

GEO Plenary XI 13-14 November 2014, Geneva, Switzerland

Statement by South Africa

Mmboneni Muofhe,
Head of the delegation,
Department of Science and Technology, South Africa,
@ WMO building, Geneva, Switzerland,
13-14 November 2014

The Co-Chairs,
The Director of the GEO Secretariat,
Representatives of Member countries and Participating organisations
Distinguished delegates/Ladies and gentleman.

It is a great honour to speak on behalf of the South African delegation at this occasion of the eleventh Plenary and appreciate the opportunity to highlight the some achievements and activities in support of the vision of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO).

First, I wish to congratulate members that have recently joined the GEO community, we believe that this will truly cultivate and improve the diversity within our membership, which is essential for the fulfilment of our vision to build a robust and innovative Global Earth Observation System of Systems.

Open Access to Earth observation data has remained a matter of priority for South Africa and the African continent at large, as data is fundamental in resolving a number of societal challenges. National mechanisms and policies to address pertinent issues related to the sharing of data so that they can be accessed easily are already in place.

Chair

Since, Earth Observations has no boundaries, South Africa recognises and affirms its commitment to co-ordinate and contribute to the successful implementation of EO activities at all levels.

Since our last statement to Plenary, on the national level, South Africa has forged ahead in operationalising the use of Earth Observations for evidence based decision-making, policy formulation, planning and monitoring. The South African Earth Observations community is active in 18 GEO tasks, 22 components and has leads on 6 components. There are now 11 active communities of practices in SA-

GEO Plenary XI 13-14 November 2014, Geneva, Switzerland

GEO covering a wide range of interests including natural resources, both terrestrial and marine; Education & Awareness, Legal & Policy, EO infrastructure, Calibration & Validation and synthetic aperture RADAR.

Land cover / land cover change mapping has received due attention with South Africa playing a prominent role in the AFRIGEOSS "Working Group on Land Cover Mapping for Africa" having members on both the Executive Board and the Technical Advisory Committee. The SA-GEO Land cover Community of Practice has also succeeded in facilitating government departments, industry, and academia to agree on scale, resolution and classes for the national land cover programme.

The SA-GEO Natural resources Community of Practice is currently developing an Integrated Natural Resources Monitoring System for South Africa based on the GEO philosophy of System of Systems. It is anticipated that this will eventually make a contribution to GEOSS.

Chair

The South African National Space Agency continues to supply the SA-GEO community and the southern African region with relevant and appropriate satellite imagery and remains active in Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS). The South African National Space Agency (SANSA) has contributed to and continues to derive value from various GEO initiatives. Recognizing the need to make data freely accessible and solve humanity's challenges, SANSA, working together with AfriGEOSS, will contribute to the unfolding SPOT heritage archive initiative as announced by France at the previous GEO Plenary. South Africa, through the Agency, is exploring the possibility of extending the very successful FUNDISA data resource distribution initiative to the SADC region to promote AfriGEOSS and advance the principles of Data Democracy as a key national objective. SANSA continues to participate in the GEOGLAM Rangelands and Pasture Productivity (RAPP) initiative as a means of ensuring food security. More specifically, South Africa is tasked with identifying one of ten global sites for the RAAP system. Also, South Africa is currently developing an integrated Natural Resources monitoring sub-system for the global GEOGLAM RAPP System. SANSA partnered with AfriGEOSS and GEO to host the EOPOWER-AfriGEOSS SADC workshop in May 2014 to demonstrate the value of Earth observation in agriculture.

GEO Plenary XI 13-14 November 2014, Geneva, Switzerland

The DST has completed the development of the calibration and validation site near Pretoria, a useful infrastructure for satellite, airborne sensors and imagery calibration and validation. This site will contribute to the CEOS Working Group on Calibration and Validation, particularly the sub-WG on infrared and visible optical data from Earth observation satellites, and form part of the global Cal Val network.

The national Crop Monitoring system continues to be improved with results from research carried out on our JECAM site and monthly contributions to the GEOGLAM bulletin continues. Data from the JECAM site continues to be shared with international projects such as the ESA Sentinel 2 Agriculture project. The geographic location of our JECAM site makes cloud free time series imagery practically possible making it a desirable site of international interest.

South Africa remains a participant and contributor to the "Blue Planet Initiative" The Southern Africa Data Centre for Oceanography, funded by South African and Namibian governmental organisations continues to make available hydrographic, wave, weather, and water temperature and other data from around Southern Africa. These milestones signify the efforts by the South African EO community to work towards reaching the utmost and significant level of commitment into the work and vision of GEO.

Chair

South Africa remains committed to promoting EO initiatives on the African continent through the advancement of data democracy, data sharing and data management principles. South Africa undertakes to address the lack of GEO activities on the African continent. The lack of active participation and contribution to GEOSS by the African member states and Participating Organisations is being addressed through the AfriGEOSS initiative. The AfriGEOSS initiative serves as one of the most crucial and a significant vehicle to drive the EO agenda for the African continent; and we acknowledge that building this initiative requires time, effort and commitment from all of us. South Africa reiterates its commitment to continue to resource the GEO Secretariat in respect of an AfriGEOSS co-ordinator and would like to encourage the rest of our African colleagues to follow suit. I wish to convey our deepest gratitude to the GEO Secretariat for the progress made currently in pushing

GEO Plenary XI 13-14 November 2014, Geneva, Switzerland

this work forward and initiating relationships and linkages with other EO initiatives in Africa.

The country continues to contribute to GEOBON and has made a significant contribution to the "Creative B roadmap" through the South African National Biodiversity Institute.

Involvement of our Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in the GFOI continues to grow slowly with recent training in REDD+ methodologies and techniques.

Chair

For many years capacity building in developing countries has focused on short term interventions and wish to encourage a more holistic approach to competency development, which would include institutional capacity development , infrastructural development and specialist human capacity development.

Ladies and Gentleman, these are a few examples of our contribution to GEO and the significant benefits we derive from remaining an active member of GEO.

Finally, South Africa pledges its continued support for GEO as it embarks upon its next 10 year journey.

We thank you