

Report of the GEO Virtual Symposium 2022

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

The GEO Virtual Symposium 2022, organized by the GEO Symposium Subgroup and the GEO Secretariat, took place virtually from 2-5 May 2022.

Under the theme ‘Global Action for Local Impact’, the GEO Virtual Symposium 2022 explored how the portfolio of GEO products and services provided insights and evidence for policy development and decision making, which is expected to lead to local impact over time.

1 SUMMARY OUTCOMES

This symposium continued the journey of strengthening synergies across the GEO Work Programme (GWP) and exploring collaborative and integrative approaches, which began at the GEO Virtual Symposium 2021 and continued at the GEO Week 2021. Participants representing local, national and global levels were invited to identify fit-for-purpose solutions based on Earth observation (EO) data and information that support decisions in real-world scenarios. Four sessions demonstrated this approach:

- The first illustrated the variety of EO-based tools being developed to support coastal countries to address multiple challenges including climate change impacts, that can also support Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) processes under existing international frameworks coordinated by UNEP and IOC-UNESCO.
- The second examined how several diverse EO projects collectively contributed to tackle inter-linked challenges in water, agriculture, biodiversity and climate change in one subnational region, the Tonlé Sap Lake Basin in Cambodia.
- The third example focused on how the EO Risk Toolkit can help countries improve their disaster risk management, with a case study of Jamaica which has established collaboration between the space agency and disaster management authority at the national level.
- The last session looked at EO solutions addressing the complex issues faced by Yerevan City of Armenia, including transportation planning, green planting, air quality control, climate change and disaster risk reduction.

Symposium participants contributed actively to the dialogues. A few recurring topics deserve mention:

- Funding is at the centre of the new integrative approach that aims to operationalize and scale up EO solutions for users and orient the GWP towards increased impact.
- Supporting on-the-ground decisions is as important as tracking progress on global policy frameworks, and both require co-design and co-development with users.
- Regional GEOs are expected to connect to national and local users through the GWP activities. National GEOs will also be an important conduit for user engagement.

- Nature-based Solutions and Ecosystem Accounting could provide another angle to weave together the themes discussed in the four sessions mentioned above and bring EO solutions to the attention of economic sectors, among others.

The dialogues will continue after the symposium to explore how integrative approaches will be reflected and tested in the 2023-2025 GWP, and will set the stage for GEO post-2025. Responding to the community's desire to continue the conversations, the Secretariat will explore a communications and collaboration platform.

The symposium also put a focus on sharing good practice and lessons learned in the current GWP. Major highlights include:

- The GWP activities expressed interest in the impact planning approach, while expecting the process to be kept simple and easy to implement.
- Multilanguage practice was requested to ensure inclusive participation from all regions. The GEO Secretariat committed to mobilize resources to enable GEO operating in multiple languages as UN agencies do.
- Sustained engagements rather than one-off events are required to involve under-represented groups including women, youth and the Indigenous community in GEO. An online collaborative platform will be piloted and scaled to use by various GEO groups to maintain continued discussion as necessary.
- The GWP activities showed strong commitment and advances towards open data and open knowledge. Dialogue sessions will be organized to facilitate the use of DMP self-assessment tools and the GEO Knowledge Hub.
- The relevance of GEOSS as a concept was debated, including the confusion of terms, its impact on GEO messaging, the value-added of GEO versus GEOSS, and what might be lost if the GEOSS concept is deemphasized or no longer used. The discussion will inform the Expert Advisory Group (EAG) for its findings and recommendations.
- The symposium participants endorsed the recommendations on how to improve policy relevance and delivery in the next GWP presented in the report [Mapping the Engagement of the 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme in Climate Action, Disaster Risk Reduction, and Capacity Development](#).

The GEO Secretariat Director in her remarks called for consideration of the following aspects in developing the next GWP:

- improving the speed of transitioning from research to operations;
- ensuring the policy and decision relevance of GEO work;
- accelerating efforts to reach end users, that is, policy makers and decision makers; and
- informing action and delivering environmental and socioeconomic impact, as well as communicating the story of that impact.

Currently, the Programme Board Engagement Teams are reviewing the Implementation Plans (IPs) submitted for the GWP 2023-2025. The symposium outcomes provide another source of input to help strengthen the IPs during the course of review and revision.

To learn more about the symposium, please follow slides and recordings of all sessions [here](#).

2 PARTICIPANT ANALYSIS

Three sets of data on symposium attendance are used in this analysis: pre-registration data, Zoom meeting statistics and participant survey result. Not all pre-registered participants attended the symposium and not all attendees were pre-registered. But the overlapping subset still reflects the gender and generation distribution of participants.

2.1 Zoom Meeting Statistics

Based on Zoom meeting statistics, the symposium attracted 1168 participants, 374 of which are unique individuals (GEO Secretariat staff excluded in both data) in 12 sessions. A unique individual participated in 3.1 sessions on average. A session was attended by 117 participants on average. Session 4 and Session 9 had less participants but benefitted participants from Asia-Oceania and west-coast America. See Table 1 for exact number of participants for each session.

Most participants followed the majority of the sessions they attended. Amongst the 1168 participations over 10 minutes, 932 (80%) are over 30 minutes and 695 (60%) are over 60 minutes. Participation under 10 minutes was considered trivial and excluded. (Table 2)

The regional distribution of the participants was 37% from Americas, 35% from Europe, 19% from Asia-Oceania, 8% from Africa and 2% from CIS. (Table 3)

Table 1: Number of participants by session

Participation by session	Number of participants
1-2_Opening and EO in Support of Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Marine Spatial Planning	171
3_From Global Action to Local Impact: How Do We Do That?	133
4_Towards Integrated EO Solutions in Tonlé Sap Basin, Cambodia	76
5_Advancing Open Data within the GWP through New Tools and Services	110
6_Harnessing the Power of Inclusive Voice in GEO	97
7_Open Knowledge: Implications for the GWP	109
8_Global Systems for Local Solutions: Opportunities and Challenges for GEOSS (EAG Consultation)	120
9_Addressing Systemic Risk in Jamaica	53
10_The Urban Fabric: A Complex and Opportune Nexus	141
11-12_Improving Policy Relevance and Delivery of the Next GWP and Closing	158
Total	1168

Table 2: Participation time

Participation time	Number of participants
Over 10 minutes in a session	1168
Over 30 minutes in a session	932
Over 60 minutes in a session	695

Table 3: Number of participants by region

Regions	Number of participants
Africa	89
Americas	429
Asia-Oceania	222
CIS	24
Europe	404
Total	1168

2.2 Pre-registration data

Symposium pre-registration asked for information on gender and age. By comparing the pre-registration data and the Zoom meeting data, 241 participants (out of a total of 374) provided gender and age information.

Amongst the 241 participants, 97% provided explicit information on gender: 55% are men and 42 are women. (Figure 1).

Participants between the ages of 30 to 59 constituted the majority of attendees (76% of 241 distinct attendees). The percentage of attendees in the age groups of 30-39, 40-49 and 50-59 are respectively 27.4%, 26.1% and 22.4%. Only 5.4% attendees are under 30 years old, and 12.5% are 60 years old and above. (Figure 2)

Figure 1: Distribution of participants by gender

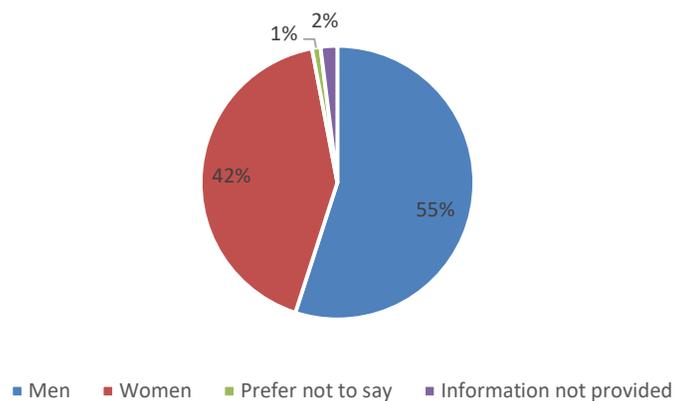
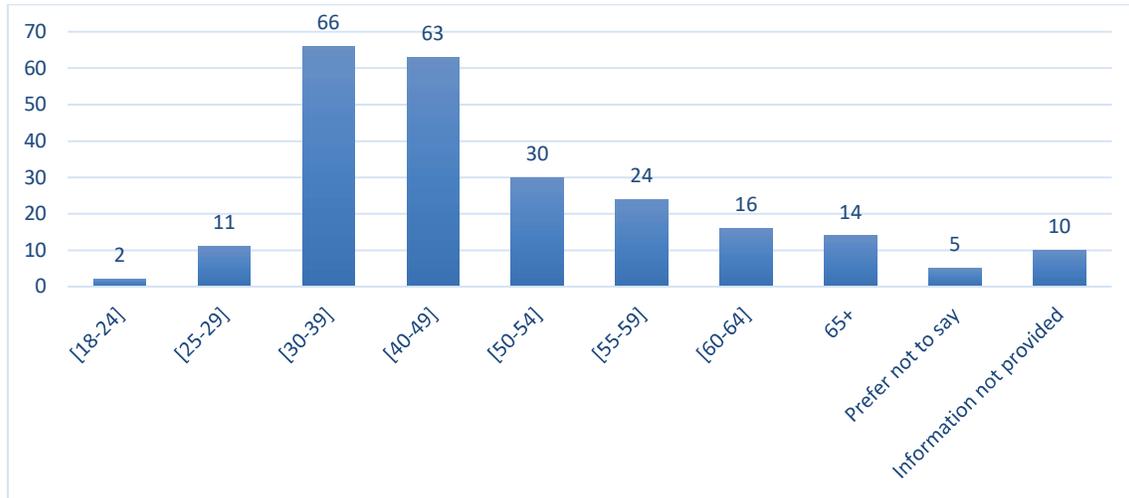


Figure 2: Distribution of participants by age



2.3 Participant Survey results

Among participants who provided response to the survey, 13% attended all sessions, 40% attended 6-11 sessions, and 47% attended 5 or few sessions. This group had a higher attendance than the average 3.1 sessions, possibly because they were more willing to respond to the survey than those who attended much less.

For those who did not attend any sessions, or attended fewer sessions than planned, the primarily reason was: 47% Conflict with another meeting, 13% Was unable to connect using the conference software, 7% Was not interested in the topic, and 27% other reasons including Zoom fatigue or non-favorable time.

The respondents had fairly high rates of satisfaction in general and in many of the aspects, except in relation to the opportunities for discussion and questions. This reflects a need to redesign future sessions with fewer and shorter presentations and more time for discussion (Table 4).

Table 4 Participant Satisfaction

Aspects of the Symposium	Score
Topics covered	3.7
Quality of the content	3.9
Session Duration	3.9
Diversity of speakers	4.1
Quality of the moderation	4.1
Opportunity for discussion and questions	3.1
Access to the presentations	3.7
Inclusion of regional content	3.9
Ease of use of the Zoom platform	4.5
Overall satisfaction with the Symposium	3.9

Note: the score is at the scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is “not at all satisfied” and 5 is “very satisfied”