

## Canberra Declaration

*This document is submitted by the Secretariat to the Programme Board for discussion.*



GEO WEEK 2019  
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The Group on Earth Observations (GEO)

### Canberra Declaration

Canberra, Australia 8 November 2019

We, Ministers of GEO Members and Ministerial representatives, convened the 2019 intergovernmental Group on Earth Observations (GEO) Ministerial Summit in Canberra, Australia on 8 November 2019. We **note** with appreciation the valuable contributions made by other attendees at our Summit, including representatives of new and existing Members, Participating Organizations and GEO Associates. We:

1. **Reaffirm** the status of GEO as a voluntary and non-legally binding intergovernmental partnership. **Highlight** GEO's unique global role in driving cooperative action and decision making by Members enacting upon our vision of a world where decisions and actions are informed by coordinated, comprehensive and sustained Earth observations.
2. **Welcome** the ongoing work of the GEO community to deliver its mission by developing a Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS) that connects and integrates the Earth observation efforts of each nation for the benefit of humanity.
3. **Welcome** the progress made to implement the *GEO Strategic Plan 2016-2025*, endorsed at the 2015 GEO Ministerial Summit in Mexico City. **Recognise** the success the GEO community has had in driving progress in the policy areas we highlighted, including expanding the use of Earth observations to address sustainable development, disaster risk reduction and climate change.
4. **Note** that in addition to the priority engagement areas currently being given special attention, we maintain our strong support for the broader goal of GEO to ensure Earth

observations deliver benefit to all sectors of society.

5. **Recognise** the *GEO Report on Impact 2016-2019*, which showcases the depth and breadth of GEO's activity and impact, including the GEO community's responsiveness to emerging policy issues such as land degradation, urbanisation and mercury pollution.

Under the Summit theme of 'Earth Observations: Investments in the Digital Economy', we:

6. **Recognise** that Earth observations play a critical role in driving productivity and sustainable economic growth, and that investments made in the acquisition and use of Earth observations deliver a substantial return on that investment to our economies and communities. **Welcome** GEO's ongoing work to demonstrate new opportunities to use Earth observations in key sectors such as healthcare, agriculture, fisheries, forestry and resource extraction.
7. **Note** that as Earth observations and associated technology become increasingly integrated into our economies, there is an increasing need to connect GEO to the work of key global and regional economic cooperation forums. **Welcome** the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation's recent acknowledgement of the importance of Earth observations.
8. **Highlight** that the digital economy is generating opportunities to fully integrate information on the current and forecast state of the Earth into all aspects of decision making, from national strategic planning, through to day-to-day actions of individual businesses. **Resolve** to work, individually and through GEO, to encourage use of Earth observations in an inclusive digital economy that promotes sustainable economic and social development. **Encourage** the broader GEO community to do the same.
9. **Reiterate** the critical role that full, secure and open sharing of Earth observations data and knowledge will play in deeper integration of Earth observation technologies into the digital economy. **Encourage** governments to increase free access to Earth observations created using public resources.

Noting the opportunity to strengthen the voices of developing island nations in GEO's governance, we:

10. **Welcome** new Members from the Pacific and other island nations to the GEO community, and recognise the significant capabilities they have to offer.
11. **Emphasise** the importance of GEO being inclusive of these countries with their significant and increasing exposure to disaster risk, climate change and sustainable development challenges.

To ensure the benefits of Earth observations are felt at regional, national, sub-national levels, and to the level of individual communities and businesses, we:

12. **Recognise** and further encourage the proactive efforts of the GEO community, including space agencies, to make Earth observations collected from space ready for analysis and easier to use through artificial intelligence, data analytics and visualization technologies.
13. **Recognise** the critical role that data collected from the atmosphere, land and water (in-situ data) plays in achieving GEO's mission, but **note** that sharing of such data is limited and there remain significant gaps in the global observing system. **Call upon** the GEO community to develop a strategy to address the challenges in this area and to demonstrate progress in implementation.
14. **Welcome** the creation of the Regional Groups on Earth Observations as a formal part of the GEO structure that enables governments to benefit from the work of GEO while collaborating to tackle common challenges.
15. **Highlight** that GEO's ability to deliver on its vision will be enhanced by growing its engagement with the private sector: leveraging the observations the private sector collects, and partnering in developing and delivering sustainable products and services that meet the needs of individual governments, businesses and communities. **Encourage** ongoing efforts to deepen and learn from GEO's engagement and partnerships with the private sector, and **welcome** the creation of the GEO Associate category and the approval of the first Associates.
16. **Resolve** to highlight opportunities for the private sector to leverage GEO's work, and **encourage** the GEO community to do the same. **Emphasise** the need to create opportunities for small-medium-micro enterprises to leverage Earth observations given their ability to create new jobs and develop solutions that meet specific local needs and priorities.

To fully realise the benefits of Earth observations for all countries, and developing countries in particular, we:

17. **Highlight** the need for the GEO community to accelerate its work to build on the capacity of all countries to exploit Earth observations. **Resolve** to enhance our efforts to help one another to develop institutional capacity to promote the use of Earth observations for national benefit.
18. **Encourage** governments with official development assistance programmes to consider how these programmes can support greater use of Earth observations at all levels and across all sectors. **Note** the need for all such efforts to be driven by the priorities and needs of recipient countries, and in collaboration with international financial institutions.

With respect to GEO's future work and the implementation of the *GEO Strategic Plan 2016-2025*, we:

19. **Welcome** the GEO community's commitments to the new *GEO Work Programme*

2020-2022.

20. Continue to **encourage** the GEO community to fully implement the strategic plan, **taking account of** the above challenges and opportunities, **noting** the need to promote a diverse and inclusive GEO community, and **highlighting** the importance of robust, stable, sustained and continually improving Earth observation systems as the foundation of GEOSS.
21. **Acknowledge** the need for GEO to be proactive and responsive to Members' needs for Earth observations that help them achieve their respective goals. **Highlight**, in particular, GEO's increasing efforts in the areas of land, water, atmosphere, biodiversity, and climate monitoring, disaster risk reduction, and sustainable development, including as relevant and appropriate, actions related to the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
22. **Recognise** the value of greater use of Earth observations in official statistics programs, in support of national and international reporting processes. **Resolve** to work to enhance collaboration between the Earth observation and official statistics communities, including within the United Nations system.
23. **Recognise** the central role that we, as Members, play in supporting and enabling the work of GEO and its broad community. **Resolve** to scale-up our support for the delivery of GEOSS and other elements of the strategic plan, noting the return these investments deliver to our environment, economies and communities.
24. **Acknowledge**, with gratitude, all investments made in GEO, including new contributions announced during our Summit and GEO Week 2019 and published on the GEO website.
25. **Call upon** the broader GEO community to redouble its efforts to communicate the value of Earth observations and engage more contributors to GEO's work.

We **resolve** to reconvene in four years to assess GEO's progress towards the goals, objectives and priorities that we established in Canberra and in GEO's Strategic Plan, and to consider new challenges and themes to guide consideration of GEO's future beyond the term of the current strategic plan.

[Acknowledgement]