

Statement by France - GEO-X - 16 January 2014

France has been involved in GEO from its very beginning in 2003 and its official creation in 2005 in Brussels. Through its first 10 years, GEO has proven a very useful organization, allowing many actors contributing to Earth Observation and Information to work together and deliver.

France wishes to emphasize the major contribution of the European Union to GEO through many European programmes, among which Copernicus should become one of the GEO flagships.

Today the French delegation wishes to concentrate on a specific announcement:

GEO and the development of GEOSS has undoubtedly been a catalyst for broader and more open access to earth observation data. During the last ten years we have seen many positive developments in this direction, including free and open access to the Landsat archive and the decision on open access to Sentinel data. In line with this evolution, France, through its national space agency CNES and Airbus Defence and Space (a major private-sector data provider which includes the former SPOT image), has recently made a decisive step toward providing improved access, for non-commercial use related to global-change assessment, to the substantial archive of imagery acquired by the SPOT family of satellites. This archive, which now totals over 30 millions images acquired during 27 years of operations, has substantial scientific value in tracing the evolution of our planet. France would like to take this opportunity to announce that processing of an initial set of 100,000 SPOT scenes has already begun. Given the wide interest that we anticipate, we aim for GEO members to join us in maintaining this initiative and extending the availability of images over their areas of interest. We hope that in bringing this news to the attention of the plenary we can work with the GEO community to bring their needs, resources and energy to ensuring this opportunity leads to establishing an extensive "World Heritage" archive of SPOT images. Definition of the zones to be covered by these images will result from wide consultation with the user community. We would therefore ask that information on this initiative be published widely by GEO in order that the GEO community, including the major international programmes initiated by GEO, be fully involved in identifying zones of interest. We anticipate that this exceptional resource will be critical in tracing the evolution of Earth, enabling us to collectively face the many challenges brought by the sustainable management of our planet in the 21st century.