



GROUP ON
EARTH OBSERVATIONS

GEO-VI

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Role of Participating Organizations

Document 20

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1 BACKGROUND

At the Fifth Plenary session of the intergovernmental Group on Earth Observations (GEO-V), held in Bucharest, Romania in November 2008, the Executive Committee was given the following action:

***GEO-V Plenary Outcome 2:** The Executive Committee was asked to present a note to Plenary elaborating the expectations of GEO Members regarding the added-value of GEO Participating Organisations.*

The role of Participating Organizations in GEO is established by Section 3.3 of the negotiated GEOSS 10-Year Implementation Plan:

Membership in GEO is open to all member States of the United Nations and to the European Commission. GEO welcomes, as Participating Organizations, intergovernmental, international, and regional organizations with a mandate in Earth observation or related activities, subject to approval by GEO Members. GEO may invite other relevant entities to participate in its activities as observers.

The “Guidelines for Recognition of New GEO Participating Organizations and Observers” were agreed at the GEO-III Plenary session in Bonn, Germany, and are provided in Annex C of the GEO Rules of Procedure. (See appendix).

2 THE GROWTH TRAJECTORY OF GEO MEMBERSHIP

The first Earth Observation Summit was convened in Washington, DC in July 2003 and attended by high-level officials from 33 countries, the European Commission and 21 international organisations involved in Earth observations. GEO has now expanded its membership to almost 80 governments and the European Commission, and some 56 intergovernmental, international, and regional organisations with a mandate in Earth observation or related issues have been recognised as Participating Organizations.

Every year, GEO continues to receive applications for membership and for recognition of new Participating Organisations. It has become necessary for GEO to streamline the process of recognising aspiring Participating Organisations as numbers continue to grow. This requires considering further how these new Participating Organisations will enhance GEOSS by their participation.

While it is still deemed necessary to open up opportunities for more Participating Organisations, the challenge is to make sure that all organisations participate meaningfully and in a coordinated fashion, especially given that some of the current requests for recognition come from entities affiliated to or linked to existing Members and Participating Organisations. Such entities should be encouraged to maximize their roles in Committees and task teams through their affiliations or links to existing Members and Participating Organisations.

3 ADDED VALUE OF PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

The value of including Participating Organizations in GEO stems from the global breadth and scope envisioned for GEOSS, as described in the GEOSS 10-Year Implementation Plan Section 3.2 Scope of GEOSS:

GEOSS will provide the overall conceptual and organizational framework to build towards integrated global Earth observations to meet user needs. GEOSS will be a “system of systems” consisting of existing and future Earth observation systems, supplementing but not supplanting their own mandates and governance arrangements. It will provide the institutional mechanisms for ensuring the necessary level of coordination, strengthening and supplementation of existing global Earth observation systems, and for reinforcing and supporting them in carrying out their mandates.

GEOSS will capture the success of Earth observation research programs, and facilitate their transition to sustained operational use.

The established Earth observation systems, through which many countries cooperate as members of the United Nations Specialised Agencies and Programmes and as contributors to international scientific programs, provide essential building blocks for GEOSS. The implementation of GEOSS will seek to ensure effective consultation and cooperation with the UN system and other international and national agencies sponsoring or cosponsoring the major component global observing systems on which GEOSS will be built.

The contributing systems will range across the processing cycle, from primary observation to information production. Through GEOSS, they will share observations and products with the system as a whole, and will take the necessary steps to ensure that the shared observations and products are accessible, comparable, and understandable, by supporting common standards and adaptation to users needs.

GEOSS aspires to encompass all areas of the world, and to cover in situ, airborne, and space-based observations. GEOSS will be primarily focused on issues of regional and global scale and cross-sectoral applications, while also facilitating, if so invited, the operation and enhancement of Earth observing systems that are focused on national, local, and sector-specific needs. GEOSS will promote capacity building in Earth observation, building on existing local, national, regional, and international initiatives

The inclusion of Participating Organizations and observers in GEO is necessary to achieve this scope. The specific added value of Participating Organizations should therefore flow from their ability to contribute **meaningfully** to the work of creating GEOSS in the following ways:

- facilitating Earth observation capacity building activities among GEO Members, in concert with GEO Participating Organisations;
- contributing data, information, systems and expertise to facilitate the implementation of GEOSS;
- contributing to specific tasks in the GEO work plan.

4 NOTE TO THE GEO PLENARY

The Executive Committee recommends that GEO reserve Participating Organization status for those organizations most capable of contributing meaningfully to GEOSS implementation as outlined above.

APPENDIX**ANNEX C TO THE GEO RULES OF PROCEDURE****GUIDANCE FOR RECOGNITION
OF NEW GEO PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS AND OBSERVERS**

Entities requesting official recognition as a GEO Participating Organization will be considered based on the following guidelines:

- 1 The entity must meet the criteria specified in Section 3. 3 of the GEOSS 10-Year Implementation Plan:

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- 2 The entity must endorse the GEOSS 10-Year Implementation Plan, consistent with Rule 2. 1 of the GEO Rules of Procedure:

Membership and Participation is contingent upon formal endorsement of the Implementation Plan.

- 3 A sub-programme or subgroup of a currently recognized Participating Organization need not be considered for independent recognition.

- 4 Joint programmes (programmes established under the auspices of two or more recognized Participating Organizations) may be designated by the Plenary as observers or Participating Organizations. Such programmes must fulfill the above criteria (1 and 2).

- 5 GEO may invite other relevant entities to participate in its activities as observers. Observers may be invited to send representatives to GEO Committees and to participate fully in specific GEO activities.

- 6 Before each Plenary, the Executive Committee will review requests for recognition received by the Secretariat, and will recommend Participating Organizations and observers for recognition by the Plenary.

- 7 The Plenary will make decisions on the requests for recognition according to Paragraph 2. 2 of the GEO Rules of Procedure, taking into account the recommendation by the Executive Committee. Paragraph 2. 2 of the Rules of Procedure states:

2. 2 Decisions. Plenary decisions will be made by consensus of GEO Members present.