

*ESA Formal Statement to the
Twelfth Plenary Session of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO-
XII)*

Chairman, Distinguished Guests.

ESA fully supports the strategic approach proposed in the GEO Strategic Plan 2016-2025. We recognize the unique convening power of GEO and appreciate the need to further engage user communities, including UN agencies as well as major international financial institutions. ESA has long worked in partnership with a range of International Finance Institutions and will sign an agreement with the World Bank on the occasion of COP-21. However, it is much preferable that such partnership should be multilateral rather than bilateral, and ESA supports strongly the potential participation of WB at GEO.

ESA also welcomes the ambition to define a coherent, comprehensive suite of requirements of the revised SBAs. These are all major strategic steps forward for GEO. Some aspects of GEO are unique; it is on these that we should concentrate our efforts.

Since its inception, ESA has been a substantial contributor to GEO either through the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS) or directly as Lead of several GEO WP tasks & components.

ESA operates a fleet of satellites, the latest being Sentinel-2 that was launched on 23 June 2015, which together provide data to more than 12 thousand user projects worldwide, more than 750 Terabytes of data per year free of charge. We anticipate, enthusiastically, that this will increase substantially in the coming years.

Together with GEO partners, ESA is significantly involved in major GEO initiatives such as the Global Forest Observation Initiative and GEOGLAM; when S-3 is launched later this year over half of all GEOGLAM data will be provided through the Sentinel missions.

The Climate Change Initiative of ESA is providing high-quality products in response to the needs of the climate community, underpinning many of the GEO societal priorities.

In the area of disaster risk management, CEOS Agencies led by ESA are working with the major relevant stakeholders in implementing the new GEO-DARMA disaster risk reduction initiative in line with the top priorities identified in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030”

ESA is also an important contributor to other GEO initiatives such as the Global Carbon Strategy, the Geohazards Supersites, GEO BON and AfriGEOSS with the on-going TIGER programme that, since 2002, has involved more than 150 water authorities and research institutes from 42 African nations.

All these examples illustrate the magnitude of resources allocated by Participating Organisations related to Earth observation from space making a vital contribution to the success of GEO.

We support strongly the strategic approach of the new GEO and its revised governance which reflects much better the importance of Participating Organisations in delivering against GEO priorities.

Lastly, I would like to express my sincerest thanks to the Mexican Government and to the GEO Secretariat for the excellent organization of this very important and successful Plenary.

Thank you.