

Secretariat Proposal for the 2019 GEO Symposium

This document is submitted to the Programme Board for discussion.

1 INTRODUCTION

The GEO Symposium, formerly called the GEO Work Programme (or Work Plan) Symposium, has been one of GEO's most significant annual events since its inception in 2010. Participants at GEO Symposia are mostly drawn from the leadership and contributors in the various GEO Work Programme activities and so the Symposium provides a key venue to discuss common issues that cut across Societal Benefit Areas and geographic regions. It has always been held in the April to June timeframe, largely to fit within the annual GEO meeting cycle, particularly to avoid conflicting with the annual GEO Plenary.

As a large event, planning for the GEO Symposium needs to begin as early in the year as possible. Additionally, as 2019 is a year in which the development of a new 3-year Work Programme occurs, it is important to consider how the GEO Symposium fits within the Work Programme development schedule and how it may be used for maximum benefit to advance the Work Programme.

GEO Symposia are organized by the GEO Secretariat, in consultation with the Programme Board. The discussion at the 8th Programme Board meeting in January 2018 proved to be very useful in identifying the key topics and focus for the 2018 GEO Symposium. The aim of this document is to support a similar discussion that will set the framework for the 2019 Symposium.

2 CONTEXT WITHIN THE WORK PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT SCHEDULE

The date for the 2019 GEO Symposium was initially set by the Programme Board at its 10th meeting in September 2018 as part of the planning process for the 2020-2022 Work Programme development. At that time, the preferred date was in the week of 20 May 2019, to be held at the WMO in Geneva. However, it was necessary to revise this date due to lack of availability of the large meeting room at the WMO at that time. The current planned dates for the Symposium are thus 27-29 May, these being the Monday to Wednesday. It should be noted that Thursday of that week is a public holiday in Geneva.

By the end of May, it is expected that all draft Implementation Plans will have been received from activity leads in the GEO community and that these Plans will have been given an initial review by the Programme Board. Comments from the Programme Board and from the Secretariat will have been provided to most proposers and many will have revised their Implementation Plans in response. The summaries from the Implementation Plans will have been compiled into a first draft of the Work Programme document and the full draft Implementation Plans made available to the GEO community through the GEO website. The Programme Board will have completed its 13th meeting in March and will have received the outcomes of the 4th Data Providers Workshop in April. The Expert Advisory Group (EAG) will also have completed its 2nd and 3rd meetings and the strategy document the EAG is developing regarding a GEO Knowledge Hub should be well advanced at that time.¹

¹ Please refer to document PB-12-13 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme Planning Diagram for more details.

Following the GEO Symposium, the Programme Board will hold its 14th meeting to discuss the outcomes of the Symposium and their implications for the 2020-2022 Work Programme, as well as to review any changes to the draft Work Programme document prior to sending it to Executive Committee and for consultation to GEO Principals in early July.

3 PROPOSED OUTCOMES FOR THE 2019 GEO SYMPOSIUM

Assuming that the principal focus for the Symposium will be on the development of the 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme and based on the timing of the Symposium within the development cycle, the following are suggested as some potential expected objectives for the 2019 Symposium:

- Confirm that the proposed categorization of activities (as Flagships, Initiatives, or Community Activities) is correct.
- Obtain specific feedback from the GEO community to improve the Implementation Plans.
- Identify any key gaps, particularly with respect to GEO's support to the Engagement Priorities, and possible ways to fill those gaps.
- Identify potential additional contributions to strengthen the Work Programme activities.
- Identify possible areas of duplication between activities as well as potential synergies that might be realized.
- Encourage support from GEO community members to the Foundational Tasks.

Programme Board members are requested to add to or modify these draft objectives to reflect what they view as the primary results they would like to see emerge from the Symposium.

4 STRUCTURE OF THE SYMPOSIUM

Recent GEO Symposia have been structured on a thematic basis, starting with the GEO engagement priorities and adding other topics that have been of particular interest or relevance at the time, such as commercial sector engagement, regional coordination, and data sharing. One of the key concerns that have been raised by the GEO community, including through participant surveys, has been the lack of sufficient opportunity for the individual Flagships and Initiatives to present and discuss their work. Since the 2019 GEO Symposium will be focused on development of the Work Programme, this would seem to be a suitable occasion to allow time for such presentations. However, experience with previous Symposia has shown that there is dissatisfaction with large blocks of presentations without sufficient time for discussion.

The typical schedule for GEO meetings is based on 4 sessions per day, each being about 1.5 hours in length. It is possible to extend this time by an hour or so by continuing past 17:00, although this will likely need to be offset by a later start on the Monday morning and an earlier adjournment on the final day. The total time available in a three-day Symposium is thus about 18 hours.

If all Flagships and Initiatives were offered an opportunity to present at the Symposium, this would mean somewhere around 30 potential presentations. If each presentation took 10 minutes, including questions, this would mean a total of about 5 hours of presentations, not counting discussion time. Providing a reasonable time for discussion would likely require a total time requirement (presentations plus discussion) of about 8 to 10 hours. This would, of course, be divided into a series of sessions, possibly across all three days of the Symposium. It would also likely be most helpful to organize the sessions around common themes, to the extent possible. These themes might also include the GEO engagement priorities. Depending on the uptake of the offer to present, and the amount of time to be devoted to the presentations, it may be possible to also offer speaking slots to some of the Community Activities, particularly those which may be more advanced or which may have key roles in supporting the engagement priorities.

In addition to the presentations from Flagships and Initiatives, it would also be useful to take advantage of the Symposium to discuss the Foundational Task structure with the GEO community. This could include presentations on some or all of the Foundational Tasks. Consideration should also be given to including a session on the Regional GEOs, especially considering their newly defined role.

Other topics that could form the basis for sessions include:

- The work of the EAG and the ideas around the proposed GEO Knowledge Hub.
- Capacity building for Work Programme activities, such as use of tools such as the Theory of Change and assistance in areas like communications and resource mobilization.
- Moving toward a digital economy model, including the role of data cubes and cloud architectures for EO.

5 NEXT STEPS

Following the Programme Board discussion, the Secretariat will prepare a first draft of an agenda for the 2019 GEO Symposium for review at the 13th Programme Board meeting in March. A “save-the-date” notice for the Symposium will also be sent out to the GEO community, which will include a short description of the purpose and format. If there is agreement on the proposal to offer speaking opportunities to all Flagships and Initiatives, this will be communicated to the existing Work Programme activity points of contact so they may organize their participation.