

*ESA Formal Statement to the
Eleventh Plenary Session of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO-XI)*

Mister Chairman, Distinguished Guests, on behalf of the European Space Agency (ESA), it is my pleasure to provide you with an updated status of ESA's contributions to GEO.

Since the inception of GEO, ESA is a substantial contributor to GEO either indirectly through the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS) and directly as Lead of several GEO WP tasks & components and, developer and operator of the GEOSS Portal.

Currently, ESA is flying 4 EO missions including Sentinel-1 that was launched on April 3. Today, we are providing free data to more than 3800 user projects worldwide without counting Sentinel-1 for which more than 3000 users have registered so far. I would like to recall that users can openly access Sentinel-1 radar data since October 3.

Today ESA is providing more than 750 Terabytes/yr of data free of charge, a volume equivalent to more than 160 000 DVDs per year, and this number will increase by a factor 6 in the coming years !!!

In cooperation with its CEOS partners, the European Space Agency is significantly involved in several major GEO initiatives such as Global Forest Observation initiative in coordination with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) ; several hundred thousands of radar and optical images are delivered to an increasing number of nations, 8 five years ago, 36 in 2014.

Another example of ESA's contribution to GEO is GEOGLAM; after the launch in 2015 and the commissioning of Sentinel-2 and 3, almost half of the data provided by CEOS Agencies in support of GEOGLAM will come from the Sentinels instruments.

With a 72 Million euro programme, the Climate Change Initiative, ESA is contributing to 13 Essential Climate Variables with high-quality products in response to the needs of the climate community. Climate change affects society in all fields health, disasters, energy, water quality, agriculture, etc..

In the area of disaster risk management, the CEOS Agencies lead by ESA are working with the major relevant stakeholders including GEO, UN organizations, international relief agencies, leading development banks, national civil protection agencies and local governments, on the establishment of an international partnership to define and implement a decadal plan of actions for the period 2015-2025, in response to the most urgent needs of the user communities, in line with the top priorities identified in the Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (HFA2) that will be adopted at the 3rd UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in March 2015, Sendai, Japan.

Last but not least, I would like to recall that ESA is also an important contributor to four other GEO important initiatives such as the Global carbon strategy as reported by the CEOS Delegation, the Geohazards Supersites and National Laboratories, GEO Biodiversity Observation Network (GEO BON) and AfriGEOSS with the on-going TIGER, a water resource management

initiative that, since 2002, has involved more than 150 water resource authorities and research institutes from 42 African nations, for a total budget of 11 Million euro.

All those examples illustrates the tremendous efforts and high volume of resources allocated by participating organisations related to Earth observation from space such as CEOS and ESA since 2005; without the continuous and sustained support from space agencies, we believe that major GEO initiatives such as GFOI or GEOGLAM would not be put forward as examples of top GEO achievements; it is legitimate for active participating organisations to ask to be involved in the governance of GEO and therefore we strongly support the proposal from the IPWG to strengthen the engagement of Participating Organizations in GEO governance matters, including the possibility of membership or observer status in the GEO Executive Committee.

Lastly, I would like to express my sincerest thanks to the GEO Secretariat for this very successful Plenary.

Thank you.