

Revised Criteria for Observers, Participating Organizations and Moratorium

This Document is submitted to the GEO-XII Plenary for decision. The Plenary is asked to review and act upon the revised criteria for Observers, Participating Organizations (POs), as well as the existing Moratorium on applications put in place at GEO-XI.

Revised Criteria for Observers, Participating Organizations and Moratorium

1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to present revised criteria, consistent with previous guidance, for Observers and Participating Organizations (PO) to join the Group on Earth Observations (GEO). If Plenary agrees to the revised criteria for POs, action on the current moratorium can be taken.

The document proposes to further streamline the review and approval process and maintain momentum by delegating to the Executive Committee authority to approve applications for POs and Observers.

2 BACKGROUND

As GEO enters its second decade, considerable preparatory work, discussion and deliberations regarding broader Stakeholder Engagement in GEO have occurred, including but not limited to, the Post-2015 Working Group (2012-2013), GEO-XI (2013), the Geneva Ministerial Summit and Declaration (2014), and the Implementation Plan Working Group (IPWG) (2014-2015), culminating with the new GEO Strategic Plan 2016-2025: Implementing GEOSS. Each of these efforts has acknowledged the contributions that GEO has made to the global environmental community, in large part because the entire Earth observation spectrum (collection to users) exists within GEO. This fact, as well as the desire to ensure that all Members and POs are actively engaged in and contributing to GEO, and the implementation of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), led to a re-evaluation of the criteria currently in use.

3 REVISED CRITERIA

In developing the revised criteria, the GEO Executive Committee also spent time exploring and articulating the underlying principles of being a PO or an Observer with the difference largely being based on the level of involvement and participation in, and contribution and commitment to GEO. Pending Plenary and Ministerial endorsement, recommendations made in the GEO Strategic Plan 2016-2015: Implementing GEOSS, POs would be eligible to serve on the Programme Board, and with demonstrated commitment and action, would also be eligible to be nominated as an Observer to the Executive Committee (three seats reserved for POs).

3.1 Participating Organizations

GEO welcomes, as Participating Organizations, intergovernmental, international, and regional organizations, development banks, foundations, non-governmental organizations, and not-for-profit associations of commercial entities with a mandate and/or interest in, or be a user of Earth observations, information or services – that is, the full spectrum and/or value chain from data collection to use.

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Independent recognition of sub-programmes or subgroups of currently recognized Participating Organizations are generally discouraged from seeking independent recognition. Generally, the parent

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organization is considered sufficient. In selected instances, and if a compelling argument is presented as to why separate participation is being sought, applications from sub-programmes or subgroups will be considered.

The Participating Organization applicant must identify their proposed contribution to GEO, including, but not limited to, involvement in the GEO Work Programme, and/or the function performed by the organization that would benefit the broader GEO community. Examples of the latter include capacity building, data sharing, programme development, training and education, and communication and outreach.

Applicants requesting PO status in GEO will send an application to the GEO Secretariat endorsing the GEO Strategic Plan 2016-2025: Implementing GEOSS.

3.2 Observers

GEO welcomes, as Observers, intergovernmental, international and regional organizations, development banks, foundations, non-governmental organizations, and not-for-profit associations of commercial entities with a mandate or interest in, or be a user of Earth observations, information, and/or services – that is, the entire spectrum or value-chain from data collection to use. Member States recognized by the United Nations are also eligible to become Observers.

To be recognized as an Observer of GEO, entities will send a letter to the GEO Secretariat, requesting formal recognition as an Observer, acknowledging familiarity with the GEO Strategic Plan 2016-2025: Implementing GEOSS.

4 REVIEW OF NEW APPLICATIONS

Upon receipt of applications (from Participating Organizations) and Letters of Interest (from Observers), the GEO Secretariat will perform an initial review against the above criteria, and make recommendations to the GEO Executive Committee for decision.

The Plenary will recognize Participating Organizations and Observers at its earliest session.

5 ENCOURAGING ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT OF PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Participating Organizations (POs) make many substantial and important contributions to GEO and the implementation of GEOSS. As it is the intent of all parties that POs remain actively involved, every attempt will be made to ensure their continued interest and engagement. Should this engagement decline, the Executive Committee, supported by the Secretariat may make direct contact with POs to encourage more active participation.

6 RECOMMENDATION ON MORATORIUM

Given that the proposed revised criteria address earlier guidance regarding eligibility of POs, and if accepted by Plenary, the Executive Committee recommends that the moratorium, put in place at GEO-XI, be lifted.

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