

Statement of Italy
at Cape Town Ministerial Summit of the Group on Earth Observations
(30 November 2007)

Mr Chairman,
Honourable Minister Mangena,
Honourable Ministers,
Mr. Director of the GEO Secretariat,
Distinguished delegates,

The Italian delegation wishes to express its gratitude to the Government of South Africa for the excellent organisation of the GEO IV as well as of this Ministerial Summit. The hospitality provided by our host is remarkable and has allowed us to develop much fruitful discussions. South Africa has been once again the most wonderful host.

Mr Chairman,

Italy has been among the Countries which have contributed to the birth of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) in 2002. We have always been supporting this initiative politically, financially, and through the provision of know-how. We would like to reaffirm the interest of the Italian Government in a programme striving to combine remote sensing with in-situ data. The combination of remote sensing and in-situ data not only reflects the fruitfulness of interdisciplinary cooperation, but also facilitates the necessary interaction between providers and users of Earth observation services and products. Italy believes that this is key in meeting urgent global environmental challenges such as climate change, desertification and biodiversity. Only if the Global Earth Observation Systems of Systems (GEOSS) is successful in this effort, the benefits will be shared by all stakeholders and our citizens.

This is the main reason why we support this Group on Earth Observations (GEO). We strongly believe that GEO represents the most suited environment, in the frame of Earth observation, to promote a mutually beneficial global cooperation.

The Italian space programme COSMO-SkyMed is one the main contributions that Italy currently offers to the space component of the Global Earth Observation Systems of Systems (GEOSS). We believe that the success achieved together with our partners in this programme, Argentina and France, will open new opportunities also to the less technologically advanced countries. I invite the honourables delegates to look at the information on this initiative at page 27 of the Annex of Early Achievements.

I have also pleasure in announcing another initiative consistent with the GEO principles. This is the CBERS programme, a partnership between Brasil, China, Spain, South Africa and Italy. In the open cooperation framework of CBERS the data are put at disposal for free to the users, once again fully meeting the expectations of the GEO community. In this programme Italy operates 2 of the 4 ground stations in Italy and Kenya.

Italy is glad to remark that the Global Earth Observation Systems of Systems (GEOSS) is being developed and achieves results through a real cooperation among all stakeholders, as the success of COSMO-SkyMed and CBERS demonstrate.

As for the non-space component, which Italy considers at least as important as the space one, we are keen in continuing with the provision of in-situ data, which include both marine and terrestrial data. In particular, we wish to pinpoint the strong expertise we bring to the Global Earth Observation Systems of Systems (GEOSS) in the field of geo-hazards, such as landslides, earthquakes and volcanism. Italy is fully involved with several Italian institutions in the GEO initiative. I invite the honourable delegates to visit the poster describing the new environmental seismic scale developed by the Italian Environmental Protection Agency together with other international organisation. We are committed to continue sharing our experience in the application and services relevant to the majority of the GEO Societal Benefit Areas, such as disasters, water and climate.

Mr Chairman,

Italy shares the GEO main objectives and the principles of democracy that lie at the basis of an open exchange of data and information, and is fully aware that the success of GEO is based on a broad worldwide participation. Also for this reason, we fully endorse the Cape Town declaration.

Italy, therefore, believes that the effort already carried out by the GEO Members and Participating Organisations, together with the Secretariat, in enlarging the number of countries represented should be continued and further supported. We are also strongly committed to contribute at further improving the management of the Secretariat, in order to quickly achieve results that facilitate the political and financial commitment from those countries that are more involved.

Thank you.