

2020-2022 GEO Work Programme Summary Document

This document is submitted to the Program Board for decision.

1 INTRODUCTION

The GEO Work Programme Summary Document is the document that will be distributed to the GEO-XVI Plenary for approval. It contains summary descriptions of each of the GEO Work Programme Activities – GEO Flagships, Initiatives, Regional GEOs, Community Activities, and Foundational Tasks – as well as some additional explanatory information.

As was described at the beginning of the process for development of the 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme, four versions of the Summary Document were envisaged. Version 1 was made available to the broad GEO community in May 2019, in advance of the GEO Symposium. Version 2 was distributed to GEO Principals in July. Both versions were made available on the GEO website along with the detailed Implementation Plans (less the data tables).

Version 3 will be prepared following the completion of the review process and will be distributed to GEO Principals as a GEO-XVI Plenary document in late September. A final fourth version will be prepared following the GEO-XVI Plenary to incorporate any changes or additions that are made during the Plenary meeting.

Decisions regarding the GEO Work Programme activities will be addressed in items 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 of the 15th Programme Board meeting agenda. The purpose of this document is therefore to seek Programme Board direction regarding the other elements of the Summary Document.

2 MATERIAL INCLUDED IN THE SUMMARY DOCUMENT OTHER THAN GEO WORK PROGRAMME ACTIVITY DESCRIPTIONS

2.1 Preface

The preface is intended as a brief description of the document and its purpose. It states that it is a compilation of the Executive Summaries from each of the individual GEO Work Programme activities and that the full Implementation Plans are available on the GEO website and through links in the document itself. The role of the document in the development process is also described, with a request for comments and suggestions from the GEO community.

The preface will be modified in version 3 to reflect the completion of the review process and the status of the document as being considered for approval at the GEO-XVI Plenary. It will also state that further comments and contributions are welcome and that the 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme will be subject to further changes during the Work Programme period.

2.2 Table of Contents

The table of contents is based on a two-level structure. The top level contains seven sections, one for each category of GEO Work Programme activity, plus an introductory section and a section for indexes. The preface, table of contents and table of changes are not included under a top level heading. The second level is largely the listing of each of the individual GEO Work Programme activities,

which may be accessed in the document by clicking on the title of the activity. The full activity names and the short names are both listed in the table of contents.

The table of contents will remain largely the same except for the removal of references to “Candidate GEO Initiatives” and “Candidate Community Activities” and a few other changes which will be described below.

2.3 Table of Changes

A table of changes was added to the Summary Document in response to a request by the Programme Board. The table is divided into sections based on the versions of the Summary Document, for example, the first section identifies the key changes from version 4 of the 2017-2019 GEO Work Programme Summary Document and version 1 of the 2020-2022 document. The table does not aim to include specific textual changes, only the addition, movement, removal or major revision of sections, including of Work Programme activities.

In version 3 of the 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme, the changes between version 2 and version 3 will be added, but the format and the existing content will remain the same.

2.4 Introduction to the GEO Work Programme

This section describes the purpose of the GEO Work Programme, its structure – with emphasis on describing each of the categories of Work Programme activities, and the process through which the 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme was developed.

Except for minor updates to the final paragraph, this section is expected to remain as it is.

2.5 Brief History of the Group on Earth Observations

The brief history of GEO was added to the 2017-2019 GEO Work Programme Summary Document (as a Preamble) at the request of the Programme Board in 2017. It was moved to its current position in version 1 of the 2020-2022 Summary Document, with the original text largely intact.

Subject to comments from the Programme Board, this section is expected to remain in its current form.

2.6 Table of Acronyms (Proposed)

A table of acronyms appearing in the document will be included in version 3 but was not included in version 2 due to changes to many of the individual Work Programme activity summaries late in the process. As a general editorial rule, use of acronyms has been avoided to the extent possible, such as for names which appear only once.

3 DIAGRAMS BY ENGAGEMENT PRIORITY AND SOCIETAL BENEFIT AREA

At its 14th meeting, the Programme Board requested that the indexes for the Sustainable Development Goals and other GEO engagement priorities be replaced with diagrams, these to be positioned toward the front of the document. These would replace the originally proposed set of indexes at the back of the document. For comparison, the 2017-2019 GEO Work Programme Summary Document included indexes by Societal Benefit Area and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) near the front of the document, following the table of contents (although termed an alphabetical index).

Analysis of the content of the Implementation Plans regarding the relevance of each Work Programme activity to the GEO engagement priorities suggests that there is a high degree of inconsistency in the information provided such that any alignment to, for example, specific SDGs runs the risk of being misleading to readers. At a basic level, many activities claim that their work is relevant to the SDGs (or other engagement priorities) but there is no existing connection such as provision of information services to countries or international organizations; the connection is planned but not in place. For

others, there may be claims of existing connections but in many cases there is insufficient information provided to be able to understand the nature of this connection or to verify it.

While the Secretariat acknowledges the value of providing clear indications of the relevance of the GEO Work Programme to the engagement priorities, it is our position that the existing information is not of sufficient quality to permit a defensible product to be included in version 3.

In the Secretariat's assessment, it should be possible to prepare a diagram regarding the relationship to the Societal Benefit Areas, as these are GEO constructs and do not carry the same level of implications of involvement with external entities (for example, countries or international organizations) as for the engagement priorities. Such a diagram will be included in version 3 of the GEO Work Programme Summary Document, if agreed by the Programme Board.

4 OTHER CHANGES REQUESTED BY THE PROGRAMME BOARD

4.1 Information regarding connections between GEO Work Programme activities

The Programme Board also requested that information on linkages among Work Programme activities be included in the activity summaries. Consistent with the practice in the 2017-2019 GEO Work Programme, a heading in each activity summary will be added which will list any GEO Work Programme activities that were identified in the Implementation Plan as being related or in some way collaborating with that activity. This information will be included in version 3 of the Summary Document.

4.2 Consistency of detail provided in the activity summaries

The Programme Board noted at its 14th meeting that the level of detail and the type of information included in the activity summaries was not consistent. In some cases, the Secretariat supplemented the original information included in the Executive Summary of the Implementation Plans with information from other sections of the plans where the level of information was insufficient. However, it was not always possible to ensure consistency in the nature of the information provided due to the different stages of development of the activities and because the available content was limited to that provided by the proposers. The Secretariat will make further adjustments to the content of the activity sections of the Summary Document, though all text will be taken only from the 2020-2022 activity implementation plans and not from other sources. It is expected that the revisions made to the implementation plans in response to the comments from the Programme Board review teams will help in this regard.

5 RECOMMENDATION

The Secretariat recommends that the Programme Board approve the approach to the other content of the 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme Summary Document as described above.

The proposed changes, and any others determined by the Programme Board during the discussion, will be incorporated into version 3 of the Summary Document, to the extent feasible.

ANNEX A – 2020-2022 GEO WORK PROGRAMME SUMMARY DOCUMENT, VERSION 2