

Draft Report
36th Executive Committee Meeting
Geneva, Switzerland, 8-9 March 2016

This Document is submitted to the Executive Committee for decision.

**DRAFT TEXT FOR INCLUSION IN THE DRAFT REPORT OF
THE 37TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**

The Report of the 36th Executive Committee Meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland, 8-9 March 2016 was approved.

Report
36th Executive Committee Meeting
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chair: Kathryn Sullivan, United States

1 GENERAL BUSINESS

The Agenda was adopted with modifications to the order of the elements in Item 4, as proposed by the United States.

The Report of the 35th Executive Committee was approved.

All actions from previous meetings were closed.

The Secretariat Director provided an update on Secretariat activities, including an emerging collaboration with the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) concerning the Sustainable Development Goals, recognition of GEO by the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technical Advice (SBSTA), facilitating GEO's outreach and continued engagement with the G7 Minister of Science and Technology and Ministers of Environment, and coordinating the GEOGLAM community's effort to seek re-endorsement of the initiative by the G20 Agriculture Ministers. She also noted an increase in brokered enterprise data, including the integration of China GEO data into GEOSS.

2 GEO-XII AND MEXICO MINISTERIAL REVIEW

The Executive Committee reviewed the GEO-XII Plenary and Ministerial Summit, recognizing the overall success of the events and the advantages of, at times, co-locating GEO Week with other events. Issues raised for consideration during preparation of the GEO-XIII Plenary included: whether to extend Plenary by one day; how to integrate the private sector into a portion of the proceedings; and how to make Plenary more strategic and engaging.

3 ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Director presented the draft Engagement Strategy Implementation Plan, which is based on three primary objectives: 1) establish GEO as THE leading global advocate for broad, open data policies; 2) establish GEO as a key intergovernmental mechanism to ensure that Earth observations (EO) underpin global environmental decision-making; and 3) ensure that the GEOSS Common Infrastructure (GCI) is the primary resource for EO data and information for better decision-making. The Committee requested several further iterations of the plan be prepared prior to the next Session of the Executive Committee which would reflect: an introductory rationale for the particular areas of focus for GEO's engagement; objectives that are outcome/purpose-focused; the perspective of those with whom GEO wants to engage; and an element of developing narratives demonstrating "what GEO can do".

4 REPORT OF BUDGET WORKING GROUP

All of the budget documents were approved. The Executive Committee discussed the need to obtain more robust pledge commitments in the near term, and the expectation that the 2016 income would not likely reach the budget approved by the GEO-XII Plenary, with resulting implications for the staffing and scope of work of the Secretariat. A call was issued for additional participation in the Budget Working Group (BWG).

5 PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL OF THE SECRETARIAT DIRECTOR

The Executive Committee met *in camera* with the Secretariat Director and in Executive Session to discuss the Director's 360-Degree Feedback Results and Performance Appraisal. The Committee commended the Director on both sets of results and expressed its complete and unwavering confidence in her as the Director of the Secretariat, and appreciation for the progress the Secretariat has made over the last year.

6 REPORT FROM THE PROGRAMME BOARD

The Programme Board co-chairs and Participating Organization Observers to the Executive Committee reported on the results of its first meeting, held in January. The Board received guidance from the Executive Committee: to be a self-confident partner of the Executive Committee, providing priorities, advice, recommendations and questions; prioritize the Foundational Tasks, including considering whether to drop or trim certain activities depending on the resources available; and to examine issues around GEO branding and the gaps between user needs and GEO products.

7 GEO LEGAL OPTIONS

The Executive received a briefing from the Government of Switzerland on the several options available to GEO regarding its legal status (become an international organization; establish a legal personality as an independent Foundation or Association; or establish a legal personality, but remain under the WMO Host State Agreement). The Committee agreed a further analysis of the pros/cons and cost/benefits of each option are required and requested the Secretariat to prepare a scope-of-work to conduct such an analysis.

8 SECRETARIAT OPERATIONS

The Executive Committee received the Secretariat Operations Report and suggested several ways it could be reorganized. The applications for Participating Organizations (European Association of Remote Sensing Companies (EARSC); Joint Board of Geospatial Information Societies (JBGIS); and the Mountain Research Initiative (MRI)) and for Observer (Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum (APRSAF)) were accepted. A revision to the Rules of Procedure concerning the item 3.6 Commitments by Members and Participating Organizations proposed by Japan was approved. The European Commission will suggest new text for the 2.4 Ethical Standards together with the issue of the number of developed and developing countries for the GEO Co-Chairs (Section 4.5). These will be reviewed at the 37th Session of the Executive Committee in July.

9 GEO-XIII PLANNING

Preparations are underway for the GEO-XIII Plenary and related events to be held in St Petersburg, Russian Federation from 7-10 November. An advance team from the Secretariat will make a site visit

later in the Spring. The Executive Committee discussed several potential modifications to the Plenary structure: adding a third day; incorporating the private sector into the proceedings through a half-day forum and/or other events; and making the content of Plenary less administrative and more engaging and strategic.

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Executive Committee discussed the potential of bringing more data into its deliberations, including web statistics and the use of web-based tools and data. The Committee agreed to issue a press release at the conclusion of this, and other Sessions.

The 37th Session of the Executive Committee will be held on 6-7 July, 2016 in Geneva, Switzerland.

Report
36th Executive Committee Meeting
Geneva, Switzerland, 8-9 March 2016

FULL REPORT**Tuesday 8 March 2016***Meeting convened at 10:00*

Chair: Kathryn Sullivan

1 GENERAL BUSINESS**1.1 Welcome of New Members and Introductions**

Kathryn Sullivan, United States Co-Chair, welcomed the Committee, noting this being the first Executive Committee meeting of GEO's 2nd decade. She reported that three of the four Co-Chairs and the Secretariat Director held a dinner discussion to reflect on GEO's accomplishments in its first ten years; the foundation it established, and both the challenges and opportunities before it in the new decade. The US continues to see GEO as a valuable forum; a fruitful gathering of nations and Participating Organizations (POs) with a focus on making Earth observation data open and accessible; and a mechanism to develop assistance for users not familiar with how to use data. Another dimension of the conversation was about the Executive Committee itself and the new Programme Board that adds a new tool to the set of tools that GEO has to advance its purpose. This will bring to the Executive Committee an obligation to think about the roles that the Committee should fill; what roles the Programme Board should step up and fill; what responsibilities the Programme Board will assume from the Executive Committee, enabling the Executive Committee to shift its focus to be more forward-looking, setting a strategy, coalescing and marshalling the resources and capacities that a senior executive leadership board should do for an organization. We should expect some adjustments, and we will certainly learn along the way. These are the challenges of moving into the next decade, but an exciting opportunity to solve new challenges.

Li Jiahong, China Co-Chair, welcomed the new Committee Members and Participating Organization Observers including, CEOS, GOOS and WMO. He noted that since the Mexico Ministerial Summit, the Asia-Oceania region has initiated discussions for an Asia-Oceania GEOSS, constructed the Asia-Oceania Earth Observation Data Sharing Platform, compiled the Global Environment Observation Annual Report of China for the "Belt and Road" Region, and initiated other activities, including preparations for the Asia Pacific GEOSS Symposium that will be held in Japan later in 2016. Under the China GEO Inter-ministerial Coordination, China has further integrated domestic resources to guarantee the efficiency of participating in GEO activities; the Ministry of Science and Technology, jointly with the National Administration of Surveying, Mapping and Geoinformation and the Chinese Academy of Sciences, has constructed the GEO China Secretariat and established the China GEOSS Center. He announced that the GEO Principal of China will change to Dr Yin Hejun, Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Science and Technology of China, due to Dr Cao Jianlin's retirement.

Philemon Mjwara, South Africa Co-Chair, welcomed the new Committee Members, Programme Board participants and the Secretariat, noting, with appreciation, the amount of preparation behind the distributed documents. He anticipated both reflecting on what GEO has achieved in the last decade, and on looking ahead, with a particular focus on closing several discussions that were started but never finished, including how far we are in the mandate to build GEOSS – which has many different interpretations – with the hope that this will come to the Programme Board’s attention so that it can be resolved in the next few years. There is also a need to clarify the roles for all of us (Executive Committee, Programme Board, etc.), stating that teams that win are those where the roles of each person have been well-defined. Most importantly, GEO needs to achieve the goals that it has set its sights on.

Rudolf Strohmeier, European Commission Co-Chair, welcomed the other Committee Members and representatives of the Programme Board. He noted that one of the main outcomes of the Mexico Plenary and Ministerial Summit was creation of the Programme Board which must provide dedication, knowledge, intelligence and advice, all of which will enable the Executive Committee to concentrate on the strategic matters that will make GEO’s second decade a success. He requested the Programme Board to send the Executive Committee its views, options and recommendations on those issues the Committee should either take informed decisions, or propose to Plenary for decision. In addition, GEO needs to push further to build the one global system.

In announcing a series of measures being taken at a European level to support GEO/GEOSS, Mr Strohmeier announced that the European Commission (EC), European Space Agency (ESA) and Italian Research Council (CNR) have renewed their efforts to improve the GEOSS Portal and Discovery and Access Broker (DAB). ESA has initiated a GEO web portal enhancement project, as a user-centered activity, and hopes to enhance the user experience in the next few months. The European Commission has proposed to the European Member States to co-fund a 1.5M EUR boost to the portal activity over the next two years.

Early in 2017, the EC will also announce details of a major research and innovation initiative to advance the brokering technology and develop a “European GEOSS hub” to connect with the integrated global GEOSS information system. A further initiative, the “ERA Planet” project has been kicked-off by the European Commission and the Italian Research Council. This project will be funded at more than 22M EUR over the next five years, complemented by funds from ESA, CNR and other partners from 16 European countries, and will boost the GCI-related Foundational Task during the second decade. All of these initiatives are undertaken in full compliance with European undertakings with the GEO initiative – they will be complementary in the global effort. The EC is looking forward to GEO’s second phase. We are living in times which are not easy, thus, GEO has now an even bigger task to make the planet better understood and preserved.

Colombia noted that it is organizing the AmeriGEOSS meeting from 7-10 June and encouraged participation by GEO Members from the region.

1.2 Adoption of Agenda ([Document 1](#))

United States proposed that Item 4.1 (Discussion of Membership of Working Group) be moved to the end of Item 4.

Finland proposed under Any Other Business to discuss how the Executive Committee could be more data-driven.

Outcome: The Agenda was approved as modified.

1.3 Draft Report of the 35th Executive Committee Meeting ([Document 2](#))

Outcome: The Report of the 35th Executive Committee Meeting held in Mexico City, Mexico on 10 November 2015 was approved.

1.4 Review of Actions from Previous Meetings ([Document 3](#))

The Secretariat Director reviewed the open Action Items, noting that all have been addressed. The Director of the Square Kilometer Array (SKA) was not able to attend the 36th Session of the Executive Committee, but will be invited to attend the 37th Session in July.

Outcome: The Executive Committee approved the closing of actions from previous Executive Committee meetings.

1.5 Update on Secretariat Activities

The Secretariat Director [presented the update](#), noting the challenges in closing membership gaps around the world, including South America and Africa (which AmeriGEOSS and AfriGEOSS are targeting); across the Middle East, and the Pacific Island States. GEO's 102 Members is still only about half of the 190+ UN Member States. She indicated that multilateral agreements should be used to encourage and leverage national investments in observing systems, pointing out the success of including GEO references in the recent Africa Union Summit, and that the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), a Participating Organization, has recently approached GEO for support regarding the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on land degradation neutrality. The Director observed that the SDG process is largely the responsibility of national statistical agencies, but that Earth observations have a key role to play. The GEO Secretariat has reached out to GEO Principals who are also members of the UN Global Geospatial Management Initiative (UN-GGIM, a component of the UN Statistics Division); GEO and UN-GGIM co-hosted a forum in early March during the UN Statistical Commission meeting on EO Supporting National Statistics to Address the SDGs.

Concerning climate issues, the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice (SBSTA) has recognized the importance of GEO and its collaboration with GCOS, acknowledging that climate change and its impacts are a cross-cutting area which strengthens the SBAs. In addition, the G20 is reviewing language supported by Canada, China and France reinforcing the importance of GEOGLAM. Similarly, the G7 Science and Technology Ministers included mention of GEO in the 2015 Germany meeting Communique, which will be carried into the Japan meetings in 2016, with a focus on oceans, data infrastructure and climate issues. We need to be connecting the G7 or G20 Ministers with the relevant GEO Principal.

Regarding the GEOSS Common Infrastructure (GCI), the Director noted the increase in brokered enterprise systems, including the addition of China GEO data; refinements to the governance structure of the portal/brokering system; and incorporating an alternate geo-location approach, such as 'What 3 Words'. She stated that GEO is a brokering organization – it does not own data, but provides the interface to data; the broker (DAB) provides discovery and access, but full control remains with the data providers.

The Director reviewed progress on implementing the new Societal Benefit Areas, noting that some areas continue to need dedicated secondments, and the Infrastructure and Transportation Management SBA needs to be developed more fully in concert with other organizations.

The Director noted the upcoming Work Programme Symposium and Programme Board meeting to be held during the first week of May, and GEO-XIII Plenary scheduled for St. Petersburg, Russian Federation from November 9-10.

The Committee expressed appreciation for the presentation. The Environment for Europe Ministerial will recognize GEO and UNEP as major sources of environmental information, creating opportunities for GEO to work closely with the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) to provide information to Environment Ministers. The Committee suggested that the Secretariat provide advance information about meetings where the Executive Committee could make contributions. The EC requested additional information regarding meetings for which the Secretariat has received invitations, in order to share the burden/activities.

2 GEO-XII AND MEXICO MINISTERIAL REVIEW

The Chair noted the success of the Mexico meetings and the benefit of, on occasion, co-locating the GEO meetings with other similar events.

The Secretariat Director indicated in her [presentation](#) that attendance (almost 400) was almost as high as any previous Plenaries, most likely assisted by the co-location with the UN-GGIM Americas meeting and Latin American Geospatial Forum (LAGF). Ministerial participation by the four Co-Chair governments was a significant accomplishment. Strengths included the Caucus meetings, but it is proposed they be held earlier in the week; very positive feedback and a lot of energy was associated with the Side Events; the Ministerial Summit was viewed as a great success, particularly given the full and active participation of the four Co-Chair Ministers; interaction with the LAGF Exhibit had advantages; the Press Conference was a big success; and PO participation was excellent. Areas for improvement include: ensure strong technology capabilities; try to avoid conflicts among Side Events; consider reports on fewer all Side Events during Plenary; single location for Plenary; and more clarity on speaking opportunities for Members and POs. Additional consideration will be given to targeted events, including a technical/programmatic forum; longer exhibition; and adding Panel discussions to the Plenary.

The Chair expressed appreciation for the presentation. The Committee indicated an analysis of the attendance by geographical region would be useful. The interest in less administrative agenda items and more programme-oriented agenda items indicates that Plenary is generally content with the direction that GEO is taking, and would now like to take part in more strategic discussions. The Committee thanked the Implementation Plan Working Group (IPWG) and Ministerial Working Group (MWG) for all of their preparatory work. The Committee should consider whether to add an additional day to Plenary to accommodate more content/progress reports, and strategic discussions. Additionally, should Plenary occur every year? A request was made for more progress reports on major, core activities well ahead of Plenary to allow Principals sufficient time to share information across their governments to develop support and better determine future directions for GEO. Could Statements be organized around specific topics in order to generate reaction and discussion on specific issues? The Committee expressed its gratitude and appreciation to the Government of Mexico for its hosting and organizing role. Mexico expressed its pleasure with hosting the meeting, and acknowledged all of the hard work invested by all parties, especially the GEO Secretariat, in making the event such a success.

3 ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

3.1 Engagement Strategy Implementation Plan ([Document 4](#))

The Chair noted the challenges of developing an engagement strategy. There are many different ways to broaden engagement. The question for GEO is where to focus. How do we leverage the varying levels of engagement and areas of interest by individual Members and POs, as well as the particular areas of focus by commercial and private sector companies in the ICT and geospatial arenas, especially with such a lean and small Secretariat? What is the logic behind approaching various groups in one way or another? The Secretariat's task is to lay out a schema explaining the rationale for focusing on certain groups and/or issues that the Executive Committee can endorse. The document has gone through a number of iterations. There is still, however, some work to be done; categorization of focus areas has crystallized a bit, but some still struggle to understand why one group is included and not others; we need to make sure we all understand this thinking. It would be helpful to provide one more level of clarification. For example, Member nations could potentially make more GEO-oriented contributions to specific organizations/events in which they engage (e.g., UN-GGIM) if this were explicitly part of the strategy. The Executive Committee needs to provide specific suggestions on making any improvements to the current draft.

The Secretariat Director presented the [draft strategy](#), framing it around three high level objectives based on the overall goal of building a Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS): 1)

establish GEO as THE leading global advocate for broad, open data policies; 2) establish GEO as a key intergovernmental mechanism to ensure that Earth observations (EO) underpin global environmental decision-making; and 3) ensure that the GEOSS Common Infrastructure (GCI) is the primary resource for EO data and information for better decision-making. Within each objective she identified specific target organizations, activities and/or events, and provided a rationale for each focal point.

The Committee discussion focused on several topics, including: providing a “logic statement” at the front of the document that would frame the overall strategy and would then translate into where and how the Secretariat would expend its resources, and where the Executive Committee can invest more of its resources in engagement; potentially switching the order of the overall objectives and orienting them more toward global outcomes, as opposed to GEO’s “role” in those outcomes; orienting the strategy more toward SBAs; providing specific examples of GEO contributions in one area that could be applied in other areas; including specific partners not already referenced in the document; placing more emphasis on specific activities – some already listed, others to be added or substituted in the document.

The Chair summarized the discussion as having four elements: 1) re-orient the objectives to be about outcomes, purposes – this is an engagement strategy to advance certain purposes; 2) put ourselves more in the mind set of those we might engage with, and develop a case statement on how GEO can advance progress toward global, regional and/or national objectives (e.g., Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, Minamata Convention on Mercury); 3) GEO or the Executive Committee could produce products (presentations, papers) that articulate what GEO is, what GEO can do, which can be shared across the GEO membership to ensure consistency in how GEO is presented across the globe and across different sectors; and 4) moving to the front of the document the organizing logic from which the rest flows, instead of embedding it further down.

The Secretariat Director asked for clarification regarding: 1) focusing the strategy document around SBAs (the Committee agreed that was not necessary); and 2) what it is the Executive Committee views GEO as delivering in addition to global initiatives and a convening framework (the Committee clarified that is looking for a narrative illustrating examples of where GEO has provided products and services to particular sectors or initiatives and how that type of activity could positively impact other initiatives or sectors).

The Committee requested that the strategy be iterated a couple of times prior to the 37th Session of the Executive Committee in July.

Action 36.1: Secretariat to revise Engagement Strategy through several iterations prior to July Executive Committee meeting:

- **“Organizing logic” at the beginning of the document;**
- **Objectives to be outcome/purpose-focused;**
- **Strategy presented from the perspective of those GEO wants to engage with;**
- **Include an element of developing products demonstrating “what GEO can do” (GEOGLAM, GFOI, etc.) that could be applied in other areas.**

3.2 Commercial Sector Engagement Concept Paper ([Document 5](#))

Kathryn Sullivan, United States Principal [presented the document](#), reminding the Committee that GEO’s commitment to engage with the private sector began in 2012 at the GEO-X Plenary in Iguazu Falls, Brazil, and indicated that the United States is recommending creation of a Corporate Associate category for commercial companies. This type of association would formalize the proposition that companies feel there is value in collaborating with GEO, and that GEO would also recognize value in such collaborations (e.g., cash contributions, products or services). The Corporate Associate category would be different from the current Observer or Participating Organization categories; any cash

contributions would be directed to the GEO Trust Fund; and that there would be an annual private sector forum during GEO Plenary week. The category would be an acknowledgment that GEO and the commercial entity are interested in the same things; clear modes of engagement would be established; and dialogue would occur in an open, fair transparent manner. Commercial contributions (cash or in-kind) would help to diversify GEO's resource base and partnership "tiers" could be created to manage different levels of contributions. The US recommended that a small and temporary Executive Committee Task Team be established to conduct additional consultations with commercial sector entities. Version 0 of a Corporate Associate document would be presented at the 37th Session of the Executive Committee in July, with version 1.0 being prepared for recommendation to the GEO-XIII Plenary in November. However, if no consensus is reached by the Executive Committee, Plenary would then be informed accordingly, suggesting that the issue should receive no further consideration.

Committee discussion focused on several issues, including: whether a Corporate Associate category was necessary as companies are already able to engage with, and contribute to, GEO; whether formal recognition of a category of "corporate partner" would undermine GEO's intergovernmental foundation; the need for GEO to finally take action on an issue that has been under discussion for more than four years, that GEO risks missing the opportunity to reap the benefits of engaging more fully with the private sector; whether companies should engage through their national governments or be limited to engaging through an enterprise forum and a large scale exhibition; how to create a structure which fits the need to receive and recognize private sector contributions, but also avoid giving the impression that the private sector would receive any type of privileged position; what kind of a tiered structure is needed to recognize different levels of contribution; whether the United Nations' engagement with the private sector provides a roadmap or framework that GEO could follow.

Action 36.2: Australia, European Commission, France and United States to lead Commercial Sector Engagement Task Team that will:

- **Reflect on the Executive Committee conversation (and the other documents that have been produced over the years);**
- **Establish a game-plan; agree on common approach/questions;**
- **Executive Committee GEO Principals to conduct interviews using above questions. Consult with sample set of commercial entities; and**
- **Produce draft v.0 for 37th Session of the Executive Committee in July.**

4 REPORT OF BUDGET WORKING GROUP

4.1 Interim Report on Income and Expenditure 2015 ([Document 7](#))

Stuart Minchin, Australia, [presented the report](#) on behalf of the Budget Working Group (BWG). The report showed some extra income for the GFOI project, which moved out of the Secretariat in early 2016, and income arriving in the Trust Fund in 2016 (USA contribution of 200K USD) was booked to the 2015 financial statement, resulting in a smaller surplus than was previously reported.

Outcome: Document was accepted.

4.2 2016 Income and Expenditure Forecast ([Document 8](#))

Stuart Minchin, Australia, presented the report on behalf of the BWG, noting that only a small number of pledges have been made for 2016, and only one has been received to date. He stressed that the Executive Committee needs to take leadership in this area. There is little certainty around the income that the Trust Fund will receive, and the Secretariat is being very prudent with its expenditures. The anticipated budget already falls short, even under the best assumptions, for completing the 2016 Work Programme as approved by Plenary. The BWG issued a call for pledges to Executive Committee Members and requested that these pledges be made as quickly as possible.

The Chair reiterated the importance of the Executive Committee taking leadership in this area by confirming its pledges as soon as possible, and recognized the prudence of the Secretariat in managing its resources.

Outcome: Document was accepted.

4.3 2016 Staffing Plan – Status of Implementation ([Document 9](#))

Stuart Minchin, Australia, presented the report on behalf of the BWG, noting that the Secretariat has responded to the call for a staffing plan that is both comprehensive and transparent. The BWG expressed concern that if not enough resources are provided, there needs to be clear direction on prioritization, and suggested the possibility of virtual secondments, recognizing that such arrangements could impose other costs which would require additional resources for the Secretariat.

The Committee expressed its appreciation to both the BWG and the Secretariat for the report and indicated an expectation that the Programme Board would include, in its recommendations to the Executive Committee regarding Work Programme activities, the management and staffing implications on the Secretariat of those recommendations. There is also an expectation that once the Programme Board has matured, future Executive Committee sessions in March will reflect linkages among the Work Programme, Budget Working Group and Secretariat in terms of prioritized activities and potential staffing impacts. The Secretariat focus is on fulfilling the Foundational Tasks, and additional management activities for Special Initiatives need to be supported by the members of those task teams through cash or in-kind contributions.

The Secretariat Director noted that the staffing plan reflects the Secretariat's approach that the Strategic Plan was a directive from Plenary to fulfil the Foundational Tasks, which are principally resourced through the Trust Fund. A number of secondees are doing double or triple duty in support of the SBAs. GCI development is being handled by ESA and CNR, with support from the Secretariat. GEOGLAM and AfriGEOSS have seconded experts in the Secretariat, but there are also activities where the Secretariat plays an important coordination and facilitation role.

The Chair observed that the model for GEO has counted on having talented, capable secondees to support the work of the organization. Perhaps in the future this can be virtual, although that is certainly not a no-cost way of conducting business. There is no intention in this model that the SBAs are a second-tier priority. An alternative consideration is to say that a single SBA stops if there is no support, rather than increase the workload on the secondees.

Outcome: The document was accepted.

4.4 Membership of Budget Working Group ([Document 6](#))

Stuart Minchin, Australia, presented the report on behalf of the Budget Working Group, issuing an invitation for other members of the Executive Committee to join the Budget Working Group.

The Chair echoed the request to support the work of the BWG and asked for volunteers from the Executive Committee to make their intent known to the Secretariat or members of the Budget Working Group directly. The Chair thanked the Budget Working Group members for their work so far.

5 PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL OF THE SECRETARIAT DIRECTOR (IN CAMERA – GEO PRINCIPALS AND DIRECTOR)

Results reported on Day 2.

Adjourned at 18:00

Wednesday 9 March 2016

Meeting convened at 09:00

6 REPORT FROM THE PROGRAMME BOARD ([Document 10](#))

John Matuszak, United States, Programme Board co-chair, presented on behalf of the Programme Board, introduced Tim Haigh as a fellow co-chair, and noted that Pengde Li (China) is the third co-chair. The first meeting of the Programme Board, held in February, was attended by approximately 30 of the 42 members. The Programme Board reviewed the GEO Strategic Plan (SP) and GEO Rules of Procedure to achieve a common understanding of its mission. The Programme Board decided its focus would be on Foundational Tasks, GEO Initiatives and Flagships, and have a ‘light-touch’ only on Community Activities. It was agreed to establish a subgroup to review proposed elements of the 2017-2019 Work Programme (WP), such as an increased level of detail pertaining to resources in the implementation plans for Initiatives/Flagships.

Pending Executive Committee approval, the Programme Board plans to review proposed WP elements and welcomes guidance on the process to finalize the WP review in July, including how strict to be in terms of demonstrated resources. Resource requirements could be intimidating for new Initiatives, and, therefore, there is a suggestion that some parts could be provisional. The Programme Board will evaluate the Work Programme elements on an annual basis; Community Activities could move up to Initiatives; Initiatives to Flagships; but there could also be movement in the other direction.

The Programme Board also requested more guidance from the Executive Committee regarding the Foundational Tasks; could the Programme Board determine that some Tasks should not be undertaken or advanced further? How much prioritization should the Programme Board engage in? The Programme Board established a second subgroup to begin this work. A third subgroup was established to develop an indicator and reporting process, based on the SP Reference Document, to provide guidance on how indicators can be translated in annual reporting. A fourth subgroup will look at the role of Science and Technology (S&T) across the Work Programme on issues such as data citation.

The next Programme Board meeting will be held immediately following the Work Programme Symposium in May. The Programme Board will make recommendations to the Executive Committee in July regarding proposed Flagships and Initiatives and present a draft outline of the 2017-2019 Work Programme. The Programme Board will apply more robust criteria, based on the new SP, regarding engagement with users in an attempt to align respective expectations.

The Board will also report to the Executive Committee on Foundational Tasks (FT) in July; how aggressive should it be in terms of recommendations? The Programme Board needs guidance on to what extent to take into account budgets and resources regarding the FTs. In addition, there was some discussion about FTs being undertaken on a regional basis. For example, could Capacity Building be focused through the Secretariat or through regional activities, e.g., AmeriGEOSS or AfriGEOSS, which could place fewer demands on the Secretariat.

Regarding Programme Board membership, initial guidance was that the Board not exceed 32 members and that there should be some percentage turnover; current Board membership is 42. The Board is eager to hear the Executive Committee’s guidance on this. How is the performance of current members to be evaluated – calling-in to Board meetings; volunteering for Task Forces? Should the Board assume these are metrics for continued membership? It should not be a subjective process; it must be based on performance. Does the Executive Committee want to define a percentage for turnover for each cycle – 1/3 of 32 has to be new (i.e., 11)? The Programme Board is willing to step forward and welcomes the experience of its members in implementing GEO. It needs to continue outlining where it thinks its responsibilities lie. Overall, the Programme Board has a very collegial atmosphere; it was a very positive first meeting.

Tim Haigh, European Commission, Programme Board co-chair, added that the GEO website provides an excellent tool to publicize and share information about the Programme Board's activities.

The Chair thanked the Programme Board co-chairs for the report and noted that the Programme Board was clearly off to an excellent start; that it will provide an important and useful mechanism to guide GEO through the next ten years, looking at existing modes and new ideas on how to help GEO move forward. The responsibility of the Executive Committee is to ensure that the Programme Board is not merely a carrier of messages to the Executive Committee and back; it needs its own authority. It will look to the Executive Committee for guidance, so it is very important that the Committee step back and determine a single view of what guidance the Committee provides.

Committee discussion focused on several topics, including how the Programme Board could help: GEO define its users; determine the ultimate form of GEOSS; identify where system gaps exist; determine priorities for the Foundational Tasks; raise the profile of GEO and help to secure additional resources; and provide data to the Executive Committee to enhance the Committee's decision-making.

The Programme Board Observers to the Executive Committee, CEOS, GOOS and WMO, noted that the users are, and need to be, a component in GEO's activities, through government participation, UN engagement, etc. GEOSS is the combination of all of GEO's activities; it will continue to evolve and develop, but the implementation of GEOSS will become more robust over time. The Programme Board must address the issue of where there are observation gaps; if it does not, no one will.

Regarding Programme Board membership, the Committee discussed the need to reduce the size of the Board and the criteria for continued membership, with some members advocating criteria based on performance and others encouraging the Board to exercise its judgement. One suggestion was that the current Board co-chairs be retained through the 2017-2019 Work Programme to ensure continuity.

The Committee encouraged the Programme Board to be a clear, strong and courageous voice, recognizing the value of firm, clear-minded expertise. The Programme Board should make recommendations on what elements of the Work Programme are working, and which are not.

The Secretariat Director noted that in order to make a sound evaluation of Foundational Task priorities, the Programme Board needs a budget reference point for 2017-2019. She agreed that the Programme Board is the appropriate forum to identify what major observing systems are missing from GEOSS.

The Chair summarized the essence of the Executive Committee's guidance as: the Programme Board should be a self-confident partner of the Executive Committee, providing priorities, advice, recommendations and asking questions; and prioritize the Foundational Tasks, including considering whether to drop or trim certain activities depending on the resources available, which would then be reviewed by the Executive Committee. Regarding a budget reference level, a 100% voluntary budget each year makes it challenging; the Programme Board should perhaps consider a 60-75% reference target.

Mr Matuszak asked for further clarity regarding "gaps"; is this in reference to Foundational Tasks or is this expected to be a systematic review of the geographic and thematic distribution of contributions to the 2017-2019 Work Programme; the latter would require a great deal of work on the part of the Secretariat. He also suggested putting forward a rank order of priorities for the Foundational Tasks. The Secretariat has reached its limit in doing more with less, at some point it needs to do less with less. What are the priority positions to fill and activities to undertake, based on resources? Regarding GEOSS, the question of what "is" GEOSS, portal, data, GCI, etc. - will be an evolutionary process.

The Chair responded that, in the first year of the Programme Board, focus should be on FTs in the 2017-2019 Work Programme, with a more systematic and holistic look over time. The Programme Board is not being asked to become the Budget Working Group.

Regarding the Foundational Tasks, Mr Matuszak asked whether the Programme Board could take into account contributions from GEO Members when providing priorities. Also, to what extent is GEO demanding "branding"; to what extent should we promote GEO? Users are expected to be built into

Flagships and Initiatives at the outset; in the future, the anticipated outcomes need to be identified and justified.

The Chair indicated that in the first review of the Foundational Tasks, the Programme Board should be bold; the Executive Committee would agree to support such an approach. The Board should factor in various elements, but make clear ground rules and assumptions so that the Executive Committee can follow the logic.

The Secretariat Director noted the importance of branding as a way to indicate to the global community the work accomplished under the GEO umbrella, giving full credit (via organizational logos) to the participants.

Mr Matuszak noted contradictory criteria regarding Flagships in that they may include having a policy impact, but also that they also function on their own (e.g., GEOGLAM, GEO BON), often with resource support from another organization. How much should we require that an activity continue to be referenced as a child of GEO?

The Chair noted that financial issues need to be separated from branding. Even if an activity GEO has launched grows to have financial independence, that does not imply that we should forego the opportunity to take credit for having conceived, incubated or started the activity.

Further Committee discussion noted that GEO has struggled over the years to find a balance to take credit for its contribution without being viewed as co-opting the contributions of others. GEO is the glue that ties elements together – “enabled by GEO” may be a reasonable approach, at least for some period of time.

Outcome: Programme Board will report at the 37th Session of the Executive Committee in July.

7 GEO LEGAL STATUS OPTIONS ([Document 11](#))

Jose Romero and Sylvie Höffer, Government of Switzerland, [provided a presentation](#) to the Committee indicating that there are two primary options for GEO to obtain an independent legal personality.

- International legal personality;
 - Create an international organization through a multilateral/bilateral agreement ratified by all GEO Member States; GEO would become an intergovernmental organization;
- Legal personality according to national law;
 - Establish GEO as an international institution; GEO could enter into contracts in its own name; the Members would have no direct liability; Switzerland would be able to enter into a direct headquarters agreement, as it has with WMO;
 - Foundation
 - Association
- Hosting Arrangement with WMO, with GEO having a legal personality;
 - GEO could be established as a legal person (as an Association or Foundation); GEO could remain an administrative entity of WMO and be covered by WMO’s Host State Agreement.

Committee discussion included review of the IPWG’s examination of the issue; the pros and cons of maintaining the status quo, becoming an international organization, or changing GEO’s legal status, but maintaining its relationship with WMO; the impact on the employee pension system; the need for GEO to conduct a proper analysis of the requirements/costs and possible solutions of each option; consideration of the processes required in each country to accede to any change in status; potential

impact on the relationship and contributions of individual Members to GEO; and what is the problem we are trying to solve by changing GEO's status.

The Secretariat Director proposed the Executive Committee narrow down the options in order to provide a better analysis of any remaining options. For example, does Option 3 (legal status with continuing relationship with WMO) require countries to go back and review its membership, or is it similar enough to maintaining the status quo? There also needs to be an analysis of where GEO has Observer status (WMO, CBD) and where GEO has been denied Observer status (UNFCCC, WMO/GFCS) due to a lack of an independent legal personality.

The Chair summarized the discussion noting Australia's suggestion that the Committee use the IPWG Strategic Plan framework to assemble a clearer, sharper assessment of what are the problems, and an assessment of internal laws that would be affected; what are the requirements we need to satisfy as laid out by the IPWG, e.g., retain GEO's voluntary nature and flexibility. This analysis will require substantive and thoughtful inputs from the Committee and the Secretariat. Analysis could begin with a review of the Executive Committee countries regarding the impact on their governments with a change in status.

The Committee also decided that Committee Members would approach their representatives to WMO regarding Observer status for GEO with the Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS). The Secretariat is requested to pull together an inventory of: 1) circumstances where the lack of a legal personality has prevented GEO from obtaining Observer status in multilateral organizations or processes; and 2) instances where GEO's lack of a legal personality has been a barrier to Member engagement and/or contributions.

Action 36.3: Secretariat to scope the work effort required to analyse the options regarding GEO's legal status and report to 37th Session of the Executive Committee in July on whether the Secretariat has the resources to implement the work effort, and whether there would be an impact on other elements of the Work Programme. Elements to include:

- **IPWG guidance;**
- **Curent obstacles (e.g., UNFCCC, GFCS);**
- **Options;**
 1. **International legal personality (intergovernmental organization);**
 2. **Legal personality according to Swiss national law (international institution) - Foundation/Association;**
 3. **Independent legal personality under hosting arrangement with the WMO; and**
 4. **Status quo.**

In terms of:

- **country requirements; and**
- **cost/benefit analysis.**

5 PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL OF THE SECRETARIAT DIRECTOR (CONTINUED)

The Chair reported on the 360-Degree Feedback Assessment and Performance Appraisal of the Secretariat Director, noting it had been implemented by the Executive Committee as a good corporate practice to provide the Director with input and feedback from colleagues on the Executive Committee and the Secretariat staff that could be constructive coaching and on-going professional development input. The Director also shared her own assessment of the 18 elements in the Assessment Plan. The

results of the 360-Degree Feedback Assessment are all consistently very positive, with very little variation between the views provided by the Executive Committee and Secretariat staff. Scores were uniformly very strong, even the lower scores were in the strong range. Director Ryan's self-evaluation was harsher in her own scores, and a good indication of the standards to which she holds herself. Her thoughtfulness in thinking through how she can apply the insights of the 360-Degree Feedback to focus on further strengthening and improving the work of the Secretariat, and her own contributions to that work, were found by the Committee to be uniformly very positive. The performance results against the Assessment Targets were consistently productive, positive and strong, as well.

The final conclusion of the Committee following its Executive Session was to commend Director Ryan on both sets of results. The Committee expressed its complete and unwavering confidence in her as the Director of the Secretariat and appreciation for the progress the Secretariat has made over the last several years. In addition, her performance against 18 different performance elements was the sum and accumulation of the contributions of all the members of the Secretariat staff. It takes a team effort; an ecosystem of contributions and pieces that come together to make the total picture of progress. The good remarks, confidence and pleasure expressed by the Executive Committee to Director Ryan about her performance is also conveyed to the rest of the Secretariat members as an integral and indispensable part of that same success.

Director Ryan indicated that Finland had suggested that results of the 360-Degree Feedback Assessment be shared with the Secretariat, which will be done.

8 SECRETARIAT OPERATIONS

8.1 Secretariat Operations Report ([Document 12](#))

The Secretariat Director presented the report which is designed to highlight where the Secretariat, rather than the entire GEO community, has made progress, as well as more clarity on current staffing commitments. The travel report ties missions to the Work Programme and includes outcomes; the travel table includes those commitments the Secretariat has accepted (about one out of every three invitations), meaning that there may be value to including information on declined invitations to alert the Executive Committee to potential opportunities for participation in activities the Secretariat declines. The Report also includes information on Letters of Agreement to support travel of participants from emerging economies, and expressions of interest from potential Members, Participating Organizations, and/or Observers.

The Director drew particular attention to when the current secondments will end, noting that virtual secondments may be an option, but given the maturity and development of GEO, she is not sure if the organization is sufficiently prepared for virtual secondments, and, therefore, they may not be cost-effective at this time.

Committee discussion focused on whether the report should be organized differently (e.g., most expensive activities, most successful activities, and activities that are not working, in order to see with one look what is going on); focus travel around the advocate, engage and deliver objectives; focus the Report more on topics (e.g., UNFCCC COP 21) to help raise the visibility of GEO as part of the engagement strategy.

Outcome: The document was accepted.

8.2 Review of Applications for Participating Organizations and Observers ([Document 13](#))

The Secretariat Director presented the applications for Participating Organizations and Observers, noting that GEO-XII Plenary has now provided the Executive Committee with the authority to approve applications at each of its Sessions, which both avoids an interim and/or limbo status for applicants in between Plenaries, and allows for immediate engagement in the Work Programme.

The organizations applying for Participating Organization status are:

- European Association of Remote Sensing Companies (EARSC);
- Joint Board of Geospatial Information Societies (JBGIS);
- Mountain Research Initiative (MRI).

The organization applying for Observer status is:

- Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum (APRSAF).

Outcome: The Participating Organizations and Observer applications were approved.

8.3 Rules of Procedure ([Document 14](#))

The Secretariat Director presented the document with suggested changes to the Rules of Procedure:

- Section 2.4 page 4 –Statement on Ethical Standards (as requested by Norway at GEO-XII);

Discussion focused on having a more explicit statement (wording to be suggested by the European Commission), including a reference to the WMO Code of Conduct and Staff Rules, along with a Statement that could be included in the annual Budget Report that the obligations have been met.

Outcome: Language, once suggested by the European Commission, will be presented to the Executive Committee.

- Section 3.6, Page 5 - stronger language regarding commitments by Members and Participating Organizations (suggested by the Secretariat);

Discussion focused on the need for routine confirmation from Member governments for the designation of the GEO Principals. Japan suggested modifying the language from “commit” to “encourage”, given the voluntary nature of GEO.

Outcome: Language, as amended by Japan, was accepted.

- Section 4.5, Page 6 – Co-Chair balance of 2+2 (developing/developed countries) – commitment at GEO-XII Plenary was that Executive Committee would examine the issue and make a recommendation to GEO-XIII Plenary.

Discussion focused on the need to establish a deliberative process to determine whether there is a need to change the current language (which calls for “at least one” Co-Chair representing each a developing and developed country); and whether there is a need to include language clarifying national representation, as compared to agency representation, by GEO Principals.

The Committee agreed that language needs to be developed (as a new Section 2.5) requiring Ministerial endorsement of the designated GEO Member Principal, and repetitious language to this effect be removed from the Rules of Procedure; and that a Task Team to review the 2+2 issue be established and report back to the 37th Session of the Executive Committee in July.

Action 36.4: Secretariat to propose succinct text on appropriate Ministerial/National endorsement of GEO Principal, under global rubric 2.5 in the Rules of Procedure for consideration at 37th Session of the Executive Committee in July.

Action 36.5: European Commission to work with the Secretariat on a recommendation regarding “2+2” GEO Co-Chair selection and report to 37th Session of Executive Committee in July.

9 GEO-XIII PLANNING

The Secretariat Director presented a brief overview of the GEO-XIII Plenary and related events in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation to be held from 7-10 November 2016. Russia is evaluating venue

choices; an advance team from the Secretariat will conduct a site visit later in the Spring, which will include a focus on internet connectivity.

Committee discussion focused on how to structure the Plenary: whether to add a day or half-day to Plenary; finding the right balance between administrative issues and those with a strategic focus; how to enrich GEO's engagement with the private sector (e.g., enterprise forum); how to better structure the Side Events. The extra day could be structured so it is not merely an appendix to Plenary, perhaps splitting the day between private sector engagement and strategic discussions, or otherwise integrating private sector interactions across Plenary. An extension of Plenary would require a thorough review of how Plenary operates, perhaps including moving away from formal Statements, while recognizing the Statements are often the only opportunity for some participants to report on national announcements, contributions to the Work Programme, and contributions to the Trust Fund. Could interventions be structured by topic with time for reaction and discussion? Could Plenary be held less than annually?

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The advantage of including more data in the Executive Committee's deliberations was discussed. Finland offered to receive ideas from Committee Members oriented around the Advocate, Engage and Deliver objectives; and catalogue what Members and POs are doing, including the use of web-based tools and data.

The Committee agreed to issue a [Press Release](#) following this and other Sessions of the Executive Committee, and to consider the type of information the Executive Committee should be sharing and conveying.

A brief presentation of the GEOGLAM Early Warning Crop Monitor (EWCM) was provided.

11 SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS

Action 36.1: Secretariat to revise Engagement Strategy through several iterations prior to July Executive Committee meeting:

- **“Organizing logic” at the beginning of the document;**
- **Objectives to be outcome/purpose-focused;**
- **Strategy presented from the perspective of those GEO wants to engage with;**
- **Include an element of developing products demonstrating “what GEO can do” (GEOGLAM, GFOI, etc.) that could be applied in other areas.**

Action 36.2: Australia, European Commission, France and United States to lead Commercial Sector Engagement Task Team that will:

- **Reflect on the Executive Committee conversation (and the other documents that have been produced over the years);**
- **Establish a game-plan; agree on common approach/questions;**
- **Executive Committee GEO Principals to conduct interviews using above questions. Consult with sample set of commercial entities; and**
- **Produce draft v.0 for the 37th Session of the Executive Committee in July.**

Action 36.3: Secretariat to scope the work effort required to analyse the options regarding GEO's legal status and report to 37th Session of the Executive Committee in July

on whether the Secretariat has the resources to implement the work effort, and whether there would be an impact on other elements of the Work Programme. Elements to include:

- **IPWG guidance;**
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 1. **International legal personality (intergovernmental organization);**
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 3. **Independent legal personality under hosting arrangement with the WMO; and**
 4. **Status quo.**

In terms of:

- **country requirements; and**
- **cost/benefit analysis.**

Action 36.4: Secretariat to propose succinct text on appropriate Ministerial/National endorsement of GEO Principal, under global rubric 2.5 in the Rules of Procedure for consideration at 37th Session of the Executive Committee in July.

Action 36.5: European Commission to work with the Secretariat on a recommendation regarding “2+2” GEO Co-Chair selection and report to 37th Session of Executive Committee in July.

16:00 Adjourned

36th GEO Executive Committee

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