

**Report**  
**48<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee Meeting**  
**Geneva, Switzerland, 23-24 July 2019**

*As accepted at the 49<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee Meeting.*

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## Report

### 48<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee Meeting

### Geneva, Switzerland, 23-24 July 2019

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chair: Mmboneni Muofhe, South Africa.

#### 1 GENERAL BUSINESS

##### 1.1 Welcome from Co-Chairs and Secretariat Director

##### 1.2 Adoption of Agenda (Document 48.1 (Rev.2) – for decision)

**Outcome:** The agenda was approved with Item 1.6 Update from the WMO Congress and Item 5.1 GEO 2020 Mid-Term Evaluation exchanged in order to accommodate the invited presenters.

##### 1.3 Draft Report of the 47<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee Meeting (Document 48.2 – for decision)

**Outcome:** The report of the 47<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee meeting was adopted, with the inclusion of the change proposed by the European Commission.

##### 1.4 Review of Action Items from Previous Meetings (Document 47.3– for decision)

**Outcome:** All actions were closed.

##### 1.5 Update on Secretariat Activities (Document 47.4 – for information)

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee welcomed the practice of providing information on emerging issues via email to Executive Committee members. The Secretariat was requested to review new initiatives such as the GEO-AWS Cloud Credits Programme to identify what worked well and what did not, lessons learned, and the value realized by GEO and its partners from such initiatives.

**Action 48.1:** The Secretariat to prepare an annual forward plan for engagement which will identify targeted organizations. **Due: First version for the 51<sup>st</sup> Executive Committee meeting (March 2020).**

##### 1.6 GEO 2020 Mid-Term Evaluation (Document 48.11– for decision)

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee expressed a preference to retain the originally planned scope of the evaluation, even if this meant that the evaluation would be completed later than originally intended. The Executive Committee requested that the Secretariat issue a second call for nominations, with a closing date in September 2019.

The Secretariat will inform the Executive Committee of the results of the second call, with a recommendation on whether the nominations are collectively adequate to conduct the evaluation. If the nominations received are considered to not be collectively sufficient, the Secretariat will work with the Lead Co-Chair to organize a teleconference of the Executive Committee to discuss the next steps.

**Action 48.2:** The Secretariat to issue a second call for nominations to the Mid-Term Evaluation Team. **Due: 31 July 2019.**

## 2 PLANNING

### 2.1 Update on the Proposal for a Results Oriented GEOSS (Document 48.5 – for decision)

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee approved the development of the proof of concept of the GEO Knowledge Hub for presentation to the GEO-XVI Plenary. This decision does not imply that the full implementation of the GEO Knowledge Hub will necessarily be approved.

If further development of the GEO Knowledge Hub is supported by Plenary and it will require additional resources, the Plenary will be asked to delegate approval of further steps to the Executive Committee. In this case, the Secretariat will identify the resource requirements, including the level of participation required by GEO Members, Participating Organizations, and GEO Work Programme activities.

### 2.2 Secretariat Concept of Operations 2019-2021 (Document 48.6 – for decision)

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee approved the document for use in developing the 2020 GEO Trust Fund Budget and for operational use by the Secretariat, subject to clarification of remaining issues as identified by Executive Committee members.

**Action 48.3:** Executive Committee members to provide any remaining issues requiring clarification to the Secretariat in writing. **Due: 6 August 2019.**

**Action 48.4:** The Secretariat to circulate a revised version of the document to Executive Committee members, addressing the identified issues. **Due: 13 August 2019.**

## 3 WORK PROGRAMME

### 3.1 Report of the Programme Board (Document 48.7 – for discussion)

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee thanked the Programme Board for its work, particularly on the development of the 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme.

### 3.2 Update to the section of the Rules of Procedure regarding the Programme Board (Document 48.8 – for decision)

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee agreed that the proposed changes to the Rules of Procedure be presented for approval at the GEO-XVI Plenary.

## 4 CANBERRA MINISTERIAL SUMMIT AND GEO WEEK 2019

### 4.1 GEO Ministerial (Document 48.10 – for discussion)

#### 4.1.1 *Canberra Declaration*

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee:

- Thanked the members of the Ministerial Working Group (MWG) for their efforts, noting the excellent progress that has been made;
- Recommended that the MWG reduce the length of the draft Declaration, primarily through reduction of duplication in the text;
- Recommended that references to past achievements and to announcements from GEO Members should be moved to a separate document;
- Recommended that the balance between the focus on the digital economy and engagement of the commercial sector, on the one hand, and the GEO engagement priorities, on the other, should be shifted more in the direction of the latter;
- Recommended that the inclusion of optional (“bracketed”) text in the draft Declaration be minimized or avoided, noting that the inclusion of optional text does not imply that the main text is open to negotiation at the Summit; and
- Expressed its intent to ensure that commitments in the Declaration remain voluntary and not legally binding.

#### 4.1.2 *Ministerial Agenda*

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee endorsed the draft agenda for the Ministerial Summit as a working document.

#### 4.1.3 *Ministerial Round Table*

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee took note of the preparations for the Ministerial Round Table and recommended that background documents to inform participants about the final topics for discussion be distributed in advance of the meeting.

#### 4.1.4 *Engaging Ministers*

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee encouraged GEO Members to engage their ministers to seek their participation in the Summit. Members were also requested to provide their Plenary and Ministerial delegate lists to the Secretariat as soon as possible.

### 4.2 GEO-XVI and GEO Week 2019

#### 4.2.1 *GEO-XVI Agenda*

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee:

- Endorsed the draft agenda for the GEO-XVI Plenary as a working document;
- Requested further clarification of the process by which the session outcomes and recommendations would be developed; and
- Noted that the item on the Results Oriented GEOSS should include a request for Plenary to delegate authority to the Executive Committee on whether to continue the development of the GEO Knowledge Hub.

#### 4.2.2 *Side Events*

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee endorsed the proposed approach for the side events.

#### 4.2.3 *Industry Track*

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee encouraged GEO Members to broaden their Plenary delegations to include ministries dealing with industry and/or commercial sector participants.

#### 4.2.4 *Exhibition*

#### 4.2.5 *Community, Youth and Indigenous Engagement*

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee welcomed the Community, Youth and Indigenous engagement activities and the GEO Awards ceremony, recognizing them as useful innovations.

#### 4.2.6 *Logistics Update*

### 4.3 **Resource Mobilization (Document 47.9 – for discussion)**

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee noted the considerable success that has been achieved with Digital Earth Africa and the GEO-AWS Cloud Credits Programme and suggested that lessons be drawn from these initiatives that could inform other resource mobilization efforts.

## 5 **UPDATE FROM THE WMO CONGRESS**

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee:

- Thanked Ms Manaenkova and Mr Belda for their presentations and welcomed the openness of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) to discussing collaboration with GEO.
- Encouraged GEO Member Principals to engage with their national meteorological agencies and other partners within their government to facilitate collaboration with WMO and other international organizations.

**Action 48.5:** The Secretariat to prepare a discussion document regarding collaboration between GEO and the WMO, including an analysis of the original collaboration areas and recommendations on which areas should be the focus for future efforts. **Due: 50<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee meeting (following the GEO-XVI Plenary).**

## 6 **PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS AND GEO ASSOCIATES**

### 6.1 **Report from the Subgroup on Participating Organizations (Document 48.12– for decision)**

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee:

- Thanked those Executive Committee members who made efforts to contact some of the activities in Annex 1 of Document 48.12;

- Agreed that the proposed addition to the Rules of Procedure be presented for approval to the GEO–XVI Plenary;
- Thanked the members of the Subgroup on Participating Organizations for their work and their recommendations; and
- Terminated the Subgroup.

**Action 48.6:** Executive Committee members to inform the Secretariat regarding the results of their efforts to contact the Participating Organizations listed in Annex 1 of Document 48.12. **Due: 20 August 2019.**

#### 6.2 Review of Requests for Participating Organization Status (Document 48.13 – for decision)

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee approved the applications for Participating Organization status from the Economic Community of West African States Commission (ECOWAS Commission), Mercator Ocean International, and the OpenGeoHub Foundation (OpenGeoHub).

**Action 48.7:** The Secretariat to contact the African Smart Cities Innovation Foundation (ASCIF) and the Conflict and Environment Observatory (CEOBS) to request additional information, with a new recommendation to be presented to the Executive Committee. **Due: 49<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee meeting.**

#### 6.3 Review of Requests for the GEO Associate Category (Document 48.14 – for decision)

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee:

- Approved the applications for GEO Associate status from Acclimatise Group Ltd.; the Centre for Ecological Research and Forestry Applications (CREAF); Beijing Piesat Information Technology Co. (PIESAT); Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (Esri); International Centre for Earth Simulation Foundation (ICES); and SpaceWill Info. Co. Ltd. (SpaceWill); and

**Action 48.8:** The Secretariat to invite the six approved GEO Associates to attend the GEO-XVI Plenary. **Due: 9 August 2019.**

## 7 GEO RULES OF PROCEDURE

### 7.1 Changes to the Rules of Procedure – Inclusion of paragraphs on Intellectual Property (Document 48.15 – for decision)

**Outcomes:** The Executive Committee approved the proposed addition with the following revisions:

- In the second paragraph, replace both instances of the word “shall” with “should”; and
- Add a sentence at the end of the second paragraph to the effect that organizations that are unable to comply with the expectation, due to legal or other constraints, should document these restrictions in advance of their

involvement in the GEO Work Programme activity (or as soon as possible in the case of existing contributors).

## **8 SECRETARIAT BUSINESS**

### **8.1 2018 Financial Statements and Audit Report (Document 48.16 – for decision in advance of the GEO-XVI Plenary)**

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee thanked Mr Cover for his presentation and thanked Patricia Geddes and the WMO finance team for their excellent collaboration in managing GEO finances.

### **8.2 Interim Statement of Income and Expenditure at 31 May 2019 and Projections for 2019 (Document 48.7 (Rev.1) – for information)**

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee:

- Thanked the Budget Working Group members for the presentation and their work; and
- Encouraged GEO Members to announce their contributions for 2020 at the GEO-XVI Plenary.

### **8.3 Any Other Business**

No items were raised.

### **8.4 Review of Action Items**

The Executive Committee reviewed and approved the Outcomes and Action Items from the meeting.

### **8.5 Closing Remarks**

The Co-Chairs thanked all participants and thanked the Lead Co-Chair for a well-managed meeting.

## Report

### 48<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee Meeting

### Geneva, Switzerland, 23-24 July 2019

#### FULL REPORT

Tuesday, 23 July 2019

*Meeting convened at 10:30*

Chair: Mmboneni Muofhe, South Africa.

#### 1 GENERAL BUSINESS

##### 1.1 Welcome from Co-Chairs and Secretariat Director

Mmboneni Muofhe, Lead Co-Chair, welcomed members and observed that it had been an interesting few months since the previous Executive Committee meeting, particularly for the preparations for the GEO-XVI Plenary and the Ministerial Summit. He acknowledged that many Executive Committee members were involved in these preparations, as well as in the development of the 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme and other activities within GEO, all of which will help to demonstrate the accomplishments of GEO to the political leaders in Member countries. Mr Muofhe also drew attention to several exciting developments recently, some of which would be presented at the meeting, including the progress on the Results Oriented GEOSS. He stated that he appreciated the activism shown by individuals within the GEO community who take it upon themselves to shape the work of GEO. As a representative of the African Caucus, Mr Muofhe highlighted activities in that region, in particular, the recent establishment of the AfriGEO secretariat at the Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD) in Kenya. He also noted that the AfriGEO Symposium (13-16 August 2019 in Nairobi, Kenya) would be a platform for formally launching Digital Earth Africa. South Africa has also made progress in setting up their own national version of Digital Earth Africa, to amplify the good work that has been accomplished through GEO. He concluded by saying that GEO and GEOSS are growing, which is only possible when the GEO community is coordinated in its efforts.

Steven Volz, United States Co-Chair, congratulated the Secretariat Director for his confirmation in the position for the next two years. Mr Volz noted the good package of documents in support of the meeting and stated his appreciation for the quality and productivity of the Secretariat team. He agreed that there was a busy year ahead and noted that AmeriGEO was also taking on its new regional focus and reminded Executive Committee members of the upcoming AmeriGEO Symposium (19-20 August in Lima, Peru). He observed that there is a strong partnership being built between the Executive Committee, the Secretariat, and the Regional GEOs. Lastly, he expressed his expectation that the Ministerial Declaration text would be close to finalized in the next few days, following the face-to-face meeting of the Ministerial Working Group.



Patrick Child, European Commission Co-Chair, stated that he looked forward to a productive set of discussions in the next few days. He observed that it was an exciting time at the European Commission due to changes of the Commissioners. In particular, he drew attention to the incoming President of the Commission who has put climate change and the digital economy at the top of her programme, both of these issues having clear connections to GEO. She has also emphasized the importance of multilateralism, of which GEO is an excellent example. Mr Child expressed his wish that the Plenary and Ministerial Summit in Canberra will provide an opportunity to discuss issues around climate and digital economy, as well as the future directions for GEOSS. He noted that there had been positive progress in recent months in resetting collaboration between Executive Committee and the Secretariat. He welcomed the Secretariat Director's confirmation in his role and thanked the Secretariat in preparing for the meeting. He stated that he looked forward to GEO being strengthened in the next period.

Li Xin, representing the China Co-Chair, extended his congratulations to the Secretariat Director and said that he looked forward to working with his team. He also thanked the Lead Co-Chair for chairing the session and the Secretariat for their preparations for the meeting. Mr Li observed that the GEO-XVI Plenary and Ministerial Summit will be a key opportunity to show progress over the past years. He thanked Australia and others who have been involved in the preparations, for what will be a major event in the Asia-Oceania region. He noted the large workload for the remainder of the year. Finally, he expected there would be substantive discussions over the two days that would address key issues in more detail and would lead to strong outcomes.

Gilberto Camara, Secretariat Director, thanked Executive Committee members for their trust in him for the next two years. He also thanked the Secretariat team for their important role in GEO's work. The Director drew attention to the recent 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Moon landing, noting that it was an inspiration for his entering the space field. He also drew attention to the pioneering work by Russia during that same era. The Director congratulated Stuart Minchin, Australia GEO Principal, on his selection for the post of Executive Director of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, praising Mr Minchin's efforts in building GEO. He observed that there was a very strong agenda for the meeting and asked that Executive Committee members give close attention to the item on reform at the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). These changes, which are being felt within the GEO Secretariat, will bring both challenges and opportunities for GEO.

#### **1.2 Adoption of Agenda (Document 48.1 (Rev.2) – for decision)**

The Lead Co-Chair proposed one change to the agenda, this being to address item 1.6 on the second day to permit attendance by a senior official from WMO. Item 5.1 on the Mid-Term Evaluation would be discussed in its place during the first morning.

Germany requested that the financial items should be addressed at an earlier point in the agenda in future meetings. A concern was expressed that there may not be enough time remaining at the end of the agenda for a fulsome discussion. Also, the item regarding changes to the Rules of Procedure should not be for decision, but for recommendation to Plenary.

The Lead Co-Chair informed Executive Committee members that the scheduling of the financial items at this meeting was due to the availability of the external presenter. He also clarified that the decision before Executive Committee regarding the proposed changes to the Rules of Procedure was whether to recommend the changes for approval at Plenary.

**Outcome:** The agenda was approved with Item 1.6 Update from the WMO Congress and Item 5.1 GEO 2020 Mid-Term Evaluation exchanged in order to accommodate the invited presenters.

**1.3 Draft Report of the 47<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee Meeting (Document 48.2 – for decision)**

Germany stated that the document, with the change proposed by the European Commission, was acceptable.

**Outcome:** The report of the 47<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee meeting was adopted, with the inclusion of the change proposed by the European Commission.

**1.4 Review of Action Items from Previous Meetings (Document 47.3– for decision)**

Patricia Geddes (Senior Administrative Manager, GEO Secretariat) reviewed each of the action items from the previous meeting. As all actions had been completed, Ms Geddes recommended that they be closed.

**Outcome:** All actions were closed.

**1.5 Update on Secretariat Activities (Document 47.4 – for information)**

The Secretariat Director presented some key highlights from the Secretariat Operations Report. He began by referring to the five Foundational Tasks proposed for the 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme, noting that these provide the structure for the work of the Secretariat. He stated that his focus would be on the first three tasks, as there would be other items during the meeting related to the other two Foundational Tasks.

On the GEO engagement priorities, the Secretariat has been very active and this effort is beginning to bear fruit. GEO is beginning to receive requests from UN organizations for assistance, for example, from the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) which led to the establishment of the GEO Initiative on Land Degradation Neutrality. The Secretariat will participate in several upcoming meetings with the UNCCD and is being recognized as a key contributor to their work. Similarly, GEO has been asked by UN Environment to co-chair a subgroup on big data within their Science-Policy-Business Forum. More recently, the Secretariat received a letter from UN Habitat requesting support from GEO on the measurement of certain Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators for which UN Habitat is the custodian agency. A fourth example is of GEO's ongoing engagement with the UN Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM), in particular related to supporting UN member countries in reporting on various SDG indicators where Earth observations are valuable. On the climate priority, GEO has been recognized now as an Observer to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and has been asked to contribute to meetings of the

Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), of which GEO is anticipating a decision soon on Observer status with that organization. This collaboration is expected to increase over time as additional activities in the GEO Work Programme become more closely aligned to the UNFCCC priorities. Regarding the Sendai Framework, GEO contributed strongly to the 2019 Global Assessment Report of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), including the redrafting of an entire chapter of the report to highlight the power of Earth observations.

On the Data, Information and Knowledge Resources Foundational Task, Mr Camara highlighted the selected recipients of grants under the GEO-AWS Cloud Credits Programme. The successful project proposals come from a broad range of developing countries focusing on a wide variety of topics. Very few of the countries receiving the grants have been active in the GEO Work Programme recently, demonstrating that a small amount of resources goes a long way to mobilize the community. It is difficult to make progress in developing countries using only fully voluntary efforts; however, small amounts of resources can stimulate a significant response.

On GEOSS Infrastructure Development, a major milestone was reached recently with the completion of the work of the Expert Advisory Group (EAG) with the issuance of their Final Report. Mr Camara thanked the members of the EAG as well as the support provided by the Secretariat and from GEO Members, notably the United States and the European Commission. The EAG recognized that one of the key challenges GEO faces is to support its Member countries to: 1) comply with their Nationally Determined Contributions to the Paris Agreement; 2) develop disaster preparedness; and 3) report on the SDG indicators and transition to a more sustainable economy. What is needed is to provide easy access to the products and services developed in GEO; access to the methods, models, source code, etc.; and enable others to reuse the results developing within the GEO Work Programme in their own country and based on their local circumstances. The aim is to create a broad global network of Earth observations practitioners who control the tools they use and are not just consumers of information.

The United States observed that the GEO-AWS resources certainly drew a healthy response, but did this just mean that countries respond to free resources? Are these real gaps or are the projects duplicating existing GEO Work Programme activities?

The Secretariat Director responded that, for example, there were several projects related to reporting on SDGs. While SDGs are already being addressed in the Work Programme, these countries have not yet been involved. Their participation in the Cloud Credits Programme will help make the connections between the countries and the Work Programme activities and thereby broaden the scope of those activities. In other cases, the issues being tackled in the Cloud Credits Programme projects are not currently being addressed in the GEO Work Programme, for example, the work by Ethiopia on groundwater potential. This provides a reminder that we need to engage others in the existing activities and that the GEO Work Programme does not represent all potential areas of Earth observation application.

The European Commission commended the good work by the Secretariat in engaging international organizations around the GEO engagement priorities. On securing Observer status with the IPCC, GEO now needs to figure out how to use this status to

increase its role within IPCC. The positive messages from the IPCC leadership on the role of GEO are also welcome. As the Secretariat continues its work on engagement with international organizations, it should look for ways to improve the information flow and transparency with the Executive Committee regarding these contacts. Annually, at the beginning of the year, the Secretariat should present the contacts they intend to make over the upcoming period. This would be helpful for GEO members as they make their own contacts.

Japan stated that it appreciated the efforts of the Secretariat in cooperating with various UN bodies. It was suggested that the work of other groups in GEO, such as the Programme Board subgroup on the Paris Agreement, could be included in the report.

IEEE noted that there are other groups in GEO that are also working on the engagement priorities.

Russia stated that they were very satisfied with the Secretariat activities and strongly supported the Secretariat.

Switzerland congratulated the Secretariat Director on the confirmation of his role and thanked him for the presentation. A question was asked regarding the support and interaction that the Secretariat has with regional organizations and with regional GEOs. Participation by the Secretariat in regional meetings would be valuable, although it was acknowledged that there are limited resources to support travel.

Italy congratulated the Secretariat Director and Stuart Minchin. Italy agreed that the Cloud Credits Programme has been good at engaging groups on the ground in developing countries and it provides added value to the ongoing efforts in the GEO Work Programme. A concern was expressed that the Secretariat may be over-committing its limited resources, however.

The Secretariat Director responded, on communication between the Secretariat and Executive Committee members, that it was using email more frequently to send documents immediately when there are key developments, rather than waiting for the next meeting. Executive Committee was asked whether it preferred to continue receiving such emails. It was also pointed out that, earlier, GEO was reaching out to other organizations, asking them to tell us how GEO could contribute. Now, GEO is receiving invitations to become involved in their activities.

Italy suggested that the Secretariat could rely more on the GEO community to respond to requests from other organizations.

China proposed, referring to the Cloud Credits Programme, that GEO should look at knowledge sharing between developed and developing countries, not just programmes for developing countries alone.

The European Commission stated that they enjoyed receiving the emails when there were new developments, but that it was still necessary to have a more structured, formal forward agenda on engagements with other organizations. This could have a light touch, but needed to be systematic and presented in advance.

The United States stated that they also appreciated receiving the emails. They observed that the engagement appeared to be both top-down and bottom-up, which is a productive way to approach it. It was suggested that the Secretariat follow-up on the

Cloud Credits Programme to see what worked and what didn't, ensure connections to GEO Work Programme activities are being made, and determined the value that was realized both for GEO and for the countries. This might be a useful ongoing process with the GEO community.

The Lead Co-Chair agreed that it was important to document the lessons learned from all such processes.

The Secretariat Director agreed with the comments, stating that it was important to give advance notice of engagement plans and to follow up with the Cloud Credits Programme projects. The Secretariat would also like to see other, similar opportunities be provided by public or private sector to enable engagement with even more countries.

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee welcomed the practice of providing information on emerging issues via email to Executive Committee members. The Secretariat was requested to review new initiatives such as the GEO-AWS Cloud Credits Programme to identify what worked well and what did not, lessons learned, and the value realized by GEO and its partners from such initiatives.

**Action 48.1:** The Secretariat to prepare an annual forward plan for engagement which will identify targeted organizations. **Due: First version for the 51<sup>st</sup> Executive Committee meeting (March 2020).**

#### 1.6 GEO 2020 Mid-Term Evaluation (Document 48.11– for decision)

Craig Larlee (Work Programme Coordinator, GEO Secretariat) presented a brief summary of the status of the nominations to the Evaluation Team for the Mid-Term Evaluation. He reminded the Executive Committee that the recommendation to proceed with the evaluation in 2019 was made by the Executive Committee in late 2018 and was approved by the GEO-XV Plenary. The Secretariat issued the call for nominations on 7 March 2019 with a requested response by 15 May. Nominations were received from six GEO Members or Participating Organizations, for a total of 11 individual nominees. Of these, five nominees were from a single Participating Organization. As having such a large proportion of the team from a single organization would not be desirable, assuming that only two members were selected from that organization it would leave a team of only eight members, half of whom would require travel support to participate. Further, none of the nominees appear to be a specialist in programme evaluation, nor had experience in previous GEO evaluations, these characteristics being considered essential based on earlier GEO evaluations. Based on these circumstances, the Secretariat recommended that it would not be feasible to proceed with the evaluation under the approved terms of reference and with the existing set of nominees. Mr Larlee proposed five options for how to proceed, recommending either to postpone the evaluation until after the GEO-XVI Plenary or to issue a second call for nominations now and adjust the schedule and/or scope of the evaluation to reflect the later starting date.

The Lead Co-Chair noted the recommendations in the presentation and stated that the Executive Committee must decide how to proceed. He suggested that the Executive Committee should aim for an approach that will result in a final report of which GEO will be proud, that it should not compromise on quality.

The United States stated that their preference was a combination of the recommended options (options A and C). The Secretariat could issue a call for nominations before the GEO-XVI Plenary. The question would be how to obtain approval of Plenary to proceed with a delayed evaluation.

Australia agreed with a mix of options A and C. Executive Committee members should go back and identify more nominees; Australia would commit to doing this.

Germany supported option C and to reduce the scope of the evaluation.

China preferred not to reduce the scope of the evaluation. This year and next would be the best time for launching the evaluation. Option A was their preferred choice. China encouraged other Executive Committee members to nominate additional members to the team. The Secretariat should issue a second call for nominations.

The European Commission expressed disappointment and regret that GEO was in this situation. It was recognized that this was a shared responsibility of the Executive Committee and promised to come back from this meeting with renewed enthusiasm. The Commission agreed that GEO should not compromise on the quality or comprehensiveness of the evaluation.

Switzerland asked whether, if option C were chosen, it would require a discussion regarding the scope of the evaluation.

The Lead Co-Chair stated that he heard that quality and scope should not be compromised.

The United States proposed that a second call for nominations should be issued following the Executive Committee meeting with a closing date prior to Plenary. A follow-up call with the Executive Committee on the status could be arranged. The Executive Committee could decide at that point if a further call for nominations (at Plenary) would be needed.

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee expressed a preference to retain the originally planned scope of the evaluation, even if this meant that the evaluation would be completed later than originally intended. The Executive Committee requested that the Secretariat issue a second call for nominations, with a closing date in September 2019. The Secretariat will inform the Executive Committee of the results of the second call, with a recommendation on whether the nominations are collectively adequate to conduct the evaluation. If the nominations received are considered to not be collectively sufficient, the Secretariat will work with the Lead Co-Chair to organize a teleconference of the Executive Committee to discuss the next steps.

**Action 48.2:** The Secretariat to issue a second call for nominations to the Mid-Term Evaluation Team. **Due: 31 July 2019.**

## 2 PLANNING

### 2.1 Update on the Proposal for a Results Oriented GEOSS (Document 48.5 – for decision)

The Secretariat Director introduced the item, drawing attention to the goals and key measures which are now included. Particular notice was given to the goals concerning policy relevance and country relevance. The third goal is focused internally, on the management of GEO Work Programme. This framework of goals and key measures is intended to guide the implementation of the Results Oriented GEOSS proposal. Although the GEO Knowledge Hub is only one component of the overall proposal, it is essential. The broader direction of the proposal is to make GEO more policy relevant and more country relevant. Annex A presents a proposed design of the GEO Knowledge Hub. The Secretariat Director stressed the contributions made by the members of the Expert Advisory Group and the GEOSS Evolve team to the proposal for a Results Oriented GEOSS. In summary, the Results Oriented GEOSS proposal is about how to make GEO relevant; the GEO Knowledge Hub is a component needed to implement this proposal.

CEOS asked about the distinction between the GEOSS Implementation Coordination Task Force and the Task Team of the GEOSS Implementation Development Foundational Task.

Germany stated that they shared the general vision behind the proposal, which has seen dramatic improvement since the first version. However, some questions remained. What is the role and composition of the task force? How would the GEO Knowledge Hub link to other existing knowledge hubs or other mechanisms for implementing aspects related to the GEO Knowledge Hub? What is meant by curation and is this a role to be played by the GEO Secretariat? If so, this might not be feasible given the resources and expertise available.

Australia said that they supported the vision expressed in the document. It was necessary, though, not to overpromise. The vision needs to be followed with actions to deliver on the vision. The proposed pilot process is excellent; it should not be based on a best-possible scenario, but look at policies, infrastructure, barriers, and so on to identify gaps and challenges, and expose any issues. What is the role for GEO in relation to large data providers? Will the resources be reliable and available in future and how do we ensure that?

South Africa agreed with the sentiments of the previous speakers. The current version of the document is a big improvement on previous versions. It was heartening to see linkages with the GEO Work Programme. The document presents a compelling vision for GEO that should not be ignored. Similar to other speakers, South Africa has questions about the mediation process and the role of the task team or task force and how it will be constituted. The pilot process moving toward the GEO-XVI Plenary is an important step, but this must not be just a technical demonstration, it should also discuss the challenges in the process, such as with in situ data. More information is needed on how the four pillars were set up and what mechanisms will be used. There is also a tendency in the document to see developing countries as beneficiaries only and not sufficient attention to their role as contributors.

The European Commission observed that this version was greatly improved and congratulated colleagues from the United States and the European Commission who have been active in developing the document, as well as members of the Expert Advisory Group. The key question is: what are we expecting to happen with the proof of concept for the GEO Knowledge Hub? Everyone has a different interpretation of what it means. The Executive Committee needs to come out of this meeting with a clear common view. The proof of concept should show how the system would work, how it would interact with other existing systems, and what it would deliver. It should be clear to the Plenary what are the implications before making a full commitment to implement it. Only at that point will the Executive Committee look at a detailed plan for implementation, including resource implications. The Executive Committee can only endorse the proposal now if it is clear that it is only endorsing the development of the concept but not the full implementation.

The Secretariat Director stated that the task force referred to in the document is the same as the task team for the Foundational Task that is included in version 2 of the 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme. The discrepancy in the names is due only to the fact that the development of the proposal for a Results Oriented GEOSS and the 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme are occurring in parallel but on slightly different timelines. He clarified that the Secretariat would not play the final role of mediation, but will coordinate the mediation process. The primary role for mediation is through the GEO Flagships and Initiatives. The resources selected will be those that the GEO Flagships and Initiatives believe are the most important. The GEO Knowledge Hub will provide an opportunity to link together all existing knowledge hubs and other resources within the GEO Work Programme together in one place. The key concept of the GEO Knowledge Hub, however, is reproducibility; that is, can the results be replicated by other countries? The Director agreed with Australia that it is important not to overpromise, as well as to highlight issues and challenges. More work is needed to define interoperability. The Secretariat has started a dialogue with the Open Geospatial Consortium to move this issue forward. The Director agreed with the interpretation by the European Commission that what is requested at this time is a conditional endorsement, with a later decision needed prior to moving to implementation.

South Africa asked about how in situ data will be handled. The Director responded that the Secretariat takes a pragmatic approach. Data that are already collected and used operationally, such as the Argo buoys, do not require involvement from GEO. The focus will be on in situ data that are currently not being shared. In many domains, for example forests, there are no operational systems that deliver this information. Delivering results requires in situ data and it is these data that are not currently shared that are most needed. Using a project-based approach has been proven successful; GEO should go after resources when there is a focused objective. He also agreed that developing countries are contributors and this should be highlighted more.

China supported the concept described in the document and noted the improvement in this version. China agreed that the proof of concept should be demonstrated at the GEO-XVI Plenary. It was also recommended that the GEO Knowledge Hub should be used to support coordination of GEO Work Programme activities.



Switzerland said that the document was converging on many ideas previously provided by the Executive Committee. Based on what is known, the Executive Committee should give the green light to further develop the concept. Perhaps this decision should not include all elements of the document, for example, the governance elements. More explanation is needed on the concept itself, while looking toward the Plenary giving the final green light.

Japan stated that it would be premature to approve the implementation of the proposal until the Executive Committee sees the proof of concept. This proof of concept should be developed within existing resources. What is the process to develop the proof of concept for demonstration at the Plenary?

Italy expressed the view that a knowledge hub is just a concept. One will never see a knowledge hub that does everything. It is necessary to have models, the downstream elaboration of data, to have knowledge. Data alone is not sufficient. It is important to have the demonstration of the proof of concept at the Plenary. This should include some pilot applications to show relevance to key policy questions, that must be specific to the domain of investigation. The Joint Research Centre has prepared a series of possible demonstrations that could be presented at the Ministerial Summit.

The Lead Co-Chair reminded members that the decision being sought at this meeting is not the approval to go ahead with full implementation, but approval to develop the proof of concept to be demonstrated at the GEO-XVI Plenary.

The Secretariat Director agreed with the statement by the Lead Co-Chair. The team working on the proof of concept includes a virtual secondment from Brazil, plus the in situ data specialist, data scientist, and information technology officer from the Secretariat. No additional resources will be needed for implementation until at least March 2020. The first test case for the proof of concept will be with GEOGLAM.

Germany observed that there is a risk that the strong focus on the GEO Knowledge Hub gives an impression that this is the only activity underway in GEO; it is important to dispel this impression.

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee approved the development of the proof of concept of the GEO Knowledge Hub for presentation to the GEO-XVI Plenary. This decision does not imply that the full implementation of the GEO Knowledge Hub will necessarily be approved.

If further development of the GEO Knowledge Hub is supported by Plenary, and if it will require additional resources, the Plenary will be asked to delegate approval of further steps to the Executive Committee. In this case, the Secretariat will identify the resource requirements, including the level of participation required by GEO Members, Participating Organizations, and GEO Work Programme activities.

## 2.2 Secretariat Concept of Operations 2019-2021 (Document 48.6 – for decision)

The Secretariat Director introduced the document, which is the second version of the Concept of Operations. This version was revised to take account of the comments from Executive Committee members at the previous meeting. The document is not contingent on the approval of the Results Oriented GEOSS; instead, it builds on the proposed Foundational Tasks that have been approved in principle by the Programme Board and

are included in the draft 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme. These Foundational Tasks collectively define what must be done by the Secretariat. The Concept of Operations is also based on the resources available, which are assumed to be similar to those in 2019. The Director drew attention to a new table on page six showing which of the staff positions are filled and on what basis (regular, temporary, secondment). Where positions are not filled, the duties must be assigned to other staff. Mr Camara also referred to the reporting structure diagram on page 15, although noted that the actual working relationships in the Secretariat are not so hierarchical. The Director concluded by emphasizing that it is important to retain institutional memory, which requires continuity of staff. This makes GEO more resilient.

The European Commission stated that the development of the Concept of Operations was a valuable and useful exercise and it was worth taking the time to get it right. It was noted that there are still two areas that are not yet as clear as they could be. First, how do the proposed posts relate to the various priority areas of the secretariat, that is, policy, administration, and engagement? Second, it appears that there is a mismatch between resources and tasks. It is important to identify which tasks are high priority and those which will not be filled or subsumed by others. With these clarifications, the document should be ready to be used for operational management.

The United States agreed with the observations from the European Commission, however, it was noted that there was a form of prioritization in the chart given that some positions were not filled. It would be helpful to know how the Secretariat planned to find the additional resources that are required.

China noted the heavy work load of the Secretariat in supporting GEO priorities and encouraged Executive Committee members to contribute additional resources to support the Secretariat. China will support its support through a virtual secondment and a junior professional officer (JPO).

South Africa suggested that the Secretariat look for synergies in putting responsibilities together, rather than separating them. It is important not to overburden incumbents of the positions. GEO may need to consider other models of resourcing. Where activities are not core, but necessary, perhaps others outside the Secretariat could perform the activities on a part-time basis.

Germany agreed with the need to prioritize activities. The reason for staffing the Space Data Specialist position before the Expert Coordinator on SDGs was questioned.

The Secretariat Director said that the issue of priorities is difficult to solve. If the Secretariat were starting from a blank slate and with a full set of resources, it might have made other decisions. Regarding approval of the document, the Director suggested that the Secretariat could respond to questions within a specified period of time, but requested that the document not be put forward to the next Executive Committee meeting.

CEOS noted that the Space Data Specialist position has always been a secondment from a space agency. This position is vital to maintaining the close relationship between GEO and CEOS.

Switzerland stated that they were satisfied with the current document. The operations of the Secretariat should be presented on a regular basis by the Director and considered by

the Executive Committee. This should not be an isolated exercise, but should be a rolling, periodic tool for collaboration between the Secretariat and the Executive Committee.

Germany supported the request from the Secretariat Director that the document not return to the next Executive Committee meeting. Answers to the questions raised by Executive Committee members should be provided by the Director within the next couple of weeks.

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee approved the document for use in developing the 2020 GEO Trust Fund Budget and for operational use by the Secretariat, subject to clarification of remaining issues as identified by Executive Committee members.

**Action 48.3:** Executive Committee members to provide any remaining issues requiring clarification to the Secretariat in writing. **Due: 6 August 2019.**

**Action 48.4:** The Secretariat to circulate a revised version of the document to Executive Committee members, addressing the identified issues. **Due: 13 August 2019.**

### 3 WORK PROGRAMME

#### 3.1 Report of the Programme Board (Document 48.7 – for discussion)

Yana Gevorgyan, Programme Board co-chair (United States), presented the report on behalf of the Programme Board. She reminded the Executive Committee that the main item for the Programme Board this year is the development of the 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme. She noted that the second version of the Work Programme had been recently distributed to GEO Principals for consultation. Ms Gevorgyan summarized the status of the various categories of Work Programme activities, noting that, while 12 current activities were not expected to submit implementation plans for the 2020-2022 period, a similar number of new proposals had been received which meant that the overall numbers should be similar to the 2017-2019 GEO Work Programme. She also drew attention to the new interpretation of the policy mandate criterion for GEO Flagships. The expectation was that all four existing Flagships would be approved, although two of them did not currently meet the criterion; these would be given extra time given that the change was only recently decided. Ms Gevorgyan also mentioned the creation of a set of individual excellence awards, with the first set of awards to be presented during GEO Week 2019. Finally, she noted that the Secretariat had received a request from UN Habitat for assistance in using Earth observations for monitoring several SDG indicators for which they are the UN custodian agency. The Programme Board has convened a special session as part of its 15<sup>th</sup> meeting to discuss the request with representatives from UN Habitat and from several relevant GEO Work Programme activities.

Switzerland suggested that the Programme Board consider changing the categories of Work Programme activities. Also, it was noted that, according to the GEO Rules of Procedure, the Programme Board is expected to make high-level recommendations to the Executive Committee. Are there any recommendations? Or is this a function which is not implemented?

The United States asked whether there are any GEO Initiatives that may be on the threshold of seeking Flagship status.

Australia welcomed the Programme Board's creation of the individual excellence awards. Many contributors put in numerous unpaid hours on behalf of GEO and it is important to recognize these contributions. It is important to celebrate GEO's achievements and successes, including at an individual level.

South Africa congratulated the Programme Board for its work on the development of the new GEO Work Programme. It was noted that some Programme Board members had raised the issue of the quality of the information submitted; how will the Programme Board deal with this?

China stated that they appreciated the efforts on the development of the GEO Work Programme and the progress being made in the regional GEOs, including the upcoming joint meeting of EuroGEO and Asia-Oceania GEO. The hope was expressed that the 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme remains open to more participation, particularly from developing countries.

Ms Gevorgyan empathized with the comment regarding the categories of Work Programme activities, but stated that these were based on the GEO Strategic Plan 2016-2025. Programme Board looked at the categories but believe they reflect real distinctions in terms of operational readiness. On the recommendations to the Executive Committee, some examples include the recommendation on the creation of the Regional GEOs, the revised criteria for GEO Flagships, and the restructuring of the Foundational Tasks. Programme Board comes to the Executive Committee to seek guidance at times, but this does not happen at every meeting. On Initiatives that could become Flagships, there may be some, but none had applied at this time. Regarding the quality of the implementation plans, the Programme Board dealt with the issue by requesting additional information from the proposers and in some cases have re-categorized the activity (from GEO Initiative to Community Activity).

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee thanked the Programme Board for its work, particularly on the development of the 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme.

### **3.2 Update to the section of the Rules of Procedure regarding the Programme Board (Document 48.8 – for decision)**

Yana Gevorgyan presented the item on behalf of the Programme Board, specifying that what was being sought was not approval of the changes by the Executive Committee, but to receive a green light to present the changes to the GEO-XVI Plenary. She noted that the Programme Board has now been running for over three years and has learned about what has worked and what hasn't, there have been some adjustments to procedures, and the Board also wishes to adopt some practices from the Executive Committee that have proven successful. Ms Gevorgyan described the proposed changes section by section.

Switzerland asked whether any consideration had been given to conflict of interest issues within the Programme Board.

Germany asked for clarification of the document distribution timelines.

Ms Gevorgyan responded to Germany that the timelines were modelled on those of the Executive Committee, so that decision documents go to the co-chairs three weeks in advance and to all Programme Board members two weeks in advance of the meetings. Documents for information only must be sent at least one week in advance. Further, for

substantive decision documents that have not been previously reviewed by the Programme Board, the timing is four weeks in advance.

Patricia Geddes responded to the question on conflict of interest by reminding Executive Committee that sub-section 3.4 on Ethical Standards was added to the Rules of Procedure previously, which includes reference to integrity and impartiality and which covers the Programme Board, among others.

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee agreed that the proposed changes to the Rules of Procedure be presented for approval at the GEO-XVI Plenary.

The Lead Co-Chair proposed, as there was still time remaining before the intended time of adjournment, that session 6 be addressed next. Executive Committee members concurred.

## 6 PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS AND GEO ASSOCIATES

### 6.1 Report from the Subgroup on Participating Organizations (Document 48.12–for decision)

Kerry Sawyer (CEOS) presented the report on behalf of the Subgroup. She reminded members that the report was in response to a request by the Executive Committee at its 47<sup>th</sup> meeting. She thanked the other members of the subgroup, Gilles Ollier of the European Commission and Rene Garello of IEEE, as well as Patricia Geddes from the Secretariat. The key recommendation from the Subgroup is to add some new text to the GEO Rules of Procedure to permit the Executive Committee to discontinue Participating Organization status of organizations that have no record of involvement in GEO activities for the past three years or are not responsive to requests for updated contact data. Ms Sawyer stated that the Subgroup looked closer at 20 Participating Organizations for which the Secretariat had initially not been able to identify any GEO involvement. In the course of the work of the Subgroup, this list was reduced to only eight. As requested, the Subgroup was now informing the Executive Committee of this list of organization with which the Subgroup was unable to make contact. It was suggested that Executive Committee members within the regions where the organizations are based could attempt to contact them one last time before a decision to discontinue their status would be taken.

Australia offered to contact several of the organizations, including the International Hydrographic Organization and Bioversity International.

Japan supported the proposed changes to the Rules of Procedure. Japan will also send to the Secretariat the contact details for the Federation of Digital Broad-Band Seismographic Networks (FDSN).

The United States stated that they had contacted the Logistics Management Institute (LMI), noting that there had been a change of leadership in the organization. LMI stated that they were interested in continuing their connection to GEO, but it might be more appropriate for them to do so as a GEO Associate given they are a national rather than international organization.

The European Commission requested some additional time to connect with some of the European organizations. The Subgroup was thanked for their expeditious handling of the issue.

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee:

- Thanked those Executive Committee members who made efforts to contact some of the activities in Annex 1 of Document 48.12;
- Agreed that the proposed addition to the Rules of Procedure be presented for approval to the GEO–XVI Plenary;
- Thanked the members of the Subgroup on Participating Organizations for their work and their recommendations; and
- Terminated the Subgroup.

**Action 48.6:** Executive Committee members to inform the Secretariat regarding the results of their efforts to contact the Participating Organizations listed in Annex 1 of Document 48.12. **Due: 20 August 2019.**

## 6.2 Review of Requests for Participating Organization Status (Document 48.13 – for decision)

Patricia Geddes presented the recommendations regarding applications received for Participating Organization status. She described the status and recommendations regarding each of the requests.

The Lead Co-Chair stated that the request from the Conflict and Environment Observatory (CEOBS) was discussed by the Executive Committee during the closed session. The Executive Committee came to a different conclusion than the Secretariat and so requested that the Secretariat provide further justification for their recommendation, as it may have been based on information not provided to Executive Committee members.

China requested that the Secretariat provide more information on applicant organizations regarding their country of registration. Concern was expressed that some applicant organizations may bring controversy or unintended consequences to GEO as a result of their use of information obtained through GEO.

Australia suggested that applicant organizations could be asked about their advocacy for particular policy positions or whether they are only providing factual information. However, GEO should not exclude organizations based on assumptions of anticipated issues that have not yet occurred.

Germany suggested that Executive Committee base its decisions on the criteria that are set out in the GEO Rules of Procedure and not reject applicants on grounds that are not mentioned there.

The United States agreed with Australia and Germany that applications should be approved or rejected based on the established criteria and practices that have been established and on evidence, and not base such decisions on perception.

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee approved the applications for Participating Organization status from the Economic Community of West African States Commission

(ECOWAS Commission), Mercator Ocean International, and the OpenGeoHub Foundation (OpenGeoHub).

**Action 48.7:** The Secretariat to contact the African Smart Cities Innovation Foundation (ASCIF) and the Conflict and Environment Observatory (CEOBS) to request additional information, with a new recommendation to be presented to the Executive Committee.

**Due: 49<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee meeting.**

### 6.3 Review of Requests for the GEO Associate Category (Document 48.14 – for decision)

Patricia Geddes summarized the six applications for the new GEO Associate category that had completed the review process. She added that other applications had been received but were still in process at the time the Executive Committee document was prepared. Ms Geddes noted that the recommendations for acceptance were from the applicable GEO Principal and not from the Secretariat.

Germany said that for some of the organizations it was clear that they had extensive previous engagement with GEO, but the level of engagement for some was unclear.

Ms Geddes responded that the Secretariat relied on information provided by the GEO Principals regarding the involvement of the organizations. For example, GEO China had provided information on the Chinese applicants. The International Centre for Earth Simulation Foundation (ICES) has interacted with the Secretariat over several years.

Australia stated that they were comfortable with all of the applicants listed. Further, as the Executive Committee had previously said that GEO Associates might be invited to attend the GEO-XVI Plenary, depending on the numbers accepted, Australia proposed that all six of the applicants be invited.

South Africa stated that they were in agreement with the recommendations.

The United States specified that the criterion for engagement is with GEO and not with Earth observations generally.

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee:

- Approved the applications for GEO Associate status from Acclimatise Group Ltd.; the Centre for Ecological Research and Forestry Applications (CREAF); Beijing Piesat Information Technology Co. (PIESAT); Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (Esri); International Centre for Earth Simulation Foundation (ICES); and SpaceWill Info. Co. Ltd. (SpaceWill).

**Action 48.8:** The Secretariat to invite the six approved GEO Associates to attend the GEO-XVI Plenary. **Due: 9 August 2019.**

*Meeting adjourned 17:30*

*Meeting convened 9:00*

#### 4 CANBERRA MINISTERIAL SUMMIT AND GEO WEEK 2019

The Lead Co-Chair suggested that the combined presentation on all items in session 4 be completed first, with the discussion by Executive Committee members on each item to follow. Executive Committee members concurred.

Stuart Minchin, co-chair of the Ministerial Working Group (MWG) from Australia, began the presentation on behalf of the Australian host government. He emphasized that the preparations for the summit represented a team effort, in which there are two key groups involved, both supported by the Secretariat and an Australian Government Summit Taskforce. The first group is the MWG, which is responsible for drafting the Ministerial Declaration, setting the agenda and program for the week, and overseeing the side event program. The second group is the Summit Political Leadership Team, which is intended to shape the high-level political and strategic framing for the Summit. Mr Minchin then reviewed the various events planned for GEO Week 2019, noting the variety of events targeting different audiences. He drew attention to the Asia-Oceania GEO meeting which is scheduled for the prior weekend in a different location in Canberra. The Industry Track is a new component of GEO Week this year and is intended to provide events for commercial sector representatives to attend while the Plenary is in session, aiming to provide greater value for their participation. Mr Minchin also noted that the gala dinner on the Wednesday evening would provide an opportunity for the GEO community to celebrate its successes and would include an awards ceremony. Other events would target the broader community beyond official representatives to GEO, such as youth, those interested in the Pacific islands, and the general public from the Canberra area.

Iain Williams, co-chair of the MWG (United Kingdom), continued the presentation, describing the status of the Ministerial Declaration and the development of the Summit agenda. He reminded Executive Committee members that the first draft was deliberately intended to be comprehensive, but that the process was now one of narrowing the text to the key priorities. The MWG received 228 comments from 15 GEO Members and five Participating Organizations, and described the most common themes of the comments. The MWG identified 22 key issues for discussion, with the expectation that the issues would be resolved at the group's face-to-face meeting on 25 July. The new draft Declaration would then be sent to GEO Principals around 30 July, requesting comments by 6 September. Mr Williams stated that the text should be high-level and not get into technical details. The themes of the Declaration have been reduced to a small number: GEO's progress; response to the GEO Strategic Plan; Earth observations in the digital economy (Summit theme); welcome to the Pacific island states and territories; delivering services at regional, national and sub-national scales; role of the commercial sector; capacity building; importance of investments in GEO; and 2023 as the date for the next Summit. Mr Williams stressed the importance of GEO Members to consult widely within their governments, although this does create issues for modifying the Declaration text at the Summit. As it is difficult to deny ministers the opportunity to change the text at the Summit, the approach is to have a "locked-down" version which has been agreed, as well as options for a more ambitious text that would be open for discussion by ministers and would only be included if agreed at the Summit. Mr Williams then reviewed the agenda for the Summit.



Stuart Minchin followed with a description of the ministerial round table, which would provide an opportunity for ministers to have a more open-ended conversation, thus providing an added incentive for ministerial participation at the Summit. There will be a proposed set of topics for discussion which will be related to GEO, but broadly defined as it is expected that the attending ministers will hold many different portfolios. Some key non-ministerial participants may be included in the round table, if requested by ministers. At least seven ministers have thus far confirmed their plans to attend and there is considerable interest from the Pacific islands, though no confirmations yet. Executive Committee members were encouraged to work with the offices of their ministers to promote attendance. Each minister must be registered through the delegation process and will be managed individually. Funds are being provided by the Australian government to assist with travel for ministers from developing countries. Letters of invitation will be sent shortly to those ministers who are already registered. The importance of early registration was stressed.

Virginia Burkett, co-chair of the MWG (United States), continued the presentation, focusing on the GEO-XVI Plenary. She noted that there were, at that time, 325 registered delegates from 25 GEO Member countries and 20 Participating Organizations. Regional Caucuses were requested to encourage other regional Members to complete their delegation lists as soon as possible. The agenda was designed to engage GEO Members, Participating Organizations and GEO Associates, with the focus on those who will not be speaking during the Ministerial Summit. The first part of the Plenary agenda is organized around the GEO engagement priorities using a common structure: opening keynote address; panel discussion including an external speaker, one representative of a GEO Member or Participating Organization presenting a case study; discussion and statements by Plenary attendees; and a summary of outcomes and recommendations (to be managed by the Plenary Chair). Following the engagement priority sessions, there will be a session on broadening the impact of Earth observations and GEO, then a session on implementing a Results Oriented GEOSS. On day two, the meeting will start with a video on the impact of the 2017-2019 GEO Work Programme, followed by a presentation of the 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme. There will then be a session on the role of the commercial sector in the Work Programme and statements from delegations, leading to formal endorsement of the 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme. The afternoon of day two will be devoted to the GEO Trust Fund budget and other aspects of GEO business. Regarding side events, 61 proposals were received. As the guidance to the MWG was to be as inclusive as possible, all proposals that were consistent with the GEO Mission were accommodated in some form. Ms Burkett then described the categories of side events and the schedule. She noted that there was flexibility to include four or five more events, if compelling cases were identified.

Theodora Mills (Communications Manager, GEO Secretariat) added that the Secretariat was working in close coordination with the Australian communications leads. All schedules, announcements, and other documents would continue to be posted on the GEO website as soon as they are available. Ms Mills noted that the Secretariat is working closely with GEO Members who have large social media followings to maximize the distribution of messages about the event. The Secretariat is working toward the launch of the GEO Week app and encouraged all participants to download the app when it is ready. She asked that GEO Members and Participating Organizations wishing to make

announcements during GEO Week contact the Secretariat, noting that several media partners are already lined up and dedicated media space will be available at the venue. The Secretariat is ready to provide support for announcements and would like to ensure that there will be key items to include on each day of the week.

Jonathon Ross (Australia) continued the presentation, noting that key updates regarding GEO Week 2019 are being consolidated into relatively few, but comprehensive, emails, the next one to be sent 30 July. He stated that the Industry Track registration would open shortly, specifying that only those organizations not included on Plenary delegations would need to register through that process. Official delegates may attend all GEO Week events with their single registration. Side event registration will be open to all. Mr Ross described the Industry Track, observing that it was similar to side events but targeted to commercial sector participants. A key opportunity for commercial sector participants is expected to be the breakfast meeting with ministers. He encouraged members of official delegations to also attend Industry Track events when they were not required to be in the Plenary room. Regarding the Exhibition, Mr Ross noted that space was limited at the facility and thus booths will be smaller than at some recent Plenary meetings. However, the Exhibition this time will be at the heart of the venue, which should encourage more visits and collaboration. Mr Ross then described the several events targeted to community, youth and indigenous participants. These include a public open session in the Exhibition, career talks for students or early-career individuals, a session on citizen science, and a session on indigenous participation, focusing on the Pacific islands and Australia. Regarding delegation lists, a second invitation will be sent from the host minister to GEO Principals, requesting identification of a minister or an official representative of the minister (such as an ambassador). If no official is designated, the GEO Member will not have an official representative at the Ministerial Summit. Plenary statements are being requested early to permit them to be circulated to attendees in advance of the meeting; this is intended to make discussions more efficient, although the statements may be modified during the Plenary. Mr Ross noted that the visa process is started through the registration tool managed by the Secretariat, thus the need to register early. Simultaneous translation in the UN languages will also be available during the Summit, if an advance request is made on behalf of minister.

#### **4.1 GEO Ministerial (Document 48.10 – for discussion)**

##### *4.1.1 Canberra Declaration*

CEOS noted that they had missed the comment period for draft zero, but is willing to support drafting of text related to space-based observations, if desired. It was recognized that individual space agencies may also engage through their national GEO Members.

Australia observed that it was likely that delegations will make announcements during GEO Week that have not been indicated earlier. For this reason, it will not be possible to lock the text of the Declaration in advance. Australia agrees that there should be a base text that all GEO Members have agreed to, but there may be additional text based on announcements or other decisions by ministers on the day. The MWG will aim to minimize any additional text, but it is not realistic to expect that there will not be other items to incorporate into the Declaration.

The Secretariat Director stated that the Secretariat was very satisfied with the effort being put into the preparations by Australia and the MWG. He questioned, however, whether the date of the next Summit should be postponed to closer to the end of the current mandate (which extends to 2025).

Germany expressed the view that there was insufficient mention of accomplishments since 2016 in the Declaration. On the other hand, it was observed that there were redundancies in the text on the digital economy that could be removed. A question was asked regarding the process for setting the text prior to the meeting.

The European Commission praised the teams, noting that a lot of good work had been done, while recognizing that it was difficult at times to reconcile all of the comments and input received. The Commission looked forward to a more stable version of the Declaration, viewing the current version as too long. It was suggested that the list of achievements and announcements could be included in a separate document, rather than in the Declaration itself. Further, while the focus on the commercial sector and the digital economy are important, in the current draft text they overshadow the discussion of the GEO engagement priorities and the plans for future years. These need to come out more strongly and clearly. If the intention is to leave one or two issues open for ministers to discuss, these need to be clearly described and ministers prepared. It is important for internal decision making that the text expresses political intentions and not legally-binding commitments. Finally, particular attention is needed on how to frame messages concerning climate.

South Africa thanked the MWG members. They agreed that the current draft of the Declaration is much too long and too broad in terms of the issues it addresses; it must be distilled down to a few priority issues. Regarding the optional (“bracketed”) text, the view was expressed that this is a risky strategy, noting that even if declarations are never final until the Summit, having bracketed text going into the Summit may open up the entire text for renegotiation, for which there would be insufficient time. GEO should strive for a close-to-final text, with the aim to have ministers adopt that text at the Summit.

Japan expressed their sincere gratitude to the co-chairs of the MWG. They noted that it is important to stress sustainability of Earth observations, particularly in priority areas. Also, as the Strategic Plan will be expected to continue to be applied following the Summit, the Declaration should not highlight its weaknesses.

The United States concurred with the comments regarding the length of the Declaration and the need to reduce redundancy. Commitments and testimonials should not be included in the Declaration itself and any future commitments should not be specific. It is important not to keep too much of the text open until the Summit.

China agreed with the previous comments on the length of the Declaration and on the approval process. Time is required for inter-ministry consultations on the text, which is difficult if the text is substantially modified at the Summit.

Iain Williams responded on behalf of the MWG, noting the comments on the length of the Declaration and on moving commitments to a separate document. He agreed that there is certainly redundancy remaining which can be removed, saying that he had no doubt that the next version would be much shorter. However, it was important not to

reduce for its own sake; if something needs to be said, it should be said. He also agreed with the need to rebalance the focus on industry engagement and digital economy with the focus on the GEO engagement priorities. The MWG had discussed this, but perhaps had not yet found the right balance. Regarding commitments, Mr Williams noted that it was likely not a good precedent to endorse particular programmes or initiatives as this might create more expectations of such endorsements in future. Regarding the use of bracketed text, he agreed with the comments that this should not be allowed as a basis for opening up other agreed text.

Stuart Minchin added that Canberra Declaration may be longer than the Mexico City Declaration since in the case of the latter it was possible to refer to an external document, the Strategic Plan. He stated that he saw it as a sign of strength in GEO that there was a lot to talk about; while this did not mean having unnecessary padding, the document could be two or three pages in length.

The United States added that 2023 should be retained as the date for the next Summit, as it would set the frame for the post-2025 Strategic Plan.

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee:

- Thanked the members of the Ministerial Working Group (MWG) for their efforts, noting the excellent progress that has been made;
- Recommended that the MWG reduce the length of the draft Declaration, primarily through reduction of duplication in the text;
- Recommended that references to past achievements and to announcements from GEO Members should be moved to a separate document;
- Recommended that the balance between the focus on the digital economy and engagement of the commercial sector, on the one hand, and the GEO engagement priorities, on the other, should be shifted more in the direction of the latter;
- Recommended that the inclusion of optional (“bracketed”) text in the draft Declaration be minimized or avoided, noting that the inclusion of optional text does not imply that the main text is open to negotiation at the Summit; and
- Expressed its intent to ensure that commitments in the Declaration remain voluntary and not legally binding.

#### 4.1.2 *Ministerial Agenda*

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee endorsed the draft agenda for the Ministerial Summit as a working document.

#### 4.1.3 *Ministerial Round Table*

Australia reminded Executive Committee members that the ministerial round table is being organized by the host minister and so is not under the control of GEO, although it can make recommendations.

The Secretariat Director noted that the proposed discussion topics for the round table were not closely linked to the core issues being discussed at the Summit. Would background documents be sent to ministers in advance of the discussions?

China agreed that background papers should be distributed and asked when the topics for the round table would be defined.

Australia confirmed that background papers would be prepared by Australia once the topics are decided. The final set of topics should be decided by the host minister shortly. While the participants will be primarily ministers, the decision on who to invite is up to the host minister.

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee took note of the preparations for the Ministerial Round Table and recommended that background documents to inform participants about the final topics for discussion be distributed in advance of the meeting.

#### 4.1.4 *Engaging Ministers*

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee encouraged GEO Members to engage their ministers to seek their participation in the Summit. Members were also requested to provide their Plenary and Ministerial delegate lists to the Secretariat as soon as possible.

## 4.2 **GEO-XVI and GEO Week 2019**

### 4.2.1 *GEO-XVI Agenda*

Australia stated that they would find some time early in the Plenary agenda where GEO Members might raise any outstanding issues with the Declaration.

Germany supported the proposal from Australia and asked where on the agenda the Plenary would formally recommend the Declaration to the Summit.

The United States asked, for the engagement priority sessions, who would propose the outcomes and recommendations. Would this be the Plenary chair or the session facilitator?

Virginia Burkett responded that the outcomes and recommendations would be prepared by the session facilitator and their helpers, but will be presented by the Plenary chair.

Patricia Geddes added that the outcomes and recommendations will be based on the input from Plenary participants during the discussion. This responds to previous comments from GEO Members that they would like more opportunities to provide input.

Australia said that the majority of the time in the sessions will be for open discussion. While it may be possible to request copies of the presentations by the speakers in advance, the outcomes and recommendations can only be developed in real time during the discussion.

Japan asked what the precise role is for the facilitator and whether they would also be responsible for preparing the session outcomes and recommendations.

Australia responded that the facilitator plays a leadership role for the session to help shape the discussion. They will not be expected to record the outcomes, which will be done by support staff and provided to them for review and revision.

The European Commission asked, for the demonstration of the GEO Knowledge Hub, whether the proof of concept would be a computer demonstration or a paper. Clarification was also sought regarding the other “demonstrators” that would be shown during the Plenary.

The Secretariat Director responded that the Secretariat would provide a demonstration of the technology, but would also go beyond this to examine other issues relevant to

implementation, as the Executive Committee had requested. The Knowledge Hub demonstration would be based on the GEOGLAM case and discuss the challenges and process for scaling it across the GEO Work Programme.

The Lead Co-Chair added that the other demonstrators are not related to the Results Oriented GEOSS.

Australia added that there should be a formal request to Plenary for a mandate to continue implementation of the Results Oriented GEOSS.

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee:

- Endorsed the draft agenda for the GEO-XVI Plenary as a working document;
- Requested further clarification of the process by which the session outcomes and recommendations would be developed; and
- Noted that the item on the Results Oriented GEOSS should include a request for Plenary to delegate authority to the Executive Committee on whether to continue the development of the GEO Knowledge Hub.

#### 4.2.2 *Side Events*

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee endorsed the proposed approach for the side events.

#### 4.2.3 *Industry Track*

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee encouraged GEO Members to broaden their Plenary delegations to include ministries dealing with industry and/or commercial sector participants.

#### 4.2.4 *Exhibition*

#### 4.2.5 *Community, Youth and Indigenous Engagement*

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee welcomed the Community, Youth and Indigenous engagement activities and the GEO Awards ceremony, recognizing them as useful innovations.

#### 4.2.6 *Logistics Update*

### 4.3 **Resource Mobilization (Document 47.9 – for discussion)**

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee noted the considerable success that has been achieved with Digital Earth Africa and the GEO-AWS Cloud Credits Programme and suggested that lessons be drawn from these initiatives that could inform other resource mobilization efforts.

## 5 **UPDATE FROM THE WMO CONGRESS**

Ms Elena Manaenkova, Deputy Secretary-General of the WMO, began by thanking the Executive Committee for the invitation to speak with them, noting her personal background in observations. Her comments would focus primarily on the outcomes of the 18<sup>th</sup> World Meteorological Congress.

Ms Manaenkova noted that WMO has been operating for 146 years, focusing initially on marine navigation, later adding support to air navigation, agriculture and hydrology. Now, the focus is shifting to an Earth-system approach and providing services to a broad range of users. The reform of WMO's constituent bodies, which was just approved, is an integrated response to changes in international agendas and frameworks; social, political and economic trends; and advances in science and technology. Other UN organizations are similarly engaged in their own reform processes. In this reform, WMO for the first time took a top-down look from the drivers of change, to the organization's objectives, to the appropriate structure. The new system is intended to be based on performance and results. WMO recognizes that many of the key risks to the world economy are related to issues under the WMO mandate; WMO's job is to help its members have access to data and forecasts so they can deliver forecasts and information to users in their countries. WMO also has a role in providing policy advice to the UN community.

The objectives of the reform were to take a seamless and integrated approach; engage members and partners; operate effectively and efficiently; and remain agile and responsive to new challenges. Ms Manaenkova noted that relatively few WMO members had been engaged in its constituent bodies, processes were too slow, and it was difficult to respond to new challenges. As the number of constituent bodies increases, collaboration among them becomes more difficult. The WMO Integrated Global Observing System (WIGOS) set the model for how the observing system can be brought together. The new Commission for Observation, Infrastructure and Information Systems will bring together all those involved in data collection, exchange, and processing into one place. Work on development of services and applications to inform decision making will be under the Commission for Weather, Climate, Water and Related Environmental Services and Applications. The Research Board on Weather, Climate, Water and the Environment will translate the strategic aims of WMO into research priorities and programmes. The governance structure will also be streamlined, with fewer bodies for WMO management. Regional Associations were also given an enhanced role, including increased collaboration with the technical Commissions.

Ms Manaenkova stated that the WMO Strategic Plan is centred around five long-term goals that are based on the value chain. Priorities remain the same as before: reducing loss of life and damage due to hydrometeorological extremes; building resilience and adaptation to climate risk; and providing socio-economic value through weather, climate, hydrological and related environmental services. Achieving the objectives of the Strategic Plan requires increased collaboration with partner organizations, including both UN organizations such as the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), as well as organizations outside the UN system. The regulations regarding collaboration with other UN bodies have now been completely revised. All organizations with which WMO has agreements can simply identify experts to work together, with no need for separate agreements. The Congress also adopted the "Geneva Declaration – 2019: Building Community for Weather, Climate and Water Actions", which is intended to strengthen links between public, private and academic sectors to tackle risks related to extreme weather, climate, water and other environmental events. Rules and principles will be developed regarding cooperation with the private sector,

Mr Fernando Belda, Director of Observations at the WMO, began by noting his previous involvement with GEO, particularly on the development of the GEOSS Common Infrastructure. Mr Belda referred to a Congress decision regarding the Global Basic Observing Network (GBON), a subset of the surface-based elements of WIGOS which, in combination with space-based and other surface-based observing systems, will contribute to meeting the requirements of global numerical weather prediction (NWP) and climate reanalysis. GBON is intended to address certain known deficiencies in observing networks that impact the quality of NWP and climate reanalysis products. Mr Belda then reviewed the status of WIGOS implementation, noting that a key challenge is to incorporate data from sectors beyond meteorology. He then briefly introduced the WMO Information System (WIS), which enables WMO members to find, access and exchange data and information. Some of the data are public but others are restricted to authorized users. Data in WIS comes from National Centres and other registered providers.

Mr Belda then turned to a list of 11 WMO-GEO key collaboration areas, which had been approved by WMO and GEO in 2016. Recognizing that progress in these areas was less than expected, the recommendation going forward was to concentrate on a smaller set of areas, five of which were tentatively identified in discussion with the GEO Secretariat Director. Further work will be required to define specific activities needed in each of the areas.

Ms Manaenkova concluded by inviting the GEO community and leadership to become involved in the upcoming World Data Conference in 2020, which will lead to a revision to the WMO data policy.

The Lead Co-Chair thanked the presenters and opened the floor for questions and comments from Executive Committee members. He suggested that the key aspect will be to decide how WMO and GEO will work together going forward.

The United States agreed that they would like to focus on areas of WMO-GEO collaboration. It was noted that there was no mention of collaboration on services? Was that part of the previous discussion? How would WMO and GEO avoid duplication or conflict in this area?

Australia stated that WMO has a long history of delivering services in water, weather and climate. GEO is moving to provide services in domains such as agriculture, pollutants, biodiversity and many others. The GEO community is focused on services beyond those that WMO provides and that may be complementary. Are there areas where we could collaborate on the underlying data that might support both WMO services and GEO services?

The Secretariat Director thanked the guests for their presentations, suggesting that this meeting would have a large impact going forward. He noted that the previous list of areas of collaboration was very ambitious, but now must be more practical and focus on what we have the capacity to do. The Director suggested that, before looking at services, GEO and WMO should try to understand what users need. First, identify what is needed, then what capacities both organizations have, and then the systems that support them. He drew attention to the overlap between the experts advising WMO and the members



of the GEO Expert Advisory Group, which showed that both have similar concerns and draw from the same small pool of experts.

Switzerland said that they were impressed by the strategic move by WMO toward a central role in the coming decades. They are enthusiastic about the services that WMO will provide. Both organizations should respect the mandates and roles of each organization, as well as the privileged relationship that GEO has with WMO. It was recommended that a working-level relationship be established for collaboration in each of the five proposed areas. Some of the joint experts mentioned may provide some institutional bridges. The possibility of having the WMO-GEO collaboration areas endorsed by the Congress was suggested.

Ms Manaenkova stated that she feels like she is among family with GEO. This is not a question of you and us, it is about “we”. We serve the same member governments and the same users; we are in the same business. WMO’s mandate is limited to certain issues and it is clear where it starts and ends. Congress recognized that the first business of WMO is to enable its members to produce good services. Second, it needs to fix the problems with the global infrastructure. This will need to involve the private sector, although the core infrastructure should remain public. The red line for WMO is on warnings, which must be issued only by government agencies. Everything else is up for discussion. Third, there is a need to define what constitutes an authoritative source. Government meteorological services are no longer the only authoritative source; WMO needs to face this and manage it. The path is to let our partners offer services to our users. Ms Manaenkova suggested not waiting until the next Congress to have confirmation of the collaboration areas, recommending to work pragmatically.

*Ms Manaenkova and Mr Belda left the meeting due to other engagements.*

Australia suggested that GEO see the WMO reform process as an opportunity. WMO is examining what they do and are looking for synergies.

The United States observed that the reform is a big step for WMO and will take time to be fully realized. GEO should focus on serving our customers and look at how WMO might help us. WMO should also be encouraged to engage with the GEO Programme Board more actively.

South Africa agreed that this is an opportunity for GEO. However, the proposed key collaboration areas are too narrow, focused mainly on infrastructure. These should be broadened to include services, especially in areas where the meteorological services do are not engaged. GEO and the Executive Committee need to spend more time to understand how the restructuring might impact GEO. This may require a more detailed discussion post-Plenary and/or putting a small team in place to prepare a discussion document.

The Secretariat Director said that he would welcome a mandate to prepare a discussion paper for the Executive Committee on the collaboration areas and what they would mean for GEO. GEO needs to be realistic about what can be done within existing resources. In the Director’s view, GEO should avoid making any commitment on services since GEO itself, including the Secretariat, do not produce any services; they are only from GEO Work Programme activities. At this point there are few operational services and thus is it too early to discuss services with WMO.

Australia stated that the collaboration areas should not be viewed as between the GEO Secretariat and the WMO Secretariat, but between GEO Members and WMO members.

The European Commission supported the point by Australia. GEO should be seen as an overall umbrella for the GEO community, that is, of its Members and Participating Organizations.

Italy expressed the view that, as it lacks a legally-binding mandate as WMO has, GEO can at best contribute to the WMO mandate. It can contribute a lot, however. There are many services within the GEO community, but many of them are still in a development phase, with no longer-term plans to make them operational. The Secretariat Director's caution was understandable; GEO should not overpromise what it cannot deliver.

The United States responded that GEO does contribute to the mission of WMO, but also to the missions of many other international organizations. Each member agency has their own mandate. GEO should proceed with a positive intent for collaboration, but cautiously. This should not change the direction and priorities for the Secretariat.

Australia suggested that the initial discussion paper should be kept simple: analyse the 11 initial areas and why the five areas were proposed going forward. Wait to see if it is necessary to set up a task force to work on the collaboration.

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee:

- Thanked Ms Manaenkova and Mr Belda for their presentations and welcomed the openness of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) to discussing collaboration with GEO.
- Encouraged GEO Member Principals to engage with their national meteorological agencies and other partners within their government to facilitate collaboration with WMO and other international organizations.

**Action 48.5:** The Secretariat to prepare a discussion document regarding collaboration between GEO and the WMO, including an analysis of the original collaboration areas and recommendations on which areas should be the focus for future efforts. **Due: 50<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee meeting (following the GEO-XVI Plenary).**

## 7 GEO RULES OF PROCEDURE

### 7.1 Changes to the Rules of Procedure – Inclusion of paragraphs on Intellectual Property (Document 48.15 – for decision)

Patricia Geddes introduced the item, noting that it originated from a recommendation of the GEO Rules for Associates (GRASS) subgroup as part of their work on the GEO Associate category. The proposed addition with respect to intellectual property was not included with the other changes to the Rules of Procedure approved at the GEO-XV Plenary as it would apply to GEO Members and Participating Organizations as well and thus needed broader consultation.

Germany proposed that the references to “shall” in the second paragraph be changed to “should”. The reason for the change is that the current wording would impose a requirement that goes beyond existing commitments by GEO Members and Participating Organizations. Further, such a requirement could not be enforced by GEO.

Australia agreed, saying that while the proposed language might be desirable, it goes further than was agreed in the GEOSS Data Sharing Principles.

The Secretariat Director raised a potential issue in which some work within GEO Work Programme activities might be based on restricted data and thereby lead to products or services whose access might be restricted. Such restrictions should be known by all participants in those Work Programme activities beforehand.

The United States pointed out that the first paragraph of the proposed changes states that any products, etc. brought into a GEO Work Programme activity may be restricted. It is only what is developed within the GEO Work Programme that must be open. Further, a product, etc. developed outside the GEO Work Programme but based on GEO Work Programme products, etc. may also be restricted.

Germany added that the language in the second paragraph is inconsistent with European activities receiving Commission grants, as the proponents of these projects have a right to the intellectual property developed in the projects. An unintended consequence of the use of the word “shall” could be to require these projects to exit the GEO Work Programme.

**Outcomes:** The Executive Committee approved the proposed addition with the following revisions:

- In the second paragraph, both instances of the word “shall” will be replaced with “should”; and
- A sentence will be added to the end of the second paragraph to the effect that organizations that are unable to comply with the expectation, due to legal or other constraints, should document these restrictions in advance of their involvement in the GEO Work Programme activity (or as soon as possible in the case of existing contributors).

## 8 SECRETARIAT BUSINESS

### 8.1 2018 Financial Statements and Audit Report (Document 48.16 – for decision in advance of the GEO-XVI Plenary)

Mr Brian Cover, Chief of the Finance Division of WMO, presented the financial statements and audit report. Turning first to the Statement of Financial Position, he said that GEO had a healthy financial position, as the cash balance of CHF 4.4 million would cover the combined liabilities of CHF 1.5 million, plus deferred revenue, as well as operating expenses for the first half of the year. He noted that the liabilities include long-term employee benefit liabilities, adding that funds should continue to be earmarked for this purpose. The year-end fund balance increased by CHF 1 million in 2018 due to an annual surplus that year plus an actuarial gain. He advised that the need to maintain a sufficient reserve needed to be balanced with spending funds on services to members. Regarding the Statement of Financial Performance, Mr Cover observed that contributions to the GEO Trust Fund increased by over 50% as compared to 2017, but this would not necessarily be true for 2019. He advised that GEO watch the track on revenue. Expenses in 2018 were generally the same as in 2017, other than the reduction in seconded staff. Spending was somewhat higher than budgeted, but the additional

spending was based on contributions for specific purposes. In conclusion, GEO's financial position remains sound and the audit was clean. There was an improvement in the financial position due to an increase in contributions.

The European Commission stated that they were pleased to see the clean audit report, which makes it easier to maintain contributions to GEO.

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee thanked Mr Cover for his presentation and thanked Patricia Geddes and the WMO finance team for their excellent collaboration in managing GEO finances.

## 8.2 Interim Statement of Income and Expenditure at 31 May 2019 and Projections for 2019 (Document 48.7 (Rev.1) – for information)

Stuart Minchin gave a brief presentation on behalf of the Budget Working Group. He reminded Executive Committee members that sending their contributions early in the year enables those funds to be expended in that same year. Mr Minchin drew attention to some funds that have been set aside to support travel to meetings by representatives from developing countries. Australia has also provided additional funds for attendance by developing countries at regional meetings and at GEO Week 2019, including by ministers.

The United States asked about the status of outreach to least-developed countries and to Pacific islands. Mr Minchin responded that Australia is working with the GEO Secretariat on a strategy for informing countries about travel support to GEO Week.

Patricia Geddes noted that the Budget Working Group will convene in late August or early September to discuss the 2020 Trust Fund budget. The focus will be on encouraging pledges at the Plenary and Summit.

The Secretariat Director pointed out that the Secretariat is at an historical low in terms of secondments. While the Secretariat remains pleased to receive secondments, it gains more by having permanent staff. He requested that, if secondments are provided, they should be at a senior level. If secondments are not forthcoming, the Secretariat will need to rely on cash contributions to hire staff. He reminded Executive Committee members that in a small Secretariat, even one additional staff member can make a significant difference. He encouraged GEO Members to make contributions to the Trust Fund, noting that the highest priority for staffing is for an SDG coordinator.

South Africa added that they have provided funds to RCMRD to maintain the AfriGEO Secretariat. This is recognized in the statements.

Australia reminded Executive Committee members that the GEO-XVI Plenary offers an opportunity to make pledges for the following year. This is especially important in a Summit year to demonstrate strong support for GEO. It also gives greater security to the Secretariat on planning for the upcoming year. The contributions announced may only be for part of the entire planned contribution, if the Member is unable to commit to the full amount.

**Outcome:** The Executive Committee:

- Thanked the Budget Working Group members for the presentation and their work; and

- Encouraged GEO Members to announce their contributions for 2020 at the GEO-XVI Plenary.

### **8.3 Any Other Business**

No items were raised.

### **8.4 Review of Action Items**

The Executive Committee reviewed and approved the Outcomes and Action Items from the meeting.

### **8.5 Closing Remarks**

The Co-Chairs thanked all participants and thanked the Lead Co-Chair for a well-managed meeting.

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