

Update on the Review of the Rules of Procedure

This document is submitted to Plenary for decision

This document provides background information on activities of the Executive Committee (ExCom), via an ExCom Task Force, to review potential governance changes to the Rules of Procedures (RoP).

This effort addressed revisions to the RoP amendment process to distinguish between major and minor changes as well as the potential expansion of the representation of the Caucuses on ExCom.

Based on the above information and analysis, the document contains specific recommendations for changes to the GEO RoP, for consideration and adoption by Plenary.

1 INTRODUCTION

At the Executive Committee’s 63rd session (ExCom-63), the GEO Secretariat proposed changes to the GEO Rules of Procedure (RoP) concerning:

- A process for distinguishing between updates/edits (minor changes that do not affect governance or operations) from amendments (substantive changes to governance bodies or processes);
- The expansion of the Caucuses on the ExCom, incorporating the proposed expansion of the ExCom representation with a holistic review of possible governance changes in the RoP as proposed in ExCom-63.

To address these topics, the ExCom established a short-term RoP Task Force comprising ExCom and Secretariat members “to review potential governance changes to the RoP, including the expansion of representation on the ExCom, with the caveat that the submission of the proposal(s) on the expansion of representation on the ExCom specifically be made no later than the GEO Plenary in 2025.”

Section 2 of this document provides a summary of the RoP Task Force’s responsibilities.

Section 3 summarizes the Task Force’s activities to develop a new process for RoP amendments; **Appendix A** documents the processed proposed process, including a flowchart. It articulates the specific changes to the current RoP to incorporate the proposed new process.

Section 4 summarizes the Task Force’s activities on the Expansion of Caucuses and ExCom Representation; **Appendix B** articulates the specific changes to the current RoP to incorporate the proposed modifications to ExCom representation, and it provides additional, detailed information about the Task Force’s activities.

2 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ROP TASK FORCE

The ExCom established a RoP Task Force with the following responsibilities articulated in the terms of reference:

- Craft proposed changes for the RoP to distinguish between minor updates or editorial changes and major amendments;
- Craft proposed RoP changes for the potential expansion of the representation of the Caucuses on ExCom;
- Craft proposed changes to the RoP amendment procedure, including for consideration of future proposals for changes to the RoP;
- Craft proposed revisions to the RoP associated with the revised amendment process;
- Examine issues related to GEO governance and relationships among governing bodies to enable ExCom conversations on this topic.

The Task Force prepared findings and recommendations for ExCom to bring topics to GEO-20 Plenary for decision.

3 PROPOSED PROCESS FOR ROP AMENDMENTS

The RoP Task Force examined the amendment procedure in the current RoP (Section 11.2). While acknowledging that this section had existed for over 15 years without major issue, the RoP Task Force found that key aspects of the procedure were ambiguous. Thus, the RoP Task Force developed a new process for amending the RoP that retains effective elements of the existing procedure, while addressing identified ambiguities. The RoP Task Force identified the following principles to guide the design of the process:

- Allow for submissions of proposed changes at any time;
- Balance flexibility, efficiency, and rigor; minimize bureaucracy;
- Proposers should be involved as much as possible in refinements to their proposal;
- Plenary should be the final arbiter of major amendments;
- New process should reflect and reinforce GEO values.

The RoP Task Force developed a flowchart of a new process, outlining key inputs, decision points, actions, and outcomes. The flowchart provided a visual aid to support discussions and refinements to the process. The RoP Task Force crafted accompanying text for the respective steps of the flowchart to support the administration of the process. The RoP Task Force discussed options for the appropriate entity to manage the process. It proposes the establishment of a new RoP Task Force, reporting to the ExCom, to oversee the amendment process. Items to note in the proposed process include:

- Submissions for proposed changes are accepted at any time;
- The ExCom RoP Task Force will assess whether a proposed change is major or minor, with the ExCom having the authority to reclassify as necessary;
- The process is phased to support Plenary decisions on major amendments, while giving flexibility for ExCom to make expedient decisions on minor changes;
- The process includes evaluation of proposed changes to assess potential risks or unintended impacts on other parts of the RoP;
- The process includes collaboration with the submitters of proposed changes.

The RoP Task Force examined how to incorporate the new process into the current RoP, and it recognized that GEO RoP Annexes often serve as the repository for detailed information and procedures. As such, the RoP Task Force identified the need for edits to RoP Section 11.2 and the creation of a new Annex. While the new Annex would document the process, the RoP Task Force identified that clarification of eligibility, change categories, the task force, and authorities were appropriate to articulate in Section 11.2 of the main body of the RoP.

Appendix A provides the specific edits proposed to modify Section 11.2 and adds a new Annex documenting the process, including a flowchart.

4 EXPANSION OF CAUCUS REPRESENTATION ON THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The RoP Task Force examined ExCom membership in the current RoP (Section 5.3)¹ and the proposed expansion of Caucus representation raised at ExCom-63. The RoP Task Force identified numerous factors influencing Caucus representation. It conducted a quantitative analysis of different approaches to Caucus representation, recognizing that each one advantaged some Caucuses and disadvantaged others. Through productive debates and collaborative discussions, the RoP Task Force converged on a new proposed allocation of 18 total ExCom members.

The RoP Task Force identified the following principles to guide its work:

- Inclusive representation to ensure geographic diversity and equal participation without disadvantaging resource-limited countries; ensure that no country is left behind;
- An effective, balanced, and manageable ExCom that ensures fair representation of the GEO Plenary;
- Adaptability and growth to align ExCom representation with GEO's evolving membership;
- Consideration of financial contributions, ExCom participation costs, and the constraints faced by some countries.

As part of its deliberations, the RoP Task Force fully examined key factors influencing Caucus representation within GEO ExCom. These included:

- Membership Growth. Consideration of GEO's expanding membership over the past 19 years and value of inclusive governance;
- Geographic Balance. Consideration of geographic factors, such as regional priorities or regional population, and the value of equality;
- Financial Contributions. Consideration of regional contributions to the GEO Trust Fund, with potential consideration of broader investments in the GWP;
- Plenary Participation. Consideration of attendance in Plenary sessions;
- Participation Costs. Consideration of the financial support and cost of participation.

Based on these factors, the RoP Task Force examined eight modalities: Growth in GEO Member Countries; Growth in GEO ExCom Membership; Regional Population Size; Equal and Geographic Representation; Financial Contributions to the GEO Trust Fund; Participation in Plenary – GEO Members; Participation in Plenary – ExCom Members; and, Cost of Participation in ExCom.

Appendix B summarizes the analysis of, and findings from, each of these modalities.

¹ The current GEO RoP specifies 16 ExCom members: Africa (3), Americas (3), Asia and Oceania (4), CIS (2), and Europe (4).

The RoP Task Force reached consensus on a new proposed allocation of 18 total ExCom members: 4 Members each for Americas, Africa, Asia & Oceania, and Europe, and 2 Members for CIS. The primary rationales underlying this proposal include:

1. Expansion of ExCom seats is required to ensure proportional representation based on GEO membership growth, financial contributions and the commitment shown through attendance rates. This is necessary to address the discrepancies where the Africa and the Americas Caucuses are underrepresented on ExCom despite significant growth and contributions;
2. Recognizing that some countries lack sufficient financial resources to participate, continued financial support is essential for equitable representation, particularly for low-income countries. However, with Trust Fund contributions stagnating or declining, any expansion of ExCom should be accompanied by increased contributions to ensure financial sustainability;
3. To ensure ExCom remains effective and accountable to Plenary, its size must be manageable. Adding two seats is recommended to enhance inclusivity and proportionality while maintaining efficiency in decision-making.

The RoP Task Force proposed edits to RoP Section 5.3 to incorporate the proposed expansion and Caucus representation. Per the original action, the RoP Task Force also considered and discussed other aspects of possible governance changes in the RoP, such as ExCom Observers. However, the RoP Task Force converged only on the ExCom expansion topic, leaving possible additional governance changes for future consideration.

In **Appendix B**, Section B.1 provides the specific edits proposed to modify RoP Section 5.3.

Appendix A

Proposed Changes to the GEO RoP: Amendment Process

Strikethrough text is for deletion. Red text is for addition.

11.2 Amendment:

These RoP may be amended by the Plenary at any meeting. Proposals to amend these rules of procedure ~~should be submitted to the Secretariat at least eight calendar weeks prior to the Plenary meeting at which the amendment will be considered~~ **can be submitted by eligible entities at any time throughout the year to the Secretariat. Proposals will be considered on a periodic basis. The process to submit, consider, and review RoP amendments will follow the procedure described in Annex G.**

11.2.1 Eligibility

- 11.2.1.1 **Members, POs and GEO Governing Bodies are eligible to propose amendments to the Rules of Procedure.**
- 11.2.1.2 **Proposals from eligible entities may be submitted by the Principal, Alternate, Focal Point, or Co-Chair of the respective entity.**

11.2.2 Categories

- 11.2.2.1 **Major amendments, or “major changes,” include material changes that introduce or represent substantive modifications or implications for governance, processes, or operations.**
- 11.2.2.2 **Minor amendments, or “minor changes,” include editorial or immaterial changes that improve accuracy but do not introduce or represent substantive modifications or implications for governance, processes, or operations.**

11.2.3 Task Force

- 11.2.3.1 **A RoP Task Force will manage the process in Annex G.**
- 11.2.3.2 **The RoP Task Force Terms of Reference are defined in Annex [TBD]².**

11.2.4 Authorities

- 11.2.4.1 **The Executive Committee has the authority to approve minor amendments, which will be submitted to the Plenary for information.**
- 11.2.4.2 **Annex [TBD] defines the authorities of the Rules of Procedure Task Force.**

² This RoP Task Force reports to the ExCom, which will develop the terms of reference for the task force. When those terms of reference are completed and endorsed by the ExCom, the RoP will be updated to indicate the specific annex following the process defined in the RoP, to be approved by the Plenary.

Annex G

Rules of Procedure

Amendment Process

ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROCESS

The following statements apply to the respective steps defined in Figure 1.

Step 1: Proposed RoP Changes to GEO Secretariat

The GEO Secretariat, in coordination with the RoP Task Force,¹ provides information no less than once per year on the process and schedule to submit proposed changes to the RoP by eligible entities.

Step 2: File/Database of Individual Inputs

The GEO Secretariat maintains a digital method for the submission, storage, and tracking of proposed changes to the RoP. The Task Force has access to this system. Submissions must include the rationale for the proposed changes as part of the information provided.

Step 3: Compliance Check & Task Force Package

The GEO Secretariat performs a compliance check on the submissions received. The compliance check involves an assessment of the eligibility of the submitter, the relation of the submission to the RoP, and the inclusion of a rationale. If a submission contains multiple independent changes, the GEO Secretariat may split the submission into separate ones in the digital system and indicate accordingly. The GEO Secretariat compiles the submissions into a package for the Task Force, indicating any submissions that the GEO Secretariat separated or deemed non-compliant. The GEO Secretariat will consult with the RoP Task Force Co-Chairs during this stage, as needed.

Step 4: Task Force Review of Submissions

4.1 The Task Force reviews the package of submissions on a periodic basis and no less than once per year. The Task Force initially reviews any submissions deemed non-compliant to confirm that assessment or to reclassify it as compliant. The Task Force will notify the submitter for a submission it determined as non-compliant.

4.2 The Task Force assesses the substantive nature of each compliant submission. Classification options include a major change or minor change. The GEO Secretariat will record the classifications accordingly in the digital system for RoP change submissions.

4.3 Minor Changes. Changes the Task Force classifies as minor are expedited to Step 5 for preparation and consideration at the soonest ExCom meeting as possible.

¹ For this Annex, Task Force refers to the RoP Task Force unless otherwise specified.

4.4 Major Changes. The Task Force conducts a thorough evaluation of major change submissions for integration into the RoP. The Task Force assesses the potential risks and impacts of a proposed change on other sections of the RoP. The Task Force may make slight refinements to proposed changes for clarity or editorial integrity or slight edits to the RoP needed to incorporate proposed changes. The Task Force can combine related changes and identify any complementary changes needed in other parts of the RoP. The Task Force will collaborate with the respective submitters in refining any proposed text or combining with similar submissions and in ensuring the submitter's concurrence. A submitter may withdraw a proposed change. As needed, the Task Force, with assistance from the GEO Secretariat, may invite comments from outside the Task Force on changes under consideration.

The Task Force will consider the following criteria in its evaluations:

- Independence. Extent to which a proposed change is unique or is related to other changes;
- Merit. Extent to which a proposed change is well-founded and has value and worth;
- Reasonableness. Extent to which a proposed change is cogent and sensible;
- Suitability. Extent to which a proposed change is germane, apt, and pertinent.

Step 5: Preparation for ExCom Consideration

5.1 Major Changes. The Task Force, with assistance of the GEO Secretariat, prepares a package of the evaluation of major changes, including a record of any combinations or revisions. The package includes the Task Force recommendations. The Task Force will work with the Secretariat to schedule ExCom consideration at the most appropriate opportunity to support the ensuing GEO Plenary.

5.2 Minor Changes. The Task Force, with assistance of the GEO Secretariat, prepares a package of the minor change submissions for the ExCom, including Task Force comments, a record of any revisions, and the Task Force recommendations. The Task Force will work with the Secretariat to schedule ExCom consideration at most expedient opportunity.

Step 6: ExCom Consideration

The Executive Committee considers the packages for major and/or minor changes and decides whether to advance major changes to GEO Plenary and whether to approve minor changes. Decision options include 'Submit to Plenary' for major changes, 'Modification' for major or minor changes, and 'Approve' or 'Decline' for minor changes. The decisions can apply to some or all changes considered. The GEO Secretariat will record the decisions accordingly in the digital system for RoP change submissions.

For major changes that the Executive Committee decides to submit to GEO Plenary, the Executive Committee will identify its recommendations for GEO Plenary. The Task Force will notify the submitters of changes that the Executive Committee decides to submit to GEO Plenary.

6A Modification. The Executive Committee may refer proposed changes back to the Task Force for additional work, such as for further evaluation, revision, or rationale. Referrals can go to Step 4 or to Step 5 depending on the nature of the Executive Committee comments. When proposed changes are referred back to the Task Force, the Task Force will consult with the proposal submitter about the Executive Committee’s concerns and will evaluate options with the submitter.

The Executive Committee can reclassify a proposed minor change as a major change and refer it back to the Task Force for additional work in Step 4 and/or Step 5.

6B Minor Change–Approve. The GEO Secretariat and RoP Task Force will incorporate approved changes in the RoP and post an updated RoP. The GEO Secretariat will notify the community of the updated RoP. The Task Force will notify the submitters of minor change proposals that the Executive Committee approved the change.

6C Minor Change–Decline. The Task Force will notify the submitters of minor change proposals that the Executive Committee declined the change.

Step 7: Preparation for GEO Plenary

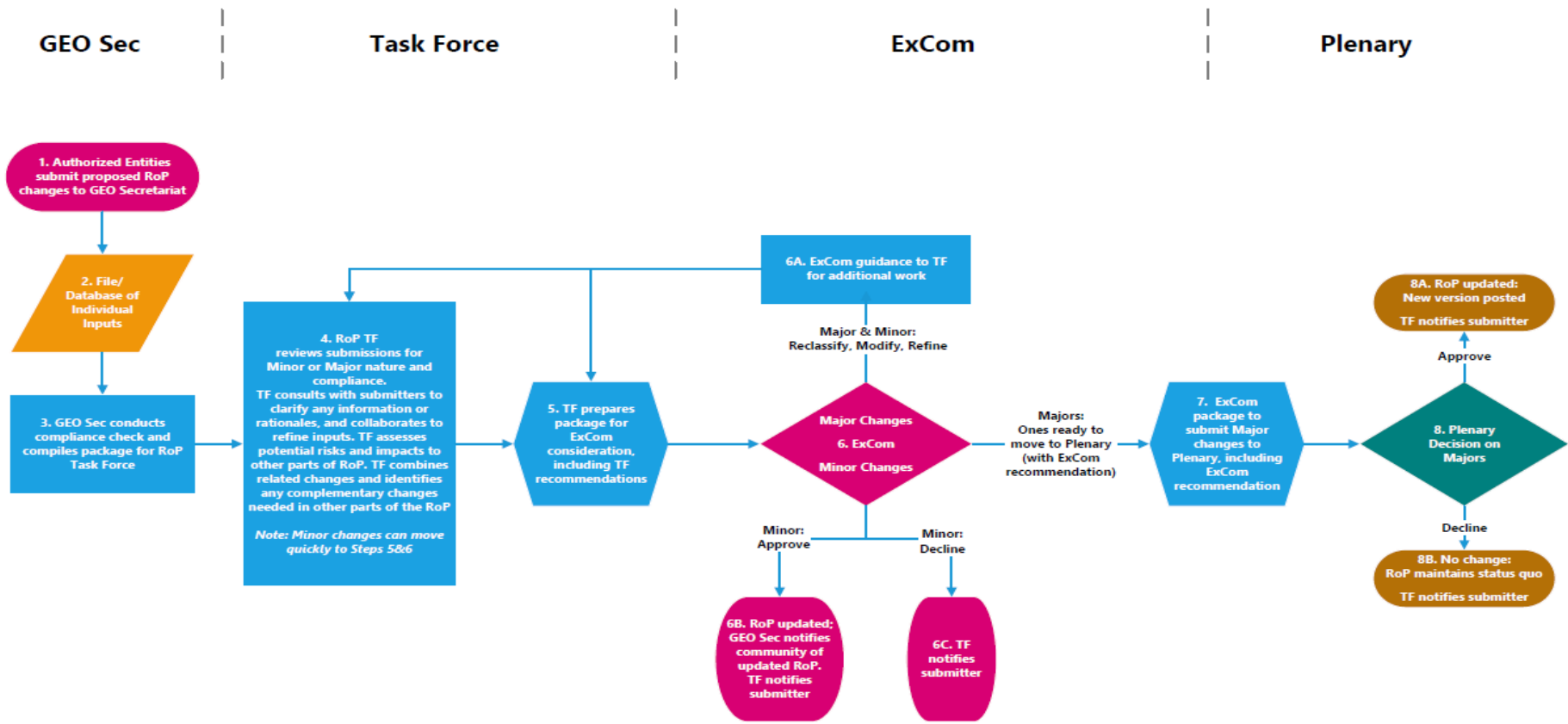
The Task Force, with assistance of the GEO Secretariat, prepares a package of proposed RoP changes for the Executive Committee to submit to GEO Plenary. As part of the package, the Task Force will combine the RoP revisions from individual proposed changes into a consolidated RoP document with edits, deletions, and additions identified; the Task Force may make slight revisions for clarity or editorial integrity and will coordinate with the submitters accordingly. The package includes the Executive Committee recommendations as well as notifications of any minor changes the Executive Committee adjudicated since the prior GEO Plenary.

Step 8: GEO Plenary Decisions

The GEO Plenary decides whether to approve the proposed major changes. Decision options include ‘Approve’ or ‘Decline.’ The GEO Secretariat will record the decisions accordingly in the digital system for RoP change submissions.

8A Approve. The GEO Secretariat and RoP Task Force will incorporate approved changes in the RoP and post an updated RoP. The Task Force will notify the submitters of major change proposals that the GEO Plenary approved the change.

8B Decline. The Task Force will notify the submitters of major change proposals that the GEO Plenary declined the change.



Appendix B

Proposed Changes to the GEO RoP: ExCom Representation and Additional Information on Task Force Deliberations

1 PROPOSED ROP CHANGES

Strikethrough text is for deletion. Red text is for addition.

5.3 Membership: The Executive Committee members are a representative sub-set from the membership of the GEO Caucuses. The Executive Committee ~~will consist~~ comprises of ~~16~~ **18** GEO Members based on ~~the following~~ geographic distribution: Africa (~~34~~), Americas (~~34~~), Asia and Oceania (4), CIS (2), and Europe (4). ~~Individuals serving on the Executive Committee do not serve in their individual capacity but as Member representatives. The~~ **Executive Committee members serve as representatives of their respective Caucuses and not in their individual or country capacities.**

2 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON TASK FORCE DELIBERATIONS

The RoP Task Force sought historical information and rationales about changes to ExCom Membership overtime, especially to understand the context for the current ExCom allocation and uneven representation among Caucuses. The RoP Task Force contacted some previous GEO Directors and others involved with early years of GEO to collect information. However, the information gathered and GEO's documentation on changes to ExCom representation did not provide sufficient clarity to inform the analysis and discussions about the ExCom expansion and Caucus allocation.

The RoP Task Force used a quantitative analysis of ExCom representation initially produced by Lawrence Friedl (United States of America). Additional data provided by the GEO Secretariat and analyzed by the RoP Task Force were also considered in forming the findings and recommendations.

Modalities Analyzed and Considered for Representation in GEO ExCom

The RoP Task Force evaluated the following modalities for Caucus representation within the GEO ExCom, using quantitative analysis to examine advantages and disadvantages of each approach¹.

- **Growth in GEO Member Countries:** *Representation considering the growth of GEO Member Countries (hereinafter, GEO Members) over the past 19 years. This*

¹ Analyses are available from the RoP Task Force Co-Chairs. The analyses focused on GEO Member Countries and did not include Participating Organizations or Associates.

ensures that GEO's evolving and expanding engagement is reflected in decision-making processes and governance structures;

- o The analysis found that the number of GEO Members has expanded across all regions over the past 19 years from 2005 – 2024, including:
 - Africa grew from 14 to 31 GEO Members (121% increase);
 - Asia-Oceania increased from 13 to 23 GEO Members (77% increase);
 - Americas expanded from 8 to 21 GEO Members (163% increase);
 - CIS increased from 3 to 6 GEO Members (100% increase) and has the lowest number of GEO Members of all regions;
 - Europe grew from 12 to 35 GEO Members, (52% increase), which has a smaller increase however the region maintains the highest number of GEO Members.
- o These findings show that the Americas and Africa regions have experienced the most significant growth in GEO Members over time. Asia-Oceania and CIS have also expanded substantially, demonstrating increased global participation. Additionally, Europe remains the region with the most GEO Members.
- **Growth in GEO ExCom Membership:** *Representation proportional to the total number of member countries within each region, recognising the geographic breadth and potential for engagement.*
 - o The analysis found that while the number of GEO Members for a Caucus has grown, ExCom representation does not always reflect these changes. Findings:
 - Africa represents 31 GEO Members (27%) but has historically had fewer ExCom seats;
 - Americas represent 21 GEO Members (18%) whilst CIS represents 6 GEO Members (5%). Asia-Oceania represents 23 of GEO Members (20%), yet its ExCom representation is often lower than that of Europe;
 - Europe has 35 GEO Members (30%), traditionally holding a larger share of ExCom seats relative to other regions.
 - o The results show that the current allocation of ExCom seats is not fully proportional to the number of GEO Members in each region. In particular, Europe and Africa are underrepresented.
- **Regional Population Size:** *Representation proportional to the human population of each region to ensure equitable participation for densely populated regions.*
 - o This analysis found that:
 - Asia-Oceania holds the majority of the world's population (58%) and 4 ExCom seats (25% inclusion rate);
 - Europe has only 9% of the global population and 4 ExCom seats (25% inclusion rate);

- CIS (4%) has 2 ExCom seats (13% inclusion);
- Africa (28%) and Americas (13%) have 3 ExCom seats (19% inclusion rate).
- o This analysis highlights imbalances in GEO Membership representation across different regions compared to their global population share.
- **Equal and Geographic Representation:** *Equal representation for all Caucuses, to ensure geographic representation, inclusivity and fairness, while recognizing the unique challenges and contributions of all regions and varied priorities of GEO's diverse member base.*
 - o This analysis found that:
 - Africa has 55 countries and 3 ExCom seats (19% inclusion rate);
 - Americas has 35 countries and 3 ExCom seats (19% inclusion rate);
 - Asia-Oceania has 53 countries and 4 ExCom seats (25% inclusion rate);
 - CIS has 10 countries and 2 ExCom seats (13% inclusion);
 - Europe has 44 countries and 4 ExCom seats (25% inclusion rate).
 - o This finding shows that the current allocation of ExCom seats is not proportional to GEO Membership. In comparison between Asia-Oceania and Africa, Africa is disadvantaged by having 1 less ExCom seat where the number of countries are similar.
- **Financial Contributions to the GEO Trust Fund:** *Representation proportional to the financial contributions of countries in each region to the GEO Trust Fund only. This may also include consideration of regional and national wide investments in the GWP in the future.*
 - o This analysis found that contributions to the GEO Trust Fund vary by region:
 - Americas (44%) followed by Asia-Oceania (35%) contribute the most, reflecting their stronger financial resources;
 - Europe (20%) contribute moderate amounts;
 - Africa contributes the second least (2%) to CIS (0%) and also benefits from financial support programs.
 - o The largest contributor was found to be the Americas, which shows this region is disadvantaged in comparison to other regions by having one less seat. Despite Europe only contributing less than half of the Americas contribution, they maintain 1 extra seat on ExCom in comparison.
- **Participation in Plenary – GEO Members:** *Representation based on attendance in Plenary sessions in GEO Week 2023 based on GEO Membership.*
 - o The analysis found was varied attendance from the Regions:
 - Africa: 23% of their GEO Members attended;
 - Americas: 21% of their GEO Members attended;
 - CIS: 4% of their GEO Members attended;
 - Europe: 16% of their GEO Members attended;

- Asia-Oceania: 36% of their GEO Members attended.
- o Asia-Oceania had the highest attendance rate indicating a strong regional engagement in GEO activities. Africa and the Americas had the second and third highest rates of GEO Members attended this event, showing their commitment to GEO despite the inequitable distribution of seats at ExCom. While CIS's attendance rate was significantly lower than all other regions.
- **Participation in Plenary – ExCom Members:** *Representation based on attendance in Plenary sessions in GEO Week 2023 based on ExCom Membership.*
 - o Further evidence of regional commitment is represented in the analysis of attendance of ExCom members during GEO Week 2023.
 - Africa: 3 out 3 (100%) of their GEO ExCom Members attended;
 - Americas: 3 out 3 (100%) of their GEO ExCom Members attended;
 - CIS: 2 out 2 (100%) of their GEO ExCom Members attended;
 - Europe: 4 out 4 (100%) of their GEO ExCom Members attended;
 - Asia-Oceania: 4 out 4 (100%) of their GEO ExCom Members attended.
 - o The analysis shows that there was 100% participation by GEO ExCom Members at Plenary 2023, confirming equal regional commitment to both the GEO ExCom and Plenary, despite the disparities in seat allocation across regions.
- **Cost of Participation in ExCom:** *Consideration of the financial support from the GEO Trust Fund, for example support given to countries that require participation support (travel), while encouraging online /virtual participation as a practical and inclusive alternative to ensure equitable engagement and reduce financial constraints.*
 - o The analysis found that:
 - Africa received 40% of the total support, indicating the highest financial reliance among all regions;
 - Americas, CIS, and Asia-Oceania each received 20% of the total support, reflecting moderate reliance on financial assistance;
 - Europe received 0% of the support, demonstrating their financial independence to participate.
 - o These results demonstrate that the availability of financial assistance is crucial to maintaining the current representation at ExCom. An increase in representation from regions that have a high or moderate reliance on financial assistance could lead to an increase in the number of requests financial assistance to attend in-person ExCom meetings. The option for online/virtual participation would reduce the need for additional requests for financial assistance.