

Australian Government Statement to Beijing GEO Ministerial, 5 November 2010

Mr Chairman,

Thank you for your very gracious welcome to your beautiful country.

On behalf of the Australian Government, I congratulate our fellow GEO Members and Participating Organisations on the achievements of GEOSS at this important five-year mark.

Australia recognises the potential of GEO to add value to both current and future Earth observation systems. By coordinating our efforts, addressing critical gaps, supporting interoperability, sharing information and striving for a common understanding of user requirements, we believe GEO, through GEOSS, can facilitate sustained global access to needed and relevant data. We value the contributed data, systems and solutions of our fellow Members and participating organisations. We look forward to working with them to fully implement GEOSS and to ensure that the GEO governance model remains relevant to its long term aspirations.

Australia particularly welcomes the GEO work on forest carbon, and looks forward to working with other countries and organisations to progress this initiative. This contribution of GEO to global forest action highlights the relevance and role for GEO and the importance of striving for a global earth observing system of systems to address these global issues.

The complimentary nature of space-based and in situ observations is vital to realizing the key GEOSS societal benefits and to the engagement of all Members. To this end, Australia supports and encourages the increasing awareness in GEO of the critical need to sustain and improve in situ observing systems, not just for 'ground-truthing' of satellite data, but because of the intrinsic value of in situ observations themselves. There are significant challenges in interoperability, coordination and sustainability of in situ observing systems, but the value of the observations, and of participation by a broader community of GEO members, is high.

Australia is currently developing a National Space Policy which will provide a vision for Australia's use of space and space-related technologies. It will have a particular focus on Earth Observation, Satellite Communication and Position, Navigation and Timing. It will express that international collaboration is vital to Australia's space efforts and will articulate Australia's role in protecting the space environment and our support of an international rules-based approach to the use of space.

Australia is committed to the GEO Data Sharing Principles and welcomes the adoption of the Data Sharing Action Plan. We will soon be presenting a Declaration of Open Government to the Australian Parliament, and through it, to our citizens. An important objective of this initiative is the use of technology as well as full and open data exchange. Our intent is to increase citizen engagement in order to maximise the economic and social value of information and reinforce its contribution to a healthy democracy.

Mr Chairman, Australia wishes to thank the Government of China for its excellent hospitality and to wish GEO and GEOSS much success as it embraces the challenges still to come.