

Proposed Revisions to the Terms of Reference for the Foundational Task Working Groups

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

1 INTRODUCTION

This document presents a set of revisions to the terms of reference of the Foundational Task Working Groups, in response to requests by the Working Group Co-Chairs.

2 BACKGROUND

As part of the renewal of the Foundational Tasks during the development of the 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme (GWP), the Secretariat proposed the creation of four Working Groups:

- Capacity Development Working Group;
- Climate Change Working Group;
- Data Working Group; and
- Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group.

While all of the Working Groups were newly constituted, two of them (Capacity Development and Data) built on the legacy of Working Groups that had operated during the 2017-2019 GWP, while the Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Working Groups evolved from Programme Board subgroups that had similar mandates.

Executive Committee approved the terms of reference of these Working Groups at its 51st meeting in February 2020. A call for members was issued by the Secretariat on 25 March 2020, which resulted in over 300 nominations from 47 GEO Members, 28 Participating Organizations, and five GEO Associates. The Working Groups held their first meetings in and around June 2020.

Since that time, the Working Groups have become an established part of the GEO Work Programme and community, offering avenues for participation in GEO for many individuals who might not find a place within GEO Flagships and Initiatives, as well as providing a focus for GEO's efforts on the engagement priorities and other key issues.

Most recently, the GEO-17 Plenary recognized Resilient Cities and Human Settlements (RCHS) as a fourth engagement priority. As part of this recognition, the Plenary also approved the terms of reference of the RCHS Working Group. The changes common to the other Working Groups are also proposed to be made to the RCHS Working Group terms of reference for consistency.

3 EXPLANATION OF THE PROPOSED CHANGES

There are four sets of changes being proposed in this document:

1. The duration of all Working Groups is revised to extend to 31 December 2025;

2. Diversity of membership is encouraged to increase representatives of the user and policy communities
3. Membership in all Working Groups is split into two categories: active members and observers;
4. The co-chairs of all Working Groups are given the power to remove members if they are no longer active and do not respond to contact requests; and
5. The duties and membership sections of the Climate Change Working Group have been updated to reflect current needs and priorities.

The first set of changes is intended to reassure members of the Working Groups that these Groups will continue to operate in the 2023-2025 GWP period.

The second set of change is intended to encourage enhanced diversity in the working groups. When a new nomination of member is made, GEO Members, Participating Organizations and Associates can consider not only senior technical and scientific experts with years of academic experiences in EO. New nominees can be representatives of the user and policy communities without deep EO knowledge. Youth involvement is also highly encouraged.

The third and fourth sets of changes are intended to address the issue that a large proportion of members of the Working Groups are not actively involved in their activities. Some of these members remain interested in the activities of the Working Group but do not, for various reasons, wish to be actively involved in their implementation. Many would prefer to follow the activities and perhaps provide comments or understand the directions being taken in GEO, but not to implement these activities directly. A new category of “observer” is proposed to reflect this desire, which will allow the individual (and through them, their organization) to remain connected to GEO and the Working Group, without requiring a significant commitment of their time. For the purposes of managing the Working Group, having such a category helps clarify which members are actively involved and thus where targeted recruitment may be needed to augment existing capacities, while retaining the corresponding members as a kind of community of practice and network of contacts. Even with this change, however, there are still a small number of members from whom no response has been received for some time. For such members, it is proposed that the Working Group co-chairs be given the authority to remove them from the list of members, based on the recommendations of the Secretariat coordinator of the Working Group. This step would generally be taken only following contact with the nominating GEO Principal to ensure that their contact information is up to date.

The fifth set of changes are specific to the Climate Change Working Group, based on their experience to date.

Approval of changes to the terms of reference of all Foundational Task Working Groups is delegated to the Programme Board.

4 RECOMMENDATION

The Secretariat recommends that the proposed changes to the Terms of Reference of the Working Groups be approved for immediate effect.

Annex A

Proposed Changes to the Terms of Reference of the Foundational Task Working Groups

Capacity Development Working Group Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Capacity Development Working Group (CD-WG) is convened to facilitate GEO's efforts on capacity development, promoting the principle of co-creation and providing conceptual support to the design, development, implementation and evaluation of capacity development activities at various levels of intervention. In this way, the Working Group will support the translation of the Canberra Declaration into concrete actions within the GEO Work Programme.

Duties

- Support GEO Flagships, Initiatives and Regional GEOs, on request, in the design, implementation, and evaluation of capacity development interventions.
- Develop, improve, and provide capacity development tools for use by the GEO community.
- Collect, document, and share good practices for capacity development related to Earth observations.
- Organize seminars, teleconferences, side-events and other means for disseminating information related to capacity development for Earth observations;
- Support the planning and implementation of impact assessments for capacity development activities within GEO.

Membership

- Membership in the Working Group is by nomination from GEO Members, Participating Organizations, and Associates. As appropriate, the Programme Board may also invite other qualified individuals to participate as members in the Working Group.
- Participation is encouraged from individuals having training or experience in the development, delivery and/or evaluation of capacity development activities, or are past or potential future participants in capacity development activities.
- In the interest of ensuring diversity and balance in the Working Group membership, the Programme Board may place limits on the number of members from individual GEO Members, Participating Organizations, or Associates or by specific categories. Participation of commercial entities is welcomed but will be limited to a maximum of two members.
- There are two categories of Working Group participants: 1) members, and 2) observers. Members are those who intend to participate actively in the implementation of the Working Group work plans, including participating in at least one subgroup of the Working Group. Observers will receive emails sent to all members of the Working Group, may attend full meetings of the Working Group, and may provide written comments on Working Group documents, but are not expected to participate in subgroups or other activities of the Working Group. Observers may become active members by indicating their interest in joining one of the subgroups.
- Members who have not been in contact with the Working Group for at least one year and who do not respond to a request for confirmation of their membership may be removed by decision of the Working Group co-chairs.

Working Arrangements

- There will be at least two co-chairs of the Working Group, who will be selected by and from among the Working Group members. Preference in the selection of co-chairs will be given to representatives from the Regional GEOs.
- The Working Group will meet at such times and places as determined by its members. Most work will occur through teleconferences and e-mail.
- The Working Group will provide periodic (at least annual) reports on its activities to the Programme Board as part of GEO Work Programme monitoring. It may also bring specific issues to the Programme Board as needed.
- The Working Group may establish subgroups to assist in fulfilling its duties.
- Administrative support to the Working Group will be provided by the GEO Secretariat.

Duration

These Terms of Reference will remain in effect ~~for until 31 December 2025~~ ~~the period of the 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme~~. They may be revised with the approval of the Programme Board.

Climate Change Working Group Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Climate Change Working Group (CC-WG) is convened to develop and implement a comprehensive GEO climate change action strategy to advance the use of Earth observations in support of climate adaptation and mitigation, including as relevant and appropriate, actions related to the pillars of the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In this way, the Working Group will support the translation of the Canberra Declaration into concrete actions within the GEO Work Programme.

Duties

- ~~Review the implementation plans of~~ Continue mapping all GEO Work Programme activities relevant to climate change to identify potential disconnect and synergy opportunities among them to be addressed, in coordination with other relevant GEO Working Groups;
- Assess from these GEO Work Programme activities where GEO is best placed to act and recommend actions to be taken by GEO/activity leads in relation to key issues, e.g., climate modelling/science, mitigation, adaptation, and other relevant areas of the UNFCCC/Paris Agreement;
- Facilitate communication between the leads and participants of these GEO Work Programme activities and between them and relevant partners, including through the organization of dedicated meetings and workshops;
- Stimulate the initiation of ~~projects~~ new Pilot Initiatives and case studies involving participants from multiple GEO Work Programme activities to enhance collaboration across GEO and to address identified disconnect, opportunities, or actions in relation to key issues;
- Assess how GEO can work with its member countries and partners to advance the collection and use of Earth observations, particularly in situ, that are needed to support countries' and international organizations' work on climate science and assessments, reduce uncertainty in climate modeling, and enhance societal response strategies;
- Assess how GEO can support countries in ~~the submission of reports and other communications~~ their obligations under the UNFCCC/Paris Agreement through the enhanced use of Earth observations, including, as applicable, supporting the update of their nationally determined contributions (NDCs), national communications, adaptation communications, and biennial transparency reports (BTRs);
- Assess how GEO can support countries in their National Adaptation Plan (NAP) process and approaches to avert, minimize and address loss and damage, including formulating supplementary guidance on the use and potential of Earth observations for the monitoring and assessment of climate change impacts, vulnerability, risks, and adaptation responses, and linkages with disaster risk reduction for informed sustainable development over multiple sectors and scales;
- Assess how GEO can support countries in the improvement of national greenhouse gas inventories over time through the enhanced use of Earth observations, consistent with the 2019 Refinement to the 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories;

- Identify gaps in terms of Earth observations that are requisite to the work of the IPCC and others conducting climate assessments, and leverage GEO partnerships and resources to provide the additional Earth observations needed to support decision making. ~~Support the IPCC in its Sixth Assessment Cycle, particularly by participating in the expert reviews in preparation of the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report due to be published in 2021-2022;~~
- Identify efficient forms of mutually beneficial collaboration between GEO and WMO in the areas of climate change, including the Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS), and the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) ~~and the Global Atmosphere Watch (GAW);~~
- Support the development of a new GEO Climate Finance workstream and related engagement, aimed at providing data for financial assessments and de-risking investments of the private sector; and support public financing with data-informed decision making;
- Increase GEO's participation and visibility, as appropriate, in sessions of the IPCC sessions, UNFCCC Conferences of the Parties (COPs), Subsidiary ~~Body Bodies, for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) sessions~~ and other meetings of UNFCCC constituted bodies' meetings, as well as other relevant fora.

Membership

- Membership in the Working Group is by nomination from GEO Members, Participating Organizations, and Associates. As appropriate, the Programme Board may also invite other qualified individuals to participate as members in the Working Group.
- Participation is encouraged from organizations and bodies relevant to climate change, including:
 - GEO Work Programme activities;
 - UN and other international organizations;
 - National and regional stakeholders; ~~and~~
 - Scientific organizations; and
 - Communities of practitioners.
- In the interest of ensuring diversity and balance in the Working Group membership, the Programme Board may place limits on the number of members from individual GEO Members, Participating Organizations, or Associates or by specific categories. Participation by commercial entities is welcomed but will be limited to a maximum of two members.
- There are two categories of Working Group participants: 1) members, and 2) observers. Members are those who intend to participate actively in the implementation of the Working Group work plans, including participating in at least one subgroup of the Working Group. Observers will receive emails sent to all members of the Working Group, may attend full meetings of the Working Group, and may provide written comments on Working Group documents, but are not expected to participate in subgroups or other activities of the Working Group. Observers may become active members by indicating their interest in joining one of the subgroups.
- Members who have not been in contact with the Working Group for at least one year and who do not respond to a request for confirmation of their membership may be removed by decision of the Working Group co-chairs.

Working Arrangements

- There will be at least two co-chairs of the Working Group, who will be selected by and from among the Working Group members.

- The Working Group will meet at such times and places as determined by its members and will work mainly through teleconferences and e-mail.
- The Working Group will provide periodic (at least annual) reports on its activities to the Programme Board as part of GEO Work Programme monitoring. It may also bring specific issues to the Programme Board as needed.
- The Working Group may establish subgroups to assist in fulfilling its duties.
- Administrative support to the Working Group will be provided by the GEO Secretariat.

Duration

These Terms of Reference will remain in effect ~~for~~ until 31 December 2025 ~~the period of the 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme~~. They may be revised with the approval of the Programme Board.

Data Working Group Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Data Working Group (Data-WG) is convened to work with the GEO community and with external stakeholders to address data policy, data ethics and data governance issues impacting the use of Earth observations, thereby improving the uptake of Earth observations for decision making. In this way, the Working Group will support the translation of the Canberra Declaration into concrete actions within the GEO Work Programme.

Duties

- Monitor trends in international open data and data management practices, and produce trend analyses and recommendations, as appropriate, for revising the GEOSS Data Sharing Principles and the GEOSS Data Management Principles and Implementation Guidelines;
- Continue to promote the adoption and implementation of the GEOSS Data Sharing Principles and the GEOSS Data Management Principles globally.
- Advance discussions of critical data-related topics with stakeholder communities;
- Recommend ways for GEO to advance the interoperability of Earth observations and complementary data, products and services; and
- Identify, analyze, and describe best practices for, legal, ethical, privacy, intellectual property, and other related concerns with respect to the sharing and management of Earth observations data, information and knowledge resources.

Membership

- Membership in the Working Group is by nomination from GEO Members, Participating Organizations, and Associates. As appropriate, the Programme Board may also invite other qualified individuals to participate as members in the Working Group.
- Participation is encouraged from individuals having expertise in data policy, spatial law, and providers or users of data technologies.
- In the interest of ensuring diversity and balance in the Working Group membership, the Programme Board may place limits on the number of members from individual GEO Members, Participating Organizations, or Associates or by specific categories. Participation of commercial entities is welcomed but will be limited to a maximum of two members.
- There are two categories of Working Group participants: 1) members, and 2) observers. Members are those who intend to participate actively in the implementation of the Working Group work plans, including participating in at least one subgroup of the Working Group. Observers will receive emails sent to all members of the Working Group, may attend full meetings of the Working Group, and may provide written comments on Working Group documents, but are not expected to participate in subgroups or other activities of the Working Group. Observers may become active members by indicating their interest in joining one of the subgroups.
- Members who have not been in contact with the Working Group for at least one year and who do not respond to a request for confirmation of their membership may be removed by decision of the Working Group co-chairs.

Working Arrangements

- There will be at least two co-chairs of the Working Group, who will be selected by and from among the Working Group members.
- The Working Group will meet at such times and places as determined by its members and will work mainly through teleconferences and e-mail.
- The Working Group will provide periodic (at least annual) reports on its activities to the Programme Board as part of GEO Work Programme monitoring. It may also bring specific issues to the Programme Board as needed.
- The Working Group may establish subgroups to assist in fulfilling its duties.
- Administrative support to the Working Group will be provided by the GEO Secretariat.

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Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group

Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group (DRR-WG) is convened to develop and implement a coherent and cross-cutting approach within GEO to advance the use of Earth observations in support of countries' disaster risk reduction and resilience efforts. These efforts include those related to the provisions of multilateral agreements such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. In this way, the Working Group will support the translation of the Canberra Declaration into concrete actions within the GEO Work Programme.

Duties

- Establish and maintain relationships with national, international and intergovernmental bodies acting in disaster risk reduction and disaster risk management, including the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, to:
 - Identify resources (financial and in-kind) to support GEO disaster-related initiatives;
 - Promote, including through best practices, sharing of data and knowledge to improve disaster risk management; and
 - Foster participation of public stakeholders in GEO initiatives.
- Enable discussion and communication on disaster-related activities within the GEO Work Programme.
- Promote the sharing of data from different platforms, technologies, themes and domains.
- Connect different scales of activities – from local, national, regional to global.
- Monitor the uptake of GEO's activities in support of the Sendai Framework.
- Seek coherence and collaboration amongst the post-2015 development agendas and GEO's areas of focus, including the identification of common metrics and opportunities for joint reporting.
- Promote to key stakeholders and partners the value of Earth observations and information provided by GEO.
- Act as a focal point, where appropriate, for the engagement with external stakeholders and international organizations and processes relevant to the Sendai Framework;
- Review the implementation plans of all GEO Work Programme activities relevant to the Sendai Framework for disaster risk reduction, and to identify potential gaps and synergies; and,
- Stimulate the initiation of projects, case studies or pilots involving participants from multiple GEO Work Programme activities to enhance collaboration across GEO and to address identified gaps.

Membership

- Membership in the Working Group is by nomination from GEO Members, Participating Organizations, and Associates. As appropriate, the Programme Board may also invite other qualified individuals to participate as members in the Working Group.
- Participation is encouraged from organizations and bodies relevant to disaster risk reduction, including:
 - GEO Work Programme activities;

- UN and other international organizations;
- National and regional stakeholders; and
- Scientific organizations.
- In the interest of ensuring diversity and balance in the Working Group membership, the Programme Board may place limits on the number of members from individual GEO Members, Participating Organizations, or Associates or by specific categories. Participation of commercial entities is welcomed but will be limited to a maximum of two members.
- There are two categories of Working Group participants: 1) members, and 2) observers. Members are those who intend to participate actively in the implementation of the Working Group work plans, including participating in at least one subgroup of the Working Group. Observers will receive emails sent to all members of the Working Group, may attend full meetings of the Working Group, and may provide written comments on Working Group documents, but are not expected to participate in subgroups or other activities of the Working Group. Observers may become active members by indicating their interest in joining one of the subgroups.
- Members who have not been in contact with the Working Group for at least one year and who do not respond to a request for confirmation of their membership may be removed by decision of the Working Group co-chairs.

Working Arrangements

- There will be at least two co-chairs of the Working Group, who will be selected by and from among the Working Group members.
- The Working Group will meet at such times and places as determined by its members and will work mainly through teleconferences and e-mail.
- The Working Group will provide periodic (at least annual) reports on its activities to the Programme Board as part of GEO Work Programme monitoring. It may also bring specific issues to the Programme Board as needed.
- The Working Group may establish subgroups to assist in fulfilling its duties.
- Administrative support to the Working Group will be provided by the GEO Secretariat.

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Terms of Reference

Resilient Cities and Human Settlements Working Group

Purpose

The Resilient Cities and Human Settlements Working Group (RCHS-WG) is convened to develop and implement a coherent and cross-cutting approach within GEO to advance the use of Earth observations in support of urban resilience and sustainable urbanisation efforts in human settlements, cities, and countries. These efforts include those related to the provisions of multilateral agreements, with emphasis and target on the New Urban Agenda which serves as the current frame at the UN level. In this way, the Working Group will support the translation of the Canberra Declaration and the GEO Strategic Plan into concrete actions within the GEO Work Programme.

Duties

- Foster support for urban and settlement related activities between the GEO community and national, international, and intergovernmental bodies, including maintaining the relationship with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat);
- Enable discussion and communication on urban and settlement related activities within the GEO Work Programme;
- Connect different scales of activities – from local, national, regional to global. Notably working with human settlements and cities;
- Monitor the uptake of GEO's activities in support of the New Urban Agenda;
- Review the implementation plans of all GEO Work Programme activities relevant to the New Urban Agenda, and to identify potential gaps and synergies;
- Facilitate communication between the leads and participants of these GEO Work Programme activities;
- Act as a focal point, where appropriate, for engagement with external stakeholders and international organizations and processes relevant to Earth observations and the New Urban Agenda;
- Seek coherence and collaboration amongst the post-2015 development agendas and GEO's engagement priorities, including the identification of common metrics and opportunities for joint reporting;
- Promote to key stakeholders and partners the value of Earth observations and information provided by the GEO community in the urban domain;
- Promote the sharing of data from different platforms, technologies, themes and domains. Advocate the use of open standards and open Application Programming Interfaces (APIs); and
- Stimulate the initiation of projects, case studies or pilots involving participants from multiple GEO Work Programme activities to enhance collaboration across GEO and to address identified gaps.

Membership

- Membership in the RCHS-WG is by nomination from GEO Members, Participating Organizations, and Associates. As appropriate, the Programme Board may also invite other qualified individuals to participate as members in the Working Group.
- Participation is encouraged from organizations and bodies relevant to urban resilience, human settlements, and sustainable urbanization, including from:

- GEO Work Programme activities;
 - UN and other international organizations;
 - National, regional, and city stakeholders;
 - Related non-governmental organizations and associations;
 - Commercial sector organizations, especially small, medium, and micro-sized enterprises; and
 - Scientific organizations.
- In the interest of ensuring diversity and balance in the Working Group membership, the Programme Board may place limits on the number of members from individual GEO Members, Participating Organizations, or Associates or by specific categories. Participation of commercial entities is welcomed but will be limited to a maximum of two members.
 - There are two categories of Working Group participants: 1) members, and 2) observers. Members are those who intend to participate actively in the implementation of the Working Group work plans, including participating in at least one subgroup of the Working Group. Observers will receive emails sent to all members of the Working Group, may attend full meetings of the Working Group, and may provide written comments on Working Group documents, but are not expected to participate in subgroups or other activities of the Working Group. Observers may become active members by indicating their interest in joining one of the subgroups.
 - Members who have not been in contact with the Working Group for at least one year and who do not respond to a request for confirmation of their membership may be removed by decision of the Working Group co-chairs.

Working Arrangements

- There will be at least two co-chairs of the Working Group, who will be selected by and from among the Working Group members.
- The Working Group will meet at such times and places as determined by its members and will work mainly through teleconferences and e-mail.
- The Working Group will provide periodic (at least annual) reports on its activities to the Programme Board as part of GEO Work Programme monitoring. It may also bring specific issues to the Programme Board as needed.
- The Working Group may establish subgroups to assist in fulfilling its duties.
- Administrative support to the Working Group will be provided by the GEO Secretariat.

Duration

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