

GEO Statement on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

This document is submitted by the Programme Board to the 17th Plenary for decision.

1 INTRODUCTION

Early 2020, GEO Programme Board formed an Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Subgroup (EDI SG). This Subgroup supports the strategic aim of developing GEO as an institution that provides a fair, supportive and encouraging networking environment with which a diverse set of participants engage responsibly. It also aims to ensure that equality, diversity, and inclusivity are fully considered, addressed, and embedded within GEO activities and decisions.

Initial discussions within the Subgroup quickly highlighted the need for GEO to establish and widely promote its vision and commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion, through the production of a GEO-wide statement. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion position statements are public-facing documents articulating an institution's vision and commitments to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. They are commonly published by institutions which aim to place Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion at the heart of their functioning. A GEO EDI statement was drafted and submitted by the EDI SG to Programme Board early 2021; the revised version (see Annex A) was approved as the basis for consultation by the GEO Executive Committee at its 54th meeting (March 2021).

2 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

The GEO Executive Committee, at its March 2021 meeting, called on the EDI SG to consult broadly with the community on the pertinence and relevance of the GEO EDI statement. Subsequently, on 21 June 2021, the EDI SG, in collaboration with the Regional GEOs, held a parallel session during the 2021 GEO Virtual Symposium. The session aimed to engage (inform and solicit inputs from) the community on the GEO EDI Statement, to get the community started and build momentum in the realization of EDI in GEO.

The session was attended by 48 people, including those already in the GEO community as well as new participants in GEO events. People identified well with the five pillars and there was a general feeling that the actions articulated for each pillar are appropriate. Several participants pointed out that EDI statements may become a politically correct way to appear to address EDI issues without taking concrete action. As such, they called on EDI SG to work on building trust in the community. Other points drawn from the feedback received during this session include: (1) people wanting to be able to engage, comment, and share their EDI experience within GEO; (2) people wanting to be able to understand what roles are available in GEO, and how to access them; (3) a request for higher visibility of under-represented communities - which could for example be helped by stronger communication around local knowledge, local stories and local champions; (4) a reminder that English as the single GEO language can be barrier for engagement for many; (5) a reminder that capacity building is an important action to promote diversity and inclusion.

Further, the Subgroup presented its activities and findings from the baseline studies that guided the development of our EDI statement in a separate Side Event (“*Taking action on gender and social inclusion in GEO initiatives*”) at the 2021 GEO Virtual Symposium. The session looked at experiences of EDI integration by GEO Work Programme activities and related groups, including GEOGLOWS, GFOI, GEOGLAM, GEOBON, and the SERVIR Program. The key outcome from this session was the recognition that inclusion is necessary for programs to identify solutions that work for all, acknowledging for example that different genders are bound to be affected by challenges differently. During the session, it was recognized that EDI discussions within GEO bring an opportunity to highlight the importance of being inclusive and be proactive about it, whether this means inclusion in management or inclusion in participation.

3 RECOMMENDATION

The Programme Board recommends that the GEO-17 Plenary approve the GEO Statement on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Annex A.

ANNEX A

GEO Statement on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Group on Earth Observations (GEO) values diversity, recognizing that successful utilization of Earth observations resources to solve humankind’s most pressing problems occurs when there is a sense of belonging for all individuals that enables them to share ideas and experiences as well as foster innovative solutions. Recognizing the value of diversity of thought and life experiences, GEO therefore commits to supporting the development of a dynamic, diverse, and inclusive Earth observation community in which everyone is given the opportunity to participate and benefit, regardless of country of origin, race, gender, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, or ability. This commitment is to ensure that all members of GEO are valued and appreciated for their unique viewpoints and collaborative contributions to the vision and mission of GEO.

Our five-pillar framework outlines a vision that equality, diversity, and inclusion are considered in every aspect of GEO, answering the mandate of the GEO mission to “unlock the power of Earth observations by facilitating their accessibility and application to global decision making within and across many different domains.” We seek to achieve this vision through:

Oversight and Accountability

We have created an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Subgroup to support the strategic aim of developing GEO as an institution that provides a fair, supportive and encouraging networking environment in which a diverse group of participants engage responsibly. The Subgroup will conduct regular audits and provide recommendations to GEO governance and administration.

Community Leadership and Advocacy

We are committed to raising awareness within the Earth observation community of the benefits of inclusive participation by people from all sectors, including government institutions, civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations, academic and research institutions, businesses, and other areas of expertise to create innovative solutions to local and global challenges.

Creating a Welcoming and Supportive Environment

We strive to maximise diversity in all governance structures of GEO, including meetings and events, at all times

Outreach and Engagement

We proactively engage a wide range of stakeholder communities to understand their needs through the GEO Work Programme, Regional GEOs, GEO communication channels, as well as national and participating organization coordination mechanisms.

Empowerment through Accessibility

We advocate for and deliver on transparent and standardised accessibility to open Earth observation data, information, and knowledge through the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS).