

Draft Report
57th Executive Committee Meeting
Videoconference, 15-16 March 2022

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chair: Stephen Volz, United States.

1 SESSION 1: GENERAL BUSINESS

1.1 Welcome from Lead Co-Chair and Co-Chairs, Secretariat Director

Outcome: The Executive Committee welcomed new members Costa Rica and Spain and new Participating Organization observers European Environment Agency (EEA) and the International Association of Geodesy (IAG).

1.4 Adoption of Agenda (Document 57.1 (Rev.1) – for decision)

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Adopted Revision 1 of the agenda as distributed;
- Approved the following documents as distributed:
 - ExCom-57.2: Draft Report of the 56th Executive Committee Meeting;
 - ExCom-57.3: Review of Action Items from Previous Meetings; and
 - ExCom-57.12: Review of Requests to Join GEO as Participating Organizations; and
- Welcomed the University of the South Pacific as a GEO Participating Organization.

1.5 Secretariat Operations Report (Document 57.4 – for information)

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Thanked the Secretariat for the report;
- Noted the challenges with the staffing of positions and suggested flexibility regarding location of staff as well as the use of secondments; and
- Recommended that communications regarding the Resilient Cities and Human Settlements engagement priority clearly remain inclusive of rural settlements.

1.6 Review of GEO Week 2021 (Document 57.5 – for information)

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Stated that they looked forward to the return of in-person GEO events though, noting the breadth of participation during GEO Week 2021, suggested that virtual participation continue to be offered as an option; and
- Recommended that more attention be given to fostering discussion in Plenary sessions.

2 SESSION 2: PLANNING AND STRATEGY

2.1 Executive Committee Priority Themes for 2022 (Document 57.6 (Rev.1) – for decision)

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Supported the proposed priority themes; and
- Requested more detail on how the outcomes under the themes will be measured.

Action 57.1: Lead Co-Chair and Secretariat to present a set of outcomes-based indicators to track progress on the priority themes. **Due: 58th Executive Committee meeting.**

2.2 Implementation of Actions in Response to the GEO Mid-Term Evaluation (Document 57.7 – for decision)

Outcomes: The Executive Committee concurred with the document, with the following amendments:

- The review of the GEO Rules of Procedure should occur through a dedicated group which should include Executive Committee members and the Secretariat; and
- Coordination of commercial sector engagement should involve Executive Committee members.

Action 57.2: The Secretariat, in consultation with the Lead Co-Chair, to prepare terms of reference for a task force to review the GEO Rules of Procedure. **Due: 58th Executive Committee meeting.**

Action 57.3: The Secretariat to prepare a strategy paper on options for how to continue private; small, medium, and micro-sized enterprise (SMME); and commercial sector engagement. **Due: 58th Executive Committee meeting.**

2.3 Update on the Expert Advisory Group Process

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Thanked the Secretariat for establishing the Expert Advisory Group (EAG) process quickly and thanked Jörg Helmschrot for his detailed planning;
- Emphasized that the process must consult with the broader GEO community; and
- Agreed that the EAG is able to modify how it implements its mandate, such as changes to the working procedures and the creation of subgroups, provided that it respects the stated objectives, deliverables, and timelines in the EAG terms of reference.

2.4 Road to GEO Post-2025 (Document 57.8 – for decision)

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Thanked the Secretariat for preparing the proposal;

- Requested that members of the Post-2025 Working Group be identified by Caucuses, then supplemented by additional nominations from the Secretariat to address diversity of perspectives;
- Noted that nominees should be reasonably fluent in English and that Post-2025 Working Group members should expect to cover any related travel costs for their participation (with the possible exception for developing country members);
- Requested that the terms of reference of the Post-2025 GEO Working Group should include coordination of consultations with the broad GEO community;
- Suggested that the number of members of the Post-2025 Working Group be between 20 and 25.

Action 57.4: The Secretariat to distribute revised terms of reference for the Post-2025 Working Group to Executive Committee members. **Due: 18 March 2022.**

Action 57.5: Caucuses to provide their nominations to the Post-2025 Working Group to the Secretariat. **Due: 30 March 2022.**

Action 57.6: The Secretariat to provide a proposed list of Post-2025 Working Group members, including Secretariat nominations, to Executive Committee members. **Due: 13 April 2022.**

3 SESSION 3: FINANCE

3.4 Interim Report on Income and Expenditure at 31 December 2021 (Document 57.9 (Rev.1) – for information)

Outcome: The Executive Committee:

- Thanked the Budget Working Group for their presentation and for their work;
- Thanked GEO Members for continuing their GEO Trust Fund contributions during the pandemic; and
- Supported continuation of the GEO Pledge Campaign and encourage GEO Members to continue to contribute to the GEO Trust Fund.

4 SESSION 4: GEO PROGRAMME BOARD

4.4 Report of the Programme Board (Document 57.10 – for information)

Outcome: The Executive Committee:

- Thanked the Programme Board for their efforts in guiding the GEO Work Programme;
- Recommended that, in addition to looking for synergies and opportunities, the Programme Board consider whether there are overlaps among GEO Work Programme activities or with programmes of other organizations; and
- Recommended that the activities undertaken by the Foundational Task Working Groups be given greater visibility in the GEO Work Programme.

4.5 Proposal to Join the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership (Document 57.11 – for decision)

Outcome: The Executive Committee:

- Endorsed the Secretariat recommendation to join the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership (REAP); and
- Requested that the Secretariat include reporting on GEO engagement in REAP in Secretariat Operations Reports.

4.6 Run up to COP27

Outcome: The Executive Committee:

- Supported the approach proposed by the Secretariat; and
- Endorsed option A that GEO seek to join World Meteorological Organization delegations to Conferences of the Parties (COPs) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- Several Executive Committee members offered assistance in obtaining recognition of GEO by UNFCCC subsidiary bodies.

5 SESSION 5: GEO WEEK 2022

5.1 GEO Week 2022

Outcome: The Executive Committee:

- Gratefully accepted the offer from Ghana to host the GEO-18 Plenary;
- Noted that the Plenary would offer online participation in addition to in-person;
- Encouraged other GEO Members to participate in the preparations;
- Welcomed the inclusion of an industry track and youth events;
- Recommended that Regional GEO meetings not be held concurrently to allow participation by those from other regions; and
- Noted that funding would be made available from the Secretariat to support participation by delegates from developing countries.

Action 57.7: The Secretariat to call for expressions of interest in the exhibition. **Due: before 30 April 2022.**

Draft Report
57th Executive Committee Meeting
Teleconference, 15-16 March 2022

FULL REPORT**Tuesday, 15 March 2022***Meeting convened at 13:00*

Chair: Stephen Volz, United States.

1 SESSION 1: GENERAL BUSINESS**1.1 Welcome from Lead Co-Chair and Co-Chairs, Secretariat Director**

Stephen Volz (United States), Americas Caucus Co-Chair and 2022 GEO Lead Co-Chair, opened the meeting. He welcomed the new China GEO Principal Zhang Guangjun, Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Science and Technology of China, who began his GEO role in February 2022. Mr Volz stated that 2022 was a critical juncture for GEO: the Programme Board has a large task ahead in the preparation of the 2023-2025 GEO Work Programme (GWP), the GEO-17 Plenary asked the Executive Committee to implement the response to the GEO Mid-Term Evaluation, the Expert Advisory Group (EAG) on the Re-evaluation of GEOSS had begun its work; and the Secretariat has prepared a substantive proposal on a potential strategic mission for GEO after 2025. Mr Volz observed that the international community has changed considerably over the nearly two decades of GEO's existence and thus GEO must stay relevant in this changing international environment. He also announced the launch of the latest in the United States' 50-year series of geostationary satellites, GOES-18, and stated that this satellite will continue to provide observations freely to the global commons for many years to come. He then invited the other Co-Chairs to provide their opening remarks and introduce any new members of their delegations.

Li Pengde (China), representative of the Asia-Oceania Caucus Co-Chair, agreed that 2022 is a crucial time for GEO. He noted that the leads of Asia-Ocean (AO) GEO are preparing the Regional GEO implementation plan for 2023-2025. Mr Li reminded Executive Committee members of two key upcoming events: the AOGEO Workshop, which will be held in China in the first half of 2022, and the AOGEO Symposium, which will be in the second half of the year, and which will also include an international training workshop. He welcomed participation of the GEO community in these events. Mr Li also noted that Tonga, the first Pacific Islands GEO Member, suffered from the effects of volcanic eruptions in January 2022. China, Japan, New Zealand, and other GEO Members provided satellite images to support the damage assessment by the Tonga government; Mr Li encouraged other GEO Members to join the disaster response. He also mentioned that China is developing a China-Africa settlement and remote sensing application centre, as well as a similar centre for Asia and a China-Asia big data centre in the coming years.

Imraan Saloojee (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Africa Caucus Co-Chair, recognized the importance of 2022 for the preparation of the Ministerial summit in 2023 and the post-2025 strategic mission. He noted that the development of the post-2025 strategic mission through a working group will give an important voice to GEO diversity and will bring in a diversity of opinions. He stressed the importance of engaging all GEO Members in the development and deepening of the initial thoughts through this process. Mr Saloojee drew attention to several items in the agenda, including the 2022 priority themes, the launch of the EAG process, the action plan to respond to the GEO Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE), the new online system and review process for the 2023-2025 GWP, and the strong financial report. Mr Saloojee closed by announcing that South Africa GEO and AfriGEO have initiated a comprehensive programme to set up communities of practice across several thematic areas. South Africa anticipates that this will contribute to strengthening AfriGEO as well as contributing to many other activities in the GWP.

John Bell (European Commission), speaking on behalf of the European Caucus Co-Chair, welcomed the comments from China, which underlined the role of GEO as part of global efforts to help all regions of the world. He observed that climate change is a threat to humanity and the planet, and that international forums such as GEO are ever more important to maintain. Mr Bell agreed with the sentiment that the meeting is an important one for GEO. The European Commission is particularly keen to support equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in GEO. EDI is critical to leverage Earth observations at a global level to address issues such as climate change, risk resilience, and protection of natural resources. EDI is also key to setting up an open process for designing GEO in the period post-2025.

Yana Gevorgyan, GEO Secretariat Director, expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to engage with Executive Committee members prior to the formal meeting and to discuss the topics on the agenda. She expressed a concern that GEO is not yet well understood by all GEO Members, and she offered assistance in helping Members to understand how GEO works and what the Secretariat is doing. Ms Gevorgyan recognized the considerable effort of the Secretariat staff in preparing the documents for the meeting and said that she looked forward to receiving feedback from Executive Committee members on the content and to having clear decisions to move forward.

Outcome: The Executive Committee welcomed new members Costa Rica and Spain and the European Environment Agency (EEA) as a new Participating Organization observer.

1.2 Adoption of Agenda (Document 57.1 (Rev.1) – for decision)

The Chair asked if there were any comments or interventions to adjust the agenda. No requests for modification were received.

The Chair then asked if Executive Committee members had any comments on Documents 57.2, 57.3, and 57.12. No objections were raised, nor changes requested.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Adopted Revision 1 of the agenda as distributed;
- Approved the following documents as distributed:
 - ExCom-57.2: Draft Report of the 56th Executive Committee Meeting;
 - ExCom-57.3: Review of Action Items from Previous Meetings; and
 - ExCom-57.12: Review of Requests to Join GEO as Participating Organizations; and
- Welcomed the University of the South Pacific as a GEO Participating Organization.

1.3 Secretariat Operations Report (Document 57.4 – for information)

The Secretariat Director provided a brief summary of highlights from the Secretariat Operations Report. Ms Gevorgyan noted the progress being made on the development of toolkits for sustainable development and human settlements in collaboration with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), including an assessment of the extent to which the toolkit data meet the FAIR criteria. The Secretariat engaged, together with the GEO Biodiversity Observation Network (GEO BON) with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in response to a request for GEO collaboration on the implementation of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Ms Gevorgyan also noted that the Earth observation Risk Toolkit will be publicly launched at the Seventh Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GP2022), scheduled to take place in Bali, Indonesia on 23-28 May. The GEO Global Agricultural Monitoring (GEO GLAM) Flagship was granted GBP 125 000 by the United Kingdom Department for Environment and Rural Affairs to continue development of technical guidance for National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) to assist developing countries in integrating Earth observation into agricultural monitoring. At the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), GEO was verbally supported by Norway during the meeting of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice (SBSTA); this provided a first step towards GEO obtaining a mandate to deliver Earth observations knowledge and products to the UNFCCC. The Secretariat worked with the [Climate TRACE](#) consortium and the World Geospatial Industry Council (WGIC) on the report [GHG Monitoring from Space](#) which was officially launched at Earth Information Day during COP26.

Turning to the GWP and Secretariat operations, Ms Gevorgyan noted the first (virtual) meeting of the EAG on re-evaluation of GEOSS was held on 7 March, addressing one of the key recommendations of the MTE. The latest GEO-Microsoft Planetary Computer programme, supporting 12-month projects that demonstrate the application of Earth observations within the context of an existing GWP activity, began on 15 March, with 10 projects receiving a combination of cloud credits and cash awards. The Secretariat held its annual bilateral meeting with CEOS where collaborative efforts across a range of topics were discussed. CEOS stated their view of GEO as a neutral broker for engagement with a variety of stakeholders, including end users, science-policy specialists and the private sector, which GEO relies on CEOS to respond to specific needs for remotely-sensed, analysis-ready datasets. The Secretariat continues to support the Data Working Group in its survey of GWP activities regarding their data needs and data sharing practices; links to the in situ data strategy, which is under development by the Working Group, were mentioned. Ms Gevorgyan also provided an update on recruitment for several priority positions in the Secretariat, noting that the process for four of these positions was expected to conclude by April 2022. For the position on resource mobilization, she noted that the original plan for a full-time official did not come to pass, and the Secretariat was looking to fill the position as a short-term consultancy.

The European Commission expressed their appreciation for the report and for the Secretariat's engagement on in situ data and with the GEOSS Platform team.

South Africa thanked the Secretariat for the report but requested that the references to “urban” in relation to the new engagement priority should be inclusive of both urban and rural areas.

China stated that they appreciated the excellent work of the Secretariat on the engagement priorities and the involvement with many multilateral organizations, even under the circumstances of the pandemic. Regarding the Conferences of the Parties on the CBD and

Ramsar Conventions, China offered to provide coordination support to the Secretariat for the meetings in China. Concern was expressed regarding the proposed consultancy, suggesting that the Secretariat consider using more secondments from GEO Members.

CEOS asked about the process for GEO Members and Participating Organizations to contribute to the various toolkits under discussion.

The Secretariat Director agreed with the comment from South Africa that it was important to maintain the full scope of the Resilient Cities and Human Settlements engagement priority. Ms Gevorgyan thanked China for their offer and indicated the Secretariat would work with China GEO in the planning for these events. Regarding the filling of vacant positions, she noted that the Secretariat may be open to filling some positions outside of Geneva given the difficulties of staffing in this location. In response to the question from CEOS, Ms Gevorgyan stated that the risk toolkit was being developed by the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Working Group together with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) while the Earth Observations for Sustainable Development Goals (EO4SDG) Initiative is developing the resilient cities toolkit with UN-Habitat. Additional contributions to both of these are welcome.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Thanked the Secretariat for the report;
- Noted the challenges with the staffing of positions and suggested flexibility regarding location of staff as well as the use of secondments; and
- Recommended that communications regarding the Resilient Cities and Human Settlements engagement priority clearly remain inclusive of rural settlements.

1.4 Review of GEO Week 2021 (Document 57.5 – for information)

Samuel Amos (GEO Secretariat) presented some statistics on participation at GEO Week 2021 and results of a participant survey. There were 1172 attendees in total, from 93 countries, who participated in at least one session across all GEO Week events. There were 547 attendees in the Plenary sessions, which was lower than the Ministerial summits in Geneva and Canberra, but otherwise higher than previous GEO Plenary meetings. Of these, slightly more than half were part of official delegations while the rest were public attendees. Just over 400 people attended at least one of the five Anchor sessions. Mr Amos then summarized some of the responses to the survey. To the question on whether participants gained new knowledge or insights from the sessions, participants mentioned the variety of GWP activities, opportunities for Earth observations to support decision making, ideas for future research, and appreciation for the integrated and multidisciplinary approach being taken by GEO. Negative comments focused mostly on the lack of opportunity for interaction with other participants. The Industry Track events involved 282 unique participants and 24 virtual “booths” provided by private sector firms. Participant comments on the Industry Track were positive and they encouraged GEO to continue to strengthen their engagement with the commercial sector. The Youth Track, which was offered for the first time in GEO, attracted 144 unique participants to its four events. In general, participant satisfaction with the event was quite high, although there were lower scores on virtual networking, accessibility, inclusion of regional content, and opportunity for discussion and questions.

The Secretariat Director reminded Executive Committee members that there was a document for the meeting (57.5) that was linked to this agenda item, but which was not presented. The document provided a cross-walk between the findings and recommendations of the MTE and the sessions at GEO Week 2021. She thanked the United States for preparing the document.

The European Commission thanked the Secretariat for the presentation and affirmed that the key challenge is to improve interaction during virtual events, though it was hoped that GEO would return to in-person events soon. The Commission also said that they appreciated document 57.5 and expressed the wish that a similar document be prepared for GEO Week 2022.

Germany shared the view that GEO should return to in-person meetings soon, as GEO is a forum for collaboration and the spirit of GEO lies in talking and meeting together, while recognizing that it is unlikely that GEO will go back to fully in-person events.

China noted that the virtual meetings have allowed a larger number of people in the GEO community to attend and thus some form of virtual participation should be continued even after in-person meetings are possible. China also asked how the key themes addressed during GEO Week could be promoted with younger generations. The Secretariat Director responded that the Secretariat is planning to bring forward some ideas on this topic for the 2023 Ministerial summit.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Stated that they looked forward to the return of in-person GEO events though, noting the breadth of participation during GEO Week 2021, suggested that virtual participation continue to be offered as an option; and
- Recommended that more attention be given to fostering discussion in Plenary sessions.

2 SESSION 2: PLANNING AND STRATEGY

2.4 Executive Committee Priority Themes for 2022 (Document 57.6 (Rev.1) – for decision)

The Lead Co-Chair summarized the set of five priority themes that were presented in the document and that were proposed to guide the work of the GEO through 2022. Mr Volz suggested that monitoring progress on each of the themes be based on a small set of indicators that focus on key milestones, particularly regarding the expected status of each theme at the next Executive Committee meeting and at the GEO-18 Plenary.

Japan stated that they concurred with the stated priorities, especially noting the reference in theme five on supporting climate investment. Looking ahead to GEO post-2025, Japan committed to continue their efforts to establish use cases for various sectors of society and to actively engage in Executive Committee discussions.

Greece recognized that 2022 is a year for essential transition for GEO and also provides an opportunity to bring clarity on several elements. Regarding theme three and the reference to in situ observations, Greece suggested that GEO bring greater alignment to its communications on this topic, specifically, whether the aim is to seek complementarity of in situ observations, to use in situ observations for merely calibration and validation, or whether in situ observations will be considered as equal to observations from remote sensing. On theme five, it was noted that the positioning of the GEO Societal Benefit Areas (SBAs) is unclear, as the SBAs appear to have been supplanted by the engagement priorities.

Germany thanked the Lead Co-Chair for the themes, which continued several of the themes from the last year, and welcomed the new additions with respect to the response to the MTE and the post-2025 activities. However, they said that they would prefer to see more concrete objectives and specific indicators to track progress toward key milestones.

China endorsed the priority themes and looked forward to more attention to capacity building in developing countries.

The European Commission said that they were pleased to see that all key GEO activities were covered by the themes. They also agreed with Germany regarding the development of key performance indicators.

Australia endorsed the priority themes, noting there is a sound balance between reviewing progress on past commitments such as the Canberra Declaration as well as looking to GEO's future.

South Africa supported the priority themes and welcomed the focus on strengthening capacity in Earth observations globally, the focus on the GEO Knowledge Hub, and on GEOSS evolution.

The Lead Co-Chair responded that he heard that tracking progress is important to Executive Committee members, and he stated that the United States would work with the Secretariat to identify how best to track and report on each of the themes. To the points raised by Greece, the Lead Co-Chair agreed that greater recognition of the importance of in situ data is needed, but that they would look to the Programme Board and the GWP to identify where and how GEO can improve access to in situ data and its integration in GEO systems.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Supported the proposed priority themes; and
- Requested more detail on how the outcomes under the themes will be measured.

Action 57.1: Lead Co-Chair and Secretariat to present a set of outcomes-based indicators to track progress on the priority themes. **Due: 58th Executive Committee meeting.**

2.5 Implementation of Actions in Response to the GEO Mid-Term Evaluation (Document 57.7 – for decision)

Craig Larlee (GEO Secretariat) provided a brief summary of the document. He noted that the discussion at this meeting built upon the steps taken at previous Executive Committee meetings. At its 55th meeting, the Executive Committee received the MTE report and established the Evaluation Response Advisory Group (ERAG) to draft a response. The response was discussed from July to November 2021, leading to its approval at the GEO-17 Plenary. The response identified a set of actions, identifying various bodies which would be responsible for the implementation of the actions. Document 57.7 provided a more detailed account of how each of the actions would be implemented, along with the time frame in which they would occur. This would enable the Executive Committee to assess the adequacy of the responses and to monitor their implementation. Mr Larlee noted that four key actions collectively account for the response to most of the MTE findings and recommendations, these actions being: the development of the Post-2025 GEO strategic mission; the Expert Advisory Group on the Re-evaluation of GEOSS; a review of the GEO Rules of Procedure; and an updated communications strategy.

China suggested that the Secretariat could investigate user needs in GEO Member countries and organize international teams that would be capable of providing services to meet these needs. China also recommended that, as the GEO Rules of Procedure are the basic law of GEO, a task force should be created to review, simplify, and clarify the GEO governance process and present their proposal for the Executive Committee meeting in July.

The European Commission welcomed the process of turning the MTE recommendations into measurable actions. They also welcomed the creation of the EAG, recommending that the EAG

should have close interactions with the GEOSS Infrastructure Development Task Team (GIDTT). As communications should be one of the priorities for GEO, the Commission recommended that the Secretariat consider supplementing the communications strategy with concrete actions. A concern was expressed regarding the delegation of leadership for engagement with the commercial sector, noting that the Executive Committee and other governance bodies in GEO should be consulted. The Commission also concurred with China regarding the review of the GEO Rules of Procedure.

The United States agreed with the view of the European Commission regarding engagement with the commercial sector; this should be shared with rather than delegated to the Secretariat. They also supported the proposal by China to create a team to review the Rules of Procedure but cautioned not to rush have answers too quickly noting several activities in response to Mid-Term Evaluation that are getting underway and will influence and provide input to the Rules of Procedure changes.

Costa Rica highlighted the importance of communications in helping GEO to achieve its outcomes and to bring more transparency for GEO Members.

The Secretariat Director responded that the Secretariat is prioritizing communications to promote the GWP, resource mobilization, engagement with the GEO community, and other priorities, and called on Executive Committee members to contribute to the GEO Trust Fund to make this possible. Regarding the commercial sector strategy, the Secretariat is putting together options and approaches for engaging different components of the commercial sector, such as using accelerators to connect with SMMEs. Ms Gevorgyan said that she would work with the Executive Committee and others in the GEO community to complete the strategy and to implement it.

In response to the point by China regarding user needs, Mr Larlee responded that the current approach on user needs in GEO is to work through the GWP activities. However, many of the individuals and agencies involved in these activities are unsure of how to engage users, which is being addressed by the Secretariat and the Programme Board in a number of ways, including through a dedicated session at the upcoming GEO Symposium. Mr Larlee also noted that the new online system for the GWP implementation plans is expected to provide more detailed information on targeted users across the GWP.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee concurred with the document, with the following amendments:

- The review of the GEO Rules of Procedure should occur through a dedicated group which should include Executive Committee members and the Secretariat; and
- Coordination of commercial sector engagement should involve Executive Committee members.

Action 57.2: The Secretariat, in consultation with the Lead Co-Chair, to prepare terms of reference for a task force to review the GEO Rules of Procedure. **Due: 58th Executive Committee meeting.**

Action 57.3: The Secretariat to prepare a strategy paper on options for how to continue private; small, medium, and micro-sized enterprise (SMME); and commercial sector engagement. **Due: 58th Executive Committee meeting.**

2.6 Update on the Expert Advisory Group Process

Jörg Helmschrot (GEO Secretariat) introduced himself as the newly-appointed coordinator for the EAG process. He provided an overview of the members of the EAG, noting their diversity geographically and in terms of their expertise and experience. Mr Helmschrot then described the inception meeting which was held on 7 March 2022 with 24 out of 26 EAG members attending. At the meeting, the EAG made several requests, which included the use of subgroups to address specific topics and that the coordinator prepare an initial draft outline for the eventual report, as a means to help focus planning of their work. Among the requests were some changes to the EAG terms of reference. Mr Helmschrot then described the tentative EAG meeting schedule and their implementation approach, the latter being divided into phases of review, assessment, and recommendation. He concluded his presentation with a summary of the next steps, noting the first technical meeting would take place in mid-April, and described several preparatory steps in planning for the meeting.

The United States said that they appreciated seeing the detailed timeline for the EAG process and also appreciate the diversity of experts engaged. A question was asked regarding the level of understanding of the task for which the group was convened and whether the members were ready to start.

Germany stated their appreciation for the good planning for this challenging task. They asked what changes would be requested by the EAG to their terms of reference.

South Africa asked whether the meetings would be virtual or hybrid, noting that it would be important to maintain a high level of participation throughout the process.

Japan also said that they appreciated the careful organization and that they wanted to ensure that there would be opportunities for interaction between the EAG members and the GIDTT.

The European Commission stated that the process is of the utmost importance to GEO and that it needs to be participative, involving the whole GEO community. The future of GEO should not be determined by a small group of experts but include engagement of GEO Members and Participating Organizations. The Commission noted that it has invested substantially in the past in the development of the GEOSS infrastructure and its reassessment should not neglect this infrastructure but aim to improve its usage and functionalities. They also reported that, with their colleagues at the European Space Agency (ESA), they have secured resources to improve the current GEOSS Portal and stand ready to ensure its future development, building on the recommendations of the EAG.

The United States agreed on the importance of engaging the broader GEO community in the EAG's work and suggested that the GEO Symposium may be a good opportunity for the EAG to interact with the community and to gather information.

Mr Helmschrot added that Justyna Nicinska, chair of the MTE team, had given a presentation to the EAG which clarified their assignment and helped them to understand their mandate. He agreed that the EAG should seek links with the whole of the GEO governance structure. Regarding the proposed revisions to the terms of reference, Mr Helmschrot said that these were mainly to enable the group to organize a set of subgroups through which their work could be divided, as well as to make some adjustments to the schedule for its activities that was included in the terms of reference. In response to the question from South Africa, he said that the first two technical meetings would be virtual, but the EAG planned to meet directly in the subgroups, depending on availability of members and resources for travel.

The Secretariat Director suggested that, if the changes to the terms of reference only addressed the working arrangements of the EAG, it may not be necessary to bring the changes for approval.

The Chair proposed that, as long as the scope, objectives and deliverables remained unchanged, the EAG could adjust their work modalities without requiring a change to the terms of reference. Several Executive Committee members concurred.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Thanked the Secretariat for establishing the Expert Advisory Group (EAG) process quickly and thanked Jörg Helmschrot for his detailed planning;
- Emphasized that the process must consult with the broader GEO community; and
- Agreed that the EAG is able to modify how it implements its mandate, such as changes to the working procedures and the creation of subgroups, provided that it respects the stated objectives, deliverables, and timelines in the EAG terms of reference.

2.7 Road to GEO Post-2025 (Document 57.8 – for decision)

The Secretariat Director introduced the item by proposing two expected outcomes from the discussion: advice from the Executive Committee regarding adjustments needed to the scope of the draft GEO strategic mission (Annex 1 of Document 57.8) and a decision to convene a Post-2025 GEO Think Tank (based on the terms of reference in Annex 2 of Document 57.8). Ms Gevorgyan then outlined the rationale that underpins the proposed GEO strategic mission. She noted several key aspects of the current science/policy/technology/finance landscape, including:

- Lagging progress toward the goals of the various key global policy agendas;
- Earth observations can complement other data sources to support action;
- Rapid change to the digital economy, including large public and private sector investments; and
- Demand for results-based financing to address climate and other global issues.

The MTE highlighted the importance of clearly defining the GEO value proposition in this changing landscape, and this redefinition must be aligned with the post-2025 GEO strategic mission. Key features of this strategic mission that are emerging from the discussions with the Executive Committee include: providing solutions to integrated policy issues; moving from research to operational services; achieving scalability, sustainability, and impact; and tapping into results-based finance. Ms Gevorgyan identified a set of integrating policy frameworks, or nexus areas, in which Earth observations and GEO specifically could play an important role. Parallel to the discussion of these nexus areas, she stated that GEO also needs to review its structure to support these directions. This includes consideration of the roles of Caucuses and Regional GEOs; advancement on equality, diversity and inclusion; and sustainable resourcing for the GEO Trust Fund and the GWP. Ms Gevorgyan concluded by describing the proposal to create a Post-2025 GEO Think Tank composed of 12 members representative of the diversity across GEO geographically and in terms of expertise and perspective.

The Chair proposed that the session be paused until the following day, which was agreed by Executive Committee members.

Meeting adjourned at 16:00.

Wednesday, 16 March 2022

Meeting convened at 12:00

2 SESSION 2: PLANNING AND STRATEGY

2.1 Road to GEO Post-2025 (Document 57.8 – for decision)

The Chair opened the discussion, stating that there was a recognized need for a small team to draft the documents, although it may be useful to have at least two members per region to increase representation and to have resilience for meeting attendance.

Japan expressed their appreciation for the preparation of the document. They noted, however, that the proposal for including only 12 members in the Think Tank was too few, suggesting that the number should be about 25. Japan stated that the post-2025 process should be led by the Executive Committee and proposed a two-step approach whereby each GEO caucus would propose some members, after which the GEO Secretariat could propose additional nominees to complement the team in terms of inclusivity and expertise. Japan also requested that the Secretariat define the timeline for the post-2025 process, ensuring that there will be sufficient opportunity for interaction and consultation between the Think Tank and the GEO community.

Germany thanked the Secretariat for the proposal, noting that Annex 1 would provide a good basis to continue the discussions, while remaining open to new ideas that may not have been included. Regarding the development of the post-2025 strategic mission, Germany agreed with Japan that the process needs to be led by the Executive Committee and agreed that there is a need to balance the considerations of diversity and efficiency. They stated that the mandate of the Think Tank was not clear and that this may in part be due to the name. Germany questioned the proposed composition of the group, noting that one non-governmental organization cannot represent the variety and noting that United Nations programmes and conventions were not included. The group should organize consultations with the broader community to hear from these different perspectives and then put the results into a proposal.

The Secretariat Director noted the discomfort with the proposed size of the group, but also the recognition that it cannot be too large either. The proposal was that the group would work with input from the Executive Committee, but not be limited only to that. The products of the group would form the basis for consultations with the GEO community. No working group can include all perspectives; it will need to consult the broader community and validate their ideas with the community. She reminded Executive Committee members that the key output of the group will be the GEO strategic mission document that will be proposed for the 2023 Ministerial summit; it is the working group which will prepare that document. In response to Japan's request for a timeline, the Director said that the Secretariat is not yet able to provide a detailed timeline but will prepare a tentative timeline which will include quarterly or more frequent consultations, including special-purpose events.

China said that they concurred with Japan and Germany. As GEO is an intergovernmental organization, the views of GEO Members are decisive. China said that the process should involve more in-depth involvement of Members, particularly those on the Executive Committee. Regarding Annex 1, China indicated concerns with the suggestion to expanding the number of GEO Caucuses.

South Africa stated that the process needs to strike a balance between being driven by GEO Members, while also bringing in new voices, and at the same time maintaining efficiency of the process. Maintaining the desired level of engagement over a long period will be difficult, noting the experience with the team that developed the 2016-2025 Strategic Plan. South Africa recommended that an engagement plan be developed to guide the consultations. On Annex 1, South Africa said that the document was a good start but needed more consultation with GEO Members and Participating Organizations before it would be ready to move outside the GEO community. In particular, the nexus areas need further consultation and perhaps to be organized in a different way.

The Chair reminded Executive Committee members that the writing team should not be equated with the consultation, saying that it was also important to have representatives from outside the organization involved in the writing. The Chair concurred with the proposal from Japan, in which Caucuses would nominate members and the Secretariat would supplement these nominations to increase diversity, similar to what was done with the EAG.

The European Commission thanked the Secretariat Director for the presentation, saying that it demonstrated needed dynamism. The Commission supported the approach outlined by the Chair, noting the various constraints of timing, size of the group, Executive Committee engagement, and hearing from other voices. They emphasized that the group must have a clear purpose and a mandate for an open culture, to engage with other organizations. The discussion must not be limited to within the group, it must have consultation as part of its mandate. The Commission also stated the importance of having an indicative timeline as soon as possible.

Greece asked about the appropriate profile or skills expected of the working group members.

Australia supported the concept of a working group that represented the diversity across GEO. They endorsed the process being discussed, highlighting that the Executive Committee will retain the ultimate approval of the final strategy.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Thanked the Secretariat for preparing the proposal;
- Requested that members of the Post-2025 Working Group be identified by Caucuses, then supplemented by additional nominations from the Secretariat to address diversity of perspectives, with final approval of the composition of the Working Group granted by the Executive Committee;
- Noted that nominees should be reasonably fluent in English and that Post-2025 Working Group members should expect to cover any related travel costs for their participation (with the possible exception for developing country members);
- Requested that the terms of reference of the Post-2025 GEO Working Group should include coordination of consultations with the broad GEO community;
- Suggested that the number of members of the Post-2025 Working Group be between 20 and 25.

Action 57.4: The Secretariat to distribute revised terms of reference for the Post-2025 Working Group to Executive Committee members. **Due: 18 March 2022.**

Action 57.5: Caucuses to provide their nominations to the Post-2025 Working Group to the Secretariat. **Due: 30 March 2022.**

Action 57.6: The Secretariat to provide a proposed list of Post-2025 Working Group members, including Secretariat nominations, to Executive Committee members. **Due: 13 April 2022.**

3 SESSION 3: FINANCE

3.4 Interim Report on Income and Expenditure at 31 December 2021 (Document 57.9 (Rev.1) – for information)

Lawrence Friedl (United States) presented the report on behalf of the Budget Working Group. He began by noting that the total contributions to the GEO Trust Fund in 2021 were just under CHF 3.8 million, these being contributed by 16 GEO Members. Expenses in 2021 were under CHF 3.5 million, thus producing a surplus of about CHF 520 000. This surplus was primarily due to reduced Secretariat travel and travel support to developing countries during the pandemic. Mr Friedl noted that Secretariat expenses would be expected to increase in 2022 as travel picks up and as new employees are hired in the Secretariat. Some of these expenses are expected to be relatively short-lived, as they relate to the response to the MTE and the preparations for GEO post-2025. Mr Friedl stated that the accumulated balance in the Trust Fund would cover these expenses. Over the longer-term, however, is how the cash and in-kind contributions will cover the full staff complement in the approved Concept of Operations document; this speaks to the importance of the GEO Pledge Campaign and the role of the Resource Mobilization Officer. Turning to the Pledge Campaign, Mr Friedl reported that CHF 1.8 million has been received in 2022, while another CHF 1.2 million is in the pipeline. To meet the projected level of contributions, another CHF 900 000 would be required, and another CHF 1.2 million, cash or in-kind, to achieve the Pledge Campaign goal. Mr Friedl concluded by noting that the Budget Working Group would discuss Action 18 in Document 57.7 at its next meeting.

Germany asked about the contribution from the Coalition for Rainforest Nations (CfRN). Sara Venturini (GEO Secretariat) responded that this was funding for a Brazilian expert to support a project on forest monitoring in Madagascar.

The European Commission commended the Secretariat for its good financial management. They observed that GEO Members have remained engaged throughout the pandemic, which is a very positive sign. The Commission recognized that current revenues are insufficient to cover all of the positions identified in the Concept of Operations and encouraged the Budget Working Group and the Secretariat to continue the GEO Pledge Campaign. The Commission also supported the filling of the Resource Mobilization Officer position.

The United States said that they supported filling the strategic communications position.

Ghana requested that the in-kind contributions provided by developing countries be quantified.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Thanked the Budget Working Group for their presentation and for their work;
- Thanked GEO Members for continuing their GEO Trust Fund contributions during the pandemic; and
- Supported continuation of the GEO Pledge Campaign and encourage GEO Members to continue to contribute to the GEO Trust Fund.

4 SESSION 4: GEO PROGRAMME BOARD

4.4 Report of the Programme Board (Document 57.10 – for information)

Evangelos Gerasopoulos (Greece), Programme Board co-chair, presented the item on behalf of the Programme Board. He started by reviewing the outcomes of a discussion at the Programme

Board regarding the responses to various findings and recommendations of the MTE that related to the Board or the GWP. For each of the five relevant recommendations, he noted that the Programme Board had identified specific actions which would be implemented largely in 2022. Mr Gerasopoulos then turned to the development of the 2023-2025 GWP, beginning by explaining the process of development of the implementation plans for each GWP activity and the review of those plans. He explained that the review of the plans will involve multiple Engagement Teams composed of Programme Board members, Secretariat staff and, for the first time, external advisors. It was emphasized that the process was based on collaborative discussions with the leads of the GWP activities and was intended to improve the quality of the plans and to identify synergies and reduce duplication. Underpinning this process is a new online system which has been developed by the Secretariat. This system is expected to provide many benefits, including improved document and version control, easier re-use of content from the plans, better analytical capabilities, connections to other data sets such as the surveys conducted by the Working Groups and, eventually, movement away from a three-year planning cycle toward an “evergreen” GWP. In other items discussed by the Programme Board, Mr Gerasopoulos noted the following:

- The Programme Board Urban Resilience Subgroup has transitioned to become the new Resilient Cities and Human Settlements Working Group (RCHS-WG);
- The Foundational Task structure will not be modified in 2022, pending the outcomes of the EAG process and a renewed Secretariat Concept of Operations;
- The mandates of the Foundational Task Working Groups was extended to the end of 2025, and several changes were made to the Working Group terms of reference;
- The 2022 GEO Symposium will be held online 2-5 May;
- The Pacific Islands Advisory Group will bring forward a request to the Executive Committee to extend their mandate; and
- The 23rd Programme Board meeting will be held on 31 May to 2 June and the 24th Programme Board meeting will be held on 6-8 September.

The Chair recognized that the Programme Board was identifying synergies and opportunities in the context of the GWP review process and asked if these would be made public. Mr Gerasopoulos explained the role of the Programme Board engagement teams in identifying the connections among GWP activities, agreeing that more effort was needed to make these more visible beyond the Programme Board.

Germany asked about the Programme Board opinion of the GIDTT and its role. Mr Gerasopoulos stated that during 2021 the Programme Board had requested several documents from the GIDTT concerning various parts of the GEO infrastructure. Given the establishment of the EAG, the Programme Board would wait for their recommendations on the future directions in this area, including the role of the GIDTT.

Spain requested that the Programme Board look at which GWP activities are working on similar tasks. Also, does the Programme Board analyse what is being done by other international organizations? Mr Gerasopoulos responded that several international organizations are represented on the Programme Board and in the GWP activities. He also noted that the Foundational Task Working Groups also play a role in understanding these connections. Mr Gerasopoulos said that this is being done in the RCHS-WG in which he is involved.

CEOS suggested that the GWP as it is currently conceived does not provide a full picture of all activities underway in GEO, pointing to the Working Groups and Regional GEOs, saying that these are not visible to the GEO community. Mr Gerasopoulos responded that the Regional

GEOs should take greater initiative to include some of their activities in the GWP. The Secretariat noted that the Working Groups are included in the GWP through the Foundational Tasks.

The European Commission stated that the Programme Board needs to be informed of progress in the EAG process. They also underlined the importance of the work on in situ data and requested that more information be provided regarding the activities of the Data Working Group. Mr Gerasopoulos noted that the work on in situ data is being handled well by the Data Working Group and that the Programme Board expected to hear more about this work in the coming period.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Thanked the Programme Board for their efforts in guiding the GEO Work Programme;
- Recommended that, in addition to looking for synergies and opportunities, the Programme Board consider whether there are overlaps among GEO Work Programme activities or with programmes of other organizations; and
- Recommended that the activities undertaken by the Foundational Task Working Groups be given greater visibility in the GEO Work Programme.

4.5 Proposal to Join the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership (Document 57.11 – for decision)

Steven Ramage (GEO Secretariat) presented the item. He noted that the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership (REAP) was launched at the United Nations Climate Action Summit in 2019 by stakeholders across the climate, development, and humanitarian communities. The partnership is hosted by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and initial funding for their secretariat was provided by Germany and the United Kingdom. Many United Nations agencies are involved, including many GEO Participating Organizations. REAP also includes a mix of developed and developing countries and many civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations. Mr Ramage noted that REAP has already been included in the engagement plan for the DRR Working Group, particularly in relation to engagement with Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs). GEO was invited to present to the REAP community regarding the role of Earth observations in DRR, after which GEO was formally invited to join as a partner. Mr Ramage underlined that REAP convenes many key stakeholders at the global scale to align and scale-up actions to reduce climate change impacts and disaster risks. REAP is useful to GEO in helping connect with United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations, as well as providing access to funders, especially around support to Early Warning Early Action (EWEA). Mr Ramage concluded with a diagram illustrating the complex relationships among the various organizations active in this area, noting the benefits for GEO through these interactions.

Germany welcomed GEO's involvement in early warning as part of the engagement strategy and stated that they understand that REAP is an important actor in the international landscape. Germany endorsed GEO's participation in REAP.

South Africa said that the presentation made a logical case for involvement and supported the involvement with REAP.

Ghana, Japan, Australia, Spain and Costa Rica indicated their support.

The European Commission noted the importance of looking at how climate observations need to adjust to support disaster readiness. They indicated they supported the proposal.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Endorsed the Secretariat recommendation to join the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership (REAP); and
- Requested that the Secretariat include reporting on GEO engagement in REAP in Secretariat Operations Reports.

4.6 Run up to COP27

Sara Venturini (GEO Secretariat) presented the item. She began by reviewing some of GEO's achievements in 2021 related to the climate change engagement priority, including the briefing of GEO Principals prior to COP26, participation in over 15 events and bilateral meetings with governments and partners during COP26, and involvement in the NAP technical working group supporting matters related to LDCs under the Subsidiary Body for Implementation. Turning to plans for 2022, Ms Venturini noted the following key actions:

- Continued engagement with the United Kingdom COP26 Presidency;
- Engagement with Egypt and the new COP27 Presidency team;
- Supporting countries, particularly through the development of NAP guidance by GEOGLAM and potentially other GWP activities;
- Participation in UNFCCC Subsidiary Body sessions in Bonn (6-16 June);
- Development of inputs to the Global Stocktake; and
- Participation in Subsidiary Body meetings and COP27 (7-18 November in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt).

In addition to these actions under the UNFCCC processes, Ms Venturini added that there would be another round of briefings to GEO Principals and contacts with technical experts in GEO Member UNFCCC delegations ahead of COP27. She also noted that the 2nd Climate Observation Conference, organized by the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) will be held in Darmstadt, Germany on 17-19 October. Ms Venturini concluded by asking the Executive Committee to decide between two options through which GEO could establish a regular arrangement for participating in UNFCCC sessions:

- Option A: the GEO Secretariat to request inclusion in the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) delegation; or
- Option B: the GEO Secretariat to join the national delegation of the Lead Co-Chair (on a rotational basis).

The Chair noted that there is a plan for a decision on climate observations at COP27, suggesting that it would be important for each GEO Member to highlight the collective value of GEO in this context, in addition to their advocacy for their own national observations.

Costa Rica agreed with the proposal for engagement with the UNFCCC process and asked whether GEO planned to have similar engagement with other international conventions such as the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Ghana asked whether GEO would participate in the pre-COP meeting prior to COP27.

The European Commission pledged to do what it could within the European Caucus to move this agenda forward. They agreed that it was important to find the most efficient way of participating in the UNFCCC events and suggested that option A would be best. The Commission offered to assist with this in their contact with WMO.

Japan noted that the importance of GEO was mentioned in a SBSTA paper at COP26. Japan committed to continue working with their SBSTA delegation to support recognition of GEO.

Germany noted that GCOS deals with climate and water but does not address terrestrial observations.

Ms Venturini responded that the Secretariat would not likely attend the pre-COP event due to other meetings. She thanked the European Commission for their offer to work with WMO on supporting GEO inclusion in their delegation. Ms Venturini reported that the Secretariat has an ongoing dialogue with WMO and is part of the scientific committee of GCOS, noting that GEO and WMO tend to be on different steps of the value chain on Earth observations.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Supported the approach proposed by the Secretariat; and
- Endorsed option A that GEO seek to join World Meteorological Organization delegations to Conferences of the Parties (COPs) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- Several Executive Committee members offered assistance in obtaining recognition of GEO by UNFCCC subsidiary bodies.

5 SESSION 5: GEO WEEK 2022

5.4 GEO Week 2022

Amos Kabo-bah, on behalf of Dr Kwaku Afriyie, Ghana Minister for Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, and Mr Samuel Jinapor, Ghana Minister for Lands and Resources, presented an offer to host GEO Week 2022 in Accra, Ghana. Mr Kabo-bah described the facilities at the proposed venue for the meeting and described the preliminary schedule of events, which are expected to include GEO community side events, an Industry Track, a Youth Track, the 59th Executive Committee meeting, and a meeting of the Post-2025 Working Group, in addition to the GEO-18 Plenary meeting.

The Chair observed that the number of rooms available at the venue was fewer than the number of participants at previous Plenary meetings, suggesting that additional rooms may need to be booked at nearby hotels.

China requested that there be opportunities for meeting with representatives of other West African countries in conjunction with GEO Week.

South Africa stated that, by accepting this offer, GEO will send a message on GEO's inclusivity and relevance to African countries.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Gratefully accepted the offer from Ghana to host the GEO-18 Plenary;
- Noted that the Plenary would offer online participation in addition to in-person;
- Encouraged other GEO Members to participate in the preparations;
- Welcomed the inclusion of an industry track and youth events;
- Recommended that Regional GEO meetings not be held concurrently to allow participation by those from other regions; and
- Noted that funding would be made available from the Secretariat to support participation by delegates from developing countries.

Action 57.7: The Secretariat to call for expressions of interest in the exhibition. **Due: before 30 April 2022.**

6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS AND REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS

6.4 Any Other Business

The Chair asked if members would be able to travel to Geneva for the 58th Executive Committee meeting. Australia indicated that they would not likely be able to travel. The Chair suggested that the Secretariat plan for a hybrid meeting in which those members who would be interested in attending in person at Geneva could do so, while those preferring not to travel could attend by videoconference.

Meeting adjourned at 15:25.