

Proposed Programme Board Actions in Response to the GEO Mid-Term Evaluation

This document is submitted by the Secretariat to the Programme Board for decision.

1 INTRODUCTION

This document reviews the recommendations from the GEO Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) and the Executive Committee response to the MTE, which were presented to the GEO-17 Plenary in November 2021. Some of the recommendations deal with issues within the mandate of the Programme Board, on some of which the Executive Committee has requested specific actions by the Programme Board. This document is intended to inform a discussion on possible actions that could be taken by the Programme Board, either in the context of the development of the 2023-2025 GEO Work Programme (GWP) or as separate tasks of the Programme Board.

2 BACKGROUND

The [2016-2025 GEO Strategic Plan Reference Document](#) called for two comprehensive evaluations to be conducted, with one mid-way through the Strategic Plan period and the other near the end. Following a recommendation by the Executive Committee at its 45th meeting, the GEO-XV Plenary directed that a comprehensive MTE be commenced in 2019. Terms of reference for the MTE were approved at the 47th Executive Committee meeting and a request for nominations to the MTE team which would conduct the evaluation was sent to the GEO community.

The MTE team began its work in February 2020 at a meeting at the Secretariat offices in Geneva. The team presented an interim report to the 53rd Executive Committee meeting in November 2020 and its final report to the 55th Executive Committee meeting in July 2021. Except for the initial meeting, the MTE team worked at a distance due to the COVID pandemic restrictions.

Following the presentation of the [final MTE report](#), the Executive Committee created an Evaluation Response Advisory Group (ERAG) from among its members to prepare an initial version of the response. The Executive Committee reviewed the ERAG draft and distributed the response as document GEO-17-1.7b to the GEO Plenary. A revised version of the response was distributed following the 56th Executive Committee meeting. The [revised version](#) (revision 2) was approved by the GEO Plenary.

A copy of the draft response, highlighting the sections most relevant to the Programme Board, was circulated as document [PB-21.05](#).

3 SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

There are five key deficiencies identified by the MTE that pertain to the GWP and the Programme Board:

1. Lack of synergy and integration among GWP activities (Key Findings 5 and 7);
2. Lack of a common framework for understanding and communicating user needs (Key Finding 6);
3. Lack of clarity on the requirements for progressing from one GWP category to another (Key Finding 6);
4. Lack of integration of the Regional GEOs with the GWP (Key Finding 9); and
5. Lack of a clear action plan for engagement with the commercial sector (Key Finding 11).

The left-most column of the table in Annex A presents excerpts from the MTE report of the key recommendations relevant to the GWP and the Programme Board on each of the issues. The middle column of the table provides excerpts of Executive Committee response to each of the recommendations. Key parts of these excerpts are shown in red for emphasis. The right-most column suggests some possible responses by the Programme Board to the recommendations and Executive Committee responses. Action on each of these issues will require collaboration and coordination with other GEO bodies, notably the Executive Committee and the Secretariat. It is expected that the responses will need to be further refined and adjusted as more information becomes available and as the 2023-2025 GWP development proceeds.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Secretariat recommends that the Programme Board seek agreement on the proposed responses as an early indication of the actions it is taking to address the identified issues. The agreed responses will then be included in the Programme Board report to the 56th Executive Committee meeting so the Executive Committee is aware of Programme Board directions on these issues.

Annex A: Proposed Programme Board Responses to Recommendations of the Mid-Term Evaluation

MTE Recommendations	Executive Committee Response	Proposed Programme Board Response
Key finding 5. Relations with the UN and Other Stakeholders		
<p>It is recommended that GEO’s Executive Committee should revisit the ‘flagship-centred strategy’ it once proposed as a way to establish clearer overarching priorities that can help to create synergies in the Work Programme and align them with key focal themes that are relevant to GEO’s users and stakeholders.</p>	<p>The Executive Committee agrees that there has been good progress over the past five years in engaging United Nations agencies and convention secretariats and believes that this progress is largely due to the GEO Engagement Strategy and the use of the engagement priorities as “targeted focal themes”. The Executive Committee notes that the Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Working Groups, which are key components of the implementation of the engagement priorities, were in an early stage of development at the time of the evaluation. These Working Groups are expected to play a significant role in the strengthening connections across GWP activities.</p>	<p>During the review of Implementation Plans for the 2023-2025 GWP, the Programme Board will look for potential synergies among GWP activities and will actively promote collaboration where the activities see value and interest in doing so.</p> <p>The Programme Board will also follow progress on the <i>Road to Post-2025 GEO</i> that is being developed by the Secretariat and the Executive Committee. The Programme Board stands ready to assist in the implementation of this strategy as it pertains to the GWP and, in particular, with the integrative projects designed to test the proposed directions.</p>
Key finding 7. Internal Processes and Connections		
<p>GEO would benefit from establishing clearer high-level focal themes that can serve to drive synergies and improve coordination across the GEO Work Programme. That would be done by</p>	<p>The Executive Committee looks to the Secretariat to develop a structured approach and appropriate proposals for Programme Board and GEO Executive Committee for</p>	<p>This recommendation will be addressed together with the response to the recommendation under Key Finding 5.</p>

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<p>having them established at the Executive Committee level and then executed by the Programme Board and GEO Secretariat in coordination with the Work programme activities.</p>	<p>ultimately mobilizing action among relevant stakeholder groups.</p>	
<p>Key finding 6. Users' Needs</p>		
<p>GEO should consider a more structured way of collecting and consolidating requirements for their user community in a standardized format across the GEO Work Programme activities. GEO Work Programme activities should be expected to be able characterise and document these needs and requirements in a standardised format for their user community, by the time they reach the stage of a GEO Initiative.</p> <p>The Programme Board should ensure that these needs and requirements are better integrated across GEO's system to guarantee the broad thematic scope of GEO engenders its full potential and to increase their capacity to link national and regional realities with the global GEO.</p> <p>GEO should also clarify how and if GEO activities should progress from a Community Activity to an Initiative to a Flagship. GEO should have</p>	<p>The gap identified by the MTE team is that, to a large extent, each GWP activity pursues this interaction with users independently. There is at present no common framework for analyzing which types of users and decision challenges are being addressed across the GWP, as well as which observational data sets are being used. The Executive Committee agrees that such a framework would be useful and requests that the Programme Board and the Secretariat look to address this gap in the development of the 2023-2025 GWP.</p> <p>The Executive Committee requests that the Programme Board review the criteria and process as part of the development of the</p>	<p>Following the initial submission of Implementation Plans, the Secretariat will prepare a horizontal analysis of the identified users and decision challenges being addressed across GWP activities. This analysis will be used to develop recommendations regarding the advantages and disadvantages of moving toward a common framework to standardize this information.</p> <p>The Data Working Group is currently implementing a survey of GWP activities to collect data on observational data sets and outputs. The results of this survey will be incorporated into the GWP information system used for the 2023-2025 GWP. Initial findings of this survey should be available for Programme Board discussion at its 23rd meeting.</p> <p>The Programme Board reviewed the criteria and process for the development of the 2023-2025 GWP at its 21st meeting (September 2021) and</p>

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<p>greater clarity on the requirements to progress from one stage to the next and also on how many Flagships GEO should have, and when activities should remain at their existing level or when the latter should progress. In summary, there is limited guidance on the lifecycle of activities within the GEO Work Programme.</p>	<p>2023-2025 GWP and requests that the revised criteria and procedures be better communicated to the GEO community.</p> <p>The Executive Committee also requests that the Programme Board apply their criteria more strictly for the 2023-2025 GWP.</p>	<p>made adjustments to address the MTE findings. Specifically, the Programme Board confirmed that Pilot Initiatives (formerly Community Activities) are expected to work toward the development of open, re-usable tools for applying Earth observation data to decision needs of identified user communities, thereby clarifying their position as one of relative maturity of development rather than an entirely different form of activity. The Programme Board also approved changes to the criteria for each category (Flagship, Initiative, and Pilot Initiative). These criteria will be communicated broadly so that the activity leads, and the GEO community generally, are aware of the expectations. Finally, the Programme Board notes the request from the Executive Committee to apply these criteria more strictly for the 2023-2025 GWP.</p>
<p>Key finding 9. Role of Regional GEOs</p>		
<p>Given that the MTE has highlighted the need to better integrate Regional GEOs within the GEO overarching structure and Work Programme, GEO should consider possible solutions to promote an increased engagement, coordination with, and contribution of Regional GEOs across GEO’s governance structure and Implementation</p>	<p>The Executive Committee requests that the Programme Board consider how to strengthen engagement with the Regional GEOs in its work and in the GWP, recognizing its existing efforts through the Regional Engagement Team...</p>	<p>The Programme Board will build on its previous interactions with the Regional GEOs through continuation of its Regional Engagement Team (RET). The RET will be responsible for reviewing the Implementation Plans of the</p>

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<p>Mechanisms. Regional GEOs contributions should be focused in five key areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improving overall communication and coordination across the GEO Work Programme and connection with the GEO Secretariat, ○ Contributing to the realization of GEO's strategy on capacity development given their unique knowledge of users' needs and requirements based on existing capacities, ○ Promoting opportunities for exchange of best practices and uptake/scaling of successful products that may be developed at a regional or subregional level, ○ Leveraging opportunities for engagement with SMMEs at the regional level by brokering relations among the SMMEs, the Secretariat and GEO Work Programme activities, ○ Exploring opportunities for the mobilisation of resources at the regional, national, and local levels. To strengthen the role of Regional GEOs, GEO should consider a role for Regional GEOs that would create synergies with other bodies. 		<p>Regional GEOs and for working with them to address the issues identified in the MTE.</p>

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<p>Key finding 11. Engagement with the Private and Commercial Sectors</p>		
<p>In view of increasing its engagement with the commercial sector, GEO should try to address the needs of different commercial sector players that might be interested in getting involved. To do so, GEO might consider adopting an action plan for engagement with the commercial sector, developing a targeted approach to address partnerships with companies of different sizes, sectors and geographies.</p> <p>While past engagements brokered by the Secretariat with Amazon, Google and Microsoft, and other engagements that developed at the Work Programme level have represented positive experiences, GEO should improve communication about these efforts across the GEO community. It should also increase awareness regarding the existence of Rules of Engagement with the Commercial Sector, that represent a flexible framework for engagement.</p>	<p>The Executive Committee also requests that the Programme Board review the status of its Private Sector Subgroup, based on the experience since its establishment, to determine which objectives it can reasonably achieve.</p>	<p>The Programme Board discussed the status of the Private Sector Subgroup and the loss of its co-chairs, at its 21st meeting. The Secretariat Director proposed at that time that the Secretariat could assume responsibility for this topic in 2022 given the workload on the Programme Board during the development of the 2023-2025 GWP. The Programme Board could then reconsider its role in commercial sector engagement at a later date.</p>