

Executive Committee Foreword to the GEO Strategic Plan

This Document is submitted to the Executive Committee for decision.

GEO STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2025: IMPLEMENTING GEOSS

Foreword structure:

1. Recall progress made by GEO since 2005, mentioning areas such as data sharing, access to Earth observation (EO) resources, building a strong and diverse community;
2. Considering the challenges that Humanity faces, the GEO vision is even more “current”. Further action is needed to consolidate initial results and move forward. It would be key to support the achievement of the 2030 Global Goals for Sustainable Development;
3. Advances in technology will help the implementation of the GEO vision and they need to be taken into consideration to define GEO actions and shape GEO Work Programmes;
4. Introduction of the Strategic Plan, recalling the process for its development (with inputs from GEO stakeholders and recommendations from the GEO Governance structures), highlighting that it provides the strategic view and the implementation framework for GEO to broaden the stakeholders’ base, and to better address national, regional and global challenges;
5. Thank IPWG, GEO Boards and WGs/TFs, the Secretariat and the whole GEO Community for their contribution to the development of the Strategic Plan.

Global environmental change, and its resulting impacts on all aspects of society, is one of the primary challenges of humankind, even more so today than in 2003 when governments and international organizations committed to a vision of a future wherein decisions and actions for the benefit of humankind are informed by coordinated, comprehensive and sustained Earth observations. In 2005, the first concrete step toward achieving that vision was taken with the establishment of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO), whose primary goal was to create the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS).

In the intervening decade, GEO has had considerable success in developing GEOSS, advocating broad, open data sharing and access, initiating major global monitoring initiatives, strengthening regional coordination, and establishing a strong and diverse community. Building on these accomplishments, yet recognizing the need of further collective effort to foster the use of Earth observation resources to their fullest extent, the GEO Ministers extended the mandate of GEO for a second decade at the Geneva Summit in January 2014. The Ministers resolved to “improve the effectiveness of GEO’s actions, to broaden engagement and collaboration of stakeholders including decision makers, and to sustain resources for GEOSS’ continuous development and functioning,” and requested that a new plan to achieve these goals be developed by the next Ministerial Summit.

The resulting “GEO Strategic Plan 2016-2025: Implementing GEOSS”, which follows, builds on a strong GEO foundation and proven successes, and identifies improvements in areas highlighted in the Geneva Declaration, including strengthening the Societal Benefit Areas (SBAs); engaging more broadly with stakeholders, the United Nations, and the private sector; establishing a robust, steady resourcing mechanism within the voluntary framework of GEO; and identifying new opportunities for GEO.

The plan was developed by an *ad-hoc* Implementation Plan Working Group (IPWG) through an extensive process of consultation and deliberation, carefully weighs the inputs received from the GEO governing bodies, from members of the GEO Community, and from other stakeholders. The Plan articulates what GEO will strive to be, and to achieve, over the next decade.

The implementation of the GEO vision will take full advantage of, and benefit from, advances in technology in areas such as the Internet, applications, and portable devices; Information and Communication Technology; Physical/Geophysical data and monitoring technology/modeling approaches; and High Performance Computing and “Big data”. These advances will inform the approach and scope of GEO actions and GEOSS implementation in the 2016 - 2025 decade.

The Plan is presented in two parts. Part A outlines the Strategy, affirming GEO’s Vision and Mission, highlighting the value of GEO’s unique capabilities, and establishing three Strategic Objectives – Advocate, Engage, Deliver – to guide the work of GEO through the next decade. Part B outlines how GEO will implement its Vision and Mission, establishing a set of Core Functions and associated, anticipated results that, based on current achievements, will frame the work of GEO and enable the broad and diverse GEO community to work together to achieve its common goal.

On behalf of the GEO Plenary, and the global GEO community, we extend our deepest appreciation to the IPWG for its exceptional work in developing the “GEO Strategic Plan 2016-2025: Implementing GEOSS”. Further, we express our gratitude to the GEO Implementation Boards, the Data Sharing Working Group, the Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group, the Data Management Principles Task Force, the GEO Secretariat and the entire GEO Community for their contributions to the development of the Strategic Plan, and for their commitment to GEO – past, present, and future.

Signed by the four GEO Co-Chairs

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