordination, data sharing, use of both satellite and *in situ* data, etc. Lastly, she noted the proposed GEOGLAM governance structure had been modeled directly after that of GFOI.

Mr Soares responded that, without a dedicated coordinator post at the Secretariat, it will be difficult to produce a robust Implementation Plan in the near term. He also noted that, although remote sensing is relied upon to provide the big picture, *in-situ* data is very much a part of GEOGLAM, as evidenced in GEOGLAM documents.

The EC remarked that, with so much at stake, it should be possible to have the GEOGLAM co-chairs confer together and develop an implementation plan in the very near future. The EC further urged all other participants to contribute resources, and reiterated the need for integration of *in-situ* aspects, necessary for improving crop yield forecasts.

[Mr Rudolf Strohmeier left the meeting at this point due to schedule constraints, with Mr Phil Mujwara taking over as Chair.]

The Secretariat Director responded that development of an implementation plan will be a priority and the Secretariat will be engaging with the GEOGLAM Co-chairs in this regard. Regarding the governance, she noted that GEOGLAM was using the exact same model as GFOI and thus did not see the need to modify this arrangement. She did not see this model as top-heavy, but rather giving all interested stakeholders a voice in how the initiative is run.

The EC agreed that the governance structure was sufficient, but still wished to see a more tangible implementation plan to deliver some demonstrators as quickly as possible. The EC also wished to see a greater linkage and interface with the IBs to provide guidance.

The Chair summarized by noting the presentation on GEOGLAM progress was accepted, and the Secretariat was requested to provide more details on the Implementation Plan by the next Executive Committee meeting.

Action 27.6 – Report on initial steps towards development of GEOGLAM Implementation Plan [28th ExCom]

5.5 GEOSS Data Sharing Working Group (Document 8 – for consultation)

Dr Alan Edwards, Co-Chair of the DSWG, presented the update on activities of the WG. He emphasized that GEOSS does not have a data policy: there is no universal standard being put forth by GEO for adoption. Rather, there are GEOSS Data Sharing Principles which provide for agencies to conduct activities as they are accustomed, while advocating for broad and open access to data and information. He also suggested that GEO should consider whether to retain or modify the GEOSS Data Sharing Principles in the post-2015 period.

In response to bullet point 2 of the summary in the presentation, the Secretariat Director questioned whether the Secretariat had the resources to hire an Information Technology (IT) specialist as called for. She also sought clarity on whether the DSWG strategy was to seek individual data sets, compared to brokering an interoperability strategy where the onus for integration with the GCI is on owners of data. In her view, the Secretariat should focus on the latter, forging interoperability arrangements.

The EC indicated its full support for the hiring of an IT specialist, viewed as important during the recent EU caucus for showcasing the success of GEO at the Geneva Ministerial.

Japan concurred with the Director, noting its experience with the Data Integration and Analysis System (DIAS) which showed it was easier to convince data providers to use a common metadata approach. In some cases, data can be provided in a way that is consistent with the DSP, and at other times significant effort and personnel are required to comply with the DSP to complete the arrangements. Nevertheless, Japan is committed to fully supporting DSP and will be seconding an individual to the Secretariat for the purpose of information management. With respect to the IT specialist, perhaps it would be possible to outsource the work, or ask for new secondments. Finally, Japan suggested that GEO continue to encourage use of data by researchers and scientists and partnering with ICSU's Future Earth initiative would ensure this.

China commented that data sharing is at the heart of GEOSS. In this regard, China is building the GEO Data Center of China, under the national inter-Ministry coordinating mechanism, to promote the data sharing between different Ministries involved in Earth observation, and advance the data exchange and service connection to the GEOSS common infrastructure. Data sharing domestically nevertheless remains a challenge in many Member countries, especially when the Earth observation work involves several Ministries -- often the first step to overcome when advocating sharing data in the GEO community.

The US underscored that support for the GEOSS DataCORE was critical and thus GEO needed to explore options as how the Secretariat can provide a focal point for this support. The Secretariat Director was encouraged to consider all options, and one suggestion could be a virtual secondment. The Executive Committee was likewise encouraged to identify a senior support individual as called for in bullet point 3 of the summary.

Canada indicated it was fully supportive of the request for IT support given the importance of the GCI and DataCORE, yet noted that the mandate of the Executive Committee was to advise and guide the Secretariat, rather than prescribe a course of action. In Canada's view, it should be left to the discretion of the Director to decide how to best fill this request.

The UK commented there was a need to demonstrate value now and provide evidence on how the GEOSS DataCORE is actually being used. The UK agreed with Canada that the IT specialist was needed, but it should be within the purview of the Director to decide how best to accomplish it.

Russia remarked that with respect to the first bullet point in the summary, to make the GCI and DataCORE registration process easier, it would be useful if the DSWG could prepare an instruction document.

The Chair summarized the discussion by noting the spirit of the recommendation was accepted since the Executive Committee would like to see support of the GEOSS Data-CORE by an IT specialist happen as quickly as possible, in anticipation of the upcoming Geneva Ministerial. However, the details for engaging such a specialist should be left to the discretion of the Secretariat Director, taking into account the current fiscal condition. All options should be explored, including engaging external bodies for help. The Chair appreciated the request by Russia, suggesting the DSWG craft a communiqué emphasizing interim resources for help with registration. Finally, the Chair requested that the Executive Committee consider who among the members might step into the position of Alan Edwards as Co-chair of the DSWG

Dr Edwards concluded by noting the DSWG had produced two documents: one technical, the other a simple step-by-step guide for registering items in the Data-CORE. He reiterated the point that it was essential to have a focal point within the Secretariat to follow up on Data-CORE requests, and that the Director should have the discretion to fill the position. The position could be virtual as long as there was a definite commitment to provide some percentage of work time to perform necessary duties. He reiterated that the EC will continue to support the work with all who have pledged data thus far. He noted that the "GEOSS Common Infrastructure" is about the only thing GEO really owns and while the EC is happy to contribute to its development, since it is common, the EC would like to see others commit resources as well. Finally, he observed that although the broker approach has been useful, it cannot correct errors in metadata. A mechanism needs to be found to tag metadata problems, which then would be up to the provider to correct.

Action 27.7 – Report on options for engaging IT/Data Management specialist to help development of GEOSS Data-CORE and GCI [28th ExCom]

5.6 Communications Strategy (Document 14 – for consultation)

Ms Katherine Canipelli (via remote video link) and Ms Daria Lopez-Alegria shared the presentation of the communications strategy document.

The Secretariat Director explained that the strategy was meant to support the Senior External Relations Manager position so the individual can hit the ground running once he/she joins the Secretariat. She added that the strategy was broad, but also included better leveraging the GEO logo and branding than GEO currently has, citing the example of the SA-GEO.

South Africa observed the marketing nature of the proposed approach which appears to be an inevitable step in the evolution of GEO.

The UK emphasized the need for subject matter of a scientific nature to be communicated more clearly to non-scientists as this was essential for engaging broader support of GEO. The UK also suggested conducting a survey to find out why potential stakeholders are not engaged, why the message of GEO was not connecting in several instances.

The Chair noted development of the process and, in response to the query as to when the strategy will be fully developed, Ms Canipelli replied that it will be ready by the end of June.

At the conclusion, Executive Committee members were invited to provide feedback on the Communications Strategy by means of the following 3-minute survey: www.surveymonkey.com/s/GEOEC. Questions to be answered:

1. How well did we explain the development of the Communications Strategy?
2. From your perspective, what Critical Issues should the strategy recommendations address?
3. What insights can you share to help this initiative succeed?

[Mr Phil Mujwara left the meeting at this point due to schedule constraints, with Dr Alan Edwards taking over as Chair.]

5.7 Website Prototype Demonstration (for consultation)

A small team of Secretariat staff have been working on revamping the GEO website, and Mr Hendrik Baeyens (Secretariat IT specialist) presented the latest developments along with a live demonstration. Major improvements include clearer layout, prominent GEO Portal link, featured articles with frequent updates (that could eventually be published by the wider GEO community), and an introductory video with the Director on GEO and GEOSS. A major aim is to reduce the amount of “friction” encountered when searching for documents and information on the website, and to render it more interactive, including a full website search function.

The EC appreciated the improvements and sees them as a major step forward. One concern would be the need for browser plug-ins to view the rotating GEO Portal globe, since not everyone is allowed to have them (EC). Mr Baeyens ensured the EC that no plug-in was used for the rotating globe, instead a cross-browser compatible animated image. A suggestion would be to make the GEO Portal even more evident.

The US likewise found the developments to be a major step forwards and thanked Mr Baeyens for the excellent work. In terms of publishing articles, the US queried who will have access to push articles and what type of filtering mechanism will be in place. Mr Baeyens responded that, in the first phase, only the Secretariat experts will be allowed to publish, then access may be expanded to Task PoCs, Leads, IBs, etc. Presumably the Senior External Relations Manager will screen articles both for content and language.

Canada noted that there is a “common look and feel” across its federal government websites to unify the user experience and guarantee accessibility of the web content for individuals with disabilities, given the wide variety of browsers and access capacities that exist. Mr Baeyens noted that the new website will be put through various checking sites to ensure accessibility standards are met.

The EC remarked the new approach appears useful for finding documents and wondered whether there were any statistics on how much the website is used. Mr Baeyens responded that, although there are

no precise statistics at this time, he has noted there is always some activity at the website, peaking around the time of each Plenary.

The US suggested the addition of an intra-net site for internal usage may be helpful, with a link on website. Mr Baeyens responded that this can be done.

The Secretariat Director commented that the use of Facebook and Twitter had been explored, but in the experience of the WMO it took one dedicated individual 4-5 hours per day to manage. The US added that social networking tools such as Facebook and Twitter are outreach tools and as such are appropriate for sharing meetings, data release, outcomes and other general GEO information for large distribution; however, they are not appropriate as an official outlet. Mr Baeyens said that the use of social media could be considered, but great care had to be observed to the effort / benefit rate and to the danger of creating duplicate entry points to GEO, creating confusion for the user, especially while the brand name “GEO” is not well institutionalized. He also noted that, would social media be used, the information flow should be aligned with the existing GEO website’s information flow to avoid information gaps. The EC also commented that perhaps the use of GEO hashtags could be encouraged for Twitter reports on events as they are happening in real time..

Japan noted the Earth in the GEO Portal is rotating the wrong direction.

Mr Baeyens concluded by noting the “beta” version of the new GEO website will go live by the time of the WPS in June.

6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Update on New Zealand representation

The Secretariat Director noted that there has been no communication from New Zealand yet on this issue.

The UK noted the GEO Principal will be changing to Mr Stuart Wainwright, who will be in attendance at the 28th Executive Committee meeting in July 2013.

6.2 Schedule for Executive Committee Meetings in 2013

The Director noted that consensus of the Committee, given the upcoming Ministerial, there should be a July Executive Committee with GEO Principals in attendance. She will soon circulate potential dates (16-17 July 2013 were selected).

The Chair suggested there might be the need for an additional Committee meeting between July and the Geneva Ministerial, but that could be decided at a later date. Additionally, the Chair wondered whether there was any additional information as to why there was no representation from South Korea and Nigeria at the meeting.

The Director responded that South Korea indicated they had internal scheduling issues, and there had been no response from Nigeria.

6.3 Proposed Modifications to Rules of Procedure (Document 15 – for consultation)

The Secretariat Director presented the proposed modifications to the Rules of Procedure, which include:

- aligning the Rules of Procedure with the Guidelines for Reporting on Performance of the GEO Secretariat and Secretariat Director (Rev 1, 2008) which states:

“The draft report of a GEO Plenary meeting should be circulated to GEO Principals no later than four weeks following the meeting, and the Principals should be allowed four weeks to provide comments. The Secretariat shall incorporate these comments and make the draft report

available to the whole GEO community within two weeks, i.e., no later than 10 weeks following the date of the meeting.”

- Modifications to Annex C on Guidance for Recognition of New POs and Observers;
- Addition of Appendix 1 of Annex C, Participating Organization Form for membership.

The US noted that the Ministerial Working Group needed to be added to Annex B of the Rules of Procedure. With regard to the new Appendix 1 of Annex C, the US remarked there should be clearer language as to the distinction between the Observer and PO roles in GEO. Moreover, the US wondered whether existing POs will need to endorse the new GEOSS IP at the 2015/16 Ministerial.

The EC echoed the US remarks, that the Observer/PO language needs clarification. Moreover, the procedure for accepting POs into GEO must be more even-handed in the future, an issue to be considered in the next phase of GEO.

The Director suggested keeping the general terminology as it is for the time being, bearing in mind the issues raised will need resolution as the next phase of GEO is entered.

The Chair proposed accepting the changes we have now, but that the language on Observers and POs should be sharpened for the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

Action 27.12 – Clarify observer / PO language in Rules of Procedure [28th ExCom]

After reviewing the meeting outcomes, and new action items, the meeting was adjourned at 17:15.

27th GEO Executive Committee

List of Participants

China	
<p>Dr Li Jiahong National Remote Sensing Center of China Ministry of Science and Technology Building No. 8A, Liulinguan Nanli Haidian District Beijing 100036 China</p>	<p>Phone: +86 10 68 51 31 99 Fax: lijiahong@nrsc.gov.cn</p>
<p>Dr Yue Huanyin National Remote Sensing Center of China Ministry of Science and Technology N° B15, Fuxing Road, Haidian District Beijing 100862 China</p>	<p>Phone: +86 10 82 91 18 52 Fax: yuehuanyin@nrsc.gov.cn</p>
European Commission	
<p>Dr Rudolf Strohmeier Deputy Director-General Research Programmes DG Research & Innovation European Commission ORBN 3/95 B-1049 Brussels Belgium</p>	<p>Phone: +32 2 296 2341 Fax: Rudolf.Strohmeier@ec.europa.eu</p>
<p>Dr Gilles Ollier Head of Earth Observation Sector CDMA 03/158 Environment RTD-I4 Directorate-General for Research European Commission B-1049 Brussels Belgium</p>	<p>Phone: +32 2 295 6630 Fax: +32 2 295 0568 gilles.ollier@ec.europa.eu</p>

<p>Mr Alan W. Edwards Programme Officer CDMA 03/156 Environment RTD-I.3 Directorate-General for Research and Innovation European Commission CDMA 03/156 B-1049 Brussels Belgium</p>	<p>Phone: +32 2 295 8301 Fax: +32 2 295 0568 alan.edwards@ec.europa.eu</p>
<p>South Africa</p>	
<p>Dr Philemon Mjwara Director General Department of Science and Technology Building 53 CSIR Meiring Naude Road Brummeria 0184 South Africa</p>	<p>Phone: +27 12 843 6815 Fax: +27 866 81 0006 phil.mjwara@dst.gov.za</p>
<p>Mr Mmboneni Muofhe General Manager International Resources International Cooperation and Resources Department of Science and Technology CSIR Building 53 Private Bag X894 0001 Pretoria South Africa</p>	<p>Phone: +27 12 843 6341 Fax: +27 86 681 0057 mmboneni.muofhe@dst.gov.za</p>
<p>Ms Lerato Senoko Deputy Director Space Technology Space Science and Technology Department of Science and Technology Building 53 CSIR Scientia Campus Meiring Naude Road, Brumeria Pretoria 0184 South Africa</p>	<p>Phone: +27 12 843 6867 Fax: +27 84 841 7281 lerato.senoko@dst.gov.za</p>
<p>United States</p>	
<p>Mr Peter Mulrean Deputy Permanent Representative</p>	<p>Phone: Fax:</p>

<p>U.S. Mission to the United Nations United States Geneva Switzerland</p>	
<p>Mr Bart Cobbs U.S. Mission to the United Nations United States Geneva Switzerland</p>	<p>Phone: Fax:</p>
<p>Ms Yana Gevorgyan Senior International Relations Specialist NOAA Satellite and Information Service Department of Commerce The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) 1335 East-West Highway Room 7317 20910 3226 Silver Spring United States</p>	<p>Phone: +1 301 713 2024 Fax: yana.gevorgyan@noaa.gov</p>
<p>Mr David Reidmiller Physical Science Officer Office of Global Change Bureau of Oceanic and International Environmental & Scientific Affairs 2201 C St. NW Suite 2480 Washington DC, 20520 United States</p>	<p>Phone: +1 202 647 3961 Fax: +1 301 286 1947 reidmillerdr@state.gov</p>
<p>Ms Nancy Garcia U.S. Mission to the United Nations United States Geneva Switzerland</p>	
<p>Argentina</p>	
<p>Mrs Ana Gabriela Medico International Relations CONAE Comisión Nacional de Actividades Espaciales Paseo Colon 751 1063 Buenos Aires</p>	<p>Phone: +54 11 4331 0074 Fax: amedico@conae.gov.ar</p>

Argentina	
Canada	
Ms Danielle Lacasse Director General Business Policy Directorate Environment Canada Meteorological Service of Canada 351 St. Joseph Blvd, 8 th Floor Gatineau, Quebec, K1A 0H3 Canada	Phone: Fax: danielle.lacasse@ec.gc.ca
Ms Heather Aucoin Senior Advisor International Affairs Environment Canada Meteorological Service of Canada 351 St. Joseph Blvd, 8 th Floor Gatineau, Quebec, K1A 0H3 Canada	Phone: + 1 (416) 739-4978 Fax: + 1 (416) 739-4380 heather.aucoin@ec.gc.ca
Estonia	
Dr Tiit Kutser Lead Research Fellow Head of remote Sensing and Marine Optics Department Estonian Marine Institute University of Tartu Mäealuse 14, 12618, Tallinn Estonia	Phone: + 372 6718 947 Fax: + 372 6718 900 Mobile: + 372 5110 961 Tiit.Kutser@sea.ee
Mrs Reet Talkop Counsellor Analysis and Planning Ministry of Environment 7A Narva mnt 15172 Tallinn Estonia	Phone: +372 626 2975 Fax: +372 524 2904 reet.talkop@envir.ee
Japan	
Mr Satoru Ohtake Deputy Director-General	Phone: +81 3 6734 41 43 Fax::

<p>Research and Development Bureau Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) 3-2-2 Kasumigaseki Chiyoda-ku 100-8959 Tokyo Japan</p>	<p>ohtake@mext.go.jp</p>
<p>Mr Takashi Kiyoura Director for Environmental Science and Technology Environment and Energy Division, Research and Development Bureau Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology 3-2-2 Kasumigaseki Chiyoda-ku 100-8959 Tokyo Japan</p>	<p>Phone: +81 3 6734 4143 Fax: tkiyoura@mext.go.jp</p>
<p>Mr Osamu Ochiai Associate Senior Administrator Satellite Applications and Promotion Center (SAPC) Space Applications Mission Directorate Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) 2-1-1 Sengen Tsukuba-shi Ibaragi-ken 305 Tsukuba 8505 Japan</p>	<p>Phone: + 81 50 3362 3387 Fax: +81 29 868 5975 ochiai.osamu@jaxa.jp</p>
<p>Mr Hiroshi Kamiyama Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva Chemin de Fins 3 Case Postale 337 1211 Genève 19</p>	<p>Phone : +41 22 717 31 11 Fax : +41 22 788 38 11 mission@ge-japan.ch</p>
<p>Ms Mariko Kato Special Staff Environment and Energy Division Research and Development Bureau Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Sciences and Technology (MEXT)</p>	<p>Phone: +81 3 6734 4159 Fax: mkato@mext.go.jp</p>

3-2-2 Kasumigaseki Chiyoda-ku Tokyo 100-8959 Japan	
Korea (did not attend)	
New Zealand (did not attend)	
Nigeria (did not attend)	
Russian Federation	
Mr Alexander Gusev Deputy Director of Department Department of Scientific Programmes, International Cooperation and Information Resources, Roshydromet 12, Novovagankovsky per. Moscow 123995 Russian Federation	Phone: +7 499 795 24 87 Fax: +7 495 795 21 15 gusev@mecom.ru aggusev@mail.ru
United Kingdom	
Dr Ruth Kelman Natural Environment Research Council Senior Science Programmes Officer Earth Observation Natural Environment Research Council Polaris House North Star Avenue Swindon SN2 1EU United Kingdom	Phone: + 44 179 341 1558 Fax: rkel@nerc.ac.uk
Dr Katherine Bass Defra – Earth Observations Area 1A Nobel House 17 Smith Square London SW1P 3JR United Kingdom	Phone: +44 207 238 4353 Fax: Katherine.Bass@defra.gsi.gov.uk

<p>Report on the Ministerial Working Group</p>	
<p>Dr José Romero Head of Section Federal Department of Environment, Transports, Energy and Communications (DETEC) Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) International Affairs Division 3003 Bern Switzerland</p>	<p>Phone: +41 31 322 68 62 Mobile: +41 79 251 9069 jose.romero@bafu.admin.ch</p>
<p>Presentation on Implementation Boards: Sprint to Summit 2013-2014</p>	
<p>Mr Khondkar Rifat Hossain World Health Organization Avenue Appia 20 1211 Geneva 27 Switzerland</p>	<p>Phone: Mobile: hossainr@who.int</p>
<p>GEOGLAM Representative</p>	
<p>Dr Sergey Bartalev Head of Terrestrial Ecosystems Monitoring Laboratory Space Research Institute (IKI), Russian Academy of Sciences 117997, 84/32 Profsoyuznaya str. Moscow Russia</p>	<p>Phone: +7 495 333 53 13 (ext. 125) Fax: +7 495 913 30 40 sbartalev@mail.ru</p>
<p>GEO Secretariat</p>	
<p>7bis, avenue de la Paix Case postale 2300 CH-1211 Geneva 2 Switzerland</p>	<p>Phone : +41 22 730 8505 Fax : +41 22 730 8520 secretariat@geosec.org</p>