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**Report**  
**63<sup>rd</sup> Executive Committee Meeting**  
**Geneva, Switzerland**  
**16-17 April 2024**

*As accepted at the 64<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee Meeting.*

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Chair: Mr Xiaohan Liao

**1 SESSION 1: GENERAL BUSINESS**

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

- China, as Lead Co-Chair, the Co-Chairs and the GEO Secretariat Director opened the 63<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Executive Committee and welcomed members, including Germany and Paraguay as new Executive Committee members;
- All hailed the GEO Week and Ministerial Summit 2023 as a successful event and stressed the opportunity to be innovative and creative in the Post-2025 Implementation plan;
- All welcomed CEOS, UNCCD, and WMO as observers to the Executive Committee;
- Germany, Paraguay, WMO, CEOS, and UNCCD expressed their appreciation to the Co-Chairs for the warm welcome and looked forward to fruitful deliberations.

**1.2 Adoption of Agenda**

- The Agenda was adopted as distributed.

**1.3 Adoption of the Draft Report of the 62nd Session**

- The following document was approved without discussion: ExCom63.2: Draft Report of the 62nd Executive Committee Meeting.

**1.4 Review of Action Items from Previous Meetings**

- The following document was approved: Action items from Previous Meetings. Lead Co-Chair noted that all previous action items were completed.

### **1.5 Secretariat Operations Report: 1 October 2023 through 31 March 2024**

- GEO Secretariat Director presented highlights from the Secretariat Operations Report;
- The Executive Committee acknowledged and commended the report;
- The Executive Committee endorsed the revitalised relation and working collaboration with the WMO and encouraged continued relations;
- UNCCD expressed appreciation to GEO Secretariat for their support of the GEO-LDN flagship and the Global Ecosystems Atlas initiative and appealed to the Executive Committee to support both UNCCD and GEO Secretariats in preparation for the upcoming COP16 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

## **2 SESSION 2: GEO WEEK 2023 IN REVIEW**

### **2.1 Review of GEO Week 2023**

- GEO Secretariat presented the findings of the GEO Week 2023 survey as well as the lessons learnt and recommendations for future GEO Weeks and Ministerial Summits;
- The co-chair of the Ministerial Working Group (MWG) presented the report of the MWG meeting and highlighted additional lessons learnt to be considered for future MWGs and Ministerial Summit;
- The Executive Committee endorsed the GEO Secretariat's and MWG's recommendations and requested the Secretariat to ensure that these inform the planning, preparation and implementation of future GEO Weeks and Ministerial Summits;
- GEO Secretariat presented the overview of the GEO Week and Ministerial Summit Handbook;
- The Executive Committee was positive about the content of the presentation and endorsed the process & timelines for host countries proposals for future GEO Weeks and Ministerial Summits as well as the planning stages (i.e. TOR developments, roles and responsibilities) listed in the GEO Secretariat's presentation.

**Action 63.1:** GEO Secretariat should share the GEO Week and Ministerial Summit Handbook with the Executive Committee.

### **2.2 GEO Week 2025 Update**

- Italy, through the Italian Space Agency (ASI) and with support from the Ministry of Universities and Research and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, proposed to host GEO Week 2025 on 5-9 May 2025 in Rome. GEO Week 2025 will be funded by the EU;
- The Executive Committee accepted the proposal by Italy with ASI as the host of the GEO Week 2025;
- Considerations on the question of having a Ministerial Summit in 2025 were exchanged, including a suggestion by the United States to consider a ministerial roundtable format instead of a traditional summit. Italy requested to defer the

decision regarding the Ministerial Summit, in order to define the exact nature and opportunity of the event at a later time.

### **3 SESSION 3: GEO BUDGET AND RESOURCES REVIEW**

#### **3.1 Report from the Budget Working Group**

- The Budget Working Group (BWG) presented the report on income and expenditures as of 31 December 2023;
- Executive Committee appreciated the work of the BWG.

**Action 63.2:** The Budget Working Group should come together on a consensus recommendation to the Executive Committee for presenting and adopting the 2025 Secretariat Budget by 15 May 2024.

### **4 SESSION 4: POST 2025 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

#### **4.1 Proposed Process for Considering Rules of Procedure/Governance Changes**

- GEO Secretariat proposed a change in the Rules of Procedure (RoP) to establish a two-tiered process for changes to the RoP, distinguishing minor edits from amendments and allowing the Executive Committee to approve minor edits to RoP;
- The Executive Committee unanimously supported the proposals to submit RoP changes to Plenary to a) distinguish decisions on updates/edits from amendments and b) to allow the Executive Committee to approve updates/edits;
- Executive Committee members expressed support for proposals for changes to the RoP to come from Members, POs and GEO governing bodies.

#### **4.2 Proposed Process for Considering Expansion of Representatives of the Caucuses on the Executive Committee**

- GEO Secretariat proposed a process for the expansion of the Caucuses on the Executive Committee, incorporating the proposed expansion of the Executive Committee representation with a holistic review of possible governance changes in the Rules of Procedure (RoP). This proposal also included the creation of a task team with the Executive Committee and Secretariat representation;
- Japan and United States volunteered to be part of the task team.

#### **Decision:**

- The Executive Committee supported the proposal to create a task team to review potential governance changes to the RoP, including the expansion of representation on the Executive Committee, with the caveat that the submission of the proposal(s) on the expansion of representation on the Executive Committee specifically be made no later than the GEO Plenary in 2025;
- Members of the Executive Committee were requested to submit additional nominations for the task team to the Secretariat no later than 1800hrs on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2024.

#### **4.3 Update on GEO Post 2025 Implementation Plan**

- GEO Secretariat introduced Andrew Murdock as the Post-2025 Implementation Plan Lead and provided a status update on the development of the Implementation Plan;
- The Executive Committee welcomed Andrew Murdock, assured their support for the development of the Implementation Plan and encouraged engagement and cooperation with the GEO community during the development of the Plan;
- The Executive Committee granted the GEO Secretariat request for additional time to produce an initial draft of the approach and roadmap, which will be submitted to the Executive Committee;
- The Executive Committee highlighted the importance of Members' views being reflected in the IP development process.

**Action 63.3:** GEO Secretariat should produce a project and engagement plan for the Post 2025 Implementation Plan within one month and share with the Executive Committee.

#### **4.4 Introduction to Member Services**

- The new Chief of Member Services introduced the Member Services team to the Executive Committee and highlighted the new unit's priority role to develop a Member Engagement Strategy and Plan to deepen engagement with current and prospective GEO Members;
- The Executive Committee thanked Chief of Member Services for the in-depth presentation and encouraged engagement with Member countries;
- United States, European Commission, China, and CEOS made specific suggestions around communicating the return on investment in GEO.

### **5 SESSION 5: GEO WORK PROGRAMME**

#### **5.1 Report of the 28<sup>th</sup> Programme Board**

- The Programme Board Co-Chair presented the report of the 28<sup>th</sup> Programme Board;
- The Executive Committee thanked and acknowledged the presentation made by the Programme Board, appreciating the progress made on the Post-2025 GEO Work Programme;
- The Executive Committee encouraged the Programme Board to prioritize the Work Programme to where GEO adds value in support of the Post-2025 Strategy, emphasizing simplicity and efficiency in the Work Programme structure.

#### **5.2 Update on Incubators**

- GEO Secretariat presented updates on the development of Global Ecosystems Atlas and the Global Heat Resilience Service;
- The Executive Committee expressed appreciation for the presentation and acknowledged the progress made on the two incubators;
- The Executive Committee offered several suggestions for improvement and affirmed their support to both incubators.

### 5.3 GIDTT Updates

- The Task Team presented the progress report on technical assessment of the GEO Infrastructure;
- The Task Team requested decisions on the amendment of the GIDTT Terms of Reference;
- The Executive Committee appreciated the update by the GIDTT and encouraged the Task Team to consider a realistic scale and scope in its architecture design.

**Decision:** The Executive Committee approved the revised Terms of Reference (TOR) for the GIDTT

## 6 SESSION 6: GEO 2024 PLANNING

### 6.1 6.1 Executive Committee Priority Themes for 2024

- The Lead Co-Chair put forward five themes to steer the Executive Committee, aligning with the priorities for GEO from 2024 until the 20th Plenary, scheduled for April 2025.

**Decision:** Executive Committee adopted the Priority Themes for 2024, subject to requested changes.

**Action 63.4:** GEO Secretariat should implement the suggested changes to the Priority Themes for 2024.

### 6.2 GEO Secretariat Draft Annual Operating Plan

- GEO Secretariat Director presented the Secretariat's Annual Operating Plan, noting that the Objectives and Key Results (OKR) do not cover all intended GEO Secretariat's activities, but focus delivering high-value outputs;
- Director requested the Executive Committee's consideration of moving towards adoption of OKR framework for the whole of GEO, particularly to encompass Secretariat, Executive Committee, and Programme Board work planning;
- The Executive Committee commended the Secretariat for the clear and measurable objectives and indicated willingness to consider this framework over the course of the year.

## 7 SESSION 7: OTHER BUSINESS

### 7.1 Review of Requests to join GEO as Participating Organizations or Associates

- The Executive Committee also approved the other requests to join GEO:
  - Alliance of Biodiversity International and CIAT (PO);
  - Taylor Geospatial Institute (PO);
  - MDA Ltd (Associate);

- The Executive Committee accepted the application from “Women in GIS Uganda” (WiGIS) as an Associate on condition that GEO Secretariat receive recommendation from the Uganda Principal.

#### **7.2 Any Other Business**

- The Executive Committee agreed on 5-6 Nov 2024 for Fall Executive Committee Meeting and requested a virtual meeting be scheduled for July 2024.

#### **7.3 Review of Action Items**

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

#### **7.4 Closing Remarks**

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

## **Draft Report**

### **63rd Executive Committee Meeting**

#### **16-17 April 2024**

#### **FULL REPORT SESSION**

#### **1 SESSION 1: GENERAL BUSINESS**

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

Mr Xiaohan Liao (China), Lead Co-Chair, opened the meeting and welcomed members to the 63<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Executive Committee. Mr Sun expressed thanks to the GEO Secretariat for preparation of the meeting and highlighted that “Earth Intelligence for All” will help bridge the digital divide to work towards achieving common global goals to promote a stronger and healthier global growth. Noting that the priority for GEO this year is to develop the Post-2025 Implementation Plan, Mr Jian Sun, on behalf of the Lead Co-Chair provided a few suggestions and reminders on how GEO can deliver on its promise to provide accessible, reusable, and trustworthy services for the broader community. Mr Sun noted that staying committed to the intergovernmental nature of GEO, and focussing on strengthening partnerships and multilateral cooperation to better organize and guide progress to address global climate issues is essential. Focussing on delivering high-quality and authoritative products and services, paying attention to, and clarifying the needs of users, while continuing to be driven by demand, especially from developing countries, Small Island Developing States, and LDCs, particularly with the implementation of the Global Ecosystems Atlas and the GEO Knowledge Hub should be the key areas of focus for the transformative year ahead. Lastly, the chair noted that GEO must direct efforts towards multilateral and sustainable development, similar to the Global Development Initiative proposed by China, explore innovative cooperation models and foster inclusivity and coordinate development ideas.

The Lead Co-Chair noted that the GEO Symposium and Open Data Open Knowledge Workshop will be held in Hangzhou, China, from 23-26 September, and extended a warm invitation to all.

Mr Phillippe Tulkens (European Commission<sup>1</sup>) noted the success of GEO Week 2023 in Cape Town and acknowledged that the Post-2025 Strategy must be supplemented with real action that create impact and help countries, communities, and businesses to cope with environmental challenges. Mr Tulkens noted GEO’s unique position allows it to be the spearhead to foster global collaboration and accelerate the digital and green transition towards climate neutrality. He reaffirmed the Commission’s support to GEO through Copernicus, and other activities to deliver Earth intelligence services to all.

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<sup>1</sup> The European Union as represented by the European Commission will be referred to as the European Commission or the Commission for this report.

Mr Stephen Volz (United States) welcomed everyone and appreciated the GEO Secretariat's work in preparation for the meeting. He noted that over the next few days, the Executive Committee will be working on making progress towards the development of the Post-2025 Implementation Plan, engaging in dialogues to align GEO with global priorities, and focussing efforts to address user needs and EDI principles. He encouraged spirited collaboration, robust and strategic dialogues. Mr Volz welcomed Germany and Paraguay as the newest members of the Executive Committee, and CEOS, UNCCD, and WMO as Observers, and encouraged everyone to approach discussions with the spirit of collaboration and innovation.

Mr Mmboneni Muofhe (South Africa) warmly welcomed everyone and expressed gratitude for all the support GEO Week 2023 received in Cape Town. Mr Muofhe acknowledged everyone's dedication leading up to GEO Week and the seamless development of the Post-2025 Strategy and the Ministerial and Youth Declarations. Mr Muofhe highlighted the key messages of the Post-2025 Strategy and the need for Earth intelligence and data-driven solutions. He reaffirmed South Africa's dedication to this collaboration to harness the full potential of GEO.

Ms Yana Gevorgyan (GEO Secretariat) welcomed everyone to the 63<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Executive Committee and noted the success of GEO Week 2023, acknowledging GEO's strong value proposition through solutions-oriented services built on research to transform decision-making. Ms Gevorgyan noted that this is the year to answer questions on how GEO will evolve its operating model, its governance, and its value proposition to create an organization of excellence built on the model of becoming the benchmark for multilateral development and solutions. She noted GEO's services leverage environmental intelligence to help with decision related to economic development, trade, supply chains, etc.

Germany, Paraguay, CEOS, UNCCD, and WMO, all expressed their thanks for being warmly welcomed into the Executive Committee. WMO emphasized the value of transparent governance and noted WMO's contributions to COP 29 and 30. WMO also noted the championing of Early Warnings for All (EW4All) and its importance and outlined areas of collaborations on activities such as Green House Gas Watch. CEOS noted several key area of collaboration with GEO and UNCCD extended their gratitude to South Africa for the success of GEO Week 2023 and anticipated fruitful collaborations and deliberations.

**Outcomes:**

- China as Lead Co-Chair, the Co-Chairs and the GEO Secretariat Director opened the 63<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Executive Committee and welcomed members, including Germany and Paraguay as new Executive Committee members;
- All hailed the GEO Week and Ministerial Summit 2023 as a successful event and stressed the opportunity to be innovative and creative in the Post-2025 Implementation plan;
- All welcomed CEOS, UNCCD, and WMO as observers to the Executive Committee;
- Germany, Paraguay, WMO, CEOS, and UNCCD expressed their appreciation to the Co-Chairs for the warm welcome and looked forward to fruitful deliberations.

## **1.2 Adoption of Agenda**

The Lead Co-Chair inquired if there were any comments or interventions to adjust the agenda. The Agenda for the 63<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Executive Committee was adopted as distributed.

### **Outcomes:**

- The Agenda was adopted as distributed.

## **1.3 Adoption of the Draft Report of the 62nd Session of the Executive Committee**

The Lead Co-Chair asked if there were any comments or interventions regarding the Draft Report of the 62<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Executive Committee. The Draft Report of the 62<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Executive Committee was adopted as distributed.

### **Outcomes:**

- The following document was approved without discussion: ExCom63.2: Draft Report of the 62<sup>nd</sup> Executive Committee Meeting

## **1.4 Review of Action Items from Previous Meetings**

The Lead Co-Chair presented the Review of Action Items from Previous Meetings. The Lead Co-Chair noted that all previous action items are completed or underway and awaiting approval from the Executive Committee over the course of the two days.

### **Outcomes:**

- The following document was approved: ExCom63.3: Action items from Previous Meetings. Lead Co-Chair noted that all previous action items were completed.

## **1.5 Secretariat Operations Report: 1 October 2023 through 31 March 2024**

Ms Yana Gevorgyan (GEO Secretariat Director) presented highlights from the most recent Secretariat Operations Report. The Secretariat Director highlighted significant achievements including the success of GEO Week 2023, adoption of the Post-2025 Strategy and Ministerial Declaration. Ms Gevorgyan noted that GEO Secretariat, as part of WMO's delegation, attended COP28 and participated in several events, most notably in the Earth Information Day under the Research and Systematic Observation agenda, and also in other events hosted by key partners such as the UNFCCC Technology Executive Committee (TEC) on the Risk Knowledge Product. GEO also hosted an event on artificial intelligence (AI) and the use of AI in delivering climate services and risk knowledge and championed the success of GEOGLAM and GEOGloWS in utilizing AI. GEO Secretariat also participated in several side events hosted by its Members, particularly at the United Kingdom's pavilion to champion the Global Ecosystems Atlas.

Ms Gevorgyan noted that the Global Ecosystem Atlas had received seed funding from the United Kingdom and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) which allowed for the progress in the development of the proof of concept. Ms Gevorgyan then highlighted the progress made in the development of the concept of the Global Heat Resilience Service, and noted the success of the HeatSprint, a design workshop, which

took place in February 2024, which gathered an impressive group of stakeholders from users to policy organizations to data technology providers.

Ms Gevorgyan noted the Secretariat's commitment to maintain continued engagement with the WMO Secretariat and the newly appointed Secretary General to strengthen relations and highlighted the briefing to the Board of Directors of WMO which allowed for GEO's work to be shared with a larger group at WMO. She noted that the Secretariat has also initiated the work of the Member Services team, which is tasked with carrying out direct engagement with current members but also cultivating relationships with prospective members, and the development of the engagement strategy.

On the infrastructure of the GEO Knowledge Hub, the Secretariat has been looking for ways to increase engagement with its users to improve the available and future packages, and that they are useful to the user communities, and easily deployable. The testing for user engagement has also begun in collaboration with GEOGLAM.

The GEO Secretariat Director noted that following the endorsement of the Ministerial Declaration in Cape Town, a survey was sent out to gauge the size of the community that is already integrating advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence, within the GEO Work Programme and beyond. The survey results indicated that there exists an organic interest to create a community of practice where this work can be shared across different platforms, applications, and communities. The Secretariat, on behalf of the interested parties created a proposal to establish an ad-hoc subgroup to look into the current practices of using AI and requested the Executive Committee to expedite the process to allow for this group to collaborate further.

Lastly, Ms Gevorgyan noted the advances made in the development of the UNFCCC TEC Risk Knowledge Product, in collaboration with UNFCCC Secretariat, UN Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and other partners, effectively integrates GEO's products to allow for better and greater utilisation of GEO's services at a country level. Noted that preparations for the Symposium and Open Data Open Knowledge Workshop are underway in partnership with China.

The United States endorsed and supported the strong reconnection with WMO and viewed it as an important element of GEO going forward due to the potential overlap in responsibilities and domains of work and underscored the significance of this connection. The United States also particularly endorsed their support for Early Warnings for All (EW4All), a WMO hallmark, to which GEO can fruitfully contribute. Lastly, the United States inquired about the efforts taken by GEO to assess the biases that may be built into AI applications and integrate AI observations into datasets to address the inherent bias of the real-world applications of AI.

The European Commission seconded the United States' support and comments in relation to the reconnection with WMO and concurred with the question raised by the United States in relation to addressing the inherent bias related to the real-world applications of AI. The European Commission noted that GEO's presence at the different COPs, particularly CBD COP and UNCCD COP, was important in context of biodiversity and the Global Ecosystems Atlas. Acknowledging the principles of fairness and openness, and the need to conduct research in a transparent way, the European Commission raised that although AI is the future of policymaking, having clear guidance and guidelines on the

utilization of the same is highly critical, and requested clarification regarding the kind of AI currently being utilised by GEO, and its scope in the future.

France congratulated the Secretariat on its achievements over the last six months and appreciated the direct involvement with the Space for Climate Observatory to include the results from various Scope projects into the UNFCCC TEC Risk Knowledge Product. France suggested that different communications activities that are undertaken by the Secretariat be consolidated within the Secretariat Operations report to make GEO and the GEO Secretariat's achievements more visible, and requested further information regarding the methodologies that are being implemented in terms of Capacity Development and the National Coordination Mechanism.

CEOS highlighted the different kinds of AI like machine learning and generative AI and requested clarification from the European Commission on the kind of AI referred to by them. CEOS highlighted that it has an AI subgroup that explores different AI and their applications.

China thanked the Secretariat for the effective work over the last six months, for engagement at COP28 and for all the work being done to advance Earth intelligence for all. China highlighted the Symposium and Open Data Open Knowledge Workshop in China in September 2024 and the AOGEOT Training Workshop in Dhaka, Bangladesh. China noted that it is in the process of carrying out specialised research on global crop production and will be glad to share its findings with the GEO community to provide data and information support for combating desertification and food security support in developing countries.

Armenia requested clarification on whether the Global Ecosystems Atlas collaborates with, or is connected to UNESCO's Man and Biosphere Program, an intergovernmental scientific program aimed at creating a world network of biosphere reserves. Noting that both projects have potential to complement each other, Armenia suggested this as a collaboration to explore in the future.

UNCCD provided a brief outline of their mandate and emphasized the need for a strong collaboration between GEO and UNCCD, especially in preparation for COP16 in December in Riyadh. They noted that COP16 will provide a unique opportunity for GEO to increase its visibility and champion GEO-LDN and other activities. UNCCD appealed to the Executive Committee to support both UNCCD Secretariat and GEO Secretariat in preparation for UNCCD COP16.

Responding to the Commission, the Secretariat Director noted data and image processing has been the extent of AI utilisation in GEO's activities, and assessment of other types of AI is but one of the elements of the work of the proposed AI subgroup. She noted that engagement with other multilateral environment agreements at COPs, particularly with CBD COP and UNCCD COP are underway, and highlighted that the CBD Secretariat is part of the ad hoc scientific committee of the Global Ecosystems Atlas and are in constant dialogue with the GEO Secretariat. The Director reiterated the appeal from UNCCD requesting support for both the Secretariats efforts to integrate Earth observations in addressing challenges related to land degradation, nature loss, climate change and pollution.

Mr Ernest Acheampong (GEO Secretariat) provided brief updates on the National Coordination Mechanism and the development of the Earth Observations Maturity Indicators. He noted that the National Coordination Mechanism is currently being implemented in nine countries and the feedback and key lessons learned are being solicited to be shared as best practices for other countries. He highlighted the key features of the Earth Observations Maturity Indicator Assessment which will help countries determine their national capacities and develop a comprehensive view of their Earth observations landscape.

**Outcomes:**

- GEO Secretariat Director presented highlights from the Secretariat Operations Report;
- The Executive Committee acknowledged and commended the report;
- The Executive Committee endorsed the revitalised relationship and working collaboration with the WMO and encouraged continued relations;
- UNCCD expressed appreciation to GEO Secretariat for their support of the GEO-LDN flagship and Global Ecosystems Atlas initiative and appealed the Executive Committee to support both UNCCD and GEO Secretariats in preparation for the upcoming COP16 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

## **2 SESSION 2: GEO WEEK 2023 IN REVIEW**

### **2.1 Review of GEO Week 2023**

#### **2.1.1 Overview of Attendance**

Ms Erika Alex (GEO Secretariat) noted that the document outlining the attendance at GEO Week 2023 was circulated and highlighted that the event was successful in terms of numbers and attendance, travel support and overall satisfaction.

#### **2.1.2 Survey Results and Recommendations**

Ms Nicoleta Panta (GEO Secretariat) presented the survey results, noting the survey included qualitative and quantitative insights. She outlined the structure of the survey, which was divided into six parts covering various aspects such as demographic, GEO week theme, length, size and type of community events, as well the Plenary and Ministerial segment, social media engagement and the exhibition, Plenary and the Ministerial. Ms Panta noted that having a theme for the event and the theme itself, The Earth Talks, was very well received and appreciated, and noted that in terms of the schedule and organization of the flash talks, showcases, and workshops the majority of people were positive but there were some neutral and critical comments in the qualitative part of the survey. The issue is how do we respond to the high demand from the community and at the same time ensure high attendance at all side events.

In terms of the duration of GEO Week, Ms Panta noted that the majority of respondents would prefer four days instead of five. Overall, the vast majority of respondents were

satisfied with the organisation and execution of GEO Week 2023 and Ministerial Summit. In terms of the content of the different sessions, the majority found it to be appropriate and effective. Ms Panta noted and emphasized the importance of social media participation and thanked the United States and European Commission for their support for the GEO Booth.

European Commission thanked the GEO Secretariat for the survey and inquired whether the respondents were asked about the applications of their takeaways from the event.

Ms Panta provided a brief presentation on the lessons learned and recommendations for future GEO Weeks, outlining several aspects from event management, timelines, side events, Ministerial, Gala Dinner, and Communications.

#### **2.1.3 Ministerial Working Group and Lessons Learned**

Mr Lawrence Friedl (Ministerial Working Group) recognised, appreciated, and acknowledged several members of the Ministerial Working Group (MWG). Noting that the circulated document 2023 Ministerial Working Group Summary Report has a full description and lessons learned, Mr Friedl provided an overview and brief remarks. Mr Friedl noted that the Working Group looked into how the intergovernmental nature of GEO, along with its multisectoral partnerships should be championed, and recommend that the Terms of Reference (TORs) for future Ministerial Working Groups include Associates to bring in the views and perspectives of the private sector, as well as including a youth representative.

He highlighted that the MWG proposed the tone of the Declaration to be positive and forward looking rather than focussing on past GEO achievements, and for the text to be easily readable with short, simple sentences. He noted that the importance of incorporating community suggestions, having more in-person for meetings for fruitful discussions, and having a timeline longer than 10 months would be particularly beneficial in having a higher Minister level attendance.

In terms of improvement, the MWG recognised that greater activity levels to recruit ministers should have been one of the priorities and articulating the roles and responsibilities of the MWG within its TORs should be one of the considerations. Mr Friedl also noted that having an updated contact list of the Ministers will be a key asset going forward.

#### **2.1.4 Overview of the Draft GEO Handbook**

Ms Panta presented an overview of the GEO Week Handbook, developed from a set of recommendations developed by the GEO Secretariat based on survey results, lessons learned and best practices following GEO Week 2023 and Ministerial Summit in Cape Town, embedded with the experience received from Australia, Ghana and South Africa. Noting that the Handbook will always be a live document, Ms Panta provided an outline of the Handbook's organization into two main parts – the proposal and planning stage for the host country as well as the preparation and implementation stage, including different templates, checklists and examples of outputs that are necessary to be produced for a GEO Week and/or a Ministerial Summit.

Ms Panta elaborated further on the proposal and planning section of the Handbook and noted the importance of having an established process on initiating and soliciting proposals for GEO Weeks and Ministerial Summits, along with timelines. She outlined the requirements needing to be incorporated in the proposal, including the strategic rationale, motivation for hosting a GEO Week and Ministerial Summit, objectives for the country and the broader GEO community, and expected decisions and outcomes, alongside a proposal for the expected budget and sources of funding.

Ms Panta emphasized the need for hosts to assign a planning lead to dedicate their time to overseeing the planning and implementation of a GEO Week and Ministerial Summit, a logistics lead who will spend their work hours liaising with suppliers and preparing routine correspondence, and a communications focal point who can dedicate time to working with the Secretariat in preparation for the Ministerial Summit. Alongside the logistical aspect, the host country must have confirmation of support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and should have a focal point with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who can advise on protocol and relevant correspondences.

Ms Panta then outlined the different timelines in preparation for a GEO Week once a host country's proposal was accepted by the Executive Committee. Preparations include, but are not limited to, acquiring a venue, drafting concept notes, finalising themes, creative ideas, scheduling, branding, registration, identifying and resolving roadblocks, invitational travel, cultural visits, and establishing an organising committee to liaise and coordinate with the GEO Secretariat. Particular attention was paid to the importance of the terms of reference for the development stage for the event.

The European Commission thanked Ms Panta for the detailed presentation and requested the document be shared with the next organisers of GEO Week, the Italian Space Agency.

The United States thanked the Secretariat for their work in putting together a Handbook with extreme clarity and precision, seconded the observation by the European Commission, and expressed support for utilising the Handbook moving forward.

China thanked South Africa for their thorough preparations for GEO Week 2023, and the Secretariat for effectively drafting a Handbook based on lessons learned and best practices.

**Outcomes:**

- GEO Secretariat presented the findings of the GEO Week 2023 survey as well as the lessons learnt and recommendations for future GEO Weeks and Ministerial Summits;
- The co-chair of the Ministerial Working Group (MWG) presented the report of the MWG meeting and highlighted additional lessons learnt to be considered for future MWGs and Ministerial Summits;
- The Executive Committee endorsed the GEO Secretariat's and MWG's recommendations and requested the Secretariat to ensure that these inform the planning, preparation and implementation of future GEO Weeks and Ministerial Summits;
- GEO Secretariat presented the overview of the GEO Week and Ministerial Summit Handbook;

- The Executive Committee was positive about the content of the presentation and endorsed the process & timelines for host countries proposals for future GEO Weeks and Ministerial Summits as well as the planning stages (i.e. TOR developments, roles and responsibilities) listed in the GEO Secretariat's presentation.

**Action 63.1:** GEO Secretariat will share the GEO Week and Ministerial Summit Handbook with the Executive Committee.

## 2.2 GEO Week 2025 Update

Mr. Nicola Pirrone (Italy) presented an update on GEO Week 2025. Mr Pirrone announced that Italy, with the Italian Space Agency, and along with the support of the Ministry of Universities and Research and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, offered to host GEO Week 2025 in Rome from the 5th-9th May 2025. He noted that Italy is already going through the GEO Week Handbook and applying best practices in preparation for GEO Week 2025 and underscored that the goal is to have in attendance as many ministers and country representatives through targeted outreach. Mr Pirrone noted that Italy will leverage connections and opportunities at the upcoming G7 engagements over the course of the coming months and noted that GEO Week 2025 in Rome will be financially supported by the European Commission.

The European Commission thanked Italy for their announcement and willingness to host GEO Week 2025 and noted that GEO Week 2025 in Rome, Italy will be funded by the Commission. The European Commission reminded Italy to take into account lessons learned from Cape Town.

South Africa thanked Italy for their announcement, and everyone involved with the planning and hosting of GEO Week 2025. South Africa noted that some of the lessons learned, though painful, are key in delivering a successful event.

United States thanked Italy and appreciated their approach to engaging with appropriate ministers to attend GEO Week 2025. The United States reiterated their support to have a ministerial round table, rather than a full ministerial event.

China, and France thanked Italy for their commitment to host GEO Week 2025 and reiterated their full support and assistance in securing representatives.

Japan expressed their gratitude to the Ministerial Working Group, GEO Secretariat and South Africa for GEO Week 2023, congratulated and thanked Italy for hosting GEO Week 2025 and noted that it is important to secure time for recruiting ministers.

Italy noted that it is open to discussion of the Ministerial format.

Nigeria thanked the GEO Secretariat and South Africa for GEO Week 2023 and thanked Italy for offering to host GEO Week 2025. Nigeria noted that it is rather difficult to engage ministers at the higher level and suggested the requests be sent through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

### **Outcomes:**

- Italy, through the Italian Space Agency (ASI) and with support from the Ministry of Universities and Research and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, proposed to host GEO Week 2025 on 5-9 May 2025 in Rome. GEO Week 2025 will be funded by the EU;
- The Executive Committee accepted the proposal by Italy with ASI as the host of the GEO Week 2025;
- Considerations on the question of having a Ministerial Summit in 2025 were exchanged, including a suggestion by the United States to consider a ministerial roundtable format instead of a traditional summit. Italy requested to defer the decision regarding the Ministerial Summit, in order to define the exact nature and opportunity of the event at a later time.

## **3 SESSION 3: GEO BUDGET AND RESOURCES REVIEW**

### **3.1 Report from the Budget Working Group**

Ms Erika Alex (GEO Secretariat), on behalf of the Budget Working Group (BWG), presented the interim report on the incomes and expenditures as of 31 December 2023. Ms Alex outlined the planned and actual contributions for 2023, noted that due to the strengthening of the Swiss Franc, some actual contributions received ended up being less than the projected contributions. Ms Alex outlined the final expenditures on salaries, benefits and travel and highlighted that the Secretariat was able to nearly fully expend the budget for travel support to individuals from developing countries to participate in different GEO activities.

She outlined the expenditures on Special Service Agreements (consultancies), other expenditures for GEO Week 2023 (moderator, banners, diaries) and then noted the major variances in what was budgeted against what was expended. Ms Alex presented the expected contributions for 2024, noting variances from the expectations that were used to build the 2024 Secretariat Budget adopted by the Plenary, noting that 70% of the Trust Fund budget is dependent on just two donors.

Looking forward, Ms. Alex outlined the three different options for adoption of the 2025 Secretariat Budget, in the absence of a 2024 plenary, which the BWG was unable to come to a consensus recommendation.

The European Commission thanked Ms Alex for her presentation and reaffirmed the commitment of the financial support from the Commission. The European Commission requested further details on activities where additional funding was needed and suggested including a quantification of the environmental footprint of GEO's activities, akin to IPCC's quantification, for information.

United States clarified that their contributions to the Trust Fund are in transit and reaffirmed their commitment to contribute financially to GEO. The United States find that having a two-year budget would be ideal for the Secretariat for the planning and execution of all activities.

Japan thanked the GEO Secretariat and the Budget Working Group and noted that time differences must be considered in case of a virtual plenary to ensure maximum attendance.

China appreciated the efforts of the Budget Working Group and GEO Secretariat and for providing the different options for the budget and suggested that once the 2025 Trust Fund Budget has been approved by the Executive Committee, it should be distributed among the GEO community for information. China also noted that the considerations for the budget timeframe should be in line with the implementation of the Post-2025 Strategy.

The Secretariat noted in response to the Commission that the menu of the unfunded activities is included in the 2024 Secretariat Budget document adopted by Plenary. The Secretariat requested further clarification on the proposal to provide a quantification of GEO's environmental footprint.

**Outcomes:**

- The Budget Working Group (BWG) presented the report on interim report on income and expenditure as of 31 December 2023;
- The Executive Committee appreciated the work of the BWG.

**Action 63.2:** The Budget Working Group should come together on a consensus recommendation to the Executive Committee for presenting and adopting the 2025 Secretariat Budget by 15 May 2024.

## **4 SESSION 4: POST 2025 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

### **4.1 Proposed Process for Considering Rules of Procedure/Governance Changes**

Ms Erika Alex (GEO Secretariat) presented the proposed process for changing the Rules of Procedure (RoP) in partial response to the action from the Executive Committee's 62<sup>nd</sup> Meeting to propose a process by which the RoP could be amended to increase the representation of the African and American caucuses on the Executive Committee. Ms Alex noted that with the current guidance based on the RoP, there are two challenges – one, there is no guidance in the RoP that distinguishes between updates/changes which are editorial in nature and those that are significant changes to governance, and two, there is very little guidance in the RoP on how changes should be submitted for consideration.

Ms Alex noted that in the case of changes that are minor and editorial in nature, the Secretariat recommends the changes to be presented to and be subject to the approval of the Executive Committee. The Secretariat would provide initial review of requests and provide recommendations to the Executive Committee. In terms of substantive changes to the RoP, the Secretariat's recommendation is to set up a clear process for submissions of proposals to changes to the RoP from the GEO community (Members, Participating Organizations, Associates), which would also uphold the transparency promise of the Post-2025 Strategy. The Secretariat would establish and communicate the process for submitting proposals for RoP updates, and outlined a submission process whereby proposals for change could be submitted via an online form, where the proposer provides their affiliation, the change requested and the rationale. This request would be reviewed by the Secretariat and submitted to the Executive Committee for further consideration.

Ms Alex further noted that the proposal to have the Executive Committee approve changes that were minor/editorial in nature would require approval by Plenary.

South Africa noted that the process to solicit proposals should be simple and straightforward and acknowledged that changes that are minor and editorial in nature do not need to be extended to Plenary for decision. Further, South Africa highlighted the importance of having multiple sources of input as everyone is a stakeholder – including Members, POs, and Associates.

France considered soliciting ideas from the broader GEO community to be made a common practice and also be included in the development of the Post-2025 Implementation Plan, and highlighted the need for better defined terms before the proposal is presented at the next Plenary.

European Commission suggested that all minor and editorial changes to the RoP must be approved by the Executive Committee unanimously and in the case of any objections, the changes for decision must be forwarded to the Plenary. The Commission requested that the ‘GEO community’ must be better defined and suggested that only Member States and Participating Organizations request amendments to the Rules of Procedure.

The United States seconded the European Commission’s suggestion that all minor and editorial changes to the RoP must be approved by the Executive Committee unanimously or be forwarded to the Plenary in case of objections and requested the definition of the ‘GEO community’ also be included in the RoP. The United States inquired about the scope of the proposals to amend the RoP.

Germany noted that it would be beneficial to receive proposals that are backed by Member States and/or Participating Organizations for the sake of continuity and to weed out irrelevant proposals.

Paraguay underscored the importance of championing inclusivity and broader participation from the Post-2025 Strategy and strongly recommended integrating Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) principles in all activities in GEO. Paraguay highlighted that allocating extra seats on the Executive Committee for the African and American caucuses would foster better coordination, inclusivity and regional equality.

Australia expressed their support for the proposal and requested additional guidance in terms of the timeline for the Executive Committee’s response to proposals.

China expressed its concurrence with the European Commission and United States’ comments on having a Member State/Participating Organization’s endorsement of the changes. Reminded the room that soliciting proposals also reflects a systematic change within the GEO community and underscored that the proposed changes that are in compliance with the Post-2025 Strategy and the development of the Post 2025 Implementation Plan will be much appreciated.

The United States suggested to not hold every proposed change to the RoP to be in line with the Post-2025 Strategy and requested further clarification on China’s intervention.

China clarified that proposals for changes to the RoP and the Post-2025 Strategy are related, but both must be developed in tandem.

South Africa acknowledged that though there is no urgency to change the RoP, there is a need for a clear process in case there is a need to update the RoP and noted that the proposed process is clear, and as and when there is a need, the process can be employed.

The Secretariat noted that limiting proposals to request amendments to the Rules of Procedure to Member States and Participating Organizations would exclude Associates and other communities, for example the GEO Indigenous Alliance.

United States noted that Associates have the opportunity to work with Member States to put forth their proposals to request amendments to the RoP, and that working through Member States or Participating Organizations would create advocates for the proposed changes and also honour the hierarchy in GEO's governance.

The Secretariat requested clarification on how the Programme Board would request changes to the RoP in the case that only Member States or POs can provide proposals, since the Programme Board is also a part of GEO's governance. The Secretariat also requested clarification regarding whether the Secretariat would be able to act as a proposer in the case a Member or a PO does not support a proposal?

France initially suggested that the Programme Board is not a governance body and was tasked by the Executive Committee to support the work of the Work Programme. (n.b. Per GEO's Rules of Procedure 3.1, the Programme Board is one of four components of GEO governance)

Reflecting on France's intervention, Ms Gevorgyan (GEO Secretariat Director) noted the important of having clearly defined representational roles across all of GEO's governance bodies is essential to ensure that countries' and organizations' priorities, views and opinions are being championed, rather than having individuals expressing opinions in their personal capacities.

The European Commission suggested that the Working Groups, along with other GEO Work Programme Activities should also be able to suggest changes to the Rules of Procedure.

#### **Outcomes:**

- GEO Secretariat proposed a change in the Rules of Procedure (RoP) to establish a two-tiered process for changes to the RoP, distinguishing minor edits from amendments and allowing the Executive Committee to approve minor edits to RoP;
- The Executive Committee unanimously supported the proposals to submit RoP changes to Plenary to a) distinguish decisions on updates/edits from amendments and b) to allow the Executive Committee to approve updates/edits;
- Executive Committee members expressed support for proposals for changes to the RoP to come from Members, POs and GEO governing bodies.

#### **4.2 Proposed Process for Considering Expansion of Representatives of the Caucuses on the Executive Committee**

Ms Erika Alex (GEO Secretariat) presented the proposed process to expand the representation of the caucuses on the Executive Committee. Noting that the proposal was

developed in response to Action Item 62.4 from the 62<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Executive Committee, Ms Alex highlighted that the Executive Committee's Response to the Mid-Term Evaluation recommended the establishment of a Task Force to review GEO's governance structure. This task force activity was then reassessed, and the Executive Committee decided to have the governance examined during the development of the Post-2025 Strategy.

Consistent with the original concept of the task force, the Secretariat recommended a task force to be established as part of the Post-2025 Implementation Plan activities to comprehensively examine changes to governance and changes to the RoP, including the expansion of the number of representatives from caucuses. The Secretariat requested the American and African caucuses to re-submit their request and include their rationale, as mentioned in process outlined in item 4.1. Noting that the original concept of the task team should include both members of the Executive Committee and the Secretariat staff, Ms Alex requested the Executive Committee to submit their nominations to the task team.

United States acknowledged that the proposal to expand the representation on the Executive Committee brought forth the issue of a lack of a process. The United States noted that the timeline for establishing a task team and co-developing the proposal in concurrence with the Post-2025 Implementation Plan seemed like a lengthy task and recommended the development of the proposal for the expansion of the representation on the Executive Committee be decoupled from the development of the Post-2025 Implementation Plan in order to be delivered to the Plenary for decision at GEO Week 2025.

South Africa seconded the United States' recommendation and noted that having clearly defined and differentiated roles and timeframes on the management of the process and the decision making even at a regional level is important to ensure endorsement and concurrence when a final decision is made.

The European Commission expressed their support for the proposal and highlighted the need for having a clear timeline and requested the Secretariat to provide a timeline for the task team by the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

China concurred with the United States' recommendation to decouple the proposal to expand representation on the Executive Committee from the Post-2025 Implementation Plan, and requested clarification on whether further decoupling may be required for the Implementation Plan and RoP amendment processes.

Armenia noted that the CIS caucus faces low levels of activity and requested an expansion of the representation of the caucus on the Executive Committee, along with dedicated support to empower the CIS nations to boost their Earth observations activities.

Japan enquired about the composition of the task team, if it would include only the Executive Committee members, or Member countries from different caucuses as well.

The Secretariat noted in response to the concerns about the timeline that the task team could be tasked to deliver their work by Plenary 2025, also why the three different processes are threaded together. The Secretariat then noted that the call for volunteers to the task team will provide an opportunity to Member States, POs and any other requests submitted by others will be considered by the Executive Committee for decision.

The United States noted that soliciting volunteers from Member States and POs is the appropriate starting point and acknowledged that including Associates would increasingly become the norm in the coming years.

Senegal requested further clarification on the timeline for the proposal.

The United States and Japan volunteered to be a part of the task team.

**Outcomes:**

- GEO Secretariat proposed a process for the expansion of the Caucuses on the Executive Committee, incorporating the proposed expansion of the Executive Committee representation with a holistic review of possible governance changes in the Rules of Procedure (RoP). This proposal also included the creation of a task team with the Executive Committee and Secretariat representation;
- Japan and United States volunteered to be part of the task team.

**Decision:**

- The Executive Committee supported the proposal to create a task team to review potential governance changes to the RoP, including the expansion of representation on the Executive Committee, with the caveat that the submission of the proposal(s) on the expansion of representation on the Executive Committee specifically be made no later than the GEO Plenary in 2025;
- Members of the Executive Committee were requested to submit additional nominations for the task team to the Secretariat no later than 1800hrs on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2024.

#### **4.3 Update on GEO Post 2025 Implementation Plan**

Ms Erika Alex (GEO Secretariat) provided an overview of the updates in the development of the Post-2025 Implementation Plan. She introduced Mr Andrew Murdock as the Post-2025 Implementation Plan Lead. Mr Murdock provided a brief introduction of himself, and noted his most recent collaboration with UNCCD, and his work with the Multilateral Fund for the implementation of the Montreal Protocol, a knowledge management system for ozone depleting substances.

Ms Justyna Nicinska (Programme Board Co-Chair) provided a brief update on the development of the Work Programme portfolio and presented the initial draft and structure of the Post-2025 GEO Work Programme and noted that the project plan will be presented to the Executive Committee in a later session.

The United States welcomed Mr Murdock and noted that it is key to have a timeline for engagement with the GEO community in the development of the Post-2025 Implementation Plan and requested the engagement plan be shared with the Executive Committee.

Japan noted that it would like to review a draft version of the Implementation Plan by the next meeting of the Executive Committee and underscored the importance of having a task team/ working group for the same and suggested the Secretariat and the Implementation Plan Lead consider other means to engage members in the development of the Post-2025 Implementation Plan.

Germany requested a project and engagement plan to be presented to the Executive Committee for discussion prior the next meeting of the Executive Committee in the interest of time.

France noted that the Symposium would act as an important avenue to collect information and requested a timeline to be shared with the Executive Committee prior to engaging with the community at the Symposium in September, so that the priorities of engagement are clear.

UNCCD requested water and land sustainability to be included as one of the thematic focus areas in the development of the Implementation Plan. UNCCD reaffirmed its commitment to assist with the co-development of the Post-2025 GEO Work Programme and the Implementation Plan and welcomed Mr Murdock to the Secretariat.

In view of the heavy nature of the task ahead, China requested the development of the project and engagement plan to be accelerated and noted that the development of the Implementation Plan would call for a Working Group under the guidance of Mr Murdock.

South Africa seconded China's views on the process of the development of the Implementation Plan and highlighted that having pre-established guidelines on how the impact of the Implementation Plan will be measured and using them to guide the consultations, communications and engagement will make the process easier.

In response to the request for a timeline and other suggestions, the Secretariat requested the Executive Committee to allow room for Mr Murdock to assess and develop his approach and timeline, to make his recommendation.

United States, France, European Commission, and the Chair concurred with the Secretariat's request.

#### **Outcomes:**

- GEO Secretariat introduced Mr Andrew Murdock as the Post-2025 Implementation Plan Lead and provided a status update on the development of the Implementation Plan.
- The Executive Committee welcomed Andy Murdock, assured their support for the development of the Implementation Plan and encouraged engagement and cooperation with the GEO community during the development of the Plan.
- The Executive Committee granted the GEO Secretariat request for additional time to produce an initial draft of the approach and roadmap, which will be submitted to the Executive Committee.
- The Executive Committee highlighted the importance of Members' views being reflected in the IP development process.

**Action 63.3:** GEO Secretariat to produce a project and engagement plan for the Post 2025 Implementation Plan within one month and share with the Executive Committee.

#### **4.4 Introduction to Member Services**

Ms Sara Venturini (GEO Secretariat) presented a detailed introduction to the newly established Member Services unit and its functions that will champion the intergovernmental nature of GEO. She outlined the unit's main tasks for 2024-2025

including the development of the long-term member engagement strategy alongside implementing fast-track measures. Ms Venturini provided an outline of the proposed process for the development of the member engagement strategy which includes conducting a preliminary assessment of the current needs of Members and matching capacities within the Secretariat, development of the strategy and validation of the same in the context of the post-2025 Implementation Plan development.

Ms Venturini then presented some of the systemic challenges currently faced by GEO, particularly lack of incentive from members to keep the Secretariat apprised in changes to Principal information and updates to National GEOs, the resulting lack of coordination and communication between the Secretariat and the community, loss of connectivity with ministries that originally endorsed GEO, lack of continuity in institutional design.

Ms Venturini then provided an outline of the proposed focus areas for the member engagement strategy. These include but are not limited to streamlining administrative processes to enable effective onboarding, retention and engagement of members in GEO's governance and Work Programme, strengthening liaison with national GEOs using Earth observations maturity assessments and tailored capacity development, providing targeted communications at major UN fora, strengthening regional GEOs by leveraging existing capacities and through expanding partnerships with the broader UN community, and working around and with major international policy events to promote advocacy for GEO.

The European Commission thanked Ms Venturini for her presentation and requested further insights from the floor on how some of the issues outlined can be tackled, particularly in relation to maintaining sustained engagement, securing funds and having a detailed value proposition for GEO's services.

The United States echoed the Commission's statements and underscored the importance of having a detailed quantification of the return on investment for members to be a contributing member of GEO, noted that the unit's proposed functions did not include POs and Associates and requested clarification behind the rationale.

Nigeria supported the establishment of the Member Services unit and noted that is the identified areas of engagement will not only foster collaboration and unity in the Earth observation community. Nigeria highlighted that the budget process is different for each country and putting together a portfolio that is relevant in a country's environmental context, Disaster Risk Reduction and food security in the context of Nigeria, will encourage member states to increase funding.

Responding to the European Commission, CEOS noted that the Mid-Term Evaluation addresses the value proposition of GEO to a certain extent and suggested having a summarized document of the statements made by countries at Plenary over the years and concurred with Nigeria's statement on aligning national priorities when engaging with countries.

China concurred with the statements made by the United States, European Commission, and Nigeria and noted that the creation of a multilingual work environment would garner positive reception from the GEO community.

WMO provided a proposal for consideration in the development of the engagement strategy and highlighted that there often tends to be a stark difference between validated

data and self-reported data and suggested incorporating various reporting mechanisms to bridge the gaps in the data and develop solutions based on the needs of members.

Ms Venturini noted that suggestions were well received and clarified that the focus of the Member Services unit is to engage with Member countries is based on the focus for the engagement strategy, the ministerial declaration and the emphasis on the intergovernmental nature of GEO. She highlighted that POs and Associates fall under the Communications and Partnerships unit, which will allow for the Member Services unit to provide prominence to Member States, a request made by the members themselves. She noted in response to China's comments that setting up a multilingual working environment would depend on the resources allocated to the Member Services unit.

Ms Gevorgyan (Secretariat Director) noted that GEO is certainly working on its value proposition to differentiate itself from the likes of UNDRR, UN SPIDER, etc. and acknowledged the complex nature of GEO's services. Reiterating the lack of connectivity between the GEO Principal and the government, Ms Gevorgyan emphasized the nature of the task ahead, and underscored the importance of capitalizing on opportunities within the UN family and leveraging on channels within governments to pursue efforts that align with GEO's vision, including through multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).

Nigeria appreciated the Secretariat Director's comments and suggested GEO's integration into the UN system and gaining visibility at a broader scale can be achieved by organizing side meetings at the UN General Assembly (UNGA), which would provide greater opportunities to engage with country representatives, showcase success stories and champion the potential of Earth observations to eliminate bad practices.

Senegal reminded the floor of the intergovernmental nature of GEO and reiterated the importance of having a high-level backing for those who are designated as a GEO Principal or a Principal Alternate.

#### **Outcomes:**

- The new Chief of Member Services introduced the Member Services to the Executive Committee and highlighted the new unit's priority role to develop a Member Engagement Strategy and Plan to deepen engagement with current and prospective GEO Members;
- The Executive Committee thanked Chief of Member Services for the in-depth presentation and encouraged engagement with Member countries;
- United States, European Commission, China, and CEOS made specific suggestions around communicating the return on investment in GEO.

## **5 SESSION 5: GEO WORK PROGRAMME**

### **5.1 Report of the 28<sup>th</sup> Programme Board**

Ms Justyna Nicinska (Programme Board Co-Chair) presented the updates from the 28<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Programme Board. Noted the re-election of Mr Evangelos Gerasopoulos and the election of Mr Amos Kabo-Bah as the remaining Programme Board Co-Chairs and acknowledged the new members of the Programme Board. She mentioned that the 29<sup>th</sup>

Meeting was preceded by a Board retreat that focused on a Programme Board vision for a Post-2025 GEO Work Programme.

Ms Nicinska then provided an update on the development of the Post-2025 Work Programme and outlined the timeline and milestones for the same. Highlighting the fact that the Programme Board's work is included in the four pillars of the Post-2025 Implementation Plan, the Programme Board Co-Chair noted that the Programme Board is exploring high-level thematic focus areas for the GEO community while championing the prioritisation framework that was called for in the Post-2025 Strategy to deliver operational services.

The Programme Board Co-Chair then outlined the priority objectives derived from the Post-2025 Strategy which will serve as the basis for the development of the Post-2025 Work Programme. The priority objectives are to develop a Work Programme that is user-centric, transformative, emphasises integrated solutions that have community impact, champions equity through Earth intelligence, co-developed by the community, engages indigenous and other communities and harnesses the ideas of innovation, open data, Earth intelligence and promotes open data and open knowledge.

The Programme Board Co-Chair then noted that an analysis of the current GEO Work Programme was carried out, mapping focus areas and analyses for engagement and regional priorities to ascertain how the structure of the Post-2025 Work Programme can be developed. Noted that a key component is to carry out consultations with the GEO community.

Ms Nicinska highlighted the key focus areas – 1) agriculture and food security, 2) water and land sustainability, 3) ecosystems-biodiversity and carbon management, 4) weather, hazard and disaster resilience, 5) one health, 6) climate, energy and urbanization – and noted that the above-mentioned thematic focus areas are complemented by cross-cutting focus areas of 7) equity, inclusion, and 8) open data open knowledge and infrastructure.

The Programme Board Co-Chair also introduced the initial Work Programme Structure, where a R2O pipeline would see activities transition from pilots to initiatives to flagships. Two new concepts of GEO Conveners and Accelerators are also introduced. This structure was proposed based on identified gaps and challenges, including providing space for research efforts, handling inactive GWP activities, rolling out new ideas, mobilizing resources, harmonizing activities, and applying cross-cutting principles effectively. The Co-Chair emphasized that the Post-2025 GEO Work Programme structure is still under development, hence will be subject to further review, and consultation with the GEO community.

Ms Nicinska outlined the next steps for the Programme Board with the overall goal to simplify the structure and better integrate thematic areas to develop clear criteria. The next steps include, but are not limited to reviewing and incorporating suggestions from the Executive Committee, scheduling community consultations and assigning task teams, adapting the thematic construct to the Post-2025 Work Programme including mapping activities and engagement priorities, adapting a R2O/M&E framework for GEO starting with the Conveyor belt model, providing clear definitions and criteria for prioritization and designing the new Work Programme Implementation Plan process.

Ms Nicinska then noted that the discussion on leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) and integrating it into GEO's work and services was welcomed by the Programme Board and outlined the results of the survey. A proposal for the establishment of an ad-hoc subgroup under the Programme Board to explore AI applications further had been made the Board's meeting. Ms Nicinska noted that the Programme Board requested the subgroup to refine their proposal to better define the applications of AI within GEO while considering ethical issues and scope to extend beyond data and image processing.

Highlighting that the TORs for the Working Groups were approved, Ms Nicinska noted that the call for memberships to the Working Groups will be circulated after the Executive Committee meeting. Noting the EDI subgroup was invited by the Programme Board to present ideas on increasing inclusivity and greater diversity across GEO – governance and institutions, Ms Nicinska highlighted the importance of engaging and championing regional GEOs along with the broader implementation of the National Coordination Mechanism (NCM) for greater regional impact.

WMO requested further clarification on Ms Nicinska's comments regarding the creation of operational services – if it would be related to Member States or GEO activities.

The European Commission acknowledged that the presentation, and the preliminary structure contain the key words to push for a holistic development of the strategy but requested further clarification on what transformative change/vision means from GEO's point of view to ensure GEO can deliver on the proposed activities by utilising the available means. The European Commission suggested the Programme Board focus on fewer issues and select those where GEO's impact is felt and for the Post-2025 Work Programme to specify GEO's collaboration and cooperation with already existing activities to ensure efforts are not duplicated.

South Africa suggested that in the context of the discussions and development of the Post-2025 Implementation Plan, the conceptualisation and thinking for the Post 2025 GWP should be deliberate and in alignment with the Post-2025 Strategy.

Japan reaffirmed their commitment to contribute to the discussions and development of the Post-2025 GEO Work Programme and noted that taking the global scope of GWP activities into account during this process would be desirable.

United States thanked the Programme Board Co-Chair and the Programme Board and noted that the prioritisation of activities is important in the development and conceptualisation process.

Armenia raised a question regarding capacity development to support Earth observations data sharing and inquired how GEO would support the transfer of best practices to countries developing their own data cubes.

China appreciated the tremendous efforts of the Programme Board in consolidating the important discussions and noted that the time is opportune to make adjustments to the Work Programme. China suggested the Programme Board conduct a bottom-up assessment to ascertain the progress of the Work Programme to develop the Post-2025 WP, and concurred with Armenia's comments to underscore the importance of mobilizing regional capacities to harness GEO's capacity to support and transfer best practices in the development of national data cubes to achieve the shared goal of Earth intelligence for all.

Germany appreciated Ms Nicinska's presentation and highlighted the importance of having a streamlined process supporting the Commission's idea to simplify things further. Germany was encouraged to see the use of familiar terminologies in the Post-2025 Work Programme structure, so that the community is not confused by too many changes.

In response to Armenia's question, CEOS noted its comprehensive history of supporting data cube activities in GEO and encouraged GEO members and others to utilise past efforts to work with CEOS to harness already existing activities to prevent duplication of efforts.

The Secretariat Director congratulated the Programme Board and highlighted the importance of communicating GEO's vision and mission, its portfolio and story with the broader community. The Director concurred with Germany's comments on the need to simplify the portfolio and noted that separating engagement priorities from the thematic areas to effectively communicate and engage with the broader community. The Director, in response to the Commission's comments underscored the importance of making the role of funding and finance explicit, particularly in the foundational tasks as it would clarify the limitations of the activities.

The European Commission suggested that the Programme Board should also reflect on their role in GEO's governance and ascertain if they would like to make adjustments to their role, and enquired if there exists a document with compiled feedback and information on barriers to access and use data, and if such a document could be treated as a deliverable to facilitate progress.

The Programme Board Co-Chair highlighted that the Programme Board is currently working on its operations and what they mean for GEO in the broader context. In response to the question regarding prioritisation, the Programme Board Co-Chair agreed with the European Commission and the United States' comments and noted that the Programme Board is in the process of finalizing priority areas for thematic focus within the current GWP but also using thematic mapping and analyses and also expecting constructive consultations with the community to contribute to the same.

In response to Armenia, Ms Nicinska noted that already existing data cube initiatives can be leveraged and integrated into the Work Programmes, especially in terms of delivering on the equity front. Noting that the process is a work in progress, the Programme Board Co-Chair highlighted that the Programme Board is currently carrying out a high-level assessment and a gap analysis of the current Work Programme to build on the analysis and formulate the Post-2025 Work Programme.

**Outcomes:**

- The Programme Board Co-Chair presented the report of the 28<sup>th</sup> Programme Board;
- The Executive Committee thanked and acknowledged the presentation made by Programme Board, appreciating the progress made on the Post-2025 GEO Work Programme;
- The Executive Committee encouraged Programme Board to prioritize the Work Programme to where GEO adds value in support of the Post-2025 Strategy, emphasizing simplicity and efficiency in the Work Programme structure.

## 5.2 Update on Incubators

Ms Yana Gevorgyan (GEO Secretariat Director) and Mr Martyn Clark (GEO Urban Resilience Coordinator) presented an update on the Global Ecosystems Atlas and the Global Heat Resilience Service.

Ms Gevorgyan noted that the Global Ecosystems Atlas is building on IUCN's Global Ecosystems Typology, which was accepted as an international standard by the UN Statistics Division and subsequently the Statistics Commission, and the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) for conducting ecosystems accounting, and for reporting and implementing the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). She highlighted that the Global Ecosystems Atlas initiative is a convening of partners to create the very first comprehensive map of ecosystems which would provide a common reference to assist governments and the public sector, but also the private sector who are aligning themselves to the biodiversity framework.

Noting that the Secretariat is building on past efforts of GEO-BON, GEO Mountains, Digital Earth Africa, Ms Gevorgyan highlighted that the pilot case study for the Global Ecosystems Atlas will be launched in a low-capacity country which represents a rich nature hotspot – the Maldives. The pilot case study is intended to produce a methodology for countries to develop a wall-to-wall map of their ecosystems. Noting that many countries are currently in the process of updating their national biodiversity plans and strategies, Ms Gevorgyan highlighted the timely nature of the Ecosystems Atlas and underscored the continued engagement with the CBD Secretariat, which has supported the Global Ecosystems Atlas.

Mr Clark noted that the Global Heat Resilience Service Incubator (GHRS) envisions delivering local information to urban settlements, cities, and communities against extreme heat events. Noting that in most cities, there is a dearth of climate risk information, particularly on the scale and nature of the risk from extreme heat, Mr Clark outlined the several developments to the incubator since Cape Town. He outlined the structure, discussions, and outcomes of the HeatSprint hosted in February, particularly the input from several key partners to conceptualise the service and the solutions that are required to mitigate heat and heat risk in urban areas.

Mr Clark noted that gathering information and insights from data providers, urban resilience officers and policy makers to conceptualise the service brought forward two key elements the service must provide – allow for cities to make a case for heat risks and implications to tackle developmental challenges utilising data, and ensuring the knowledge, information and insights provided are applicable across all cities where the effects of heat aren't felt equally. The consensus was to create a service that would provide risk knowledge information – a decision support platform that gathers input, information and insight on the user and the city's heat context to produce a brief and customizable report to 'make the case' with decision makers, catalogues available global data and allows for local datasets to be added, and helps select locally-relevant interventions to quantify their potential impact.

The European Commission thanked the Secretariat for their update on the incubators and inquired on the specific data types that would be used by the Heat Resilience Service and how GEO is adding value through the incubator. The Commission highlighted that the

scope of the GHRS is close to EU's Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change and requested the Secretariat to leverage on existing activities and the repository of solutions of the Climate Adapt Repository of EEA. Noted that the outcomes of the HeatSprint are particularly relevant in the theme for IPCC's next special report, and suggested the Secretariat provide the outcomes of the HeatSprint as a publication to the same.

CEOS articulated on how the work of CEOS on biodiversity aligns with the Atlas and underscored the importance of biodiversity in CEOS's activities moving forward. Noted that there are environmental and climate justice grants that are available, particularly targeting heat resilience and suggested exploring the avenue further.

Japan expressed their support for both the incubators and appreciated the progress made to advance the collective vision of GEO. Suggested that the services should create and provide not only observational data, but also intelligence in a way that users can utilise the service in a multilingual capacity to address global challenges.

WMO requested further clarification on the role WMO could play in the development of GHRS.

The United States expressed its thanks and support in the development of the incubators and the Programme Board's direction and support of the nexus incubators. The United States highlighted the recent announcement by NOAA in partnership with the Department of Housing and Development of the campaign to carry out heat mapping in several cities in the United States, Africa and South Asia and requested the Secretariat leverage the results and findings of the campaign. The United States echoed the Commission's suggestion to contribute to IPCC's special report as the GHRS is a timely and demand driven service, and the outcomes of the HeatSprint are particularly relevant from a public viewpoint.

France enquired about the methodologies to implement the incubators, and the cities that the GHRS is considering for pilot implementation.

South Africa appreciated the nexus incubators, and reminded the room that the challenges of data quality and availability must be considered while taking advantage of the potential of capacity building, especially building on the experience of the pilot initiative in the Maldives. As for GHRS, South Africa noted that heat is increasingly becoming a pressing issue and suggested that the issue of scalability be considered during the development of the service.

Armenia noted that there are a few ideas and projects that are already being implemented in Armenia that are in line with both the incubators and reaffirmed Armenia's support for them.

China thanked the Secretariat for the presentation and underscored the importance of standards and specifications such that stakeholders must be enabled and empowered to contribute to the development and scaling of the incubators. Reaffirmed China's commitment and involvement in the incubators.

The Lead Co-Chair noted that acknowledging and leveraging regional activities in the past, should also be part of the development of the incubators.

Senegal requested clarification on the difference between a flagship and an incubator.

The Secretariat Director, in response to the European Commission's comments, highlighted the message being built is towards a harmonised standard being implemented for ecosystems mapping. She highlighted the CBD's recommendation of IUCN's GET allows countries to disaggregate from different approaches to move towards a standardised method to map and account for ecosystems. Noting that the proof-of-concept for the Atlas will be developed over the coming months, the Director clarified that flagships are activities that already exist and are being implemented and incubators are future GEO flagships.

Mr Clark noted that the HeatSprint was a starting point to formulate and conceptualise the service, factors that are measured – climate hazards, vulnerabilities, and identifying gaps temporally and spatially, and also harnessing non-GEO products and commercial platforms along with leveraging the Climate Adapt Repository. In terms of pilot cases, Mr Clark noted that though cities have not yet been selected, it would be done on a competitive basis, particularly with willingness to partner and provide in-kind resources. Mr Clark clarified that Google was present as a potential funding agency but also to help in terms of mapping and that WMO-WHO Joint Office on Climate and Health is already present in the development of the pilot.

**Outcomes:**

- GEO Secretariat presented updates on the development of Global Ecosystems Atlas and the Global Heat Resilience Service;
- The Executive Committee expressed appreciation for the presentation and acknowledged the progress made on the two incubators;
- The Executive Committee offered several suggestions for improvement and affirmed their support to both incubators.

### **5.3 GIDTT Updates**

Ms Marie-Francoise Voidrot and Mr Yuqi Bai presented the updates on the GIDTT.

Mr Bai provided an overview and noted that based on the post-2025 Strategy, the renewed focus for the GIDTT will be on data information and knowledge and underscored that the GIDTT was reestablished after the EAG report presented at GEO Week in 2022 based on user demands and needs, along with the priorities of the Executive Committee. Mr Bai noted that the new architecture of the GIDTT is user oriented and that subgroups were also reestablished to support the new architecture to address space-based data and data cubes, in-situ data and regional GEOs and integration of GEOSS, GEO Knowledge Hub, governance and quality check.

Ms Marie-Francoise provided an overview of the progress in each subgroup. She noted that under the space-based data and data cube subgroup, the goal is to transition to something that is fully thematic and user oriented. This was conceptualized to best serve the end user and connect all the data, identify key cloud providers, and to establish interoperability of data providers. She noted that the new platform will be a space for users to discover and access services and build on previous collaborations in the context of cloud credits programme to advance GIDTT's activities.

As for the in-situ data and regional GEOs subgroup, the goal is to connect available in-situ data repositories. This was also conceptualized with the goal to serve the end user, but also to strengthen collaboration between regional and national in-situ data providers using standards that are both machine-to-machine and human readable to increase cooperation and interoperability within the existing infrastructures.

The integration of GEOSS, GEO Knowledge Hub, governance and quality check was also done with the key goal of enhancing the user experience, and to ensure quality data.

Mr Bai requested the Executive Committee to make a decision on the TORs for the GIDTT and outlined the changes and the shift in the timeline for deadlines and milestones.

The European Commission mentioned that the goal to connect existing repositories, while commendable, must consider limitations in terms of resources, which must guide the GIDTT and suggested that integrating the open data ideology to provide world class services can be an action of the Member Services unit.

Japan extended its support to the work done by the GIDTT.

Nigeria appreciated the work of the Programme Board, GIDTT and the Secretariat and noted that success will only be achieved when the identified thematic areas can be implemented at the national level in regional and national programmes and activities.

The United States echoed the Commission's comments on the importance of understanding the implications of the scale of broader implementation of the proposed infrastructure and the required financial support to determine the feasibility compared to other services and priorities of the Post-2025 Strategy.

Germany emphasized that there is a need for solutions that are light, easily adaptable and customizable and that there are checks on how these solutions work with users. Noting that the GEO Knowledge Hub has the potential to provide infrastructure for capacity building, Germany requested clarification on how the incubators related to the GEO Knowledge Hub and the new GEO infrastructure as a whole.

Mr Bai highlighted that the GIDTT will ensure to stick with the principle of equitable access to high quality data and acknowledged that it may not always be straightforward or affordable for all countries to share data, and underscored the reliance on repositories and data providers as they are able to make metadata accessible to all. Mr Bai noted that data sharing is the key priority for the GIDTT and the Data WG, and that GIDTT is always open to contributions from different regions, countries, members and highlighted that GIDTT is represented widely by members across GEO and appreciated the Secretariat's dedication to assisting the planning, development and implementation of the different aspects of GIDTT.

Japan requested clarification on the extent of engagement with in-situ committees and enquired about the challenges of further engagement with in-situ committees.

Mr Bai responded that in-situ data sharing has been discussed extensively in GEO for many years, and GIDTT would like to approach the community to ascertain best practices and best ways to share in-situ data within their networks.

The European Commission suggested that an annual report highlighting the progress of the implementation of the fair principle would be a useful tool, and Mr Bai highlighted that there already exists an evaluation in the current repository.

**Outcomes:**

- The Task Team presented the progress report on technical assessment of the GEO Infrastructure;
- The Task Team requested decisions on the amendment of the GIDTT Terms of Reference;
- The Executive Committee appreciated the update by the GIDTT and encouraged the Task Team to consider a realistic scale and scope in its architecture design.

**Decision:** The Executive Committee approved the revised Terms of Reference (TOR) for the GIDTT

## 6 SESSION 6: GEO 2024 PLANNING

### 6.1 Executive Committee Priority Themes for 2024

Noting that 2024 is a transformative year for GEO, the Lead Co-Chair proposed three main themes of focus for the Executive Committee – Integrate the programme results and evolve GEO infrastructure, Promote Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) of GEO, and mobilize resources for the GEO Trust Fund.

South Africa emphasized the importance of delivering on the Youth Declaration that was passed in Cape Town and underscored the importance of incorporating it into the priorities to maintain momentum.

The United States supported the proposed direction for the Priority Themes for the Executive Committee, particularly concurring with the need to promote rules-based governance, clear documentation, clear communication, and EDI. The United States suggested the *“Focusing on users’ needs, guide the assessment of the technical feasibility and requirements of GEO infrastructure evolution, and push forward the official start of operations”* be reworded to *“Focusing on users’ needs, guide the assessment of the technical feasibility and requirements of GEO infrastructure evolution, and explore different pathways to operations”*.

Germany supported the direction for the Priority Themes and underscored the importance of the development of the Post-2025 Work Programme Implementation Plan.

The European Commission expressed its support for the Priority Themes for 2024 and reiterated the United States’ request for change in the language for the evolution of GEO’s infrastructure. Reiterated the Commission’s support and engagement to GEO in its transformative year and requested the Secretariat to answer some of the unanswered interventions.

Nigeria noted that it would be helpful for the new members of the Executive Committee to receive a ‘welcome package’ which would provide them with the required information to deepen their knowledge and understanding of GEO and its activities to facilitate better decision-making.

Ms Chen Miao noted in response to South Africa that youth participation and inclusion is a key priority for the Executive Committee and highlighted that following the Youth Declaration during the Ministerial in Cape Town, the willingness of the youth to participate and actively engage has increased, and acknowledged by GEO community and reassured that the voices of the youth will certainly be taken into consideration in the development of the Implementation Plan. In response to the United States and European Commission, Ms Miao noted that the language will be changed accordingly. Responding to Germany, Ms Miao noted that their observation was acknowledged, and necessary changes will be made.

The Secretariat Director, in response to Nigeria noted that one of the key tasks of the Member Services unit is to develop a Welcome Package for new members. In response to the Commission, the Director noted that the Secretariat will further investigate their request for the unanswered interventions to be answered and highlighted that the report reflects the discussions of the Executive Committee and requested the Commission to share best practices for the same.

**Outcomes:**

- The Lead Co-Chair put forward five themes to steer the Executive Committee, aligning with the priorities for GEO from 2024 until the 20<sup>th</sup> Plenary, scheduled for April 2025.

**Decision:** The Executive Committee adopted the Priority Themes for 2024 subject to requested changes.

**Action 63.4:** GEO Secretariat should implement the suggested changes to the Priority Themes for 2024.

## **6.2 GEO Secretariat Draft Annual Operating Plan**

Ms Yana Gevorgyan (GEO Secretariat Director) presented the Secretariat's Annual Operating Plan (AOP) with its Objectives and Key Results (OKRs). She highlighted that the OKRs do not cover all the activities the Secretariat intends to carry out over the course of the year, but instead focuses on high-value deliverables that are relevant in the context of the year, aggregating efforts under common organizational objectives to coordinate and exchange in a way that aligns individual efforts and carry out course corrections as needed.

She noted that the document provides a mapping of the proposed objectives to the priority themes proposed by the Executive Committee. Ms Gevorgyan suggested the vision for GEO as an organization is to develop a common set of OKRs across all activities and governance to work towards common results than distinguishing between the Executive Committee, Programme Board and the Secretariat. Requested the Executive Committee reflect on this proposition to work towards convergence under a singular framework.

The European Commission thanked the Secretariat for outlining a thoughtful, clear and measurable objectives.

The United States echoed the Commission's statements and appreciated the framing of the plan as it represents accountability and would like the idea of a horizontal operating plan to be explored over the course of the next year.

China noted that GEO is in its transition period and the community is counting on the Secretariat to fulfil the development and eventual implementation of the Post-2025 Implementation Plan and appreciated the Secretariat's efforts in effective collaboration, communication and contributions.

**Outcomes:**

- GEO Secretariat Director presented the Secretariat's Annual Operating Plan, noting that the Objectives and Key Results (OKR) do not cover all intended GEO Secretariat's activities, but focus on delivering high-value outputs;
- Director requested the Executive Committee's consideration of moving towards adoption of OKR framework for the whole of GEO, particularly to encompass Secretariat, Executive Committee, and Programme Board work planning;
- The Executive Committee commended the Secretariat for the clear and measurable objectives and indicated willingness to consider this framework over the course of the year.

## **7 SESSION 7: OTHER BUSINESS**

### **7.1 Review of Requests to join GEO as Participating Organizations or Associates**

Ms Erika Alex (GEO Secretariat) presented the review of requests to join GEO as Participating Organizations (PO) and the review of applications for Associates statutes. Ms Alex noted that despite several attempts to contact the Principal/Correspondence contacts for Uganda for an affirmative answer and support to accept Women in GIS (WiGIS) Uganda as an Associate, there was no response and requested the Executive Committee for further guidance.

CEOS noted its collaboration with WiGIS Uganda over the least three years and highlighted their strive for inclusivity and diversity and strongly recommended the Executive Committee to accept WiGIS's application.

United States and the European Commission recommended that WiGIS Uganda be conditionally accepted subject to the approval of the GEO Principal.

The Secretariat suggested moving forward with approval with the rest of the applications unless there are any objections or questions from the participants.

**Outcomes:**

- The Executive Committee also approved the other requests to join GEO:
  - Alliance of Biodiversity International and CIAT (PO);
  - Taylor Geospatial Institute (PO);
  - MDA Ltd (Associate).
- The Executive Committee accepted the application from "Women in GIS Uganda" (WiGIS) as an Associate on condition that GEO Secretariat receive recommendation from the Uganda Principal.

## **7.2 Any Other Business**

Ms Erika Alex proposed 5-6<sup>th</sup> November as the dates for the next meeting of the Executive Committee, highlighted that the dates are immediately before the UNFCCC COP and noted the other available dates for a November meeting are the week of American Thanksgiving and elections. Requested the Executive Committee for feedback and input.

Germany, Australia, and the United States support the Executive Committee dates for November and suggested a virtual one in July for discussion of urgent matters and items requiring decisions, and to maintain communication and flow of information.

### **Outcomes:**

- The Executive Committee agreed on 5-6 Nov 2024 for Fall Executive Committee Meeting and requested a virtual meeting be scheduled for July 2024.

## **7.3 Review of Action Items**

The Secretariat presented the outcomes and actions from the 63<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Executive Committee.

Paraguay expressed their support for the development of the Post-2025 Implementation Plan in response to Item 4.3 Update on GEO Post 2025 Implementation Plan of the agenda and underscored the importance of seamless and pragmatic execution of the development and implementation of the Post-2025 Implementation Plan, and the highlighted the importance of the nuances of the discussions to be reflected in the plan.

South Africa appreciated the progress made towards appointing the Implementation Plan Lead and underscored the importance of building on the work that was done during the conceptualization of the Post-2025 strategy.

China underscored the importance of integrating the key messages and ideas of the Post-2025 Strategy in the Implementation Plan and suggested re-mobilizing the members of the Post-2025 WG to provide support in the development of the IP. China noted it's appreciation towards the Italian Space Agency and Italy for their proposal to host GEO Week 2025 and reaffirmed the Commission's financial commitments for the same.

### **Outcomes:**

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

## **7.4 Closing Remarks**

The European Commission thanked the Lead Co-Chair and all the members of the Executive Committee for their fruitful contributions over the two days towards the development of the Post-2025 Implementation Plan. The Commission appreciated the work done by the Secretariat so far and noted their commitment to engage and provide support in any capacity possible. Emphasised the importance of focussing on avenues where GEO's value addition can truly be felt.

South Africa thanked everyone for their presentations, engagement and involvement over the two days and underscored the importance of building on the momentum from Cape Town to ensure the Post-2025 Strategy is implemented successfully. South Africa

reiterated their support for working with the Implementation Plan Lead in development of the Implementation Plan.>

United States thanked the Secretariat for its efforts in preparation for and the success of the 63<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Executive Committee.

The Secretariat Director thanked all the members of the Executive Committee for their input and the lively discussions over the course of the two days and noted the importance of gaining clarity on proceeding with certain aspects of the planning for the transformative year ahead. Appreciated the Italian Space Agency and Italy's offer to host GEO Week 2025 and highlighted that 2025 should also have a celebratory tagline to honour 20 years of GEO.

China thanked the members of the Executive Committee for their engagement and spirited collaboration and provided a brief overview of the discussions that took place over the course of the two days. The Lead Co-Chair then announced the dates for Symposium and Open Data Open Knowledge Workshop to be 23-26th September in Hangzhou, China and extended a warm welcome to all.

**Outcomes:**

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

| <b>List of Participants</b><br><b>63<sup>rd</sup> GEO Executive Committee, Geneva, Switzerland</b>                                                                                                                                    |                                                                        |
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