
Report
62nd Executive Committee Meeting
Cape Town, South Africa
7th November 2023

As accepted at the 63rd Executive Committee Meeting.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chair: Mr Mmboneni Muofhe, South Africa

1 SESSION 1: GENERAL BUSINESS

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

- South Africa (Lead Co-Chair), China (Co-Chair), United States (Co-Chair) and the European Commission (Co-Chairs) opened and welcomed the members to the 62nd meeting of the Executive Committee;
- All acknowledged the hard work and efforts by South Africa, the Secretariat, and members of the community to bring GEO successfully to this milestone week;
- All recalled the importance of the Post-2025 Strategy and the Ministerial Declaration to guide GEO to its renewed mandate and future direction.

1.2 Adoption of Agenda

- The Agenda was adopted as distributed, amended with a request to discuss the two incubator projects (Global Ecosystems Atlas and the Global Heat Resilience Service) as agenda items 3.3 and 3.4 respectively.

1.3 Adoption of the Draft Report of the 61st Session

- The following document was approved without discussion:
 - ExCom-62.2: Updated Draft Report of the 61st Executive Committee Meeting.

1.4 Review of Action Items from Previous Meetings

- The Executive Committee requested the GEO Secretariat to continue developing the draft for the 'Standard Operating Procedures' document for GEO Week host countries by ExCom 63.

1.5 Secretariat Operations Report: 1 July through to 31 October 2023

- The Secretariat Director presented highlights from the Secretariat Operations Report;
- The Executive Committee appreciated the update and encouraged continued youth engagement;
- The United States emphasized the importance of collaborations with WMO and other UN entities in the context of Early Warnings for all Initiative (EW4All) and the connectivity with COP28;
- China proposed the Secretariat should develop a mechanism to support national and regional GEOs and noted their willingness to share their own experiences with other GEO Members.

2 SESSION 2: GEO PLENARY: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM EXCOM AND MINISTERIAL DOCUMENTS

2.1a Review of requests from Participating Organizations and GEO Associates

- IUCN was approved as a new Participating Organization of GEO;
- The European Commission requested a revision in appropriate documentation to more accurately reflect their membership as 'European Union, as represented by the European Commission'.

2.1b Review of Nominations to the Programme Board

- The Executive Committee approved the recommended Programme Board slate, congratulating the new members on committing to the role at a critical moment of opportunity for GEO;
- The Executive Committee reflected on the importance of ensuring a fit-for-purpose Programme Board in revisions of the Rules of Procedure given that the Board mandate ends in 2025; and
- Encouraged efforts to engage the new incoming members of the Board to ensure they are able to contribute sustainably.

2.2 Joint Report from the Budget Working Group and GEO Secretariat

- The Executive Committee appreciated the Budget Working Group and the Secretariat for their work on a revised budget document that clearly links funding with other activities;
- Suggested that GEO continue to provide value as a convener and coordinator, with the Secretariat noting that this work also comes at a financial cost;
- Noted that it is possible for members to fund activities not captured in the 2024 budget.

Decision: The Executive Committee recommended the 2024 Secretariat budget be approved by Plenary.

2.3 Ministerial Declaration and Agenda

- The Executive Committee warmly appreciated the Ministerial Working Group and the Secretariat on their efforts on the Ministerial Declaration and appreciated the spirit and vision of the Declaration;
- Urged GEO Members to prioritize its implementation;
- Discussed whether the Declaration should renew GEO's mandate for 10 years specifically or an undefined period. The Ministerial Working Group to explore how to address this.

Action 62.1: The Ministerial Working Group to produce a reflection of the lessons learned and good practices of the process of developing the Declaration to inform future efforts.

3 SESSION 3: ROAD TO POST-2025

3.1 Report of the 27th Programme Board

- The Executive Committee appreciated the work of the Programme Board, including the initial work on the development of the Post-2025 GEO Work Programme;
- Welcomed the onboarding of the new Board members and encouraged diversity and inclusion in all aspects, including in the GEO Work Programme;
- Recognized the importance of a Board that is aligned with the direction of the Post-2025 Strategy to enable transformative programmes and inclusive efforts;
- Encouraged the integration of the GEO Work Programme and the Post-2025 incubators;
- Considered a terms of reference for the group leading the Post-2025 GEO Work Programme development.

3.2 Road Map: Development of Post-2025 Implementation Plan

- The Executive Committee appreciated the presentation of the roadmap of the Post-2025 GEO Work Programme and the early work being done by the Board on the Post-2025 GEO Work Programme and incubators;
- The Executive Committee was informed that details on the process, sequencing, engagement steps, and where expertise will be drawn from, will be developed once the Implementation Plan Project Lead will be recruited;
- ExCom emphasized that the Implementation Plan is of significant importance, and needs to be developed in line with the principles of openness, inclusivity and transparency and requested to be informed of progress;
- The GEO Secretariat will present an approach to develop the Post-2025 Implementation Plan, including milestones, and roles and responsibilities.

Action 62.2: GEO Secretariat to submit TOR of the Project Lead of the Post-2025 Implementation Plan to ExCom for quick review.

3.3 & 3.4 An update on the Global Ecosystems Atlas and the Global Heat Resilience Service

- The European Commission reflected on the development of the incubators;
- Emphasized that the two incubators should build on existing and emerging work.

Action 62.3: GEO Secretariat to request the European Commission to send the complete intervention on the two incubators.

4 SESSION 4: OTHER BUSINESS

4.1 ExCom Meeting Dates 2024

- Agreed to 16-17 April 2024 for the 63rd meeting of the ExCom;
- Requested the Secretariat to:
 - explore first week of November for the 64th meeting;
 - Explore options for informal touchpoints;
 - Propose dates for the 2025 meeting before Plenary.

4.2 Any Other Business

- The new schedule for GEO Week and likelihood for its rebranding to be announced at Plenary;
- Costa Rica, on behalf of AmeriGEO, proposed an increase in the number of AfriGEO and AmeriGEO representatives on ExCom;
- Nigeria announced that it has successfully launched GEO Nigeria, welcomed capacity development, including from EC to Africa, which has a lot of opportunity to benefit from Earth Observations.

Action 62.4: GEO Secretariat to identify a process for expanding representation from the caucuses as proposed by Costa Rica.

4.3 Review of Action Items

- The GEO Secretariat presented outcomes and actions from the meeting.

4.4 Closing Remarks

- The Lead Co-Chair and Co-Chairs provided closing remarks.

Draft Report

62nd Executive Committee Meeting

7 November 2023

FULL REPORT

1 SESSION 1: GENERAL BUSINESS

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

Mr Mmboneni Muofhe (South Africa), Meeting Chair and 2023 GEO Lead Co-Chair, welcomed members to the 62nd meeting of the Executive Committee and opened the meeting. Mr Muofhe highlighted the significant progress made in preparation for the Ministerial Summit and highlighted the importance of laying the foundation for the Plenary and the Ministerial. He acknowledged all the hard work put in by the Executive Committee, the Secretariat and the members of the GEO community during the course of the year in preparation for GEO Week, Plenary-19 and the Ministerial Summit.

Mr Richard Spinrad (USA) thanked the Lead Co-Chair and the GEO Secretariat staff for organising and hosting GEO Week. He noted that this week represents a major milestone for GEO as an organisation, as it looks forward to renewing its mandate for the next decade as manifested in the Post-2025 strategy, that outlines the evolving and transformative vision for GEO as a key global player enabling the use of Earth Intelligence for all. He also noted that the time for action is now and acknowledges that it is up to the governance body led by the Executive Committee to implement this vision to lead GEO into the future. Finally, Dr Spinrad acknowledged that this new vision represents change and a different approach but notes his confidence in the Executive Committee and the Secretariat can rise to the challenge and focus its future direction on the high-level priorities for GEO that deliver the greatest impact to its stakeholders.

Ms Joanna Drake (European Commission) thanked the host South Africa for their hospitality, and for their role in organising GEO Week 2023 and Ministerial Summit, and emphasized the continued support the European Union has shown to GEO over the years. Ms Drake noted the EU's particular support for the Post-2025 strategy and noted that the strategy holds resonance and thanked everyone who was involved in the development of the impressive and ground-breaking piece of work. Noting the need for reinforced coordination and collaboration, Ms Drake emphasized the importance of preparing an ambitious, impactful and realistic implementation plan which will guide the interventions over the next two years. Lastly, Ms Drake called for a discussion of the two centrepieces of the Post-2025 strategy, namely the two incubators – the Global Ecosystems Atlas and the Global Heat Resilience Service.

Mr LIU Zhichun (China) thanked the Lead Co-Chair and the GEO Secretariat staff for their efforts in organizing GEO Week 2023 and Ministerial Summit. Mr Liu acknowledged the work put in by the GEO Secretariat with a multi-party GEO community to draft the Post-2025 strategy and the Ministerial Declaration. He noted that these documents will serve

as a wide reference on the foundation of GEO's future endeavours, guiding its objectives on its operational framework beyond 2025. Noting that over the next decade, GEO is expected to refine its operational model and coordination mechanisms to establish a more integrated, global, and regional organisation structure involving stakeholders across the world. Mr Liu noted China's continued engagement with GEO and its activities over the past year, which yielded substantial accomplishment, particularly in the Asia-Oceania region, with the hosting of the AOGEO Workshop and the two international training workshops. Additionally, Mr Liu acknowledged China's valuable contributions to disaster risk reduction, wherein valuable data and analysis reports were provided for international disaster responses. Finally, Mr Liu highlighted China's commitment to collaborating closely with other GEO Members to achieve GEO's strategic goals.

Ms Yana Gevorgyan (GEO Secretariat Director) warmly welcomed the attendees, emphasizing the importance of the upcoming Plenary and Ministerial Summit, as a culmination of the efforts that went into preparing a transformative and strategic vision, which provides GEO with a mandate to follow through with the strategy. Ms Gevorgyan noted the importance of collaborative spirit, and acknowledged the efforts put in by the Secretariat. Finally, Ms Gevorgyan outlined the ideas for 2024 and requested the Executive Committee for constructive input to build an implementation plan that will deliver Earth Intelligence for all.

Outcomes:

- South Africa (Lead Chair), China (Co-Chair), United States (Co-Chair) and the European Commission (Co-Chairs) opened and welcomed the members to the 62nd meeting of the Executive Committee;
- All acknowledged the hard work and efforts to bring GEO successfully to this milestone week by South Africa, the Secretariat and members of the community;
- All recalled the importance of the Post-2025 strategy and the Ministerial Declaration to guide GEO to its renewed mandate and future direction.

1.2 Adoption of Agenda

The Lead Co-Chair asked if there were any comments or interventions to adjust the agenda. The European Commission proposed the allocation of additional time for the discussion of the two incubator projects – the Global Ecosystems Atlas and the Global Heat Resilience Service. The Budget Working Group requested for more time to be allocated for the budget and interim financial statement presentation. The Lead Co-Chair endorsed both proposals.

Outcomes:

- The Agenda was adopted as distributed, amended with a request to discuss the two incubator projects (Global Ecosystems Atlas and the Global Heat Resilience Service) as agenda items 3.3 and 3.4 respectively.

1.3 Adoption of the Draft Report of the 61st Session of the Executive Committee

The Lead Co-Chair asked if there were any comments or interventions regarding the Draft Report of the 61st Session of the Executive Committee.

Outcomes:

- The following document was approved without discussion:
 - ExCom-62.2: Updated Draft Report of the 61st Executive Committee Meeting.

1.4 Review of Action Items from Previous Meetings

Ms Erika Alex (GEO Secretariat) presented the Review of Action Items from Previous Meetings. Noting that Action 60.1 and 61.1 is underway and partially complete, Ms Alex informed the Executive Committee that an outline for the Standard Operating Procedure has been created, pending further development. The Lead Co-Chair suggested a deadline be assigned to the delivery of the Standard Operating Procedure document.

With respect to Action 60.2, Ms Alex noted that since the in-situ Data Specialist's departure in September, further work was paused until the position is filled. Ms Gevorgyan noted that beyond the current vacancy in the in-situ data specialist position, the engagement that had been initiated to date had yet to generate results, suggesting this process required further consideration in its implementation.

Outcomes:

- The Executive Committee requested the GEO Secretariat to continue developing the draft for the 'Standard Operating Procedures' document for GEO Week host countries by ExCom 63.

1.5 Secretariat Operations Report: 1 July through 31 October 2023

Ms Yana Gevorgyan (GEO Secretariat Director) presented highlights from the most recent GEO Secretariat Operations Report. The Secretariat Director highlighted the significant achievements including the delivery of the Post-2025 Strategy and the Ministerial Declaration for the endorsement by the Plenary and the Ministerial, which were developed in coordination with their respective Working Groups. Ms Gevorgyan noted that the GEO Work Programme Foundational Tasks 2023-25 were developed, along with the launch of the Programme Board Task Force that will be taking up the task of developing the Post-2025 GEO Work Programme.

Additionally, Ms Gevorgyan noted that the GEO Infrastructure Development Task Team (GIDTT) was launched in response to an action that was followed by a report by an expert advisory group, incorporating the Executive Committee's feedback and direction into the evolution of GEO's infrastructure. The Concept Note for the National Coordination Mechanism was developed and distributed to the Programme Board and Chairs. Ms Gevorgyan noted the Capacity Development Coordinator's efforts to provide technical support to four countries – Senegal, Ghana, Kenya and DRR Congo – which resulted in their successful application for the 2023 GEO-LDN Global Dialogue Forum.

Ms Gevorgyan also highlighted the development, delivery and launch of the Resource Mobilisation Toolkit, and noted the successful presentations of the toolkit at AmeriGEO Week and that it would also be presented during GEO Week in Cape Town. She mentioned the support received from various parties to integrate GEO Programmes into official

negotiations and side events by parties and pavilions at COP28, noting that several GEO activities will be featured in a number of sessions.

The Secretariat has begun a partnership with the UNFCCC-TEC (UNFCC Technology Executive Committee) to collaborate on jointly producing policy products to support Early Warnings for All (EW4All). The Secretariat has also participated in the launch of EW4All and in-country implementation in the Maldives, in their development of their proposals to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) to support their Early Warnings services.

She noted that there has been significant progress in advancing the incubator projects – the Global Ecosystems Atlas and the Global Heat Resilience Service. The Global Ecosystems Atlas was advanced through a Project Design Workshop which provided a deeper understanding of the components of the design for the Atlas, while the Global Heat Resilience Service had its first convening meeting with initial set of partners on the side of UNGGIM assembly. A GEO Case Study was included in WMO's State of Climate Services Report, as it explores health risks related to urban heat.

The Secretariat also developed and delivered the new GEO website, which will be launched at Plenary. Lastly, the Secretariat carried out all necessary operations leading up to GEO Week, including the GEO Booth, the GEO Highlights Report diaries, conducting the Youth Workshop to create the Youth Declaration, created four videos to promote GEO Week, expanding the GEO Awards, and creating a particularly dynamic format of the side events to engage the attendees.

South Africa acknowledged the work that went into the layout of the exhibitions, noted that the Youth Declaration workshop was a success and an exciting event to participate in, and saw the need to keep continuing the GEO spirit and activities, particularly in terms of collaboration and diversity.

The United States emphasized the importance of collaborations with WMO and other UN entities particularly in context of EW4All and appreciated the engagement with the United States for collaboration at COP28. The Co-Chair (United States) concurred with South Africa on the importance of youth engagement and lauded the Secretariat for their efforts to promote GEO Week, and GEO on social media, and acknowledged the fact that having the youth contribute is imperative.

Japan conveyed its gratitude to South Africa and the Secretariat for their efforts in preparation for GEO Week. Japan noted that they will be hosting AOGE Symposium in February 2024 in Tokyo.

China conveyed its gratitude to South Africa and the Secretariat for their efforts to bring together a successful GEO Week, praised the flash talks and exhibitions, which they found to be generating insightful discussions. China also acknowledged the action taken up by the Secretariat to solicit information from past GEO Week hosts to create a Standard Operating Procedure for future GEO Weeks. Additionally, China thanked the Secretariat for its productive efforts to bring together and organise the Youth Workshop, and the Youth Declaration and believes that the Secretariat has successfully demonstrated their efforts to engage the youth.

Lastly, China proposed the Secretariat should develop a mutual assistance approach for Members' National Coordination Mechanism development and noted their willingness to

share their own experiences with other GEO Members. China also expressed its interest to play an active role in the Global Heat Resilience Initiative.

Outcomes:

- The Secretariat Director presented highlights from the Secretariat Operations Report;
- The Executive Committee appreciated the update and encouraged continued youth engagement;
- The United States emphasized the importance of collaborations with WMO and other UN entities in the context of Early Warnings for all Initiative (EW4All) and the connectivity with COP28;
- China proposed the Secretariat should develop a mechanism to support national and regional GEOs and noted their willingness to share their own experiences with other GEO Members.

2 SESSION 2: GEO PLENARY: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM EXCOM AND MINISTERIAL DOCUMENTS

2.1a Review of requests from Participating Organizations and GEO Associates

Ms Erika Alex (GEO Secretariat) presented the review of request from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to join GEO as a Participating Organization (PO). The Secretariat recommended approval.

China supported IUCN's application to become a Participating Organization and raised the question of how GEO should be shifting its focus solely from expansion to improved quality in the forthcoming years. China holds the view that the planning of GEO's future should be centred around GEO being a convener and a coordinator.

The United States reiterated their support for IUCN's application and acknowledged them as a serious and important connection to make.

The European Commission endorsed IUCN's request to be granted the status of a Participating Organization. The European Commission also requested a revision in appropriate documentation to more accurately reflect their membership as 'European Union, as represented by the European Commission'.

Outcomes:

- IUCN was approved as a new Participating Organization of GEO;
- The European Commission requested a revision in appropriate documentation to more accurately reflect their membership as the 'European Union, as represented by the European Commission'.

2.1b Review of Nominations to the Programme Board

Ms Wenbo Chu (GEO Secretariat) presented the slate of nominations to the 28th Programme Board. She outlined the procedure for nominating, and representation on the Programme Board as per the Rules of Procedure, and emphasized the different selection criteria that was taken into consideration – gender balance and equal representation in

particular, along with ensuring representation across continents. Ms Chu also noted that the Co-Chair seats for the Programme Board will be open for re-election after Plenary.

Noting the Programme Board Slate, the Lead Co-Chair (South Africa) solicited comments and questions.

The European Commission expressed its admiration for the new Board for taking on the new role during the transition period, noting that the Programme Board TOR supported the implementation of the last Strategic Plan through 2025, the European Commission would like the Secretariat to work on new Terms of Reference (TOR) for the post-2025 period.

South Africa noted the importance of ensuring a fit-for-purpose Programme Board in revisions of the Rules of Procedure.

The United States added on South Africa's comments and emphasized the need to create a sustained interest in the Programme Board.

Outcomes:

- The Executive Committee approved the recommended Programme Board slate, congratulating the new members on committing to the role at a critical moment of opportunity for GEO;
- The Executive Committee reflected on the importance of ensuring a fit-for-purpose Programme Board in revisions of the Rules of Procedure given that the Board mandate ends in 2025; and
- Encouraged efforts to engage the new incoming members of the Board to ensure they are able to contribute sustainably.

2.2 Joint Report from the Budget Working Group & GEO Secretariat

Ms MIAO Chen (Budget Working Group) presented the income and expenditure statements, and provided a detailed explanation of the extrabudgetary, trust fund, and in-kind contributions. Ms Miao also presented the development process and direction of the Secretariat structure, noting that the Secretariat has established a Member Services unit, while highlighting the expected contributions.

The projected incomes for 2024 were presented, excluding the pledged income for GEOGLAM, the Global Ecosystems Atlas, GEO-LDN. The planned expenditures for 2024 were also presented. The Budget Working Group also brought to the attention of the Executive Committee, the unfunded and vacant activities and roles that would benefit from funding. Ms Miao ended her presentation and asked the Executive Committee to recommend the budget to Plenary for approval.

South Africa opened the session for comments and questions.

Japan appreciated the efforts of the GEO Secretariat and the Budget Working Group in putting together the Budget for 2024. Japan inquired how the budget for the post-2025 incubators would be secured by the Secretariat.

The United States thanked the Budget Working Group and the Secretariat for the budget documents, particularly noting that the Budget Report is much more cleanly written, and endorsed the Budget, while encouraging other members to fund the unfunded activities.

The European Commission appreciated the work put in to create the Budget Report, reiterated the EC's support to the GEO Trust Fund Budget and acknowledged that the Trust Fund Budget needs to be increased to fund the currently unfunded activities.

China appreciated the Budget Working Group and the Secretariat and endorsed the 2024 Trust Fund and encouraged members to meet their budgetary commitments and noted that China is committed to continue its contributions to the budget. China also noted that the fundamental objective is not to solicit money but to support collaboration across, and leverage Earth Intelligence data.

South Africa requested further clarification regarding the budget requirements associated with the implementation of the Post-2025 Strategy and member services.

Australia raised a point to clarify there is an opportunity to raise additional activities other than the unfunded requirements and activities listed in the paper provided.

The Budget Working Group noted that the detailed budget regarding the funding for the incubators are available in the plenary documents. Ms Miao clarified the verbiage for the “recurring and non-recurring costs”, noting that unfunded, recurring costs were highlighted under staff costs and the unfunded, non-recurring costs were highlighted as one-time costs.

Ms Gevorgyan noted that the Secretariat is actively looking to garner funding for the unfunded activities from various sources and encouraged the Executive Committee to increase contributions. Ms Gevorgyan elaborated on the various unfunded recurring and non-recurring costs and acknowledged that Member Services is a critical function.

The Lead Co-Chair took note of the currently unfunded activities and the struggle to raise resources and agreed upon the expected projected expenditures for 2024. He stressed the need for more substantial progress in this area. The Chair underscored the significance of maintaining effective communication and engagements with members to encourage contributions, while acknowledging that previous efforts have not yielded results.

Outcomes:

- The Executive Committee appreciated the Budget Working Group and the Secretariat for their work on a revised budget document that clearly links funding with other activities;
- Suggested that GEO continue to serve value as a convener and coordinator, with the Secretariat noting that this work also comes at a financial cost;
- Noted that it is possible for members to fund activities not captured in the 2024 budget.

Decision: The Executive Committee recommended the 2024 Secretariat budget be approved by Plenary.

2.3 Ministerial Declaration and Agenda

Mr Lawrence Friedl and Ms Yasko Kasai, on behalf of the Ministerial Working Group, provided an overview of the progress made on the Ministerial Declaration in preparation for the Ministerial. He noted the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Ministerial Working Group and acknowledged that the Working Group has largely met the outlined terms, in

particular the renewal of GEO's mandate. They underscored the broad representation of the Ministerial Working Group, emphasising the importance every voice brought to the development of the Declaration.

Mr Friedl outlined the three sections of the Declaration – New World, New GEO and New Commitment and noted that changes were made to the Ministerial Declaration taking into consideration the comments from the European Commission to include a reference to Artificial Intelligence and Machine learning, and the changing the wording from 'endorsing GEO' to 'renewing GEO's mandate'.

Lastly, Mr Friedl noted that the Ministerial Working group also produced the Ministerial Package for distribution and thanked the Secretariat for its efforts in producing the one-pagers for the Summit. Finally, an overview of the Summit Agenda was presented to the Executive Committee for information.

The Lead Co-Chair (South Africa) acknowledged the Ministerial Working Group for its efforts in bringing together the Ministerial Declaration and expressed appreciation towards the Working Group.

Ms Gevorgyan requested clarification regarding the wording in the Declaration about GEO's mandate, specifically whether the declaration would renew GEO's mandate for the next decade or renew as an open-ended mandate, with only the strategy requiring further renewal.

The Ministerial Working Group noted that the wording in the Declaration to 'renew GEO's mandate for the next decade' was drafted to fulfil the Working Group's Terms of Reference. Recognising that continually renewing GEO's mandate is suboptimal, the Working Group Co-Chairs agreed to take this topic back to the Working Group for consideration.

China noted that the Ministerial Declaration represents a significant milestone in GEO's future and expressed their gratitude to the diligent efforts of the Ministerial Working Group. China underscored their endorsement of the Ministerial Declaration and urged all the members to prioritise its endorsement and implementation.

The United States thanked the Working Group for their efforts, appreciated the direction, tone and clear vision of this Declaration, which stands out in its transformative vision to past declarations and noted that ambiguity in such documents may be beneficial.

France conveyed its gratitude and congratulations to the Ministerial Working Group and requested the process to be documented for future Declarations.

The European Commission joined the chorus of approval for the Declaration and noted the Commission's delight on the results from the team, particularly in including 'Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning for developing Earth Observations based solutions'.

Italy expressed its thanks to the working group in delivering a visionary Declaration and noted its endorsement of the same.

The Ministerial Working Group acknowledged all the comments and agreed to produce a reflection of the lessons learned and good practices of developing the Declaration to inform future efforts.

Outcomes:

- The Executive Committee warmly appreciated the Ministerial Working Group and the Secretariat on their efforts on the Ministerial Declaration and appreciated the spirit and vision of the Declaration;
- Urged GEO Members to prioritize its implementation;
- Discussed whether the Declaration should renew GEO's mandate for 10 years specifically or an undefined period. The Ministerial Working Group to explore how to address this.

Action 62.1: The Ministerial Working Group to produce a reflection of the lessons learned and good practices of the process of developing the Declaration to inform future efforts.

3 SESSION 3: ROAD TO POST-2025

3.1 Report of the 27th Programme Board

Dr Evangelos Gerasopoulos (Programme Board Co-Chair) presented the report of the 27th Programme Board meeting and highlighted the major achievements since the previous Executive Committee meeting. He noted that since the previous Executive Committee meeting, the Programme Board has welcomed a new Co-Chair, Amos Kabo-Bah, who will serve until the end of 2025. He noted that the other two seats for the Programme Board Co-Chair will be up for re-election immediately after Plenary.

Dr Gerasopoulos outlined the evolution of renewal of the Foundational Tasks within GEO, noting the process began in September 2022. A survey to evaluate the Working Groups took place in April 2023, providing insights into the functionality and operations of the Working Groups. He noted that the GEOSS Infrastructure Development Task Team (GIDTT) had been revitalized and would inform the implementation of the consolidated task on GEO's Infrastructure Development. He finally noted that the current version of the Foundational Tasks was approved by the Board in September 2023 and will be presented to the Plenary for adoption on Thursday, 8 November 2023.

The Programme Board Co-Chair described the ongoing work of a Programme Board Task Force of Board volunteers to come up with a process for the Post-2025 GEO Work Programme development, noting that it will tie in with the planned Post-2025 Strategy direction.

Dr Gerasopoulos highlighted the importance of a smooth transition from the current GEO Work Programme 2023-25 to the Post-2025 GEO Work Programme. He noted the need for clear planning and increased meetings throughout the process of developing the new Work Programme, and highlighted the fact that the process needs to be an open, and inclusive one. He underscored that the Board is aligned to deliver on the mandate of the new strategy.

The Programme Board Co-Chair ended his presentation with a brief description of the new GEO Awards criteria process, which was approved by the Programme Board.

South Africa expressed its gratitude to the Programme Board and noted the need for aligning the Programme Board with the activities that will help deliver the Post-2025 Strategy.

Japan expressed its appreciation to the members of the Programme Board for playing an important role in supporting GEO activities and promoting cross-sectional participation across the world and requested the Terms of Reference for the Board's volunteer group of Post-2025 Work Programme development to be shared with the Executive Committee for discussion and decision.

The United States noted that the Programme Board is one of the pillars of execution for GEO and recognised its growth, and the value addition it creates for GEO. The United States acknowledged that there will now be significant change in the Programme Board and noted that it is important to remember and respect the value of diversity in all the aspects – country and organization size, geographical parity and gender parity. The Co-Chair also underscored the importance of conveying the outcomes of the commendable work that is being done by the Programme Board activities and the working groups.

China thanked the work done by the Programme Board and acknowledged the significant impact different work programme activities and incubators have in addressing major capacity differences among countries. China proposed to establish a “demand-driven” mechanism which encourages GEO members to submit their specific and localized needs, knowledge and application scenarios to the Secretariat, who will in turn facilitate collaboration among members. China noted the importance of integrating the Work Programme activities and the incubator projects into the GEO infrastructure to foster two-way interactions.

The European Commission welcomed the guidance of the Programme Board and emphasized the need for further engagement with the GEO Community to develop a plan that translates the principles brought forward in the Post-2025 Strategy into tangible, measurable and visible actions. The Commission also welcomed the analysis of the current work programme as a basis to build the next implementation plan and expressed the need to prolong the mandate for the Programme Board beyond 2025.

Peru reiterated the importance and need to measure the impact of all the activities of the Programme Board, a concern also raised by Costa Rica regarding the importance of having a monitoring and evaluation framework.

Dr Gerasopoulos noted that the functionalities of the Working Groups and the work of the Programme Board's Taskforce on the Post-2025 GEO Work Programme are in the same direction and that the new Work Programme should reflect the strength of the regional GEOs to support national programmes. He drew the Executive Committee's attention to the 2023 Highlights Report, which measures and outlines the impact of different work programmes and noted the report's ability to deliver these stories in non-technical terms.

Outcomes:

- The Executive Committee appreciated the work of the Programme Board, including the initial work on the development of the Post-2025 GEO Work Programme;

- Welcomed the onboarding of the new Board members and encouraged diversity and inclusion in all aspects, including in the GEO Work Programme;
- Recognized the importance of a Board that is aligned with the direction of the Post-2025 Strategy to enable transformative programmes and inclusive efforts;
- Encouraged the integration of the GEO Work Programme and the Post-2025 incubators; and
- Considered a terms of reference for the group leading the Post-2025 GEO Work Programme development.

3.2 Roadmap: Development of Post-2025 Implementation Plan

Ms Gevorgyan (Secretariat Director) presented the roadmap to Post-2025 based on the strategy and the Ministerial Declaration. She noted that the Post 2025 Implementation plan will stand on four pillars – the Post-2025 Work Programme, Communications and Resource mobilization, Operations and Administration, and Community and Governance (a pillar which encapsulates engagement with members, POs and Associates).

The Director outlined the key initial steps which are defining the Terms of Reference for the Project Lead, advertising for and recruiting the Post- 2025 Implementation Project Lead, onboarding the Project Lead and developing a Project Plan with an initial 12-month to be proposed to the Executive Committee at the April 2024 meeting.

Ms Gevorgyan noted that the Secretariat was able to identify a few key considerations particularly in gathering feedback, progressively integrating the work of the Programme Board, balancing the scope of the project and incorporating and adapting the plan for other unknowns. She noted that all advice and guidance from the Executive Committee is appreciated, particularly for developing the sub-pillars.

South Africa noted that the Roadmap of the Post-2025 Implementation Plan is an important document for the Executive Committee to engage with post Plenary and Ministerial.

The United States noted that finding an Implementation Plan Project Lead is key and coordinating with other key stakeholders to achieve that goal is essential. The Co-chair suggested increased engagement with the Programme Board and multiple GEO members to collect diverse inputs from the community to develop the plan over the next few months until the next convening of the Executive Committee in April 2024.

France requested clarification on whether the Implementation Plan would be drafted as another 10-year implementation plan or if there will be a short-term implementation plan for the Secretariat to bring together the Programme Board task force with the proposed working group pillar on the post-2025 work programme. France also requested a timeline for the proposal to be examined by the Executive Committee.

The European Commission noted that translating the commendable work into actions is essential as the Post-2025 strategy is an ambitious one. The Commission requested further clarification regarding the alignment of the two GEO incubators with the Work Programmes and how they will be prioritised.

China noted that drafting of the implementation plan holds significant importance and underscores the prioritisation of user demands and encourages broader participation. The

plan should ensure that there is an established rule-based framework, and should be considered using different criteria, primarily transparency and cooperation. China requested the Executive Committee be well informed about these efforts in order to steer the efforts in the right direction.

The GEO Secretariat agreed to present an approach to develop the Post-2025 Implementation Plan, including milestones, roles and responsibilities and to submit a Terms of Reference of the Project Lead for the Post-2025 Implementation Plan to the Executive Committee for quick review.

Outcomes:

- The Executive Committee appreciated the presentation of the roadmap of the Post-2025 GEO Work Programme and the early work being done by the Board on the Post-2025 GEO Work Programme and incubators;
- The Executive Committee was informed that details on the process, sequencing, engagement steps, and where expertise will be drawn from, will be developed once the Implementation Plan Project Lead will be recruited;
- ExCom emphasized that the implementation Plan is of significant importance and needs to be developed in line with the principles of openness, inclusivity and transparency and requested to be informed of progress;
- The GEO Secretariat will present an approach to develop the Post-2025 Implementation Plan, including milestones, and roles and responsibilities.

Action 62.2: GEO Secretariat to submit TOR of the Project Lead of the Post-2025 Implementation Plan to ExCom for quick review.

3.3& 3.4 The Global Ecosystems Atlas and the Global Heat Resilience Service

The European Commission offered an intervention regarding the two incubator projects. The European Commission was requested to submit their intervention in writing. Their submission is attached as Annex 1.

The Secretariat noted that the intent had always been to build on existing GEO activities, regardless of their placement within the GEO Work Programme, whether they are flagships or pilot initiatives. The Secretariat acknowledged that there is a lot of effort that is going in to incorporate the most fit-for-purpose projects to create the best products and services possible. The Secretariat assured the European Commission that constant engagement is a top priority for both incubators as they develop and progress further, and that the Secretariat is consistently seeking and implementing feedback.

Outcomes:

- The European Commission reflected on the development of the incubators;
- Emphasized that the two incubators should build on existing and emerging work.

Action 62.3: GEO Secretariat to request the European Commission to send the complete intervention on the two incubators.

4 SESSION 4: OTHER BUSINESS

4.1 ExCom Meeting Dates: 2024

Ms Erika Alex (GEO Secretariat) presented the proposed dates for the Executive Committee meetings in 2024, noting that the Secretariat would like to schedule 2 Executive Committee meetings for 2024 to allow the community and Secretariat sufficient time to progress on the complex tasks of developing the Post-2025 Implementation Plan.

France requested clarification whether there would be three Executive Committee meetings in the time period before the next Plenary.

China accepted the proposed date for the Spring 2024 meeting and suggested to reschedule the fall meeting to late October or early November taking into consideration the fact that China will be hosting the GEO Symposium and ODOK in late September.

The European Commission requested clarification behind the decision to skip the Summer Executive Committee meeting. The Secretariat noted that the decision was taken based on the fact that it will be a fairly work-intensive period, assuming a plan for the post-2025 implementation can be presented in April which can be a good opportunity to focus on work to produce something meaningful to present to the ExCom, and requested the Committee's indulgence of the same.

France noted that it would like to maintain the number of Executive Committee meetings as regular exchanges are necessary for constructive and positive cooperation between the Secretariat and the Executive Committee.

The United States noted that the proposed dates for the fall ExCom meeting overlap with the CEOS Plenary and gave its support to not have an Executive Committee meeting in July.

South Africa suggested late August for the fall ExCom.

Japan requested opportunities to participate in the upcoming Executive Committee meetings online.

The European Commission noted that other options for informal touchpoints can be explored.

Peru agreed with the proposed dates.

Outcomes:

- The Executive Committee agreed to meet on 16-17 April 2024 for the 63rd Meeting of the Executive Committee;
- Requested the Secretariat to:
 - Explore the first week of November for the 64th Meeting;
 - Explore options for informal touchpoints;
 - Propose dates for the 2025 meeting before Plenary-20.

4.2 Any Other Business

Ms Gevorgyan (Secretariat Director) presented the idea of the new schedule for GEO Week and the likelihood for its rebranding to be announced at Plenary on day two, along with the announcement for the GEO Symposium to be held in China next year. She noted that if there are no objections from the Executive Committee, the next GEO Week will be presented to the Plenary as the Earth Intelligence Summit, so that the Secretariat can work on securing the IP for the same to work with the WMO to copyright the same.

The International Association of Geodesy (IAG) flagged that an Earth Intelligence Summit was organised by the Defense Strategies Institute Group in 2020.

Ms Joanna Drake (European Commission) suggested considering “The Earth Talks” Summit as an alternate name for the convening of GEO.

Costa Rica, on behalf of AmeriGEO proposed to increase the number of representatives from AfriGEO and AmeriGEO on the Executive Committee, drawing from GEO’s principles of equity. Noting that both African and Latin American regions have been growing greatly and implementing different programs to integrate Earth observations to respond to the needs of the region, Ms Calvo (Costa Rica) called for equal representation of all regions including American and African caucuses on the Executive Committee.

Nigeria noted that GEONigeria has been launched successfully and is garnering robust stakeholders, and that it is looking forward to concretizing the capacity building training it received along with Ghana and two other countries. Nigeria appreciated the European Commission for its Horizon project and requested them to pay particular attention to Africa which has a lot of ability to build on Earth Observations as a continent.

The United States seconded Costa Rica’s proposal to include more countries to be represented on the Executive Committee, particularly considering the geographical diversity and equity approach.

South Africa suggested the Secretariat investigate the Rules of Procedure for the inclusion of more countries in the Executive Committee for broader representation.

Outcomes:

- The new schedule for GEO Week and likelihood for its rebranding to be announced at Plenary;
- Costa Rica, on behalf of AmeriGEO, proposed an increase in the number of AfriGEO and AmeriGEO representatives on ExCom;
- Nigeria announced that it has successfully launched GEO Nigeria, welcomed capacity building, including from EC to Africa, which has a lot of opportunity to benefit from Earth Observations.

Action 62.4: GEO Secretariat to identify a process for expanding the caucuses as proposed.

4.3 Review of Action Items

Outcomes:

- GEO Secretariat presented outcomes and actions from the meeting.

4.4 Closing Remarks

The United States thanked the current Lead Co-Chair (South Africa) for their work this year and welcomed the new Lead Co-Chair (China) for the upcoming year and encouraged everyone to embrace the new mandate and view it as a new opportunity to evolve as an organisation, and with post2025, to aim to be more inclusive, and looking forward to the Plenary.

The European Commission noted that as we are about to close the 62nd session of the ExCom, it was time to discuss and make progress, and make improvements since Accra to showcase successful results. Thanked Dr Mmboneni and the South Africa team for hosting the GEO Week 2023 and the Ministerial Summit and making sure everything runs smoothly. The Co-Chair noted that the Commission is Looking forward to the next GEO Plenary and is in favour of having the next meeting in April 2025, and to work together. Noting that the post 2025 strategy will be GEO's north star going forward, the Co-Chair reminded everyone that we should not forget that our level of ambition lies with the resources we have at our disposal. Finally, the EC reiterated their support for GEO.

China thanked everyone for the active participation to significantly enhance GEO's governance for its future operations. Expressed its heartfelt gratitude to South Africa and the GEO Secretariat and all the Working Groups for the diligent preparations for GEO Week. China noted that it will be formally taking over as the Lead Co-Chair during the Plenary and is looking forward to leading talks on implementing the GEO Post-2025 Strategy. China reiterated that the aim is to reduce the digital divide between the countries and that it is expecting to continue the momentum and continue contributing.

The Secretariat Director thanked everyone for their positive and continued engagement and for offering useful insights. She thanked those members who have served out their term on the Executive Committee and welcome the incoming members, Germany and Paraguay.

South Africa acknowledged the opportunity to host GEO Week 2023 and to be Lead Co-Chair for 2023. The Lead Co-Chair acknowledged the teamwork and efforts that have gone into navigating a pivotal year for GEO, with the Post-2025 Strategy and the Ministerial Declaration. He warmly welcomed the Chinese Lead Co-Chair and reminded the room of the common goal of making sure that GEO lives up to its mandate.

Outcomes:

- The Lead Co-Chair, Co-Chairs, and Secretariat Director provided closing remarks.

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ANNEX 1

European Commission Intervention