

U.S. National Statement for GEO-XI Plenary

November 14, 2014

A core tenet of GEO is the provision of open and timely access to Earth observation data to support better decision-making. In support of this principle, I am very pleased to highlight President Obama's announcement at the recent UN Climate Summit that the U.S. is releasing high resolution elevation data to support global efforts to prepare for the impacts of severe environmental changes such as drought, glacial retreat, flooding, coastal storm surges, agriculture stresses and public health challenges. Specifically, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency (NGA) and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) will make available a collection of higher-resolution elevation datasets from the **Shuttle Radar Topography Mission**. The first of these elevation data sets, released on September 23, cover a geographic area including much of Africa. Previously, elevation data for Africa were freely and publicly available only at 90-meter resolution. These new datasets resolve to 30-meters and aid in global environmental monitoring, climate change research, and local decision support.

Datasets covering other global regions will be made available within one year, with the next release of data providing more accurate elevation information for Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean scheduled for the end of this month.

With a commitment from the Secure World Foundation, and in collaboration with the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites, USGS, NOAA, and NASA have begun to develop online training and plan regional workshops to further enable users to take advantage of this valuable new resource. We look forward to exploring how the broad range of GEO projects will utilize the SRTM data sets.

The United States has undertaken a number of additional activities that help foster and develop international cooperation in the context of global Earth observation. I am pleased to highlight a new and innovative U.S. initiative to lay the foundation for the **first national network to monitor marine biodiversity**. We believe this initiative will be a significant contribution to the GEO Biodiversity Observation Network, an effort the United States has supported since its inception, and could inform development of marine biodiversity observing efforts in other regions.

Working together, NOAA, NASA, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, and Shell Oil will fund demonstration marine biodiversity observing projects in four locations - three of the four locations are in NOAA's National Marine Sanctuaries. Several universities are key partners in this effort. The pilot networks will occur in different marine environments and integrate existing observations ranging from satellite observations to DNA sampling and genomic techniques. In addition, new observations will fill current data gaps.

The U.S. assists in international development and disaster planning. **SERVIR is opening a new node in Southeast Asia**. With funding from USAID and NASA, SERVIR Mekong will be hosted at the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center in Bangkok. This regional hub will enable governments and decisions makers in Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam to utilize

Earth observation data to make more informed decisions on water management, land use planning, disaster risk reduction, infrastructure development, and natural resource management.

The **Global Precipitation Mission (GPM)** is another outstanding example of the importance and value of international cooperation in Earth observations. The GPM Core Observatory Satellite will set a new standard for precipitation measurements from space. Precipitation is a key observation in every GEO societal benefit area. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our international GPM partners – especially Japan (JAXA), as well as India (ISRO), EUMETSAT and France (CNES).

GEO recognizes and supports the need for coordination of Earth observations and data sharing at both an international and national level. In July, **the United States released the first-ever National Plan for Civil Earth Observations**. The National Plan provides guidance to Federal agencies for a balanced portfolio approach to managing Earth observation to fulfill agency mandates, achieve national objectives, and inform investments in civil Earth observation systems. The United States seeks to ensure the continued provision and access to key Earth observation data, which support a broad range of public services, research programs, and international efforts.

The release of higher resolution elevation datasets combined with the ongoing U.S. role in national level coordination and a range of other international Earth observation initiatives, including GPM and SERVIR, underscores the United States' clear and ongoing commitment to open data, international sharing, and cooperation through GEO.

In October, we were pleased to join our fellow members of the GEO Americas Caucus in a meeting organized by Colombia – the new Chair of our regional Caucus – in which nine countries agreed to move towards **establishing a regional initiative “AmeriGEOSS”** to provide maximum benefits of Earth observations to the communities of the Americas. This initiative will provide the structure for countries and organizations to partner around specific areas of need and will aim to promote a greater synergy effect without duplication of efforts for the benefit of the region. Based on an open discussion of needs and priorities, the Americas Caucus has identified four priorities areas that will become the initial scope of AmeriGEOSS:

1. Agriculture and Food Security
2. Disaster Risk Reduction
3. Water Resource Management
4. Monitoring of ecosystems with emphasis on native forests and coastal areas

The terms of reference, governance structure and an implementation plan for AmeriGEOSS will be developed during 2014 - 2015 with the aim to be presented to GEO at GEO-XII.

We believe that with the efforts underway in Africa to strengthen AfriGEOSS, and the developing efforts to form AmeriGEOSS, our communities are proactively moving towards a regionalized approach to building GEOSS and promoting the key objectives of GEO.