

Report of the Executive Committee

1 INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the key actions and decisions taken at the 27th, 28th and 29th meetings of the Executive Committee held in Geneva, 19-20 March, 16-17 July, and 30-31 October 2013 respectively; and the 30th meeting held in Geneva on 14 January 2014, immediately prior to GEO-X. The approved minutes of individual Executive Committee meetings can be found on the GEO website.

2 THE 27TH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The meeting was chaired by the GEO Co-Chair representing the European Commission (EC), Dr Rudolf Strohmeier.

Mr Mmboneni Muofhe, Co-chair of the **Post-2015 WG** (PWG) reviewed the report updating the activities of the PWG. In response, the Executive Committee requested the PWG to:

- revise the Recommendations to keep GEO-jargon to a minimum;
- proceed with plans 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 the Recommendations;
- retain optional text on governance, engagement with developing countries, and 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).

Beyond these modifications, the Executive Committee requested the addition of an "Implementation Plan Analysis" document. This document would outline 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 aim of this document would be 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. The PWG was requested to take note of the development of this document and ensure that the content harmonizes with the recommendations developed for endorsement in the Ministerial Declaration.

Dr José Romero, Head of Section of the Federal Department of Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications (DETEC), Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN), Switzerland, reviewed the report of the **Ministerial Working Group** (MWG). He noted that a major outcome of the Ministerial should be the continuation of GEO, plus endorsement of the final two years of the current GEOSS 10-Year Implementation Plan. The Executive Committee requested the preparation of a Ministerial folder containing relevant documents for the Ministers, including the Geneva Declaration, and expressed its preference for individual statements from Ministers during the summit, as opposed to a round-table panel discussion approach, to allow for adequate statement preparation.

Secretariat Work Plan Coordinator Dr Alexia Massacand provided a summary overview of the **GEO 2012-2015 Work Plan** progress that had been achieved since the GEO-IX Plenary. In particular, she noted that, although the coordination of space-based observations was progressing well, thanks to the

virtual constellations of CEOS, the lack of a global framework to expand *in-situ* networks was hampering coordination and rehabilitation activities there. 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), and that the new Discover and Access Broker (DAB) had made over 14 million datasets accessible through the GEOSS Portal. She noted that Norway had offered to serve as Point of Contact (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.

Mr Rifat Hossain, World Health Organization (WHO) representative and HE-01 Task Coordinator and Societal Benefits Implementation Board (IB) Co-chair, presented 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. The Executive Committee 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.

Dr Giovanni Rum (Secretariat support to M&E WG) presented **Progress in the Implementation of Recommendations from GEOSS Evaluations** and noted, as a result of Plenary-IX feedback, the addition of a column for “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 assessments for the “Current Status” column will be provided by the Secretariat and IBs. Noting the departure of current M&E WG Co-chair, Craig Larlee (Canada), the Executive Committee requested the Secretariat to issue a call for Co-chair and membership nominations.

The **Secretariat Performance Indicators** were 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 rather narrow and did not provide truly meaningful information on performance, 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. Although principally quantitative in nature, the Executive Committee wished to proceed with the new indicators as presented to report on the Secretariat’s performance in a quantifiable way, with a view to improving them over time.

Dr Joao Soares from the Secretariat delivered the presentation on **GEOGLAM progress**. He commented that, although the initiative was advancing on many fronts, 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 Secretariat Director observed 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. The Executive Committee requested the Secretariat to provide more details on the Implementation Plan by the time of the next Executive Committee meeting.

Dr Alan Edwards, Co-Chair of the **GEOSS Data Sharing Working Group** (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. He 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. 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.

Ms Katherine Canipelli, (via remote video link) and Ms Daria Lopez-Alegria of Science Bridges Srl shared the presentation of the preliminary draft of the **Communications Strategy** document. The Secretariat Director commented that the strategy was meant to support the Senior External Relations Manager position once it was finally filled, to expedite progress. 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. The Executive Committee 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 Committee 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. Ms Canipelli invited the Committee to provide feedback on the Strategy, and noted a completed document would be delivered by June.

3 THE 28TH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The meeting was chaired by the GEO Co-Chair representing the Peoples Republic of China, Vice Minister Cao Jianlin. In this meeting the Executive Committee was informed that Georgia has become the 90th Member of GEO.

The Committee reviewed the current status of the preparations for the documents to be presented at GEO-X and the January Summit submitted by the **Post-2015 Working Group** and the Executive Committee task team on **Draft Post-2015 Implementation Scenarios**. The Executive Committee requested a stronger narrative for GEO as a next step in the development of the documents, a completion of the topic papers for Plenary information and to remove reference to the private sector in the Governance section.

The Committee also reviewed the progress reported by the **Ministerial Working Group**. The Committee requested greater integration of the documents to be presented to the Ministerial and considered a Ministerial Document plan, jointly prepared by both working groups and presented at the request of the committee. The Ministerial Declaration was reviewed and the Committee proposed modifications to improve clarity and conciseness. The Committee requested that the Sprint to Summit process focus its efforts on the usability of the GEOSS Portal.

The report on the initiative for **Private Sector Engagement** was considered, the Committee provided its support for the methodology and schedule proposed by the Secretariat, starting with the survey of Committee members to facilitate an informed selection of individuals to form a Think Tank meeting in October, followed by a Private Sector Forum to likely be held in November. The outcome of the Forum will be a series of recommendations for GEO's engagement with the private sector, to be presented at the GEO-X Plenary.

The Committee was apprised of the **Target and Task progress** by Dr Alexia Massacand and noted various highlights including: the opening up of ocean biogenic data to the entire community; an increasing number of GEO Members making contributions to the GEOSS DataCore; connections being made to the Belmont Forum with respect to calls on arctic monitoring, land cover change, and food security; and how GEOSS contributes directly to the Global Mercury Observation System and the convention on supply and trade of mercury. The document has been designed to align the vast network of projects in the GEO community with Strategic Targets to monitor progress. The Committee commented that considerations should be made that Strategic Targets for the post-2015

period could be aligned with the human development goals of the UN Post-2015 Development Agenda (including post Millennium Development Goals [MDGs] and Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs]).

The Committee was presented with the **4th Monitoring and Evaluation Report**, which had evaluated the Disasters, Energy and Health SBAs by the Monitoring and Evaluation Co-Chair Mr Lars Eide. The report found that cross-cutting efforts among the SBAs were not evident. In response to the survey question as to whether activities would have been accomplished independent of GEO, it was noted that the general conclusion was yes, but at a slower pace and with less engagement. The International Charter on Disasters had definitely benefited from GEO. Mr Eide outlined several issues identified including; Difficult standards against which to evaluate progress; Exchanges with Task Leads result in overly optimistic assessments; Difficult for evaluation team to identify all GEO achievements; Gaps between action necessary to achieve Targets and actual Task activities not managed adequately and User engagement not evident. The Director outlined the steps currently taken at the Secretariat to address these issues such as bi-monthly staff meetings to exchange updates on activities across other domains; a change in format of the Work Plan Symposium to panel discussions in order to foster cross-SBA Linkages

4 THE 29TH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The meeting was chaired Ms Anne J. Castle, the GEO Co-Chair representing the United States of America. This was an extraordinary meeting of the Executive Committee with the main objective to review the status of the Plenary and Summit preparations.

The Executive Committee considered the report on the **Progress on Plenary and Ministerial preparations** and agreed on the following recommendations to the Ministerial Working Group:

- Change the planning for Plenary and Ministerial events and requested the Secretariat to put forward a schedule that had the GEO-XI Plenary in late 2014 or early 2015 and the GEO-XII Plenary and Ministerial in late 2015 or early 2016;
- Revision should be made to Ministerial Agenda to foresee the official adoption of the Ministerial Declaration towards the end of the day, after the presentation of all official Statements;
- Limit the number of keynote speeches to three in order to accommodate a session lead by a Co-Chair on the request to Ministers for their guidance for the evolution of GEO;
- Keynote speeches to include current and future benefits, sustainable development, collaboration with Private Sector and International Organisations. Strengthen the opening paragraph of the Ministerial Declaration with a strong statement that includes economic development and growth. Change the word “acknowledge” to “encourage” in point 7. End paragraph 12 after thanking the Swiss hosts;

The Secretariat and MWG was requested to refine keynote themes along the following lines:

- Current and future achievements/benefits of GEO (including specific examples);
- Sustainable development;
- Private sector (innovation) and international organization collaboration.

The Committee provided the following suggestions to refine the Draft Summit Declaration:

- Chapeau paragraph: draft strong statement including economic development and growth;
- Paragraph 7 revised to encourage and broaden GEO community base;
- Paragraph 12: limit to thanking host country.

The Committee suggested that the Secretariat and Post-2015 Working Group (PWG) refine the document Vision for GEO 2025 as follows:

- Part A: The Case for a renewed GEO:
 - Change title of Context paragraph 1 to better reflect content (description of societal challenges, creation and continuation of GEO);
 - Change order of bullet points under section 3.
- Part B: Recommendations for GEO through 2025:
 - Clarify opening paragraph to reflect intended procedure with respect to Plenary and Ministerial;
 - Find alternative wording to “continue” (renewal, regrowth, impacts);
 - Change Recommendation 3 title to reflect content (priorities, focus, orientation, emphasis on need to address societal challenges).

The Executive Committee considered a redrafted part A of the Preliminary Guidance for GEO 2025, Pathway to GEOSS 2025. It was agreed that:

- a facilitated discussion will occur in the agenda of the Ministerial Summit consisting of an initial presentation of the request for guidance and short optional responses provided by Ministers;
- there will be a recording of the responses but with no attribution or any reference in the Ministerial official documents, the outcomes of the session will be provided to an Implementation Plan drafting team for guidance;
- the one page summary document will be included in the Ministerial folder for consultation but instead of providing specific scenarios will provide a range/spectra of options;
- the document will footnote the following sentence: “For more information and details please refer to the Vision for GEO 2025 and the Pathway to GEOSS 2025 documents”. These documents will NOT be part of the Ministerial folder but included in the Plenary package;
- the shorter document will also have a reference to establishing an Implementation Plan drafting team.

The Executive Committee concurred that a **GEO Fact Sheet and Progress Report** should be provided to Ministers and requested that the Secretariat develop further the Report to include more emphasis on numbers, end-users and actual achievements, taking into account the Beijing Report on Progress as shown in the Appendix.

The Executive Committee provided further guidance for the preparation of the full **Task and Strategic Target progress report** to Plenary. They suggested that the Data Sharing Working Group (DSWG) investigate reporting mechanisms for user metrics. The recommendations for the renewal of the Implementation Boards were accepted. The Executive Committee was pleased to see the progress made by the GEOSS Common Infrastructure (GCI) Team and thanked them profusely for bringing the GEOSS Portal to a higher level of usability within the Sprint to Summit process.

5 THE 30TH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The meeting was chaired Mr. Phil Mjwara, the GEO Co-Chair representing the Republic of South Africa.

After approving the 30th Executive Committee agenda and the draft Summary Report of the 29th Executive Committee Meeting, the Committee reviewed all the documents for the GEO-X Plenary and Geneva Ministerial Summit. Highlights included:

- Recognition of Participating Organizations and Observers (Plenary Document 3) (for consultation)
 - **Outcome:** Executive Committee endorses candidates in Rev 3 PO and Observer status.
Action: Secretariat with (representation from Executive Committee) to prepare document describing strategic approach to engagement with GEO, to include POs, observers, with a view towards private sector; application to clarify contribution to GEOSS implementation and periodic review of contributions from Members and POs. [by ExCom 31].
- Geneva Ministerial Summit Draft Agenda (Ministerial Document MS1)
 - **Outcome:**
 - hierarchy for each Session: Ministers, Minister's representatives, Heads of Delegations, Members, POs;
 - based on registration by Head of Delegation;
 - Secretariat to confirm with Delegations during Plenary.
- Preparation of the next GEOSS Implementation Plan (Plenary Document 6)
 - **Outcome:** Caucuses may suggest up to three distinguished experts nominees maximum for, keeping regional balance, subject to acceptance by the Executive Committee.
- 2013 Report of the Executive Committee (Plenary Document 12)
 - **Outcome:** reworking of PowerPoint summary presentation to highlight 3-4 points along main themes (e.g. governance).
- Secretariat Operations Budget for 2014 (Plenary Document 15)
 - **Outcome:** After the presentation of the budget, the chair will read the following intervention for insertion in the GEO-X meeting report:
"The Executive Committee appreciates the Secretariat's sound management of the GEO Trust Fund, and recommends the adoption of the GEO budget top line amount for 2014 and its categories of expenditure as prescribed by IPSAS. Plenary is asked to concur with the Executive Committee requests that the Secretariat, with the assistance of a budget working group, develop an annex that provides greater detail and transparency of the programmatic elements and strategic directions of the Secretariat's annual expenditures, both planned and actual. The 2014 budget annex should be presented to the Executive Committee at that body's first meeting in 2014. This budget annex is designed to maintain and increase donor confidence in the financial arrangements for, and management of, GEO, and ultimately strengthen GEO's financial position."
- Management of GEO Trust Fund (Plenary Document 16)
 - **Outcome:**
 - highlight CHF 200K in presentation to Plenary;
 - special initiatives: funds earmarked until balance is achieved.
- Adoption of Rules of Procedure (Plenary Document 18)
 - **Outcome:** language will be proposed that allows Plenary to set up WGs without having to amend RoP each time (by Plenary XI).

- Dates of future Meetings.
 - To be decided offline by GEO Executive Committee Co-Chairs.

Annex
Performance of the Secretariat and Secretariat Director
Duties, Documents and Assessment

GEO Secretariat duties	Supporting documents	GEO Secretariat assessment	Executive Committee comments
a) Prepare and submit, for Plenary approval, the Annual Work Plan - including activities and budgets;	3-Year Work Plan Update (Plenary document).	Fulfilled.	The Executive Committee agrees with GEO Secretariat's assessment.
b) Support the implementation by Members and Participating Organizations of the Annual Work Plan and execute expenditure of the budget;	Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document).	Fulfilled.	The Executive Committee agrees with the assessment but encourages the Secretariat to provide information on the specific functions performed by the Secretariat to distinguish from activities by Members and POs. The Executive Committee requests that greater detail is in the formulation and execution of budget expenditures as they relate to GEO's programmatic issues and strategy.
c) Provide annual reports on the performance of GEOSS, including milestones of the	Work Plan Progress Report (Plenary document)	Fulfilled. Task Sheet updates coordinated by GEO	The Executive Committee agrees with GEO

GEO Secretariat duties	Supporting documents	GEO Secretariat assessment	Executive Committee comments
Annual Work Plan;	Monitoring and Evaluation Report (Plenary document).	Secretariat. Three reports prepared for Executive Committee meetings and one major for GEO-X.	Secretariat's assessment.
d) Provide annual reports on Secretariat operations, including execution of annual budget expenditures;	a) Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document); b) Financial statement and Report on income and expenditure (Plenary documents).	Fulfilled. Secretariat operations and financial statements have been submitted to all Executive Committee meetings. Financial statements have been audited every year and successive "audit (s) revealed no weaknesses or errors"	The Executive Committee is in general agreement with GEO Secretariat's assessment, but reinforces the request in item b) above encouraging GEO Secretariat to improve the reporting by providing greater detail regarding its operations and budget formulation and execution.
e) Organize, prepare, and support meetings and other work of the GEO Plenary, Executive Committee, and other GEO committees and working groups;	Implementation Board reports to the Executive Committee and to Plenary.	Fulfilled. Four Executive Committee meetings, multiple teleconferences of Boards and Co-Chairs, Board meetings, Work Plan Symposium and substantial input to PWG and MWG this year.	The Executive Committee is in general agreement with GEO Secretariat's assessment, but requests more proactive, systematic and timely secretarial support to the implementation boards.
f) Pursue activities to identify and secure funds for Secretariat operations and GEO activities in accordance with the direction of GEO;	Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document).	Fulfilled. Individual letter sent to all GEO Principals requesting additional contributions.	The Executive Committee agrees with GEO Secretariat's assessment.
g) Oversee the implementation of the GEO	Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations	Fulfilled.	The Executive Committee urges the GEO

GEO Secretariat duties	Supporting documents	GEO Secretariat assessment	Executive Committee comments
communication strategy;	(Executive Committee document).		Secretariat to provide an annual communications strategy.
h) Organize the GEOSS user and other fora as required in coordination with GEO Boards as appropriate;	Private sector think tank session held as an initial step towards a broader private sector engagement forum.	In progress.	The Executive Committee notes initial progress in private sector engagement but also notes the need to pursue steps towards the establishment of the annual forum with the private sector, and other stakeholders as requested by Plenary IX.
i) Facilitate overall cooperation and liaise with GEO Members, Participating Organizations, and other programmes and bodies as appropriate or as needed to support the work of GEO, with particular emphasis on existing systems and Earth observation coordination mechanisms;	Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document).	Fulfilled.	The Executive Committee agreed with GEO Secretariat's assessment.
j) Identify staffing and other resources necessary to support the Annual Work Plan, develop indicators for Secretariat performance, and report to Plenary on Secretariat performance against indicators;	Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document).	Performance appraisals are conducted annually with each staff member identifying progress and challenges.	The Executive Committee generally agrees with GEO Secretariat's assessment, but notes the request from ExCom 30 for appendix to accompany the report providing greater detail regarding the Secretariat's planned and

GEO Secretariat duties	Supporting documents	GEO Secretariat assessment	Executive Committee comments
			actual expenditures.
k) Ensure an open and transparent process is utilized for all Secretariat employees, including short-term contractors, and for the designation of experts to the various GEO Boards and working groups;	Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document).	Internal procedures are being reviewed and corrected when discrepancies are found.	The Executive Committee agrees with GEO Secretariat's assessment and requests to be kept informed.
l) Facilitate and coordinate the updating of the 10-Year Implementation Plan as directed by the Plenary;	GEO 2012-2015 Work Plan Update.	Fulfilled	The Executive Committee agreed with GEO Secretariat's assessment related to the updating of the GEO Work Plan. However, we note inconsistency between the description of the function/duty and reported activity.
m) Conduct the day-to-day administrative activities of the Secretariat;	Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document).	Fulfilled.	The Executive Committee agreed with GEO Secretariat's assessment.
n) Carry out additional duties as required by GEO.	Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document).	Fulfilled.	The Executive Committee agreed with GEO Secretariat's assessment.