Report
59th Executive Committee Meeting
Hybrid Conference, 1 & 4 November 2022

As Accepted at the 60th Executive Committee Meeting.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chairs:

Dr Stephen Volz, United States (for Sessions 1-5 on 1 November 2022)

Dr Mmboneni Muofhe, South Africa (for Session 6 on 4 November 2022)

1 SESSION 1: GENERAL BUSINESS

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

The Co-Chairs and the GEO Secretariat Director opened and welcomed the members to the 59th meeting of the Executive Committee.

1.2 Adoption of Agenda

The Executive Committee adopted the agenda (revision 1) as distributed.

The following documents were approved without discussion:

- ExCom-59.2 Draft report of the 58th Executive Committee meeting;
- ExCom-59.3 Review of Action Items from Previous Meetings;
- ExCom-59.7 Review of Requests for Participating Organizations status.

1.3 Update on Secretariat Activities

The Executive Committee:

- Thanked the Secretariat for the report;
- Requested maintaining the updates on Secretariat Activities and Programme Board Report as discussion items for all Executive Committee meetings;
- Recommended a balanced approach to support the current work and the future-setting work;
- Suggested including Associates as part of the ongoing and planned stakeholder engagement;
- Asked the Secretariat to leverage Executive Committee members further in increasing member and stakeholder engagement.

2 SESSION 2: IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIONS IN RESPONSE TO THE GEO MID-TERM EVALUATION – REPORT FROM EXPERT ADVISORY GROUP

2.1 Report from the Expert Advisory Group (EAG)

The Executive Committee:

- Thanked the Expert Advisory Group for their work done on the GEOSS evaluation and acknowledged the complexity of the exercise;
- Noted that Expert Advisory Group's work had both been necessary and useful but that it was not possible for the Executive Committee to make a decision with the analysis conducted to-date;
- Recommended that the Expert Advisory Group's work is further built upon with more analysis of the various options and/or possible combinations of the options;
- Requested the Expert Advisory Group remain available for consultation;
- Decided to continue discussion of the Expert Advisory Group report and next steps at Friday's special Executive Committee session.

3 SESSION 3: ROAD TO POST 2025

3.1 GEO Resource Mobilization Strategy: Positioning GEO Work Programme for Impact

The Executive Committee:

- Thanked the GEO Secretariat for its ongoing work on a resource mobilization strategy;
- Noted the GEO Secretariat's efforts to continue to explore financing options, including innovative financing, for the GEO Work Programme and Trust Fund;
- Encouraged the GEO Secretariat to look at financing models from other organizations.

3.2 Sustainability & Scalability via Innovative Finance

The Executive Committee:

- Thanked the GEO Secretariat for its early reflections on innovative finance;
- Highlighted the importance of identifying and focusing the GEO Work Programme towards impact;
- Encouraged exploring innovative financing mechanisms to acquire high-resolution satellite images under a single license for multiple low- and middle-income country users.

3.3 GEO Road to Post-2025: Interim Report of Post-2025 Working Group

The Executive Committee:

- Thanked the Post-2025 Working Group for its efforts to-date and work on the Interim Report, including regional caucus engagement;
- Emphasized that the GEO value proposition must allow GEO to focus on fewer activities that have more impact;

- Looked forward to ongoing engagement with the Working Group, including by submitting written comments on the Interim Report;
- **Action 59.1**: Extended the deadline for comments on the Interim Report by Executive Committee and Plenary. **Due: 18 November 2022**.

4 SESSION 4: PREPARATION FOR GEO-18

4.1 Review of Nominations to the Programme Board (Preparation for Plenary Presentation at Agenda item 8.7)

The Executive Committee approved the recommended slate for presentation to Plenary.

4.2 Report of the Budget Working Group

The Executive Committee:

- Thanked Mr Brian Cover (WMO) for his presentation, appreciated the clean audit and adopted the reports;
- Accepted the results of the financial audit and the Budget Working Group report and approved advancement to Plenary;
- Tasked the Secretariat to update the budget document to reflect the German financial contribution to the Trust Fund for GEO-LDN;
- Concurred with the 2023 budget plan advancement to Plenary for approval.

4.3 Overview of the Plenary Documents

The Executive Committee:

- Approved the following documents that were not discussed but for which no objections were raised, nor changes requested:
    - GEO-18-7.3: 2023-2025 Work Programme (for decision);
    - GEO-18-8.3: Terms of Reference for the Ministerial Working Group (Min-WG) (for decision).
- Recommended extending the deadline for nominations to the Ministerial Working Group, making an announcement in Plenary, and ensuring that the Ministerial Working Group is inclusive of low- and middle-income countries as well;
- Noted the new timeline for nominations to the Ministerial Working Group will be decided and announced during Thursday's Plenary session.

5 SESSION 5: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 Any Other Business

The Executive Committee:

- Agreed to reconvene on Friday exceptionally with members of both Executive Committee 2022 and Executive Committee 2023 for continuity;

- Considered dates for the next Executive Committee meetings for approval at Friday's meeting:
    - Week of March 20 (preference March 22-23);
    - Week of July 10.

6 SESSION 6: EXTENDED EXCOM MEETING

6.1 Welcome

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- South Africa, as Lead Co-Chair 2023, opened and welcomed the members to the continuation of the 59th meeting of the Executive Committee.

6.2 Adoption of Agenda

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Adopted the agenda as announced.

6.3 Review of Outcomes and Actions

The Executive Committee:

- Clarified the Outcomes and Actions from Tuesday, 1 November;
- Requested the GEO Secretariat to review the recording of Tuesday, 1 November and circulate an updated Outcomes and Actions summary.

6.4 EAG follow-up

The Executive Committee:

- Confirmed that the Expert Advisory Group has been disbanded;
- Recognized the extended deadline for comments announced in Plenary to 25 November;
- Tasked the GEO Secretariat to conduct an analysis of all the comments and inputs from the Executive Committee and the Plenary, through a transparent synthesis process;
- Requested the GEO Secretariat propose recommendations for next steps, including an identification of appropriate expertise and resources;
- **Action 59.2**: GEO Secretariat to bring recommendations on the way forward to the Executive Committee in March 2023. **Due: ExCom-60**.

6.5 GEO Post-2025 Strategic Mission

The Executive Committee:

- Emphasized the importance of the work needed before the March Executive Committee meeting;
- Requested more granular timeline on work and products leading to the March Executive Committee meeting;

- Requested opportunity to review draft(s) with sufficient time to provide and incorporate feedback;
- Encouraged Executive Committee members to use existing channels, including regional caucuses and regional GEOs, for comments on the Post-2025 report and further engagement.

6.6 Update to Executive Committee on GEO Post-2025 Incubators

The Executive Committee:

- Recommended that the Secretariat prepare a paper reviewing existing mechanisms for resource mobilization models in other organizations;
- Offered broad support for the Post-2025 Incubator Work.

Draft Report
59th Executive Committee Meeting
Hybrid Conference, 1 & 4 November 2022

FULL REPORT

1 SESSION 1: GENERAL BUSINESS

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

Dr Stephen Volz (United States), Meeting Chair and 2022 GEO Lead Co-Chair, opened the meeting. Dr Volz acknowledged how the GEO partnership had greatly helped in the coordination and leveraging of the national USGEO's activities. Dr Volz expressed an interest in learning about current activities and future priorities. Dr Volz highlighted United States' continued support for GEO, as well as willingness to assist in the future.

Dr David Applegate (United States), US Principal Alternate and Head of Delegation, thanked Ghana for hosting this first in-person GEO Week since the pandemic. Dr Applegate noted that through the national coordination mechanism of USGEO, the United States is able to focus government resources effectively and understand agencies' plans for Earth observation and how to leverage them. He encouraged ExCom members to continue to explore how a National GEO mechanism can lead to improved EO coordination and requirements gathering. With fellow Americas Caucus co-chairs from Peru and Costa Rica, he was happy to share the continued strides across the Americas to grow use of observations to meet specific regional needs. Dr Applegate stated that he looked forward to hearing more this week about GEO activities and priorities for the future and then bringing back to the United States ideas on how to grow our coordination with the various Work Programme activities. He mentioned that the items this week related to the Work Programme, and on the Post-2025 GEO strategy, will set GEO up for a strong Ministerial event next year. Dr Applegate reiterated the United States' support for GEO and its activities as well as working with the Administration to identify high-level support for the Ministerial Summit next year.

Dr Mmboneni Muofhe (South Africa), Africa Caucus Co-Chair thanked Ghana for hosting the Executive Committee meetings and the Plenary. Dr Muofhe was pleased with how South Africa handled the difficult period during devastating floods by deploying a massive amount of Earth observation. This enabled South Africa to demonstrate the utility of Earth observation data and information in responding to such crises. South Africa appreciated being part of this organization and expressed a desire to reach out to other governments that have yet to recognize the true value of GEO. AfriGEO is gaining traction in Africa, not only in terms of numbers, but also in terms of engagement quality. Dr Muofhe hoped to strengthen ties with other regional GEOs and looked forward to laying the groundwork for how GEO will look Post-2025, as well as what it can do to address climate change, food and energy security.

Dr Yuqi Bai (China) conveyed messages on behalf of the China GEO Co-Chair in his absence. The Co-Chair expressed his special wishes for this Executive Committee meeting, believing it would be of great significance. Dr Bai congratulated Ghana and the GEO Secretariat on overcoming enormous obstacles and wished this GEO Week success. He expressed China's interest in the GEO Post-2025 Working Group and Expert Advisory Group's report, stressing that there needs to be a balance between diversity and consensus in those processes.

Dr Joanna Drake (European Commission), the European Caucus Co-Chair, thanked Ghana for hosting the GEO Week 2022. She stated that time would be set aside for reviewing the GEO Post-2025 strategy. Further discussions would also be held about the future of GEOSS infrastructure while keeping previous investments in mind. Moreover, lessons from the preparation for this GEO Week must be gathered for the next Ministerial Summit. Dr Drake reiterated that the European Commission was eager to contribute to GEO and reminded that GEO was founded to serve the GEO community, therefore its value proposition must be balanced and beneficial to all GEO members.

Ms Yana Gevorgyan (GEO Secretariat Director) thanked the Co-Chairs for setting a good tone for the agenda. The bridge from today to Post-2025 has been built on the findings of the Mid-term Evaluation, community input, interactions with GEO Members, and Post-2025 Working Group work. Ms Gevorgyan expected the Executive Committee to consider the approaches needed to scale up the GEO Work Programme so that results could be distributed equally to more countries. A sense of urgency must be shared by all when discussing this bridge from today to the future. The GEO Secretariat will support this work by means including consolidating activities in the Work Programme, improving internal and external communications. Ms Gevorgyan concluded that it is critical to maintain an open mind to external perspectives in order to develop a strategy that will allow GEO to grow and remain relevant in the current Earth observation landscape.

Outcomes:

- The Co-Chairs and the GEO Secretariat Director opened and welcomed the members to the 59th meeting of the Executive Committee.

1.2 Adoption of Agenda

The Chair asked if there were any comments or interventions to adjust the agenda.

Germany asked why reports on the Secretariat's mission and the Programme Board were not on the agenda. The Chair clarified that the Programme Board report was submitted for information, and GEO Secretariat activities would be discussed in the next agenda item. The Executive Committee accepted previously submitted reports.

Outcomes:

- The Executive Committee adopted the agenda (revision 1) as distributed;
- The following documents were approved without discussion:
    - ExCom-59.2: Draft report of the 58th Executive Committee meeting;
    - ExCom-59.3: Review of Action Items from Previous Meetings;
    - ExCom-59.7: Review of Requests for Participating Organizations status.

1.3 Update on Secretariat Activities

Ms Yana Gevorgyan (GEO Secretariat Director) presented the Secretariat's operations report. She highlighted the Secretariat's achievements since 58th Executive Committee meeting on following aspects:

1.3.1 GEO Work Programme/Incubators:

- Advanced coordination and integration of GEO Work Programme activities to amplify impact and efficiency;
- Revived GEO-Wetlands with a new Implementation Plan and strategically positioned it to be featured at the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands;
- Conducted the first coordination workshops on Climate-Urban-Health and Nature-based Solutions.

1.3.2 National Adaptation Plans:

- GEO activities were featured at the 7th National Adaptation Plan (NAP) Expo in Botswana for the first time;
- For GEOGLAM specifically, GEO engaged with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Least Developed Countries Expert Group on the potential to integrate crop monitoring into National Adaptation Plans and unlock Green Climate Fund financing;
- Launching National Adaptation Plan guidance on Food Security at GEO Week 2022 and then featuring GEOGLAM at the 27th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

1.3.3 Resource Mobilization Plans:

- The GEO Secretariat has initiated the development of a Resource Mobilization strategy for GEO sustainability and scalability;
- This work is geared toward both the Trust Fund and the Work Programme;
- Implementation of this strategy will support both the current Work Programme and Post-2025 aspirations.

1.3.4 Stakeholder Engagement:

- The Secretariat organized and hosted the first event showcasing the role and value of Earth observation for the corporate investing sector;
- Beginning to expand service delivery opportunities to members through leveraging Participating Organizations;
- Engaging new and established members to increase and/or revive engagement with GEO.

Ms Gevorgyan reflected that more strategic, systematic and methodical engagement was desired, and advocacy, communications and resources were needed for successful follow-up.

At the request of the Chair, Ms Gevorgyan stated that associate partners were involved in the stakeholder engagement. She also emphasized the crucial role of GEO Members in

particular the Executive Committee members, in connecting with various funding organizations to support consolidation of the new Work Programme activities. She added that the Secretariat's role was to ensure all partners were moving in the same direction.

The European Commission Co-Chair acknowledged and appreciated the Secretariat's extensive effort in different areas. She recognized the Secretariat's efforts in building the GEO community at a deeper level, as well as the extent to which it has progressed in engaging authorities and providing the tools needed to make use of Earth observation data. She requested that Ms Gevorgyan provide more information on recruitment strategies, including consultants, as well as an update on the Concept of Operations.

Ms Gevorgyan explained that the Secretariat Concept of Operations presented in 2021 provided for a more even distribution of Secretariat resources across Secretariat function areas. To identify additional opportunities within the Work Programme in terms of establishing links with GEO partners, the Secretariat advertised the position of Chief Work Programme Coordinator. As a result, Ms Madeeha Bajwa joined the Secretariat team. As part of the Concept of Operations, the Secretariat advertised for a Capacity Development Coordinator, and Mr Ernest Acheampong joined the organization as a result. As for the Chief Resource Mobilization, the Secretariat was unable to complete the initial recruitment. In the following months, Secretariat recruited a consultant Ms Olivia Simmons to develop an overarching resource mobilization strategy. Subsequently, in recognition of the interlinked nature of communications, advocacy and resource mobilization, Secretariat advertised for a position of Chief Partnerships and Communications and Ms Nicoleta Panta was selected. Since Ms Patricia Geddes will retire at the end of this year, the Secretariat advertised the position of Chief of Staff. Ms Erika Alex is now a member of the Secretariat team. The Chief of Staff will lead the development of an effective system of protocols and processes that would allow the Secretariat to operate efficiently, transparently and with focus on coordination, results and accountability.

Costa Rica acknowledged the work of the Secretariat and asked how to bring on board more Central American countries. Costa Rica also inquired about how to define priorities among the many areas GEO intends to play a role.

The Chair suggested that the topics be addressed during the Post-2025 strategy session.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Thanked the Secretariat for the report;
- Requested maintaining update on the Secretariat and Programme Board activities as discussion items for all Executive Committee meetings;
- Recommended a balanced approach to support the current work and the future-setting work;
- Suggested including Associates as part of the ongoing and planned stakeholder engagement;
- Asked the Secretariat to leverage Executive Committee members further in increasing member and stakeholder engagement.

2 SESSION 2: IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIONS IN RESPONSE TO THE GEO MID-TERM EVALUATION – REPORT FROM EXPERT ADVISORY GROUP

2.1 Report from the Expert Advisory Group (EAG)

Dr Neil Sims (Co-Chair of the Expert Advisory Group) presented the Expert Advisory Group report on GEOSS. He described the Expert Advisory Group's role and composition, as well as an iterative review procedure which included technical assessment, community consultation and survey. Another two Expert Advisory Group members, Dr Anastasia Wahome (Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources For Development) and Joe Flasher (Amazon Web Services), participated in the session for discussion.

The Expert Advisory Group proposed three options in terms of investment in the current GEOSS Platform: discontinue investment; pivot investment toward end-user needs; or continue investment and enhance the functionality of the GEOSS Platform. Admittedly there were diversified perspectives both within the Expert Advisory Group itself and among the broad GEO community. As a follow-up step, the Expert Advisory Group recommended conducting an in-depth cost/benefit analysis for these options.

The Expert Advisory Group also provided thoughts for any future GEO infrastructure: bringing in users' perspectives and requirements; integrating different components of the infrastructure including the Knowledge Hub; providing support to the GEO Work Programme; and improving in-situ data support.

The Chair thanked Dr Sims and the Expert Advisory Group, and the larger community for the progress and efforts made so far.

Ghana shared the confusion within the GEO community over GEOSS or GEO, with Ghana leaning toward GEO as an overarching operating construct. However, Ghana emphasized the importance of considering the amount of money invested in GEOSS, as well as the future of the existing infrastructure if GEOSS was completely disregarded. Ghana also expressed the need to innovatively integrate the GEO Knowledge Hub and the GEOSS platform. Finally, connectivity should be considered in order to access all available data sets.

The European Commission reminded the GEO community not to forget one of the fundamental objectives of GEO – free data sharing, when discussing the evolution of GEOSS. The European Commission stated that GEO as a community must continue to facilitate, harmonize and provide access to data and services, particularly to those who are experiencing difficulties. It is agreed that the role of GEOSS must be redefined while the landscape of data infrastructure evolves. The European Commission would be happy to continue engaging with representatives from other regions of the world to adapt the GEOSS Platform to their needs. Regarding the Expert Advisory Group's report, the European Commission believed it was a very good work in progress which required further refinement in the scenarios and the potential implications of those scenarios, and it was critical to reach out to GEO stakeholders for additional information and incorporating more evidence-based and quantitative elements in the analysis.

The United States acknowledged the difficulty in evaluating a long-running program with multiple perspectives from stakeholders. The Expert Advisory Group discussion

complemented the earlier presentation on the importance of communication and branding. The United States agreed that the earlier GEOSS term probably served its purpose, but now it was critical to have a single name representative of GEO as a whole. At this point, the United States simply acknowledged that it looked forward to a more detailed analysis on the cost/benefit of various options.

Japan requested the Expert Advisory Group to document clearly that this report mainly focused on the GEOSS platform, not a GEO-related infrastructure or a GEO concept. Secondly, Expert Advisory Group should clarify how GEO member states engage in the three options because the Expert Advisory Group report did not include a cost analysis for each of the options, which was very critical for the Executive Committee to make evidence-based decisions. Furthermore, Japan would like the GEO Secretariat to clarify the process and schedule for the Executive Committee to discuss these options.

Germany stated that the three options were not yet complete or deep enough for Germany to make a decision. Germany cautioned that Option 1 might cause tremendous risk to GEO's reputation, while the combination of Options 2 and 3 could be an interesting way forward. As a result, Germany concurred with other members to have a more in-depth analysis with GEO internal experts and proposed to clarify the governance of the future GEOSS infrastructure, which they believed should be integrated into governmental processes.

Australia concurred with the interventions from Germany and the United States and recommended that the GEO Secretariat return to the next Executive Committee meeting with a proposal for the way forward.

China recognized that GEOSS was the original aspiration of GEO. The development of GEOSS seventeen years ago was to make data findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable. China believed that the real challenge now was to integrate these various parts of GEOSS - the GEOSS platform, GEO Knowledge Hub and all other components, therefore, to support the GEO Work Programme in the future.

Dr Sims thanked the Executive Committee Members for their comments. He stated that rebranding was the clearest message that the Expert Advisory Group received, but they found it challenging to rebrand everything to GEO which may result in a new definition of GEO as a technical infrastructure, as GEOSS is what GEO does and not necessarily what GEO is. The Expert Advisory Group expressed that they reviewed GEOSS from a technical standpoint, and the decision to be made here was a political one. They recommended the GEO Secretariat provide assistance in cost/benefit analysis.

Greece agreed that the Executive Committee had to make a political decision rather than a technical one. Greece expressed the discussion should be shifted at a certain point to what objectives the infrastructure should meet in the future. They could actually set a strategy and requirements on how to benefit from all the available resources and check the red lines such as openness, governance, etc.

Costa Rica asked the Expert Advisory Group how they found Flagships and Initiatives contributing to GEOSS and how people were using the GEOSS Platform. Costa Rica clarified that in South America they were increasingly using the Knowledge Hub rather than the GEOSS Platform.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Thanked the Expert Advisory Group for the work done on the GEOSS evaluation and acknowledged the complexity of the exercise;
- Noted that Expert Advisory Group's work has both been necessary and useful but that it was not sufficient for them to make a decision with the analysis conducted to-date;
- Recommended that the Expert Advisory Group's work was further built upon with more analysis of the various options and/or possible combinations of the options;
- Requested the Expert Advisory Group remain available for consultation;
- Decided to continue discussion of the Expert Advisory Group's report and next steps at Friday's Special Session of the Executive Committee.

3 SESSION 3: ROAD TO GEO POST-2025

3.1 GEO Resource Mobilization Strategy: Positioning GEO Work Programme for Impact

Ms Olivia Simmons (Resource Mobilization Consultant of GEO Secretariat –) presented the GEO resource mobilization strategy resulting from an analysis of the GEO Work Programme 2023-2025 statistics and interviews of activity leads. The strategy is a response to the Mid-term Evaluation findings – "lack of steady financing for the GEO Trust Fund lies at the heart of ensuring the long-term sustainability of GEO and for this reason this topic deserves the utmost attention", and impact, communication and fundraising are interconnected.

Ms Simmons found that the GEO Work Programme profile was not set up for impact, as the majority of the funding and expertise was concentrated in the research and development phase rather than the implementation phase. Ms Simmons reported that the GEO Trust Fund was fairly stable and not particularly growing, and the funding profile was not diverse enough given the majority of the donors were from government sources.

While recognizing GEO's strengths as a global convener of the Earth observation community and a successful advocate for open data sharing and access, Ms Simmons pointed out GEO's challenges lie in:

- Building a cohesive brand and reputation with many independent GEO Work Programme activities;
- Accepting and effectively managing project funding under the current operating model;
- Delivering impact beyond research and development;
- Monitoring and evaluating across the GEO Work Programme for accountability and impact;
- Driving strategic donor engagement across GEO;
- Convening outcomes-focused engagement;
- Resourcing fundraising for impact (human and financial resources that go into fundraising).

Ms Simmons then proposed what GEO needed to do to be successful, which included: delivering demand-driven, impactful programs with high-quality products; articulating a clear and strong value proposition and measuring the return on investment in a much clearer way; delivering an integrated fundraising, communications and advocacy strategy, and building capacity and resources for fundraising across the GEO community; and building a strong operating model that can manage funds transparently and efficiently.

Ms Simmons also elaborated GEO's current actions towards impact: developing an integrated fundraising, advocacy and communication strategy (2023); incubating projects based on GEO Work Programme for impact (2023-2025); and Post-2025 scale-up and application of learning (2025+).

South Africa thanked Ms Simmons for the presentation which placed two options in front of GEO: the status quo, or an impactful way that requires a number of changes, including resource (human and financial) increase and identification of impact areas. South Africa recommended exploring existing opportunities for impact funding, meanwhile, to keep in mind GEO's mandate and avoid being distracted by the pursuit of resources.

The United States asked for clarification if the sustainable funding strategy distinguished between funding for the GEO Trust Fund for the GEO Secretariat and funding for the GEO Work Programme, and if there were different approaches for attracting respective investors.

The European Commission considered it the right exercise to look at sustainable and scalable financing for impact, and they needed it to know what other financial resources they could mobilize for GEO in the next phase. The European Commission welcomed the engagement of the private sector but noted that it would need to be evaluated in the future given GEO's structure as an intergovernmental partnership. They recommended looking at financing models of other organizations and examining the potential and constraints associated with these models. They encouraged the GEO Secretariat to continue investigating this topic and to keep the Executive Committee informed of any actions taken.

In response to the Executive Committee's comments, Ms Simmons confirmed that there were two approaches for the GEO Secretariat and the GEO Work Programme and she agreed to keep sight of GEO's core values and future position in further developing the strategy.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Thanked the GEO Secretariat for its ongoing work on the resource mobilization strategy;
- Noted the GEO Secretariat's efforts to continue to explore financing options, including innovative, for the GEO Work Programme and Trust Fund;
- Encouraged the GEO Secretariat to look at financing models from other organizations.

3.2 Sustainability & Scalability via Innovative Finance

Mr Robert Filipp (GEO Secretariat Innovative Finance Advisor) presented on sustainability and scalability via innovative finance. Mr Filipp explained that innovative financing had a

long history and emphasized that there were numerous mechanisms. He highlighted one aspect of innovative financing: the collaboration of private capital and public resources to solve global problems and advance the common good.

Mr Filipp illustrated a few existing innovative finance mechanisms:

- Resilience Insurance, including insurance-linked loans (Fiji cyclone insurance), parametric disaster risk insurance (United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund), impact bonds (Peterborough) and Climate Risk Insurance (African Risk Capacity);
- Environmental Social Governance (ESG) investments, such as 180 blended finance funds with $60.2 billion in Assessments Under Management (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), evolving investment principles & Shareholder Activism - $33.9 tn by 2026 in ESG assets (PricewaterhouseCoopers) and ESG-linked Indexed Funds (Deutsche Bank/The National Bank of Abu Dhabi Global Fund Exchange-Traded Fund).

By analyzing the strategic value of GEO, Mr Filipp gave a few examples where GEO could have a role in innovative financing: ESG rankings (more accuracy and additional indicators), bulk purchasing for low- and middle-income country users, etc. To implement these new initiatives, a few enablers need to be put in place:

- Problem/solution-oriented Work Programme;
- Diversify partnerships to include governments, multilateral environmental agreements, development financing institutions and private actors (financial industry, risk insurance industry, ranking companies, philanthropy);
- Transparent, inclusive and accountable governance to fully realise resource mobilisation potential (Post-2025 Working Group recommendation);
- Efficient, agile operating model to respond to funders' requirements (Post-2025 Working Group recommendation); and
- Baselines strengthened monitoring and evaluation for better evidence and achievement reporting.

South Africa confirmed the presentation to be very informative. They thought the single license multi-user example was a very good proposal, as South Africa had experienced uncoordinated access to data and information and was only able to obtain a single license for multiple users through their space agency.

China appreciated GEO Secretariat's efforts in finding new ways to use Earth observation data. However, they thought financial solutions would be difficult to implement without trustworthy and quality data or ways to evaluate these two things based on their previous experiences. Therefore, they stressed the quality of Earth observation data should be a focus.

The European Commission agreed with the first recommendation of having a problem and solution-oriented Work Programme, and requested clarification on diversified partnerships, such as environmental agreements, and how this related to the source of innovative financing.

The United States expressed interest in using the Work Programme to provide additional value to innovative financing mechanisms. As a result, the characteristics of a good Work Programme activity could be defined as how to meet those thresholds.

In response to comments, Mr Filipp concurred with China about focusing on data quality. He clarified how multilateral agreements related to innovative financing. Many countries face reporting burdens with 1-2 people reporting on 10+ conventions. If GEO could provide a service to make this easier, there is an opportunity to finance this service.

Peru expressed the need to raise funds from other sources, including commercial partners. It would be even better if GEO could aid Peruvian national projects.

Ms Yana Gevorgyan (GEO Secretariat Director) reported that efforts were underway to package the Work Programme for greater impact, which is why it is critical to look at finance opportunities to implement it faster than traditional research and development funding, as well as more equitable ways for countries to access data.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Thanked the GEO Secretariat for its early reflections on innovative finance;
- Highlighted the importance of identifying and focusing the GEO Work Programme towards impact;
- Encouraged exploring innovative financing mechanisms to acquire high-resolution images under a single license for multiple low- and middle-income country users.

3.3 GEO Road to Post-2025: Interim Report of Post-2025 WG

Ms Melanie Hutchinson (Post-2025 Working Group member) provided an update on the work of the Post-2025 Working Group and sought feedback and input for the GEO Post-2025 strategy.

Through analysis of policy and technology trends, the Working Group stated:

- GEO has 17 years of success to build upon;
- Making GEO fit for purpose;
- Accompanying factors to propel GEO as a catalyst;
- Responding to user needs (e.g., facilitating access to high-resolution data);
- The world is different than 17 years ago, how to harness the opportunities.

The Working Group proposed some initial considerations for GEO Post-2025 for discussion, which include:

- Increase equitable access to Earth observations;
- Optimize the GEO Work Programme;
- Strengthen GEO governance;
- Mobilize new donors, private sector and innovative financing;
- Strengthen communications and advocacy.

Costa Rica suggested defining priorities for GEO and finding ways to overcome barriers such as language barriers and country-specific needs.

The European Commission stressed the importance of member engagement in the Post-2025 strategy development process. A continuing dialogue is required. Looking ahead should not deviate from the current strategy. GEO's uniqueness must be preserved. A continuing dialogue is required.

Germany provided detailed input to the Working Group's report. They agreed there was no doubt that GEO would persist. They stated that GEO produced significant results in the past and must continue to rely on them. While recognizing good points in the report, Germany found it still too general and recommended a few areas to strengthen including: sharpening GEO's uniqueness and its value proposition; focusing on activities with the most impact for society and reputation; ensuring complementary with other organizations using Earth observation data; ensuring free and open data; and retaining intergovernmental cooperation at the heart of GEO while improving non-governmental cooperation.

Japan stated that the next GEO strategic mission should develop a high-level policy framework in order to gain broader support from member and non-member states. The policy framework should clarify the value proposition GEO provides to member states and how member states can achieve their goals through GEO. Japan proposed that the Working Group review the 2016-2025 strategic plan and look at what goals GEO has accomplished in the past 10 years.

Ms Hutchinson thanked the Executive Committee for their valuable suggestions and asked to provide them in writing.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Thanked the Post-2025 Working Group for its efforts to-date and work on the Interim Report, including regional caucus engagement;
- Emphasized that the GEO value proposition must allow GEO to focus on fewer activities that have more impact;
- Looked forward to ongoing engagement with the Working Group, including by submitting written comments on the Interim Report;
- **Action 59.1**: extended the deadline for comments on the Interim Report by Executive Committee and Plenary. **Due: 18 November 2022**.

4 SESSION 4: PREPARATION FOR GEO-18

4.1 Review of Nominations to the Programme Board

Ms Wenbo Chu (GEO Secretariat Work Programme Officer) presented the review of nominations to the Programme Board.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- The Executive Committee approved the recommended slate for presentation to the Plenary.

4.2 Report of the Budget Working Group

Mr Brian Cover (WMO) presented the report of the Budget Working Group.

The European Commission contributed 1.2 million euros in August and will contribute the same amount next year.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Thanked Mr Cover for his presentation, appreciated the clean audit and adopted the reports;
- Accepted the results of the financial audit and the Budget Working Group report and approved advancement to Plenary;
- Tasked the Secretariat to update the budget document to reflect the German financial contribution to the Trust Fund for GEO-LDN;
- Concurred with the 2023 budget plan advancement to Plenary for approval.

4.3 Overview of the Plenary Documents

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Approved the following documents that were not discussed but for which no objections were raised, nor changes requested:
    - GEO-18-7.3:2023-2025 Work Programme (for decision);
    - GEO-18-8.3: Terms of Reference for the Ministerial Working Group (Min-WG) (for decision).
- Recommended extending the deadline for nominations to the Ministerial Working Group, make an announcement in Plenary, and ensure that the Ministerial Working Group is inclusive of low- and middle-income countries as well;
- Noted the new timeline for nominations to the Ministerial Working Group will be decided and announced during Thursday's Plenary session.

5 SESSION 5: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 Any Other Business

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Agreed to reconvene on Friday exceptionally with members of both 2022 and 2023 for continuity;
- Considered dates for the next Executive Committee meetings for approval at Friday's meeting:
    - Week of March 20 (preference March 22-23);
    - Week of July 10.

6 SESSION 6: POST 2025 STRATEGIC MISSION

6.1 Welcome from Lead Co-Chair and Co-Chairs

Dr Mmboneni Muofhe (South Africa), African caucus Co-Chair and 2023 GEO Lead Co-Chair, opened the meeting. Dr Muofhe invited Executive Committee members to introduce their new representatives.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- South Africa, as Lead Co-Chair 2023, opened and welcomed the members to the continuation of the 59th meeting of the Executive Committee.

6.2 Adoption of Agenda

Dr Muofhe introduced the key topics of this Executive Committee meeting, namely the outcome review, the Expert Advisory Group follow-up, and a brief reflection on the Post-2025 process. He suggested the adoption of the agenda as presented.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Adopted the agenda as announced.

6.3 Review of Outcomes and Actions

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Clarified the Outcomes and Actions from Day 1;
- Requested the GEO Secretariat to review the recording of Tuesday, 1 November and circulate an updated Outcomes and Actions summary.

6.4 EAG Follow-up

The United States stated that the Expert Advisory Group had completed its mission. The Expert Advisory Group should be available for consultation but not for additional tasks. The next step is to conduct a cost/benefit assessment which the Expert Advisory Group doesn't have the expertise to carry out. The next step is to determine how to conduct that cost-benefit analysis.

Peru concurred the Expert Advisory Group had finished their work and proposed that the GEO Secretariat provide options and make recommendations on the next steps.

The European Commission also concurred the Expert Advisory Group had completed its mandate and (the Executive Committee) should now move on to refinement of the options.

China stated the options presented by the Expert Advisory Group were inconclusive. They proposed to have a new group with technical expertise oversee the future work.

Germany stated that future work should clarify GEO's role as an organization in the various options, which could have different implementations. Future options and proposals must clearly define the roles of the members and how this is governed.

The United States stated that GEO was not equivalent to GEOSS. There is a need to understand GEO's path as well as to figure out what GEOSS is. GEOSS is a supporting

capability, function and infrastructure. But the question is not whether GEOSS must be resolved immediately, but rather how to define organizational strategy after 2025. The United States preferred not to set a six-month deadline for the Secretariat or any new body to conduct a comprehensive analysis and then leave everyone waiting for the result.

South Africa agreed with China's observation on inconclusive recommendations and requested an analysis be conducted based on the input received and the next steps be proposed by the Secretariat.

France agreed with the approach and proposed to revisit gaps in the Expert Advisory Group report. France expressed interest in a combination of options.

Greece stated that GEO was approaching a time parallelism issue, that decisions must be made before actions, but that actions must proceed. As Italy mentioned, there is a mandate, as well as a specific group within GEO, such as the GEOSS Infrastructure Development Task Team (GIDTT), that has been working on this. A minimum requirement should be established for the improvement of the GEOSS platform and the integration of the various components. Greece recommended that the Executive Committee provide the initial direction to avoid process stagnation and to allow time for more concrete plans for the future.

Executive Committee members made further deliberations around the role of the GEO Secretariat in the following process, as well as the transparency and inclusiveness of the process.

Ms Gevorgyan confirmed that the Secretariat would undertake the analysis of all input. She reassured that the Secretariat would consult GEO Members, Participating Organizations, Working Groups and other stakeholders before making recommendations to the Executive Committee in March 2023.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Confirmed that the Expert Advisory Group has been disbanded;
- Recognized the extended deadline for comments announced in Plenary to 25 November 2022;
- Tasked the GEO Secretariat to conduct an analysis of all the comments and inputs from the Executive Committee and the Plenary, through a transparent synthesis process;
- Requested that the GEO Secretariat propose recommendations for next steps, including identification of appropriate expertise and resources.

Action 59.2: GEO Secretariat to bring recommendations on the way forward to the Executive Committee meeting in March 2023. **Due: ExCom-60**.

6.5 GEO Post-2025 Strategic Mission

The Chair clarified the purpose of this session was to receive feedback on the process. Input to the Post-2025 strategy itself should be provided in written form in the upcoming three weeks.

Costa Rica asked if there was a way to ensure that the comments received were visible and inquired about how language barriers could be overcome so that people could provide

feedback in their native language. Ms Gevorgyan responded to Costa Rica's intervention by suggesting the Working Group create a space for uploading and accessing the received statements.

South Africa suggested reaching out to various regional caucuses and specific members to encourage their inputs. They further stated that it would be helpful to know how contributions from caucuses are considered to understand the representativeness of perspectives.

Ms Katy Matthews (Post-2025 Working Group Member) believed that some of the Expert Advisory Group's potential outcomes can be informed by the Post-2025 Working Group. She emphasized that GEO should continue to ensure that various aspects of the organization (infrastructure, services and the Work Programme) are advancing, and the strategy should be continuously developed in the coming year. She also stressed that the focus of the Post-2025 Working Group was on developing a future strategy and vision rather than evaluating data infrastructure

The European Commission advocated for transparency in developing the Post-2025 strategy. They believed it was a good idea to create a space for accessing the members' inputs and stressed that some milestones need to be met between now and finalization of the document. Members should be informed of the various versions of the document and kept up to date on the process. They emphasized that GEOSS should be a component of the post-2025 strategy and hoped that evaluation of GEOSS would be completed on time and be included in the overall evaluation of the Post-2025 strategy. The European Commission concluded that a roadmap towards delivering the document would be beneficial.

The Chair concurred with the proposal of a roadmap with focus on the critical path between now and March 2023. Ms Gevorgyan explained the Post-2025 Working Group would set up a meeting in December to work on this, and they would run a roadshow in all regions in preparation for the Ministerial Summit. The Chair stated the local organizing committee of the summit would benefit from the briefings.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Emphasized the importance of the work needed before the March Executive Committee meeting;
- Requested a more granular timeline on work and products leading to the March Executive Committee meeting;
- Requested opportunity to review draft(s) with sufficient time to provide and incorporate feedback;
- Encouraged Executive Committee members to use existing channels, including regional caucuses and regional GEOs, for comments on Post-2025 report and further engagement.

6.6 Update to Executive Committee on GEO Post-2025 Incubators

Ms Yana Gevorgyan explained that the purpose of this briefing was to provide the Executive Committee with information about the Post-2025 incubators in response to the Mid-term Evaluation recommendations. The Programme Board has been involved in the

development of the "incubator" approach, and the Work Programme activities have also been involved.

Ms Madeeha Bajwa (Chief Work Programme Coordinator) recalled the Executive Committee's appreciation and guidance provided in July 2022 when they were first briefed on the concept of the Post-2025 incubators. The Secretariat followed up with a proposed way forward and received endorsement from the Programme Board at its 24th session in early September. The approach included leveraging e-shape expertise on the co-design, and involving interested Programme Board members, Regional GEOs and Work Programme activities. A series of coordination workshops were organized to define incubators for pilot projects that respond to user needs and have the potential to mobilize resources for scale and impact.

Ms Bajwa presented the process of coordination workshops using the Nature-based Solution incubator as an example. This incubator aims to create a consensus-based global monitoring program for ecosystem extent in order to support nature conservation and restoration, including baseline and target setting and monitoring. The workshop inputs, which included discussions about a potential initiative design, potential partnerships, and policy connections, will be used to create a draft concept note, which will be circulated to the GEO Work Programme activities for feedback. The first coordination workshop will serve as a springboard for a series of other consultations that will bring together other partners such as users, data and technology providers, experts, and potential donors.

Ms Bajwa stated that the co-design must begin at an early stage in order to have an impact. Communications, fundraising, and advocacy must also be incorporated into the design and implementation of this initiative. She used another incubator on Heat and Health to illustrate how these interconnected elements are considered during the process.

Ms Gevorgyan emphasized that in addition to funding needed to launch these incubator projects, partner engagement and communications were important to the success of the incubators. A key distinction in the design of the incubator projects relative to the traditional GEO Work Programme activity is the comprehensive program design approach that allows for a clear results-based proposal with associated requirements and future monitoring and evaluation of results. This approach will allow GEO to make a pitch to donors for fundraising, similar to how Germany supported GEO-LDN.

The European Commission appreciated the thematic and nexus-based approach and welcomed the contribution from the e-shape project, which was an excellent example of a project supported by a GEO member having the potential to reach a much larger audience than the regional caucus.

Ghana expressed satisfaction with this approach and suggested the Secretariat to redefine the impact areas that funders are looking for. Ghana stated that this approach must be demonstrated at the Post-2025 in order to receive funding to make GEO relevant for the grassroots.

Japan welcomed this direction, emphasizing that incubators unlock the potential of GEO and can assist regional activities in scaling up and making an impact.

Greece felt it was important to reflect the discussion in the Plenary. Greece stated that the Nature-based Solution workshops and urban resilience workshops received positive feedback. There was a high demand for preparing materials to be sent to donors.

The United States expressed support for this incubator-based approach and stressed the need to align mission mandates with those of participating members and Participating Organizations. The United States further noted that resource mobilization and financial sustainability are key, and called on the GEO Secretariat to show examples of innovative funding models.

Germany appreciated the incubator concept and agreed with Ghana that it should be a guiding principle in the Post-2025 strategy. Germany stated that there should be an emphasis on member states since GEO is an intergovernmental organization.

Senegal appreciated the presentation on the GEO Post-2025 incubators and expressed support that the objectives of GEO-LDN were considered in these incubators.

Costa Rica also appreciated the incubator concept and wanted to minimize overlapping efforts in order to accomplish objectives.

South Africa emphasized the importance of implementing these efforts at the local level, which would have an impact on the sustainability of financing.

China stated that the incubator was important because it could set concrete goals for GEO community to pursue when moving forward towards Global Engagement Priorities. China also commented on how to further engage and integrate existing systems to support the Work Programme.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Recommended that the Secretariat prepare a paper reviewing existing mechanisms for resource mobilization models in other organizations;
- Offered broad support for the Post-2025 incubator work.

6.7 Closing Remarks

Dr Yuqi Bai (China) expressed gratitude to the government of Ghana and the local organizing committee for making the reunion a reality. They acknowledged that significant progress was made, such as the official approval of the Work Programme, and great advancement on the Post-2025 strategy and incubators.

Dr Stephen Volz (United States) praised the Executive Committee for being able to reach agreement on challenging issues and expressed the importance of working with each other in the Executive Committee. He finally thanked Ghana, the Secretariat and the GEO members for making this Plenary a success.

Dr Joanna Drake (European Commission) highlighted that this special session helped reach a consensus. They also thanked the Ghanaian hosts, the GEO Secretariat and all the Executive Committee members for their support.

Dr Mmboneni Muofhe (South Africa) thanked the fellow Co-Chairs for their support, Ghana for hosting a GEO Plenary with attendance of the Vice President and Ministers, the Executive Committee for the decisions made, and the GEO Secretariat for their hard work.

Ms Gevorgyan (GEO Secretariat Director) applauded the Vice President for setting the scene for not only the GEO Week 2022 but also GEO in the next 12 months. She appreciated the GEO community for taking ownership of the GEO Week agenda and the GEO future strategy, and thanked the GEO Secretariat staff for their efforts put behind the GEO Week 2022.