

**Statement to
The Fourth GEO Ministerial Meeting**
Cape Town, South Africa
30 November 2007

Professor Thomas Rosswall
on behalf of the
International Council for Science (ICSU)

Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As was mentioned in the statement by WMO on behalf of the UN agencies, the International Council for Science (ICSU) is a co-sponsor of three existing and essential global observing systems—Global Climate Observing System, Global Ocean Observing System, and Global Terrestrial Observing System.

We have also been involved in the development of GEOSS ever since our informal consultations with the French Presidency in preparation for the Evian G8 Summit in 2003. The reason for our substantial engagement is the conviction that the international science community needs GEOSS and that the system of systems cannot be developed without the full participation of the scientific community that we represent.

The mission of ICSU is to ‘strengthen international science for the benefit of society’ and we share the recognition in the draft Cape Town declaration ‘that nations are facing major environmental, social and economic challenges as a consequence of global change’. To address this challenge, decision making must be based on best available scientific knowledge developed through the coordinated international research programmes of ICSU and its partners, some of which are Participating Organizations in GEO.

As we demonstrate in our GEO exhibition, using the examples of climate change and biodiversity, policy must be supported by scientific research, global monitoring and scientific assessments of knowledge. It is essential that governments give full support to all components of this knowledge chain.

We wish to point out that there is an urgent need to also address how we obtain georeferenced socio-economic data as part of GEOSS. It is impossible to develop science for the wise management of the Earth system and for sustainable development without strong involvement of the social sciences and access to socio-economic data. We urge GEO to pay more attention to this vital need. In this way we can ensure that science and global observations help governments address the Millennium Development Goals.

We are pleased that the draft Declaration makes reference to the Data Sharing Principles—for which ICSU’s Committee on Data for Science and Technology has developed the draft plan that was informally introduced to the GEO Plenary. We will continue to engage in this effort with the objective to reach consensus on the implementation for presentation to the GEO 5th Ministerial Meeting.

ICSU continues to pledge its strong commitment to GEOSS and will continue to participate in and contribute to the work of GEO and its Science and Technology Committee and thus help ensure the implementation of the GEO agenda.

Thank you.