

Summary Report

12th Executive Committee Meeting Geneva, 26-27 March 2008

As approved by the Executive Committee at its 13^h Meeting in July 2008

Wednesday 26 March

1 GENERAL BUSINESS

The GEO Co-Chair from China served as Chair for the meeting. He welcomed the participants, extending a special welcome to the new members from Argentina, Australia, Panama, Norway and Uganda, who were elected at GEO-IV. He thanked the Co-Chair of South Africa for his country's role in making GEO-IV and the Ministerial Summit a success and stressed the progress achieved in GEOSS Implementation. In view of the very full agenda of this meeting, he urged the Members to be efficient in their work.

The Co-Chair from the EC welcomed the new members and highlighted the fact that the successful Plenary and Summit had provided a great stimulus for the 10-Year Implementation Plan. He stated that GEO should already start looking forward towards the next Summit, where efforts would need to be consolidated, demonstrating that GEOSS has moved from a pilot phase to an operational phase.

The Co-Chair from the US thanked the South Africa Co-Chair for a successful GEO-IV and Summit and welcomed the new members, saying that the smooth selection of the Executive Committee at GEO-IV was proof that a voluntary organization could govern itself in a rational way. He emphasized regional cooperation within GEO and the importance of the G8 meeting to be held in Japan later in the year, expressing appreciation to the Japanese members of the Committee for keeping GEOSS in the pre-G8 discussions. He informed the Committee of US initiatives, such as NOAA's recent public partnership with Shell, noting that the energy industry saw the value in large scale observation and stressed the strong support for GEO and observing systems as reflected in the US budget.

South Africa echoed his fellow Co-Chairs and welcomed the new members, who would be able to provide fresh and new ideas. He joined in the praise for the successful Summit involving all the Members and Participating Organizations, without whom the success would not have been possible. He expressed the wish to work with the new member from Uganda to increase the participation of African countries in GEO.

The Chair of the meeting invited the new members to take the floor.

Argentina expressed its willingness to work towards furthering GEO's objectives.

The representative from Australia acknowledged that the Bureau of Meteorology was not the only Australian stakeholder in GEO; he was speaking on behalf of all the Australian entities involved in the work of GEO.

Norway hoped that although a small country, it would be able to use its experience to contribute towards making observations accessible to many users.

The representative of Panama reiterated Panama's commitment to the work of GEO.

Uganda expressed its commitment to GEO, recalling that it was the lead of an agriculture task.

1.1 Adoption of Agenda (Document 1)

The Secretariat Director introduced the Agenda. The Agenda was adopted with the proposed changes.

1.2 Approval of the Summary Report of the 11th Executive Committee Meeting (Document 2, Rev1)

The US Co-Chair requested that the discussion on the procedure for the extension of the Director be reflected in the report including the decision of the 11th meeting that the US would prepare a document, in consultation with the other Co-Chairs, on GEO Secretariat Arrangement Procedures and that this item would be placed on the Agenda of the 12th meeting. The Secretariat was requested to modify the report accordingly. Subject to this change, the Report was approved.

Action 12.1 Secretariat to modify the 11th Executive Committee meeting report.

1.3 Review of Actions from previous meetings (Document 3)

The Secretariat Director presented the document.

It was agreed that ongoing items have as requested, been recorded and that a number of these can now be closed.

As a consequence, the 8th Executive Committee Meeting report was therefore approved with no further changes.

1.4 Review of GEO-IV Plenary Minutes

The following procedure for the circulation of draft Plenary minutes was agreed. The draft reports of GEO Plenary sessions should be circulated to the Principals for comment four weeks after the meeting providing a further 2-week review period to make early changes. The updated report would then be circulated to the full GEO community with the specific mention "draft, for information only, to be submitted for approval at next Plenary".

Action 12.2 Draft minutes of GEO-IV to be circulated to the GEO community.

2 SECRETARIAT OPERATIONS

2.1 Quarterly Report (Document 4)

The Secretariat Director presented the report. He stressed the need for Members to second experts to the Secretariat. He explained that a number of organizations had expressed their interest in formalizing and strengthening links with GEO and asked the Executive Committee for guidance on the type of relationships to be developed. It was agreed that GEO was an umbrella organization with the role of

facilitator, and that access to meetings and documents of other bodies should be through GEO Members rather than having to request an “observer” status. It was requested that the report be amended regarding the wording of REDD and HIRON activities.

It was further decided that proposals to sign agreements of any nature by the Secretariat be put through the Executive Committee.

The G8 Summit preparation was discussed, and the Executive Committee welcomed the efforts of Japan to mention GEO and GEOSS at the meeting and in the final declaration. The EC and the US suggested that Members of GEO who are also members of the G8 provide information on the value of GEO’s activities to their sherpas. In particular, the US would like to promote the idea at the G8 that GEO is the right umbrella for dealing with adaptation and furthering the scientific understanding of climate change. The EC emphasized the cross-cutting dimension of GEOSS, the need to support data sharing principles, as well as the need to foster a large involvement of the scientific community. Japan reassured the Executive Committee that, although the focus of the meeting would be on environment and climate change, non-proliferation and the world economy, the Japanese government recognized the cross-cutting value of GEOSS for all nine SBAs.

Action 12.3 Secretariat to write to GEO Principals clearly outlining the needs for secondments.

Action 12.4 Secretariat to revise the Quarterly Report.

2.2 Secretariat Performance Indicators (Document 14)

The EC presented the document and stressed the importance of agreeing a way forward on this topic. A discussion ensued on the 3 options presented in the document, and it was agreed that the Secretariat and the EC would work together to develop a proposal elaborating Option 2, with additional elements from Option 3, for discussion at the 13th Executive Committee meeting and presentation at GEO-V for an eventual modification of the Rules of Procedure, should that be necessary. It was emphasized that the proposal should be both useful and “light”, i.e. would not create unnecessary burden on the Secretariat and/or the Executive Committee and it would combine quantitative and qualitative evaluation.

Action 12.5 Secretariat to develop a proposal on Performance Indicators based on Document 14 produced by the EC, for discussion at a future meeting.

2.7 Secretariat Arrangements (Document 15)

The US Co-Chair introduced document 15. The document was discussed and amended. After revision, the document was approved by the Executive Committee, which recommended that Document 15 (Rev 3) become Annex E to the GEO Rules of Procedure.

The Chair recommended that the Co-Chairs meet immediately after the session in order to propose a process to the Executive Committee, on the next day, to address the question of the reappointment of the Director, in agreement with the approved GEO Secretariat Arrangements Procedures.

Thursday 27 March

2.3 Draft Report on Income and Expenditure 2007 (Document 5)

The Secretariat Director introduced the document explaining that the 2007 accounts would shortly be audited by the external auditor and a final version presented to the Executive Committee at its next session.

2.4 Report on Income and Expenditure Jan-Feb 2008 (Document 6)

The Secretariat Director presented the document and explained that there was a large gap between the budget accepted at GEO-IV and the level of contributions pledged. He recommended that the carry-over from previous years be preserved, as much as possible, since it is needed every year to face cash-flow problems at the beginning of the year before contributions pledged by Members are received in the Trust Fund. He further recommended that expenditures in a given year be matched by contributions for the same year. He concluded that it may be necessary to revise the budget during the year if additional contributions were not pledged.

The EC confirmed its pledge of €600,000 for 2008.

The US announced a pledge for USD 350,000 and mentioned that, although it could not be confirmed at present, it was expected that it could contribute an additional amount making the total US contribution USD 600,000.

Germany reiterated its pledge of €100,000 for 2008 and 2009.

Australia announced that various agencies interested in GEO would make a contribution, the amount of which would be communicated to the Secretariat in due course.

Japan expected to maintain the same level of contribution as in previous years.

China confirmed its pledge of USD 80,000 and announced that it would continue to second an Expert to the Secretariat and that it had a budget for hosting GEO-V and the Executive Committee in China later in the year.

The US expressed the need to balance income and expenditure and to see where projects could be funded collaboratively by GEO Members and Participating Organizations. He expressed the importance of informing the GEO community of the Secretariat's needs for seconded experts, as they performed a major part of what GEO does.

The Secretariat Director expressed appreciation for the pledges and confirmed that he would follow the recommendation of the Executive Committee to investigate new options for funding and transferring certain activities to host countries. He would report back to the Executive Committee at its next meeting on progress made in this domain.

Action 12.6 Secretariat Director to invite Members and Participating Organizations to contribute to the GEO Trust Fund.

2.5 Follow-up on Audit recommendations (Document 7)

The Secretariat Director presented the document, which was met with unanimous approval. He asked the Committee if they wished the external auditor, the National Audit Office, to present its report on the 2007 accounts at the next meeting. This was agreed.

Action 12.7 Secretariat to invite the Auditor to present its report at the next session of the Executive Committee.

2.6 Branding/logos/publications

The Secretariat Director first requested the approval of the Executive Committee for registering the GEO logo with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in order to protect it. The Executive Committee endorsed the GEO logo and gave a mandate to the Secretariat to have it registered.

The Director then raised the question of the branding of GEO documents. A discussion ensued on whether the logos of other organizations that contribute to the printing of documents should also figure alongside the GEO logo in publications. The discussion also addressed the question of branding GEOS components and systems such as GEO BON and the GEO Portal.

The US raised the possibility of defining two categories of GEO documents: official documents and other documents. It was the view of US that recognition should be given to those providing resources for the publication of official documents, but perhaps not on the front cover. China noted that there would be a need to define the type of document which would fall into each category.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, the Chair asked the Secretariat to prepare a list of official GEO documents together with publication guidelines, to be reviewed at the next meeting.

Action 12.8 Secretariat to prepare list of official GEO documents together with publication guidelines for review at the next meeting.

Action 12.9 Secretariat to take the necessary action to register the GEO logo with WIPO.

2.7 GEO Secretariat Arrangements (continued)

The US Co-Chair stated that the procedures approved for Secretariat Arrangements called for the Executive Committee to establish a selection Panel. On behalf of the 4 Co-Chairs, he proposed that on this occasion, the selection Panel be composed of all the members of the Executive Committee. The proposal was accepted and the Executive Committee decided to hold a Panel session immediately.

2.7.1 Executive session of selection Panel.

The report of the Panel session is presented as an Annex to this report.

2.7.2 Panel report to the Executive Committee.

Following the meeting of the selection Panel, the Executive Committee reconvened to consider the recommendation of the Panel. The members of the Executive Committee unanimously endorsed the proposal from the selection Panel that the current Director of the GEO Secretariat should be re-appointed for a second three-year term with effect from 1 January 2009.

The Executive Committee then asked the incumbent Director if he would be willing to serve a further three-year term from January 2009 to December 2011. The Director stated that he was honoured by the proposal and glad to accept it. The members of the Executive Committee warmly welcomed this response from the Secretariat Director.

The South Africa Co-Chair invited the Secretariat staff to present themselves to the new Executive Committee. The Committee and the Secretariat Director expressed their appreciation to the staff for their work.

3 C4 AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

Germany presented a summary report covering the activities of the 4 GEO Committees and the C4.

The report also communicated recommendations from the Committees to the Executive Committee.

The major points raised were:

ADC

- GEO Web Portal Process is the priority and should be implemented with no delay.
- Proposal of Best Practices Wiki is supported.
- Data Sharing Principles need to be further discussed with all GEO Participating Organizations. A process to reach consensus should be established.

CBC

- Proposal to add a “Capacity Building box” to all tasks sheets.
- GEO Portal should be operational as soon as possible.
- Proposal was advanced to create a “Capacity Building Portal”.
- Task review yielded positive outcomes.

UIC

- Further improvement of its working process is needed.
- IGOS-P transition provides the opportunity to consolidate Communities of Practice.
- Efforts to work on the Data Sharing Principles will be a priority item.
- Like STC and CBC, UIC will work on a paper elaborating “the Role of the UIC” in GEO.

STC

- GEO Web Portal to start soon, structure should allow full control and offer best services, although financial implications need to be explored further.
- Reluctance to add new Tasks to the next Work Plan 09/11.
- IGOS-P transition is viewed as having been very positive for GEO, with the experience gained to be transferred to other areas.
- The idea of a Best Practice Wiki is supported.

The following recommendations emerged from the Committee and C4 meetings:

GEO Portal

1. Decision to start with an Initial Operation Capability (IOC) if operators are willing to continue as soon as possible: 3 offers to establish the GEO portal were available.
2. Decision on the length of the IOC: 12 months depending on willingness of providers to go on.
3. Detailed plan and requirements for sustained operation to be developed by the Secretariat following the start of the IOC.

Work Plan Update

- Efforts to be made **not to add new Tasks**, but rather encourage better clustering of existing Tasks (thus improving their cross-cutting nature).

- New tasks should be proposed only if Task Lead, Point of Contact and resources are committed (example of IGOS-P).
- Cover note should be included for the next Work Plan addressing the **role of GEO as an attractive broker** in the field of capacity building, providing easy outreach to the Earth observation community at large at no charge.
- Period of Work Plans should be **3 years, with 1 year overlap**.
- the Annex of Early Achievements Document needs to be emphasized.
- IGOS-P Themes should be integrated more fully into the Work Plan.
- Inserting a “capacity building box” in all Task sheets.

GEOSS Performance Indicators

Considering the generally **voluntary nature of contributions** that GEO is enjoying, “diplomatic” means/indicators need to be developed. The Task Force (USA, CAN) is still working on this. Evaluation of progress against the 2-, 6-, and 10-year targets of the GEO Implementation Plan with a “light” procedure is recommended.

GEO Cost/Benefit analysis

- Work is in preparation by the GEO Secretariat.
- UIC is asked to look at macro-economy with examples and case studies, and also consider planning a specific workshop.
- All committees are asked to pass on references to the GEO Secretariat concerning cost/benefit analyses in the field of Earth observation.
- The EC has funded a GEO cost/benefit analysis “GEOBENE”.

Co-Ordination of Committees

- Committees should communicate and keep each other informed as closely as possible.
- Clustering of meetings may help (which implies early information for the host!).
- Co-Chairpersons may attend other Committees’ meetings, and are encouraged to do so as often as possible.
- C4 will strengthen its work by means of more frequent meetings/teleconferences.

Schedule of upcoming Committee meetings

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|------------|---|
| CBC | 3-5 June, Tashkent, Uzbekistan |
| | 15-17 September, Athens, Greece |
| ADC | 19-22 May, Geneva |
| | 21-24 Sept., Boulder, CO, USA |
| UIC | Toronto, 6-8 May 2008 |
| STC | 22-23 May, Geneva |
| | 8-9 September, Paris (TBD) |
| C4 | 17-18 June, Geneva |
| | 25-26 September, Boulder CO, USA (with ADC) |

The Executive Committee thanked Udo Gartner for his excellent and comprehensive report.

South Africa queried whether there was any timeline attached to the cost/benefit analyses. The Director responded that the scope of the effort was still to be defined before a clear plan and schedule could be produced.

During the discussion, it was recommended that new members of the Executive Committee contribute to the Committees' activities. The US emphasized the role of broker that GEO could play in capacity building. It was stated by several members that Tasks in the new Work Plan should have well identified leads. EC recognized the value of the synchronization of all committees, C4 and Executive Committee meetings and highlighted the recommendations of CBC to have "flagship projects" brought to the attention of "resource providers".

Norway expressed its willingness to become a Co-Chair of the User Interface Committee, and this was accepted with appreciation.

4 PORTAL PROCESS (DOCUMENT 8)

The Secretariat Director presented the document.

The Co-Chair from China asked Germany in its capacity as C4 chair to lead the discussion.

Germany raised the following points:

- a decision needed to be made as to when the IOC would start.
- a process needed to be developed on how to make use of the IOC.
- financial implications need to be evaluated.
- in order to manage the process, technical competences would be needed, and these could be found within the ADC.
- political guidance would also be needed in order to keep the GEO principles of transparency and open access.
- users would need to be involved.

After a long discussion, consensus was reached on having the Initial Operating Capability beginning as soon as possible and lasting up to one year. The Executive Committee was of the opinion that at this time, the GEOSS Clearinghouses should be searchable by multiple Portals. The Executive Committee was also of the view that in accordance with the 10-Year Implementation Plan, the development of the GEOSS common infrastructure should be based on the use of open standards. These issues would be addressed in more detail during the IOC, before any final decisions are made. The proposal was made to start with the all current providers. It was also decided that a task force of experts, drawing on the expertise of the GEO Committees, GEO Members and Participating Organizations, would be established by the Secretariat to oversee the IOC.

The Secretariat was requested to prepare a letter to be addressed to all providers clarifying various crucial points on the GEOSS common infrastructure development, contracting authority, absence of obligations, etc. Following review by the ADC, this draft letter would be circulated to all Executive Committee members for approval. A kick-off meeting of the IOC would be organized by the Secretariat as soon as possible.

The Executive Committee requested that a more detailed reference document be prepared which would specify the reference frame for the final decision. The GEO Secretariat should support the Task Force in the preparation of this document.

It was agreed that the initial period would be "up to 12 months".

Action 12.10 Establish a Task Force of Experts to oversee GCI/IOC

Action 12.13 Organize a kick-off meeting of the IOC

Action 12.14 The GCI Task Force, supported by the GEO Secretariat, should prepare a more detailed reference document

5 DATA SHARING PRINCIPLES (DOCUMENT 9)

Michael Rast of the GEO Secretariat introduced the document.

The progress made since the Cape Town Summit was complimented, and the work of the Task Team was acknowledged. The Executive Committee requested that the latest version of the Guidelines to the GEO Data Sharing Principles be circulated to the members of the Executive Committee. There was consensus that participation in the Task Team needs to be broadened. The EC suggested that the dialogue between data providers and users be strengthened, so that obstacles to the full and open exchange of data can be identified, addressed and overcome.

It was agreed that a letter would be sent to GEO Principals requesting that their experts on the subject provide inputs and comments on the current set of Data Sharing Guidelines. The long-term target is to have the GEOSS Data Sharing Principles Implementation Guidelines ready for acceptance by the Ministerial Summit in 2010.

Action 12.15 Secretariat to circulate the latest version of the Data Sharing Principles paper to the Executive Committee.

6 WORK PLAN

6.1 Progress Report (Document 10)

The Secretariat Director presented the document and invited comments.

It was felt that the system of colour coding of tasks enabled easy identification of where progress was being made. It was recommended that an explanation be given to the traffic lights to clarify, for example, whether work was at a standstill, as whether there could be an opportunity to take further action.

It was also recommended that the table include the Committee responsible for overseeing the task. The Secretariat Director invited the Executive Committee to recommend action on the five tasks reported as inactive. It was decided to request the respective GEO Committee in charge of overseeing an inactive Task to make the recommendation. The recommendation of the UIC to close three user tasks was, therefore, accepted. It was further decided to delay changes in other Tasks until the new three-year work plan was elaborated and to ensure, at that time, that inactive tasks were not (re)introduced.

Action 12.16 Clarify significant of colour-codes in WP Progress report to specify problems.

Action 12.17 Add a Committee oversight column to Work Plan Progress sheet.

Action 12.18 Request UIC to consider AG-06-01 (GEOSS Agriculture Strategic Plan) for deletion.

Action 12.19 Close three UIC tasks as recommended by the UIC.

6.2 Forest Monitoring for REDD (Document 11)

The Secretariat Director presented the document, which outlines a proactive approach to coordinating the diverse forest monitoring activities being undertaken within the GEO community. The Committee applauded the initiative and the goal of strengthening and harmonizing forest carbon monitoring. Several members, however, highlighted that GEO should be concerned only with developing the observation capability and not with negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Committee therefore emphasized that the initiative should be focused on improving technical monitoring capacities and that all explicit references to REDD should be removed. Norway expressed its interest in becoming a lead for GEO's forest and carbon monitoring activities. Japan stated that forest carbon monitoring will be addressed by the upcoming 2nd GEOSS Asia Pacific Symposium. The Committee noted that the current GEO work plan contains several relevant Tasks and that the importance of forest carbon monitoring should be reflected in the new 2009/2011 work plan. The Secretariat was requested to revise the document for submission to the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

Action 12.20: Secretariat to produce new document on forest carbon monitoring for consideration by the 13th Meeting of the Executive Committee and update all documents along the guidelines provided by Executive Committee.

6.3 Process for next Work Plan (Document 12)

Document 12 was presented by Alexia Massacand, the Secretariat's newly appointed Work Plan Coordinator.

The Executive Committee was requested to:

- Approve the principle of a new Work Plan.
- Accept the schedule.
- Accept the creation of a task team to revise and update the six and ten year targets, the team to be composed of eight to ten people including at least two members of the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee agreed to the proposal from the Secretariat, with the caveat that with regard to the revision and updating of the six and ten-year targets, changes should only be made where they are well-reasoned. Any revised targets should not undermine the current 10-Year Implementation Plan.

Action 12.21 Secretariat to prepare a list of proposed members of a Target Task Team for circulation to the Executive Committee.

7 TSUNAMI / MULTHAZARDS WORKING GROUP (DOCUMENT 16)

Giovanni Rum of the GEO Secretariat presented Document 16.

The Executive Committee agreed that the Tsunami Working Group had successfully completed its mandate and therefore did not need to be extended. The Committee reaffirmed the need for GEO to foster international coordination on "all-hazards" activities, systems and services, but did not recommend creating an "all-hazards" Working Group. It was considered more appropriate to reinforce existing instruments such as the Work Plan Tasks and dedicated Communities of Practice. In particular the Committee strongly restated the need to ensure continuity of coordinated action by GEO to support the establishment of a Tsunami Early Warning "System of Systems" worldwide and

invited Members and Participating Organizations to actively support the activities of task DI-06-04. The Committee also emphasized the need to strengthen coordination with other international initiatives and programmes, in particular with UN-ISDR and WMO Disaster Risk Reduction.

Action 12.22 Secretariat to inform Members of the termination of the Tsunami Working Group.

Action 12.23 Secretariat to invite Members and Participating Organizations to support task DI-06-04.

8 FINANCE TASK TEAM

The Secretariat Director introduced the item and mentioned the interest of Switzerland in being a member of this team. China and the US suggested that Australia be a member of the team. Since Australia was not present during the discussion, the Secretariat proposed that this issue be discussed at the next meeting. It was agreed that the terms of reference of this task team should be updated in light of the discussion held during GEO-IV and that the issue should be deferred to the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

Action 12.24 Secretariat to redraft the paper Proposal for a Finance Task Team.

9 CLARIFICATION OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE

The EC pointed out an ambiguity in the application of the Rules of Procedure concerning the presentation to the GEO Plenary of requests received from organizations requesting status as GEO Participating Organizations or Observers. Clarification was needed as to whether all requests were to be submitted to the Plenary, or only those which received consensus in the Executive Committee. China suggested that the requests which did not receive consensus at the Executive Committee, not be submitted to the Plenary. China further emphasized that GEO should not become entangled in political issues such as China's sovereignty over Taiwan, Province of China.

The issue of informing the plenary of all the requests received in the Secretariat was raised, as well as that of a transparent procedure, and the interpretations of the Rules of Procedure.

It was decided that the Secretariat should draft a paper clearly defining the various options for review at the next Executive Committee meeting.

Action 12.25 Secretariat to draft a paper outlining the various options for informing plenary of requests received by organizations wishing to be recognized by GEO.

10 GEO WIKI (DOCUMENT 13)

The Secretariat Director introduced the document. After discussion, the Executive Committee supported the recommendation to explore a Wiki approach for the implementation of the Best Practice Registry for GEOSS, as an efficient mechanism to accelerate the peer review period of best practices. The Committee agreed that a condition for the success of the project would be the identification of a qualified Editor to control the content of the material published. The Secretariat was requested to identify a Member or Participating Organization willing to take on this role.

The Executive Committee concurred that:

- The Best Practice GEO Wiki be provided at no cost to GEO.
- The pages of the Wiki would carry the GEO logo, to ensure that the Registry would appear as a GEOSS component, fully endorsed by GEO.
- The identity of the providers could be shown, in accordance with the rules for the branding of GEO documents and services.
- The Wiki would be reviewed after a year, to allow the Executive Committee to make a decision for the future.

11 DATE AND PLACE OF GEO-V

The Co-Chair from China presented a video presenting the venue proposed for hosting GEO-V in Beijing. Document 17 outlining the organization of the 14th Executive Committee session and GEO-V was circulated and the Chinese delegation briefed the Executive Committee on logistical arrangements for the sessions, and a possible Earth exhibition at that time, subject to the approval of the Chinese government. The agreed dates for GEO-V (25-26 November 2008) were confirmed, and the Executive Committee applauded China for its generous offer.

12 DATE OF 13TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

It was decided to hold a 1.5 day meeting on 15 and 16 July, starting mid-morning on the 15th and ending mid-afternoon on the 16th.

13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Germany proposed that an advisory group of high-level experts be invited on a regular basis by the Executive Committee to discuss activities and provide external recommendations on GEO's activities. This would considerably assist in updating the Work Plan and provide feedback from users.

Caution should be exercised so as not to give the community the impression that a new structure is being set up. Germany was requested to support the Secretariat in drafting terms of reference for this group with clear procedures on the selection of experts and working methods.

Action 12.19 Secretariat to draft Terms of Reference for an advisory group of experts with the support of Germany.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 18h15.

Annex I
Panel Report regarding the Renewal of the GEO Secretariat Director's contract

The 12th meeting of the Executive Committee (EXCOM) of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) took place at WMO Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland, on 26-27 March 2008. During this meeting, EXCOM discussed the process to be adopted for the (re)appointment of the Director of the GEO Secretariat.

Having agreed on the details of the process during the session that took place on the afternoon of 26 March, the following morning the US Co-Chair made a recommendation to EXCOM that; "*on this occasion, the whole of EXCOM be considered to be the Panel. If accepted, EXCOM will then convene as the Panel, make a recommendation in accordance with the process that it had just adopted and then reconvene as EXCOM to consider endorsing any recommendation made by the Panel*".

Having accepted this proposal, the Panel therefore convened on the morning of Thursday 27 March 2008 in the premises of WMO, Geneva, Switzerland.

On behalf of the GEO Co-Chairs – China, the European Commission, South Africa and the United States of America – the US Co-Chair proposed that "the current Director of the GEO Secretariat should be engaged for a 2nd term".

The Co-Chair from the European Commission then reported to the members of the Panel that "*the Co-Chairs have evaluated the performance of the present Director and the GEO Secretariat according to the current GEO Rules of Procedure, (as set out in section 4.2)*".

A summary of this evaluation is given below:

| <i>GEO Rules of Procedure, section 4.2, GEO Secretariat duties</i> | <i>Co-Chairs remarks</i> |
|--|--|
| a.) Prepare and submit, for Plenary approval, the Annual Work Plan - including activities and budgets; | As can be noted from the documents submitted to the Plenary, this duty has been performed outstandingly well; |
| b.) Support the implementation by Members and Participating Organizations of the Annual Work Plan and execute expenditure of the budget; | The Secretariat has given ample assistance to the GEO Members and PO in support of the execution of the annual Work Plan, in particular with regard to under-performing tasks; |
| c.) Provide annual reports on the performance of GEOSS, including milestones of the Annual Work Plan; | The Secretariat has developed a reporting mechanism which allows the Plenary to immediately identify tasks that are performing poorly, or totally inadequately. This methodology also shows progress towards meeting the 2, 6 and 10-year targets; |
| d.) Provide annual reports on Secretariat operations, including execution of annual budget expenditures; | The Secretariat has developed a reporting mechanism which adequately addresses this requirement; |

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|--|---|
| <p>e.) Organize, prepare, and support meetings and other work of the GEO Plenary, Executive Committee, and other GEO committees and working groups;</p> | <p>The Secretariat has performed very well, except for the support given to the other GEO committees, (ADC, CS&T, CBC and UIC), where this support can be further strengthened. Particular mention is made of the outstanding work carried out, together with the South African hosts, in the organisation of the GEO-IV Plenary and Cape Town Ministerial Summit;</p> |
| <p>f.) Pursue activities to identify and secure funds for Secretariat operations and GEO activities in accordance with the direction of GEO;</p> | <p>The Secretariat has adequately addressed this duty;</p> |
| <p>g.) Oversee the implementation of the GEO communication strategy as outlined in the Annual Work Plan;</p> | <p>More emphasis is required on this duty in the future. The appointment of an External Relations Manager in the Secretariat should improve the effectiveness of this work;</p> |
| <p>h.) Organize the GEOSS user and other fora as required in coordination with GEO committees as appropriate;</p> | <p>The Secretariat has worked with the GEO Committees to address this duty;</p> |
| <p>i.) Facilitate overall cooperation and liaise with GEO Members and Participating Organizations, and other programmes and bodies as appropriate or as needed to support the work of GEO, with particular emphasis on existing systems and Earth observation coordination mechanisms;</p> | <p>The Secretariat has devoted considerable efforts to carrying out this task. The Director was reminded during EXCOM 12 that the emphasis must be on the implementation of the GEOSS and the mechanisms whereby the GEOSS can provide data and information to GEO Members, PO and other programmes and bodies. Any political engagements are a matter for the individual GEO Members and PO;</p> |
| <p>j.) Identify staffing and other resources necessary to support the Annual Work Plan, develop indicators for Secretariat performance, and report to Plenary on Secretariat performance against indicators;</p> | <p>Within the constraints placed upon it, the Secretariat has adequately addressed the first part of this task. The development of indicators for Secretariat performance should be undertaken, together with EXCOM, during 2008;</p> |
| <p>k.) Ensure an open and transparent process is utilized for all employment to the Secretariat, including short-term contractors, and for the designation of experts to the various GEO committees and working groups;</p> | <p>Improvements in the manner in which this task has been addressed have been noted. However, improvements should be considered over the coming months to further improve the performance of this duty;</p> |
| <p>l.) Facilitate and coordinate the updating of the 10-Year Implementation Plan as directed by the Plenary;</p> | <p>The Secretariat has proposed measures to EXCOM to address this issue in conjunction with GEO Members and PO;</p> |
| <p>m.) Conduct the day-to-day administrative activities of the Secretariat;</p> | <p>The Secretariat has adequately addressed this duty;</p> |
| <p>n.) Carry out additional duties as required by the GEO.</p> | <p>The Secretariat has shown itself to be very willing and responsive to any additional requests for support, or action. The Secretariat and the Director are to be commended for their overall level of work.</p> |

Individual delegations then gave their response to the proposal from the Co-Chairs.

Germany stated that it could wholeheartedly endorse the recommendation of the GEO Co-Chairs and asked if it had been established whether the Director of the Secretariat was willing to continue, or not.

As a new member of EXCOM, Australia said that it had limited information upon which to make a judgement. Notwithstanding this remark, Australia could see no reason to object to the recommendation from the Co-Chairs.

Norway reported that is agreed with what the position of the German delegation.

South Africa stated that it wished to reinforce the point made by the European Commission. The decision reached by the GEO Co-Chairs was made based upon an assessment of the points listed under the GEO Rules of Procedure.

Japan reported that it was satisfied with the work of the GEO Director and that it could support the Co-Chair recommendation.

Uganda said that there was a need to have a clear basis upon which the Panel was recommending a 2nd term for the GEO Director. Given the qualitative assessment made by the GEO Co-Chairs, Uganda could endorse the recommendation of the Co-Chairs.

The Russian delegation reported that it did not have any problems in supporting the re-appointment of the current Director for a 2nd term. However, as a matter of procedure the proposal for the Panel to meet should be reflected in the EXCOM agenda. In the future, this item should be indicated in the agenda well in advance of the relevant EXCOM meeting.

The US Co-Chair concurred with the request from the Russian delegation and suggested that the agenda for EXCOM 12 be amended after item 2.7 to show both the meeting of the Panel and that EXCOM subsequently reconvened to consider the recommendation of the Panel.

Russia gave its agreement to this proposal.

China also stated that it was able to support the recommendation that the current Secretariat Director should be re-appointed for a 2nd term.

Argentina was also strongly in favour of the recommendation to re-appoint the Director of the GEO Secretariat.

The Chinese Co-chair concluded that the Panel should recommend to EXCOM that the current Director of the GEO Secretariat should be re-appointed for a second 3-year term with effect from 1 January 2009.

The members of the Panel unanimously endorsed this proposal.

The Chinese Co-chair then closed the meeting of the Panel.