
Report
65th Executive Committee Meeting
Geneva, Switzerland
4-5 March 2025

As Accepted at the 66th 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, European Commission and South Africa as Co-Chairs and the GEO Secretariat Director opened the 65th meeting of the ExCom and welcomed members;
- Co-Chairs and Secretariat Director emphasized the importance of unity within GEO to mobilize resources in support of the SIP, with the Global Forum as an opportunity to showcase GEO's strength and commitment to providing EI4All;
- Secretariat Director welcomed Dirk Engelbart as the new GEO Principal of Germany;
- Co-Chair Steven Volz provided welcome remarks on behalf of the USA during the opening of the second day.

1.2 Adoption of Agenda

- The agenda was adopted with a modification in Session 4.1, with the Programme Board (PB) Terms of Reference (ToRs) presented for decision rather than for information.

1.3 Adoption of the Draft Report of the 64th Session

- The following document was approved as distributed: ExCom65.2: Draft Report of the 64th Executive Committee Meeting.

1.4 Review of Action Items from Previous Meetings

- The following document was approved: ExCom65.3: Review of Action items from Previous Meeting. Lead Co-Chair noted that all previous action items were completed.

1.5 Secretariat Operations Report: 1 October 2024 to 31 January 2025

- ExCom commended the Secretariat Operations Report as positive and emphasized the importance of aligning GEO's activities with strategic priorities, particularly by identifying those with the highest return on investment considering budget constraints;
- Some ExCom members emphasized the importance of strengthening GEO's linkages to international policy frameworks and country engagement during international events;
- Germany sought clarification on fundraising mechanisms and budget allocation for specific initiatives, to which the Director provided details on how projects are costed, funded, and governed through the GEO Work Programme and Trust Fund to ensure transparency and accountability;
- Senegal highlighted the importance of improving communications to engage LDN countries with GEO to further scale up its impact.

2 SESSION 2: 2025-26 SECRETARIAT RESOURCING AND BUDGET

2.1 Secretariat Financial Update Including: 2025-2026 Concept of Operations; 2025 Secretariat Budget

- The GEO Secretariat presented the 2024 Interim Statement of Income and Expenditure, draft Concept of Operations 2025-2026 and draft 2025 GEO Secretariat Budget. The Secretariat explained the latter two documents were based on a fully funded budget in 2025. In response to current uncertainties around the funding environment, the Secretariat then presented a series of four financial scenarios based on different levels of reduced funding;
- A discussion followed, including clarification of the nature of extra-budgetary fees and administration fees, the criticality of timing in investment/cost reduction decisions for prudent cash management, and the need to carefully consider which roles, tasks and initiatives should be prioritized in any scenario of reduced funding;
- Numerous members (including China, the EU, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and South Africa) expressed their continuing support to GEO;
- A range of potential revenue generating initiatives were discussed, including a switch to a membership contribution model, a large scale EO exhibition (e.g. EO Expo) with the opportunity to attract sponsoring corporations to showcase their capabilities, and opportunities relating to private sector contributions. The members recognized that some efforts, especially those involving public sector funding, would require more time and any opportunities to realize quicker contributions would likely need to target the private sector. The GEO Global Forum was considered as an opportunity to catalyze those contributions;
- The Secretariat also updated on a fundraising outreach initiative to all members, initially through a ministerial letter;
- Budget planning scenarios with relevant impact on ConOps – anonymized to remove sensitivities – will be supplemental information;

- ExCom recommended a special session to be convened before the Plenary in Rome to discuss the updated budget and various scenarios;
- ExCom continued previous-day discussion on the review of the Draft 2025 Secretariat Budget and 2025-26 ConOps. The Secretariat provided clarification on various points including: the duration of the ConOps, designation of funding for specific activities used to meet the mandate of those activities, as well as on the funding status of several specific staff posts;
- ExCom discussed organizational resource mobilization needs in the context of a challenging funding environment and emphasized the importance of Member Services support. The challenges of maintaining adequate staffing within a finite annual budget were discussed;
- The Secretariat Director presented a draft proposal on deepening engagement with the private sector and other non-Governmental stakeholder communities. This was well-received by the ExCom. The Secretariat requested feedback on the proposal as soon as possible.

Action 65.1: The Secretariat will take under advisement ExCom's input on the ConOps and will revert to ExCom with a proposed final ConOps balancing multiple staffing requirements.

Action 65.2: The Secretariat will provide an updated draft 2025 budget within the next 2 weeks, based on the latest information available, ahead of the Plenary documentation deadline of March 26. It will additionally organize an ExCom call in advance of March 26 for members to provide any final feedback.

Action 65.3: ExCom members to provide feedback on the draft private sector engagement proposal as soon as possible.

Action 65.4: GEO Secretariat to develop a set of potential "offers" to the private sector in return for their contribution.

Action 65.5: GEO Secretariat to work with GEO Principals to hold discussions on funding contributions and timeframes associated with confidence levels and the financial outlook to substantiate requests to national governments.

3 SESSION 3: POST-2025 STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

3.1 Review of Draft Post-2025 Strategy Implementation Plan

- Post 2025 Strategy Implementation Plan (SIP) Lead Andrew Murdock introduced the session;
- The document was well-received by ExCom, and feedback and recommendations were provided for final revision before circulation to Plenary.

Action 65.6: SIP Lead Andy Murdock to incorporate the recommended minor edits, including those related to the role of regional GEOs (Objective 5, page 22), Annex A, and the language on climate and DEI throughout the document. The revised version will be presented to ExCom by **11 March**. Written comments to be provided by ExCom by **5th March 2025**, end of the day.

4 SESSION 4: POST-2025 WORK PROGRAMME

4.1 Report of the 31st Programme Board Meeting

- Programme Board (PB) Co-Chair Evangelos Gerasopoulos presented the outcomes and actions of the 31st Programme Board for information, including the Post-2025 GEO Work Programme (GWP), changes to the Terms of Reference (TORs), Concept of Innovation Fund, etc;
- ExCom reminded PB that the Post-2025 GWP development should be aligned with the goals of the Post-2025 Strategy and endorsed its circulation to the GEO Principals for consultation. Clarification was made that the monitoring and evaluation of the GWP should be part of the SIP monitoring and evaluation framework;
- Regarding the Innovation Fund, clarity should be made on its relationship with the various funds proposed in the SIP, and its relationship with the GEO Trust Fund.

Decision: ExCom directed PB to continue with the current ToR and extend the term of the current board members through 2025 to allow alignment of the RoP and ToR to streamline approval by ExCom.

5 SESSION 5: REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS

5.1 Review of Action Items

- GEO Secretariat Coordination Officer, Amber Kremer presented the Action Items from the day for comments by the ExCom;
- ExCom members to send an email with additional comments by COB on Wednesday, March 5.

6 SESSION 6: GLOBAL FORUM 2025

6.1 Update on GEO Global Forum 2025

- Nicola Pirrone and Giovanni Rum, on behalf of Italy, presented an update on the Global Forum planning, including a list of ministerial segment themes, for information and discussion;
- ExCom commended the planning efforts for the Global Forum;
- Italy confirmed co-chair representation during the May 5 Opening Ceremony and reassured that travel visa requests are being managed promptly.

Ministerial invitations

- Invitation letters have not been sent yet. Italy noted invitations are expected to be sent by the week of March 10 and addressed to relevant ministers identified by the GEO Secretariat with GEO Principals copied, noting that the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAECI) is fully responsible for the invitations;
- It was recommended that ExCom members liaise and confirm which ministers will attend, to support targeted outreach and panel planning.

- Organizing team (GEOSEC, Italy, and EU) is urged to work together to finalize themes and ministerial engagement, with clear communication to GEO Principals to expedite arrangements.

Ministerial themes and panel

- ExCom recommended the themes for the ministerial sessions be refined to ensure relevance to GEO's work while engaging the non-GEO community. It was observed that some themes, e.g. DRR, One Health and Energy, application of AI represent opportunities for alignment with Post-2025 GWP Focus Areas;
- Smaller panels with professional moderators were recommended to allow for audience interaction;
- Secretariat urged for the panel composition and themes to be locked down by end of next week (March 14).

Community Events

- Upon final review of proposals by GEOSEC, a 2–3-day window will be given for the Local Organizing Committee to provide final feedback on community events;
- Clarification was provided that GEO Work Programme activities and regional GEOs will have good visibility through community events based on the submissions.

Videos

- Members encouraged the Local Organizing Committee and Secretariat to ensure that the 20th anniversary video is produced with keen attention paid to inclusivity and representation.

7 SESSION 7: GEO GOVERNANCE MEETINGS & FORA/SYMPOSIA SCHEDULING

7.1 Review of: GEO Governance Meetings & Community Engagement Scheduling

- Mr Steven Parkinson (GEO Secretariat) outlined options for an annual engagement cycle, to facilitate powerful convening of the GEO community through engagement events and delivering excellence in governance through efficient and effective Plenary and ExCom engagement, within the context of finite resources;
- The ExCom agreed henceforth to organize one major convening event annually (midyear), alternating each year between a Global Forum and GEO Symposium. Opportunities to leverage, align or link to Regional GEO events should be explored. Overlaps between Symposia and ODOK meetings should also be addressed to avoid duplication. The scope of Symposia should be revisited if it is to become the key convening event in a given year;
- ExCom agreed to hold one Plenary per year, coinciding with the annual major convening event. After some discussion, ExCom agreed to hold three ExCom meetings per year – two in person (one at the sidelines of the major convening event) and one virtual, with the possibility to hold a second virtual if needed;
- Further to a request from China regarding earlier circulation of documents (than the 2 weeks indicated in the ROP), the Secretariat indicated the related challenges

with many documents, but will seek to do so where possible, for example with less time sensitive documents.

- Germany explained its position that Plenary should not delegate to ExCom responsibility for approval of the annual Secretariat operational plan and budget. The Secretariat noted the consequence that this will lead to GEO working with an interim operating plan and budget each year until a midyear Plenary.

Action 65.7: GEO Secretariat will - where feasible - circulate certain key documents to ExCom with longer lead time (to the 2 weeks indicated in the Rules of Procedure) prior to ExCom meetings.

Decision: GEO will organise one major convening event annually (Global Forum or Symposium).

Decision: Three ExCom meetings will be held annually – two in-person and one virtual (or two if needed)– with the scheduling to be proposed by the Secretariat. A Plenary will be held once annually, coinciding with the major convening event.

8 SESSION 8: GIDTT

8.1 GEO Infrastructure Architecture and Finalization of requirements:

2nd Deliverable

- GEO Infrastructure Coordinator Paola de Salvo presented the GIDTT second deliverable, GEO Infrastructure Architecture and identification of the requirements needed to implement the infrastructure, with two options for the revised GEO Infrastructure, for decision;
- ExCom commended the work of GIDTT and the clarity of the document;
- US requested that GIDTT work with the GEOSEC to develop a more detailed cost estimate and break down existing costs versus new staff /contract support;
- ExCom members expressed support for Option 2 based on previous GKH evaluations, as well as providing less strain on budgetary needs;
- Japan suggested to explore inclusion of the Foundation Model into the revised GEO Infrastructure - "e.g. EO GPT";
- GIDTT called for minimum annual budget of 60k from May 2025 to sustain operations.

Decision: ExCom approved proposed Option 2 related to the GEO Infrastructure Architecture.

Action 65.8: GIDTT will work with ESA to explore synergies to valorize existing investment across platforms.

Action 65.9: GEO Secretariat to include GIDTT FTE requirements in the ConOps to ensure consistency.

9 SESSION 9: EXCOM RULES OF PROCEDURE TF

9.1 Update on the ExCom RoP TF

- RoP TF Co-Chairs: Lulu Makapela and Lawrence Friedl presented an update on the revision of the RoP, for decision;
- ExCom members commended the work done by the Task Force;
- US, Australia, Senegal, and Germany supported the expansion of ExCom membership and the proposed process for the RoP, with US, Australia, and the EU recommending streamlining the process by eliminating steps 7 and 8;
- Co-Chairs agreed with China's comment to align the text in the document and the flowchart;
- RoP Co-Chairs presented an update on the governance framework, for information;
- ExCom instructed the TF to continue work on governance framework and to continue the discussion.

Decision: The proposed process and recommended expansion of ExCom membership were conditionally approved, pending TF resolution based on feedback from ExCom after a streamlined flowchart of the process is distributed. The TF should align the text in the document and the resolved flowchart.

10 SESSION 10: EXCOM DEPT TF

10.1 Update on the ExCOM DEPT TF

- Yuqi Bai, China, presented an update from the ExCom DEPT TF and outlined the Draft Report from the ExCom DEPT TF;
- Recommendation from EU and GEO Secretariat to focus on the Performance Evaluation process and remove the 360 Assessment process from TF's outputs. Recommendation from US that ExCom should have ability to provide their feedback to the Co-Chairs;
- ExCom discussed whether the Performance Evaluation process requires Plenary approval and becomes an annex to the ROP, or should be a separate document approved by ExCom only.

Action 65.10: DEPT Team to finalize the Performance Evaluation process and the 360 Assessment process and submit to ExCom for approval.

11 SESSION 11: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 Approval of new POs and Associates

- GEO Secretariat Chief of Member Services Sara Venturini listed the proposed new POs and Associates, for decision.

Decision:

- The following organizations were approved as a Participating Organization:

- Red De Laboratorios De Observación De La Tierra Para La Reducción Del Riesgo De Desastres (RedLabOT)
- The following organizations were approved as an Associate:
 - Skywatch Space Applications Inc.;
 - Voyager Search.

11.2 Proposed ExCom dates for 2025

- GEO Secretariat Chief of Staff Steven Parkinson proposed ExCom dates for 2025 for feedback from ExCom;
- Recommendation from China to compile holidays and special dates to guide scheduling of meetings.

Action 65.11: GEO Secretariat to send Doodle to assess availability of the ExCom for the proposed dates.

11.3 Review of Action Items

- Amber Kremer provided an overview of the outcomes, decisions, and action items, allowing for any final comments or modifications on the content.

11.4 Any Other Business

11.5 Closing Remarks

- Closing remarks were provided by Lead Co-Chair, Co-Chairs and GEO Secretariat Director.

Draft Report

65th Executive Committee Meeting

4-5 March 2025

FULL REPORT

Chair: Mr Xiaohan Liao

1 SESSION 1: GENERAL BUSINESS

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

The Lead Co-Chair, Mr Xiaohan Liao, welcomed everyone to the 65th meeting of the Executive Committee and extended a warm welcome to the representatives of the Permanent Missions in Geneva who play a key role in supporting the work of GEO and the Executive Committee. Noted the importance of recognizing past achievements and the need to foster progress.

Mr Gao Xiang (China) in his opening remarks thanked the GEO Secretariat for the preparations leading up to the 65th Executive Committee Meeting, and the representatives of the Executive Committee for contributing to the development and refinement of the Post-2025 Strategy Implementation Plan (SIP). Noted the importance of the SIP in achieving Earth Intelligence for All and advancing global cooperation on Earth observations and Earth Intelligence. Highlighted the success of the 7th AOEGO Workshop held in Kunming, China, with multiple representatives from 14 countries. Reaffirmed China's commitment to mobilizing resources and organizing multi-ministry delegations in preparation for the GEO Global Forum in May, in Rome. Noting the key budgetary restrictions, China reiterated its commitment to discussing and addressing current budgetary challenges to continue the work of GEO.

Ms Joanna Drake (European Commission¹) in her opening remarks, emphasized the importance of implementing the Post-2025 Strategy through concrete and sustainable actions. She noted and commended the significant progress made to further develop and refine the SIP. Ms Drake urged the Executive Committee to make efforts towards producing a well-structured SIP for Plenary for approval. She noted the GEO Work Programme's central role in advancing GEO's vision into action and fostering collaboration with global partners, particularly in the current geopolitical climate, and re-emphasized the Commission's commitment to support GEO. Ms Drake highlighted the new iClimateAction project led by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), to enhance the collaboration between GEO, WMO, the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) and related efforts in international climate action. She reiterated the continued commitment of the European GEO community to GEO, with the EuroGEO initiative, and the establishment of national GEO offices in Ukraine and the Netherlands. Lastly, Ms

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

Drake called for unity and political engagement in the run-up to the GEO Global Forum in Rome and stressed the importance of maintaining the momentum and leveraging Earth Intelligence for sustainability and stability, despite shifting global priorities.

Mr Mmboneni Muofhe (South Africa) welcomed everyone to the 65th Executive Committee Meeting and thanked the GEO Secretariat for the preparations for the same. He reflected on the journey of GEO over the last 20 years in playing a key role in enabling nations to utilize Earth observation (EO) data, and how GEO has continued to grow with regards to national and international coordination, importance and impact. He noted the need to address the increasing financial pressure, particularly during the Post-2025 implementation period, and emphasized the importance of working together to mobilize support and resources to successfully deliver Earth Intelligence for All. Mr Muofhe noted that discussions must be guided by the realities while appreciating the achievements over the last 20 years. He appreciated the strength of the GEO community in making sure services are prioritized and continued to achieve the goals set out in the Post-2025 Strategy with the spirit of constructing the future without fear.

Ms Yana Gevorgyan (GEO Secretariat Director) welcomed the attendees, extending a special acknowledgement for Mr Dirk Engelbart, Germany's new GEO Principal. She emphasized the transition from planning to action, comparing GEO's Post-2025 Strategy to building a house – Cape Town set the blueprint, and Rome will lay the cornerstone for implementation. With GEO's 20th anniversary approaching amidst global challenges, Ms Gevorgyan stressed the need for a strong foundation and outlined three priorities: securing support for the SIP, ensuring a solid budget and operational structure, and strengthening government engagement, particularly at the decision-making level. Ms Gevorgyan encouraged deeper involvement from the Permanent Missions in Geneva and called on the Executive Committee to ensure a strong and united presence of GEO in Rome.

Mr Stephen Volz provided welcome remarks on behalf of the USA during the opening of the second day.

Outcomes

- China as Lead Co-Chair, European Commission and South Africa as Co-Chairs and the GEO Secretariat Director opened the 65th meeting of the ExCom and welcomed members;
- Co-Chairs and Secretariat Director emphasized the importance of unity within GEO to mobilize resources in support of the SIP, with the Global Forum as an opportunity to showcase GEO's strength and commitment to providing EI4All;
- Secretariat Director welcomed Dirk Engelbart as the new GEO Principal of Germany;
- Co-Chair Stephen Volz provided welcome remarks on behalf of the USA during the opening of the second day.

1.2 Adoption of Agenda

The Lead Co-Chair outlined changes to the agenda since its distribution and requested comments.

Germany requested clarification regarding the nature of the agenda item on Post-2025 Work Programme in relation to the Terms of Reference of the Programme Board and whether the item was for decision or information.

GEO Secretariat clarified that the Executive Committee is expected to provide endorsement and a decision.

The Updated Agenda was adopted with a minor change to the Post-2025 Work Programme agenda item from information to decision.

Outcomes:

- The agenda was adopted with a modification in Session 4.1, with the Programme Board (PB) Terms of Reference (ToRs) presented for decision rather than for information.

1.3 Adoption of the Draft Report of the 64th Executive Committee Meeting

The Draft Report of the 64th Executive Committee Meeting was adopted as distributed.

Outcomes:

- The following document was approved as distributed: ExCom65.2: Draft Report of the 64th Executive Committee Meeting.

1.4 Review of Action Items from Previous Meetings

The Lead Co-Chair noted that all action items from previous meetings are complete.

Outcomes:

- The following document was approved: ExCom65.3: Review of Action items from Previous Meeting. Lead Co-Chair noted that all previous action items were completed.

1.5 Secretariat Operations Report: 1 October 2024 through 31 January 2025

The GEO Secretariat Director provided highlights from the Secretariat Operations Report, covering activities carried out by the Secretariat from 1 October 2024 through 31 January 2025. She noted the launch of GEO's first newsletter in February to expand outreach. Key updates included the phased development of the Post-2025 GEO Work Programme, and publication of the policy brief with UNFCCC which promotes the use of Earth Intelligence tools and services and AI for early warning services. Noted that while the policy brief is well received, its impact will depend on its adoption at various governmental levels.

The Director noted that GEO strengthened its presence at global events, particularly at the UNCCD COP16 in Saudi Arabia, where it expanded partnerships, and the World Economic Forum's (WEF) annual meeting in Davos, where it showcased the economic potential of Earth observation across sectors like insurance, supply chains, and agriculture. She noted GEO's initiatives were also featured in the WEF's Executive Playbook.

Ms Gevorgyan noted that funding was secured for new initiatives including the Global Ecosystems Atlas and the Global Heat Resilience Service, with support from Norway, the Hoffman Foundation, UK Defra, and the Horizon Europe Programme.

Ms Gevorgyan noted that the engagement with Members and Regional GEOs has increased, with guidance provided to 13 countries interested in joining GEO. She noted that a joint regional coordination mechanism to enhance cross-regional collaboration has been proposed, with the first meeting to be held in March.

Ms Gevorgyan noted the expanding capabilities of the GEO Knowledge Hub, which introduced a marketplace for applications and country profiles for centralized national data use. Finally, she noted the progress in the preparations leading up to the GEO Global Forum in Rome, with the GEO Secretariat actively involved in agenda development, event branding, outreach to ministers and all related communications.

Japan appreciated the work carried out by the Secretariat and particularly thanked the Secretariat for the monthly calls with the Member Services team which allows for increased engagement and information exchange. Enquired about future country engagement opportunities at the World Economic Forum (WEF).

The Commission thanked the Secretariat for the extensive report and stressed the need to evaluate return on investment (ROI) from GEO's activities, particularly high-cost events like COPs, and suggested prioritization of resources, including social media impact assessment.

South Africa supported the Secretariat's regional coordination efforts, emphasizing alignment with the Post-2025 Strategy and the importance of the GEO Knowledge Hub (GKH).

Paraguay expressed its appreciation for the work carried out by the Secretariat Director and team in this challenging time and concurred with the Commission and South Africa on reflections about priorities.

China and Italy thanked the Secretariat for their continued work and support, echoed the need to reflect on the impact of GEO's activities, with Italy emphasizing the necessity of GEO's role in international policy.

Nigeria and Germany appreciated the Secretariat's efforts, with Germany specifically enquiring about the distribution of fundraising responsibilities for the implementation the Post-2025 GEO Work Programme.

Australia thanked the Secretariat for the comprehensive report and noted that the upcoming discussions on the Concept of Operations (ConOps) and Budget would allow further reflection on priorities to maximize the ROI.

Armenia appreciated the work carried out by the Secretariat.

Senegal highlighted the success of GEOLDN at UNCCD COP16 and the need to scale up GEO's initiatives in resource mobilization, capacity development, and national engagement.

The Secretariat Director acknowledged the busy period covered in the report and emphasized the collaborative nature of GEO's representation at major events. Responding to Japan, she noted that current WEF engagement has been through the EO community and noted the Secretariat aims to establish a sustained relationship. On event prioritization, she highlighted the GEO Secretariat's process in assessing the ROI based on relevance, deliverables, and cost, leading to strategic decisions like skipping COP30 in

Belem, Brazil due to high expenses while leveraging cost-effective platforms like IUCN's World Conservation Congress.

She also highlighted the importance of GEO's initiatives and engagements in attracting new members, citing Benin's participation in LDN as a pathway to joining GEO.

The discussion reinforced the need for strategic engagement, cost-conscious participation in global events, and stronger alignment with GEO's long-term priorities.

Outcomes:

- ExCom commended the Secretariat Operations Report as positive and emphasized the importance of aligning GEO's activities with strategic priorities, particularly by identifying those with the highest return on investment considering budget constraints;
- Some ExCom members emphasized the importance of strengthening GEO's linkages to international policy frameworks and country engagement during international events;
- Germany sought clarification on fundraising mechanisms and budget allocation for specific initiatives, to which the Director provided details on how projects are costed, funded, and governed through the GEO Work Programme and Trust Fund to ensure transparency and accountability;
- Senegal highlighted the importance of improving communications to engage LDN countries with GEO to further scale up its impact.

2 SESSION 2: 2025-26 SECRETARIAT RESOURCING AND BUDGET

2.1 Secretariat Financial Update Including: 2025-2026 Concept of Operations; 2025 Secretariat Budget

The closed budget session focused on three key documents:

1. Interim Report on Income and Expenditure for 2024 (for information);
2. Concept of Operations for 2025-2026 (for decision);
3. Revised Secretariat Budget for 2025 (for decision).

Interim Report on Income and Expenditure (2024)

The interim report outlined the financial performance for 2024, with estimated contributions amounting to 4.78 million Swiss francs, subject to the receipt of outstanding contributions from the UK, NOAA, and NASA. The approved budget was 4.636 million Swiss francs, with actual expenditure at 4.58 million Swiss francs, indicating near alignment with projections.

Concept of Operations (2025-2026)

The staffing plan for 2025-2026 was presented by the GEO Secretariat, noting that proposed updates have been designed to best support delivery on the GEO Post 2025 Strategy and Strategy Implementation Plan (SIP). The Secretariat noted that the function/team structure remained substantively unchanged from the previous ConOps, with proposed changes being at the individual post level.

It also noted that the staffing structure was based on a level of 2025 and 2026 funding equivalent to 2024, meaning that significant funding shortfalls (over 12-15%) would require adjustments to the staffing structure.

Emphasizing the need for financial sustainability amid uncertainty on a significant percentage of the Secretariat's funding, the proposed ConOps included a Resource Mobilization Officer role, funded equally between the core Secretariat budget and the Global Ecosystem Atlas project.

2025 Revised Budget and Funding Risks

The 2025 budget was presented under a fully funded scenario of 5 million Swiss francs, with breakdowns across different funding sources. The inclusion of extra-budgetary fees (admin service fees) from externally funded projects such as the Global Ecosystem Atlas and Global Heat Resilience Service was discussed.

Given the current uncertainty relating to over 40% of the Secretariat's funding, a set of four potential funding and expenditure scenarios was presented. These ranged from a 10% income shortfall to a worst-case scenario of a 42% shortfall. For each scenario proposed expenditure reductions were provided. A series of mitigation scenarios were also presented, including prioritizing non-staff cost reductions, leveraging cash reserves, and diversifying funding sources.

Member states expressed concerns about the funding risks and reaffirmed their commitment to supporting GEO.

Germany confirmed continued contributions but highlighted internal budgetary constraints until mid-2025.

China proposed transitioning to a membership fee model and hosting a large-scale Earth Observation exhibition to attract private sector funding.

Australia recommended engagement with GEO Principals to discuss the status of financial contributions, expenditure scenarios linked to confidence levels around current and future contributions, and timelines for decisions relating to the predictability of such contributions. Australia also offered their support in examining what opportunities exist to secure additional investment from member states, and in building the narrative for increased financial and in-kind contributions.

The European Commission confirmed additional funding via Horizon Europe and suggested prioritization of critical functions.

South Africa stressed the importance of proactive communication and contingency planning.

The next steps were identified to include immediate action to mobilize additional funding from both government and private sector sources, a special session of the Executive Committee to refine resource mobilization strategies and prioritization of essential activities and continued engagement with member states to secure pledges before August 2025, to ensure financial stability. The Secretariat also agreed to prepare a summary proposal for deepening engagement with the private sector for discussion on day two of the meeting.

The session concluded with an agreement to intensify collaborative efforts to mitigate financial risks and ensure the Secretariat's continued functionality.

The group reconvened on the second day to finalize decisions regarding the 2025 Secretariat Budget and the 2025-2026 Concept of Operations (ConOps), as well as addressing concerns about funding constraints, staffing priorities, and financial sustainability.

The Secretariat sought the Executive Committee's approval to present the 2025 Budget to the Plenary and to approve the ConOps as a guiding framework. France and other members enquired whether a two-year ConOps was appropriate given the budget uncertainties.

The Secretariat highlighted its revised staffing model, prioritizing key roles under constrained funding. The Secretariat stressed the urgent need to secure additional funding, with the Resource Mobilization Officer playing a critical role.

The Secretariat noted support for dedicated resource mobilization capacity from members including Australia, France, Germany, Italy, Nigeria and the US. The US underscored the need for a broader membership contribution, highlighting the need for specialized and professional fundraising skills, particularly in the current turbulent and competitive fundraising environment. Australia suggested that resource mobilization be a priority for GEO in the context of the Post 2025 Strategy and SIP implementation, noting the benefit to having dedicated resource mobilization skills resident within GEO. Germany noted the importance of resource mobilization, particularly given GEO's increased uncertainty over funding. Specifically relating to the proposed funding of a dedicated P4 Resource Mobilization Officer, the EU, Germany and the US requested clarification on the focus of their fundraising effort (Trust Fund versus projects). Nigeria commented to the importance of investing in resources to fundraise for new resources.

Italy acknowledged the importance of resource mobilization by GEO and the need for the Secretariat to consider its vision and business model in determining the fundraising engagement approach with the private sector and governments in the new political era. The Secretariat noted Italy's recommendation to consider how to best organize staffing to achieve important results in resource mobilization, and its reference to the importance of delivering services as a critical value add to support fundraising with both the public and private sectors. The Secretariat also noted Italy's feedback that resource mobilization is a top management duty, and its expectation that the Director be fully engaged on it (the Director confirmed this to be the case). Italy suggested that another senior hire should not be necessary.

The US noted that it is not the role of the Secretariat Director to be the sole fundraiser for the organization. They observed that fundraising is not simply another duty but rather a specialized skill, adding that GEO is competing with some of the best fundraisers in the world. The US recognized the need for professional fundraising capacity as a key element to a successful resource mobilization approach.

In the context of the Secretariat's proposal to create dedicated resource mobilization capacity, several members raised a concern that the recruitment of a dedicated P4 Resource Mobilization Officer post may come at the expense of Member Services capacity.

The Secretariat noted concerns from the EU, China, France and South Africa in relation to the size of the Member Services team, which would move from a headcount of three individuals to two during 2025 when the temporary appointment of a P1 Member Services Associate would come to an end.

China noted the linkages between the resource mobilization effort and the Member Services effort, commenting that serving members also includes the solicitation of input from them and the fundraising of contributions. In this regard, China raised the question of whether the Member Services team could also perform the function of mobilizing resources from the members and avoid the recruitment of a specialized fundraiser. China also articulated their view that any staff member involved in resource mobilization would need to have adequate skills and experience in the Earth observation field.

The EU encouraged the Secretariat to consider all solutions to address the need for fundraising resources, and supported the consideration of China's idea to include resource mobilization and member services capabilities within the same department. They also pointed to the role of the P3 Coordination Officer, raising the question of whether this role could be merged with the proposed P4 Resource Mobilization Officer role. (Note: the Coordination Officer role was recruited in 2024 based on a need to provide executive and administrative assistance to the Director, including coordination of many of the activities in the Secretariat, oversight of operational action tracking and coordination support on major events.)

South Africa noted the value of the Member Services team and observed that the level and anticipated impact (including timeframe) of dedicated resource capacity would need to be carefully considered.

The Secretariat noted that a Resource Mobilization Officer position was proposed as a priority because GEO is in a financially unstable condition. The Post 2025 Strategy highlights sustainable funding as critical, and the Secretariat considers the fruition of this as a priority. The Secretariat noted that resource mobilization is a specialized skill, requiring a clear strategy (different for different types of donor), different roadmaps to which each pitch should be tailored, and specialized attention and messaging. It also emphasized that the Member Services team already works closely with the Communications and Partnerships team, including a resource mobilization consultant.

Previous efforts in recent years using task forces without such skills have yielded limited results. Conversely, experience over the last 10 months leveraging the resource mobilization consultant to fundraise for the Global Ecosystems Atlas has been successful in raising resources. The Director noted that while she leads the fundraising effort, such support is required to research targets, generate leads, co-draft proposals with relevant tailored content, and support follow up. The Director also highlighted a proposed study on the economic impact of GEO activities, which would serve as a business case for securing long-term funding.

China underlined the role of members sitting on ExCom as key partners in the resource mobilization outreach to member states. They highlighted that the Secretariat is not alone in GEO's fundraising efforts and noted their own recent efforts to convince the Chinese government to increase China's contributions. China explained its perspective that it is

the ExCom members, rather than dedicated fundraising staff, who are the proper way to engage more GEO members on funding, to deal with the current financial challenges faced by GEO.

ExCom members emphasized the need to both increase and diversify GEO's donor funding base, particularly through private sector engagement. To advance discussions on this effort, the Secretariat prepared a draft proposal overnight and presented it on day 2 of the meeting. The document outlined a potential targeted outreach strategy focused on key Earth observation and tech companies, highlighting the importance of high-level personal engagement—either by GEO leadership or by members with existing industry relationships. The document was well received by the ExCom. The Secretariat requested feedback on the proposal from ExCom members as soon as practicable, committing to factor feedback received into the proposed approach.

Italy underscored the growing importance of private sector fundraising, emphasizing the need for GEO to establish strong dialogue not only with government institutions but also with corporate entities. Given the evolving political and economic landscape, Italy stressed the necessity of discussing an appropriate business model for engaging the private sector. China also acknowledged the significance of structuring this engagement effectively to maximize impact.

Conclusions

In concluding the session, the Lead Co-Chair reiterated that the Secretariat is not alone in the resource mobilization effort. He emphasized the need for the ExCom and the Secretariat to work as one cohesive team. The Lead Co-Chair noted that the Secretariat Director has prime responsibility for the delivery on all of the Secretariat's responsibilities, including fundraising. He noted the Secretariat resource mobilization needs outlined by the Director during the session, and reminded the ExCom that it is the Director's responsibility to select and put in place a team of staff with the necessary skills to deliver on all the Secretariat's duties, including fundraising. He invited the Director to consider the suggestions made by ExCom to combine some of the functions, roles and responsibilities discussed during the session. Members agreed to reconvene virtually in late March to review the updated ConOps and Budget before submission to the Plenary. The session concluded with a call for collaborative efforts to stabilize funding while ensuring GEO's ability to meet operational and strategic priorities.

Outcomes:

- The GEO Secretariat presented the 2024 Interim Statement of Income and Expenditure, draft Concept of Operations 2025–2026 and draft 2025 GEO Secretariat Budget. The Secretariat explained the latter two documents were based on a fully funded budget in 2025. In response to the current uncertainties around the funding environment, the Secretariat then presented a series of four financial scenarios based on different levels of reduced funding;
- A discussion followed, including clarification of the nature of extra-budgetary fees and administration fees, the criticality of timing in investment/cost reduction decisions for prudent cash management, and the need to carefully consider which

roles, tasks and initiatives should be prioritized in any scenario of reduced funding;

- Numerous members (including China, the EU, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and South Africa) expressed their continuing support to GEO;
- A range of potential revenue-generating initiatives was discussed, including a switch to a membership contribution model, a large-scale EO exhibition (e.g. EO Expo) with the opportunity to attract sponsoring corporations to showcase their capabilities, and opportunities relating to private sector contributions. The members recognized that some efforts, especially those involving public sector funding, would require more time and any opportunities to realize quicker contributions would likely need to target the private sector. The GEO Global Forum was considered as an opportunity to catalyze those contributions;
- The Secretariat also updated on a fundraising outreach initiative to all members, initially through a ministerial letter;
- Budget planning scenarios with relevant impact on ConOps – anonymized to remove sensitivities – will be supplemental information;
- ExCom recommended a special session to be convened before the Plenary in Rome to discuss the updated budget and various scenarios;
- ExCom continued the previous-day discussion on the review of the Draft 2025 Secretariat Budget and 2025-26 ConOps. The Secretariat provided clarification on various points including: the duration of the ConOps, designation of funding for specific activities used to meet the mandate of those activities, as well as on the funding status of several specific staff posts;
- ExCom discussed organizational resource mobilization needs in the context of a challenging funding environment and emphasized the importance of Member Services support. The challenges of maintaining adequate staffing within a finite annual budget were discussed;
- The Secretariat Director presented a draft proposal on deepening engagement with the private sector and other non-Governmental stakeholder communities. This was well-received by the ExCom. The Secretariat requested feedback on the proposal as soon as possible.

Action 65.1: The Secretariat will take under advisement ExCom’s input on the ConOps and will revert to ExCom with a proposed final ConOps balancing multiple staffing requirements.

Action 65.2: The Secretariat will provide an updated draft 2025 budget within the next 2 weeks, based on the latest information available, ahead of the Plenary documentation deadline of March 26. It will additionally organize an ExCom call in advance of March 26 for members to provide any final feedback.

Action 65.3: ExCom members to provide feedback on the draft private sector engagement proposal as soon as possible.

Action 65.4: GEO Secretariat to develop a set of potential “offers” to the private sector in return for their contribution

Action 65.5: GEO Secretariat to work with GEO Principals to hold discussions on funding contributions and timeframes associated with confidence levels and the financial outlook to substantiate requests to national governments.

3 SESSION 3: POST-2025 STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

3.1 Review of Draft Post-2025 Strategy Implementation Plan

Mr Andy Murdock (GEO Secretariat) presented the evolution in the development of the Post-2025 Strategy Implementation Plan (SIP) as a summary document with suggested actions and an annex with detailed implementation steps. The Executive Committee's guidance was sought in relation to the execution of the SIP and next steps.

The European Commission welcomed the new version of the SIP but expressed concerns about the diluted references to climate change, EDI principles, operational modalities of the funds, and revision of governance procedures. Noted the need for finding language within the SIP that will avoid disengagement while remaining scientifically sound. Noted a heavy implementation burden on the GEO Secretariat and requested the ConOps to be reflected within the SIP, with details on the implementation in case of a reduced operational capacity.

France requested further clarification on the structure of the suggested funds within the suggested activities, fund ownership and governance of pilot projects.

China suggested refining the definition of and vision of Earth Intelligence in the SIP, including clearer depictions of EI, and how it would be enabled, generated and provided to various stakeholders, with illustrations. Enquired about the circulation of Annex A of the SIP.

Australia supported the document's evolution and the flexibility of the Annex, appreciated the incorporation of the majority of comments from Australia particularly in relation to Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Highlighted the need to clarify the role of Regional GEOs (page 22, objective 5) which must be determined by the Plenary and the Executive Committee, and not the regions themselves.

Japan proposed removing Annex A from Plenary approval and suggested the cost and priority columns to be deleted if the Annex is retained. Stressed the need for careful consideration of multiuser licensing agreements and requested clarification on the timelines in relation to the development and implementation of the Member Engagement Strategy and the Resource Mobilization and Communications Plan.

In response to the Commission, Mr Murdock noted the limited time for major changes, and agreed to minor wording adjustments. In response to Japan, Mr Murdock maintained the multiuser licensing, cost and priority columns should remain as they provide a foundation for the suggested actions.

The Secretariat Director emphasized that Annex A is a result of the Executive Committee's direction for an actionable plan, which will be refined and prioritized by the Executive Committee in future annual operating plans. Noted only minor tweaks are feasible considering Plenary documents will be issued on 26th March.

China concurred with Japan and enquired the nature of the circulation of Annex A among the GEO community and whether stakeholders would have the opportunity to revise and provide input.

Japan requested a footnote to be added and agreed to keep the cost and priority columns in Annex A.

Italy supported keeping the columns and requested clarity on how actions will be implemented, particularly through the GEO Work Programme.

China requested clarification on the number of documents presented to the Plenary for decision and the need for visuals within the document.

GEO Secretariat confirmed only one document would be submitted to the Plenary for approval, with clear language on the suggested actions, as the summary document outlines all the detailed suggested actions within Annex A. Noted visuals were omitted on purpose.

The session concluded with a consensus to submit a single document to the Plenary for approval, incorporating minor refinements while maintaining the current structure of Annex A.

Outcomes:

- Post 2025 Strategy Implementation Plan (SIP) Lead Andrew Murdock introduced the session;
- The document was well-received by ExCom, and feedback and recommendations were provided for final revision before circulation to Plenary.

Action 65.6: SIP Lead Andy Murdock to incorporate the recommended minor edits, including those related to the role of regional GEOs (Objective 5, page 22), Annex A, and the language on climate and DEI throughout the document. The revised version will be presented to ExCom by **11 March**. Written comments to be provided by ExCom by 5th March 2025, end of the day.

4 SESSION 4: POST-2025 WORK PROGRAMME

4.1 Report of the 31st Programme Board Meeting

Mr Evangelos Gerasopoulos (Programme Board Co-Chair) presented the key outcomes and highlights from the 31st Programme Board Meeting, which included the Post-2025 GEO Work Programme proposal review as the key focus. Mr Gerasopoulos stressed that it was a carefully-design process with 26 Programme Board members and 6 GEO Secretariat coordinators involved in reviewing 66 proposals within a condensed timeframe. Feedback was provided to proponents, and coordination calls were organized where clarifications were requested or merging of proposals were proposed. The process resulted in 24 Research to Operation (R2O) activities, 8 Conveners and 17 Enabling Mechanisms to be recommended to the GEO Principals for consultation in March then for approval at the Global Forum in May.

The Programme Board Co-Chair highlighted the proposed key changes to the Programme Board's Terms of Reference, which include the reflection of new Work Programme categories, expansion of the board's responsibility to proposal selection for potential funding opportunities, stronger focus on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), and coordination of GEO Work Programme with Regional GEOs. He emphasized the enhanced representation on the Programme Board, particularly the inclusion of youth, indigenous communities and the private sector. A high-level endorsement of the new Terms of Reference was requested from the Executive Committee.

Mr Gerasopoulos noted the Programme Board had discussed the concept of GEO Innovation Fund which intends to accelerate the delivery of the Earth Intelligence solutions through the R2O pipeline. The Board will establish a task force to refine and concept and report back to the Executive Committee at its 66th meeting.

The European Commission requested further clarification on the M&E Task Force and the nature of the Innovation Fund, and noted approval of changes to the Terms of Reference of the Programme Board would require updates to the Rules of Procedure for consistency.

South Africa acknowledged the work carried out by the Programme Board, and requested clarification regarding the regional coordination carried out by various Regional GEOs and the consideration to formally include it in GEO's governance framework.

China thanked the Programme Board for its effective work in developing the Post-2025 GEO Work Programme, and advocated for greater voices and work of developing nations to be included in the Work Programme. They called for coordinated efforts from Programme Board, Executive Committee, Plenary and the Secretariat to mobilize national and international resources for the successful implementation of the new GEO Work Programme.

Germany requested clarity on the Innovation Fund and the process to endorse the Rules of Procedure.

The Lead Co-Chair highlighted the importance of enabling mechanisms and called for clarity on the Innovation Fund. Noted the funding criteria for the GEO Work Programme should be holistic, considering sustainability either from Members or other sources. Noted in-kind funding could marginally support GEO Secretariat operations.

In response to the Commission, the Programme Board Co-Chair noted the M&E Task Force would evaluate the Work Programme activities, consider best practices and align with the SIP to ensure synergies across GEO. The Commission stressed the need for the SIP to outline the M&E framework, including the timeline and logistics. The Secretariat concurred with the proposition to have a unified M&E framework, with the Work Programme's M&E as a component of the overall SIP.

In response to South Africa, Mr Gerasopoulos stressed that while Regional GEOs are not considered as Work Programme activities, they will play a vital role in supporting and coordinating the Work Programme's efforts in their respective regions. The Secretariat suggested the role of Regional GEOs be specified in the Rules of Procedure rather than the Terms of Reference of the Programme Board.

In response to China, the Programme Board Co-Chair concurred with the importance of synergies and collaboration for the new Work Programme and committed to facilitating a smooth transition.

In response to the Commission, Germany and the Lead Co-Chair, the Programme Board Co-Chair noted that Innovation Fund would be earmarked as part of the contributions to the GEO Trust Fund, not a standalone fund.

Regarding the Programme Board Terms of Reference, the Secretariat noted the Rules of Procedure Task Force recommended the Programme Board to present the revised Terms of Reference for endorsement in order to launch the call for new nominations to the

Programme Board. Supported by Australia, Nigeria and other Committee members, a decision was made to continue the current Terms of Reference of the Programme Board and the terms of current Programme Board members through the end of 2025.

Outcomes:

- Programme Board (PB) Co-Chair Evangelos Gerasopoulos presented the outcomes and actions of the 31st Programme Board for information, including the Post-2025 GEO Work Programme (GWP), changes to the Terms of Reference (TORs), Concept of Innovation Fund, etc;
- ExCom reminded the PB that the Post-2025 GWP development should be aligned with the goals of the Post-2025 Strategy and endorsed its circulation to the GEO Principals for consultation. Clarification was made that the monitoring and evaluation of the GWP should be part of the SIP monitoring and evaluation framework;
- Regarding the Innovation Fund, clarity should be made on its relationship with the various funds proposed in the SIP, and its relationship with GEO Trust Fund.

Decision: ExCom directed PB to continue with the current ToR and extend the term of the current board members through 2025 to allow alignment of the RoP and ToR to streamline approval by ExCom.

5 SESSION 5: REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS

5.1 Review of Action Items

GEO Secretariat presented a review of action items at the end of the first day of the 65th Executive Committee meeting.

The Executive Committee noted the need for further discussions on private sector funding, 2025-2026 Secretariat Concept of Operations and 2025 Secretariat Budget.

Outcomes:

- GEO Secretariat Coordination Officer, Amber Kremer presented the Action Items from the day for comments by the ExCom;
- ExCom members to send an email with additional comments by COB on Wednesday, March 5.

6 SESSION 6: GLOBAL FORUM 2025

6.1 Update on GEO Global Forum 2025

Italy provided an update on the preparations for the GEO Global Forum 2025 in Rome, acknowledging the support from the GEO Secretariat, the European Commission, and the Local Organizing Committee. The update covered progress related to the organization of the event, logistics, Plenary programme and agenda which was developed in consultation with the Local Organizing Committee, Lead Co-Chair and GEO Secretariat. Italy outlined the seven proposed ministerial segment topics which were developed in consultation with the Local Organizing Committee and the European High-Level Working Group -

Advancing sustainability strategies with AI-powered EO, Strengthening disaster resilience through EO for Disaster Risk Reduction & mitigation, Enhancing global monitoring of environmental pollution, Global collaboration in solid earth sciences – role of open research infrastructures & government, Unlocking renewable energy potential through EO, Integrating biodiversity into GEO, Space4Ocean Alliance.

Nigeria appreciated the progress made in preparation for the GEO Global Forum and suggested a Co-Chair from the Executive Committee to provide remarks during the opening ceremony and raised concerns relating to visas for participation of members from the African caucus.

In response to Nigeria, Italy noted the suggestion was received and implemented, and the visa issues are noted, and are being addressed to the best of capabilities.

Senegal enquired the nature and visibility of Regional GEO events and the timeline for the distribution of invitation letters to the Ministers and requested the GEO Principals to be copied in the letters.

Italy clarified that guidelines were given to copy GEO Principals in letters to the Ministers.

South Africa requested the Plenary programme to be shared as soon as possible to coordinate the Minister's schedule.

The Commission highlighted efforts to secure high-level engagement and ministerial participation, emphasizing the importance of scaling up entrepreneurial solutions and youth engagement. Suggested making better use of community event spaces.

Japan requested clarification regarding the deadline for ministerial RSVPs/registration and clarification on how topics of discussion will be assigned to ministers.

In response, Italy encouraged countries to assist in assigning ministers to topics.

China greatly appreciated the efforts of the Commission, Italy and the GEO Secretariat. Acknowledging 20 years of GEO, China enquired if caucuses could exhibit success stories and good practices. Enquired about travel support capacities and noted the SIP presents opportunities to discuss various topics with stakeholders.

In response, Italy noted there was no confirmed answer on travel support but noted that booths could showcase regional champions and success stories.

France welcomed the inclusive approach carried out to discuss topics for the Ministerial segment at the European level and the Executive Committee meeting and expressed strong resonance for topics 2 and 7.

Korea requested further details on the ministerial invitation letters, and the nature and list of recipients.

The Secretariat noted in response that invitations will be sent to GEO Principals, and ministries affiliated with GEO Principals (e.g., Foreign Affairs, Environment, and sectoral EO authorities).

The United States thanked Italy and emphasized the SIP be a priority topic in the ministerial agenda, noting that many topics currently lean towards research. Noted the GEO Global Forum is not formally a ministerial event, so U.S. ministers are unlikely to

attend. Requested the 20-year GEO video be inclusive and consider the contributions over the last 20 years.

Germany raised concerns about ministerial participation due to ongoing political transitions, making commitments uncertain. Expressed interest in topic 7 and enquired how the GEO Work Programme would be championed in Plenary, community events, and the ministerial agenda.

Italy confirmed the flexibility in community event themes to include key GEO initiatives and contributions to the GEO Work Programme. Noted the GEO Secretariat will finalize the programme and ensure opportunities to showcase GEO's 20-year legacy through presentations, videos, and exhibition booths.

Delegations noted the urgency to finalize topics and publish the agenda as soon as possible. Key themes include One Health, and Energy transition. Italy was urged to confirm Ministers and key speakers as soon as possible and requested non-ministerial speakers, including industry and public-sector leaders to be considered for the discussions.

The Secretariat noted that high-quality submissions from flagship initiatives will be included in the Plenary programme. Coordination among initiatives is being encouraged to create cohesive sessions, and final decisions on community events will be communicated within the coming weeks.

The Secretariat noted that a social media campaign will begin shortly, supported by the local organizing committee. Noted the press conference will depend on having high-level announcements and key figures present.

Italy noted a media area with interview spaces will be available, and outreach will be enhanced closer to the event.

The group agreed to finalize the agenda for the Plenary and ministerial segment and confirm speakers within the coming weeks, to improve communication between the Local Organizing Committee, GEO Secretariat, and the EC Co-Chair to ensure smooth planning and execution. In addition, the group agreed on the need to secure high-level participation to enhance media interest and event success and address pending logistical concerns, including budget constraints and travel support.

The Secretariat Director noted the need for swift action to ensure a well-prepared and successful event.

Outcomes:

- Nicola Pirrone and Giovanni Rum, on behalf of Italy, presented an update on the Global Forum planning, including a list of ministerial segment themes, for information and discussion;
- ExCom commended the planning efforts for the Global Forum;
- Italy confirmed co-chair representation during the May 5 Opening Ceremony and reassured that travel visa requests are being managed promptly.

Ministerial invitations

- Invitation letters have not been sent yet. Italy noted invitations are expected to be sent by the week of March 10 and addressed to relevant ministers identified by the

GEO Secretariat with GEO Principals copied, noting that the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAECI) is fully responsible for the invitations;

- It was recommended that ExCom members liaise and confirm which ministers will attend, to support targeted outreach and panel planning;
- Organizing team (GEOSEC, Italy, and EU) is urged to work together to finalize themes and ministerial engagement, with clear communication to GEO Principals to expedite arrangements.

Ministerial themes and panel

- ExCom recommended the themes for the ministerial sessions be refined to ensure relevance to GEO's work while engaging the non-GEO community. It was observed that some themes, e.g. DRR, One Health and Energy, application of AI represent opportunities for alignment with Post-2025 GWP Focus Areas;
- Smaller panels with professional moderators were recommended to allow for audience interaction;
- Secretariat urged for the panel composition and themes to be locked down by end of next week (March 14).

Community Events

- Upon final review of proposals by GEOSEC, a 2–3-day window will be given for the Local Organizing Committee to provide final feedback on community events;
- Clarification was provided that GEO Work Programme activities and regional GEOs will have good visibility through community events based on the submissions.

Videos

- Members encouraged the Local Organizing Committee and Secretariat to ensure that the 20th anniversary video is produced with keen attention paid to inclusivity and representation.

7 SESSION 7: GEO GOVERNANCE MEETINGS & FORA/SYMPOSIA SCHEDULING

7.1 Review of: GEO Governance Meetings & Community Engagement Scheduling

Mr Steven Parkinson (GEO Secretariat) outlined the document shared with the Executive Committee which presented the options for managing the calendar of governance meetings, including Plenary, Executive Committee meetings and large-scale events, such as the GEO Global Forum and GEO Symposium.

The primary objectives are to ensure GEO maintains its role in convening the GEO community and delivering Earth intelligence, establishing an annual Plenary and Executive Committee meeting cycle that meets governance needs efficiently, responding to requests from Executive Committee members for frequent engagement and informal interaction and aligning recommendations with the current resources and staffing levels of the Secretariat.

He noted while GEO plays a critical role in convening members and stakeholders, challenges exist in delivering multiple large-scale events annually due to resource

constraints, extensive preparation time, and budget limitations. Governance requirements dictate that Plenary meets at least once annually to agree on key decisions and adopt changes to the Work Programme, annual budget, and review the Secretariat's progress. Noted the Executive Committee is required to meet at least once per year to ensure the efficient conduct of GEO business.

The Executive Committee was requested to make decisions regarding the frequency of major convening events (e.g., Global Forum, Global Symposium), the frequency and format of Plenary and Executive Committee meetings, whether to delegate operational plan and budget approvals to the Executive Committee and the structure of virtual versus in-person Executive Committee meetings.

Based on Secretariat analysis and member feedback, the following recommendations were proposed:

1. One major convening event annually, alternating between the GEO Global Forum and the GEO Symposium;
2. One annual plenary meeting, coinciding with the major convening event, where the Plenary remains the approval authority for the annual operational plan and budget;
3. Executive Committee meeting frequency and format with two in-person Executive Committee meetings annually and two virtual Executive Committee meetings annually. Virtual meetings will be designed for informal discussions, no formal decisions, but key action points noted.

The European Commission supported integrating the Plenary within a major event and to look for overlaps between the Symposium and Open Data Open Knowledge (ODOK) Workshop, and if the events can be used to further reflect the implementation of the SIP.

South Africa supported two in-person and two virtual Executive Committee meetings, seeks clarity on which will be virtual with regards to the current calendar year.

China noted its preference for three Executive Committee meetings aligned with Director review checkpoints and requested Executive Committee documents to be circulated earlier than 2 weeks.

Korea suggested a bi-annual rotation for major events and sought further budget clarification.

United States emphasized balancing resource constraints with GEO's convening role, and suggested revisiting the scope of the Symposium if it were to become the key convening event in a given year.

Senegal expressed support for hosting one annual major convening event while leveraging Regional GEO events and supported two Executive Committee meetings in person and two virtual to balance the costs related to in-person meetings.

Japan noted its willingness for two in-person and two virtual meetings; and suggested at least one virtual meeting to have formal minutes.

Germany supported the proposal and insisted that the Plenary retains budget approval authority.

Nigeria advocated for mandatory virtual Executive Committee meetings and noted preference for formal meetings with recorded minutes.

France supported aligning events with ODOK and concurred with Germany on budget approval not being delegated to the Executive Committee.

Italy recommended mid-year budget approval to align with national budget cycles.

After some discussion, there was consensus on holding one major convening event per year, alternating between the Global Forum and Symposium, and holding one Plenary per year to coincide with this event. There was broad agreement regarding two in-person and one virtual Executive Committee meeting (or two if needed) annually, with virtual meetings considered formal and minuted.

Outcomes:

- Mr Steven Parkinson (GEO Secretariat) outlined options for an annual engagement cycle, to facilitate powerful convening of the GEO Community through engagement events and delivering excellence in governance through efficient and effective Plenary and ExCom engagement, within the context of finite resources;
- The ExCom agreed henceforth to organize one major convening event annually (midyear), alternating each year between a Global Forum and GEO Symposium. Opportunities to leverage, align or link to Regional GEO events should be explored. Potential overlaps between Symposia and ODOK meetings should also be identified and addressed to avoid duplication. The scope of Symposia should be revisited if it is to become the key convening event in a given year;
- ExCom agreed to hold one Plenary per year, coinciding with the annual major convening event. After some discussion, ExCom agreed to hold three ExCom meetings per year – two in person (one at the sidelines of the major convening event) and one virtual, with the possibility to hold a second virtual if needed;
- Further to a request from China regarding earlier circulation of documents (than the 2 weeks indicated in the ROP), the Secretariat indicated the related challenges with many agenda documents, but will seek to do so where possible, for example with less time sensitive documents;
- Germany explained its position that Plenary should not delegate to ExCom responsibility for approval of the annual Secretariat operational plan and budget. The Secretariat noted the consequence that this will lead to GEO working with an interim operating plan and budget each year until a midyear Plenary.

Action 65.7: GEO Secretariat will - where feasible - circulate certain key documents to ExCom with longer lead time (to the 2 weeks indicated in the Rules of Procedure) prior to ExCom meetings.

Decision: GEO will organise one major convening event annually (Global Forum or Symposium).

Decision: Three ExCom meetings will be held annually – two in-person and one virtual (or two if needed)– with the scheduling to be proposed by the Secretariat. A Plenary will be held once annually, coinciding with the major convening event.

8 SESSION 8: GIDTT

8.1 GEO Infrastructure Architecture and Finalization of requirements: 2nd Deliverable

Ms Paola de Salvo (GEO Secretariat) presented updates on the second GIDTT deliverable, focusing on the GEO Infrastructure Architecture and the requirements needed for its implementation. The item was tabled for decision, with an outlined timeline of the GIDTT.

The European Commission requested further clarification on Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) and where the individuals would be based.

Ms de Salvo clarified that FTEs represent the number of people required, but not all need to be based within the GEO Secretariat, as resource needs may vary.

South Africa expressed support for Option 1.

Senegal sought details on strategies to engage users in developing countries with diverse capacity needs.

China expressed gratitude for the long-term operational support from GEO Members. Supported Option 2, signaled willingness to explore additional technical support and recommended incorporating perspectives from the Executive Committee and Plenary discussions into the document.

United States appreciated the work done, favored Option 2 and recommended the GIDTT to work with the GEO Secretariat to develop detailed cost estimates.

Japan supported Option 2, emphasizing the potential of the GEO Knowledge Hub (GKH) as a valuable resource for the community and suggested considering a foundation model for its structure.

German noted its preference for Option 2, citing its sustainability, realism, and achievability. Emphasized the importance of ensuring continued resource allocation for the development of GKH.

Korea expressed support for Option 2, aligning with the rebranding of GEOSS under GEO.

France acknowledged GIDTT as a long-term commitment and congratulated the team on progress. Expressed preference for Option 2, stressing GEO infrastructure is crucial and must remain a priority.

The European Commission further acknowledged the contributions of the European caucus and encouraged broader efforts to expand access to GEO tools and services and emphasized the importance of reflecting GIDTT's staffing requirements within the Secretariat's Concept of Operations (ConOps).

Ms de Salvo highlighted that the decision would facilitate progress and accelerate GKH's impact. In response to China's query, she clarified that the goal is to interconnect existing efforts at the global, regional, and national levels.

The discussion reaffirmed the preference for Option 2 as a sustainable path forward, with emphasis on technical collaboration, resource allocation, and maintaining GEO's long-term infrastructure goals.

Outcomes:

- GEO Infrastructure Coordinator, Paola de Salvo presented the GIDTT second deliverable, GEO Infrastructure Architecture and identification of the requirements needed to implement the Infrastructure, with two options for the revised GEO Infrastructure, for decision;
- ExCom commended the work of GIDTT and the clarity of the document;
- US requested that GIDTT work with the GEOSEC to develop a more detailed cost estimate and break down existing costs versus new staff /contract support;
- ExCom members expressed support for Option 2 based on previous GKH evaluations, as well as providing less strain on budgetary needs;
- Japan suggested to explore inclusion of the Foundation Model into the revised GEO Infrastructure - "e.g. EO GPT";
- GIDTT called for minimum budget of 60,000 from May 2025 to sustain operations.

Decision: ExCom approved proposed Option 2 related to the GEO Infrastructure Architecture.

Action 65.8: GIDTT will work with ESA to explore synergies to valorise existing investment across platforms.

Action 65.9: GEO Secretariat to include GIDTT FTE requirements in the ConOps to ensure consistency.

9 SESSION 9: EXCOM RULES OF PROCEDURE TF

9.1 Update on the ExCom RoP TF

The Co-Chairs of the Rules of Procedure (RoP) Task Force provided a progress update on the Task Force, outlining its mandate, completed work, and outcomes from various subgroups. The presentation covered modalities analyzed, various factors evaluated, rationale and recommendations, principles of process design and key elements for executing amendment changes.

The European Commission appreciated the Task Force's work in establishing a structured process and concurred with the recommendations.

The United States expressed gratitude and supported both recommendations on the Executive Committee membership and the proposed process to amend the Rules of Procedure. Recognized the complexity of the process, but noted it was clearly articulated.

Australia supported the recommendations, while raising a question about steps 7 and 8 in the proposed process—whether they should be retained or removed to improve efficiency.

China supported both recommendations, proposed streamlining the future task force's name to RoP TF instead of Governance TF in the report and emphasized the need for the process should allow for flexibility behind the scenes.

Germany supported both recommendations and requested clarification regarding whether the current framework would allow for major changes where necessary.

Senegal strongly supported the proposal to increase representation within the African and American Caucuses.

The Co-Chairs acknowledged the need to align the text with flowchart edits.

Australia and the European Commission agreed on refining the process and streamlining steps before presenting it at Plenary.

China clarified that the detailed nature of the process ensures flexibility for the RoP TF.

Australia requested further discussion time since refinements could still be made to the proposed process.

The Co-Chairs presented an alternative option and clarified it was not for decision, only for discussion.

China stated that a decision on the alternative option was premature.

United States suggested tasking the RoP TF to further streamline the process.

Nigeria recommended that the Executive Committee provide input, but the process should not require the Executive Committee's approval again.

The Co-Chairs also provided a brief update on the governance framework, outlining key challenges, a proposed approach, and areas requiring clarity.

South Africa highlighted the importance of clearly defining governance bodies' roles and responsibilities to address ambiguities.

The United States supported the ongoing work and encouraged its continued extension.

China emphasized that refining and revising the RoP is a serious process that requires thoughtful planning. Suggested an initial step to align all parties with the current RoP before soliciting changes and noted the Executive Committee must play a role in addressing gaps and refining the process.

The Lead Co-Chair noted that the process was conditionally approved provided the recommendations and input from the Executive Committee are incorporated.

Outcomes:

- RoP TF Co-Chairs: Lulekwa Makapela and Lawrence Friedl presented an update on the revision of the RoP, for decision;
- ExCom members commended the work done by the Task Force;
- US, Australia, Senegal, and Germany supported the expansion of ExCom membership and the proposed process for the RoP, with US, Australia, and the EU recommending streamlining the process by eliminating steps 7 and 8;
- Co-chairs agreed with China's comment to align the text in the document and the flowchart;
- RoP Co-Chairs presented an update on the governance framework, for information;
- ExCom instructed the TF to continue work on governance framework and to continue the discussion.

Decision: The proposed process and recommended expansion of ExCom membership are conditionally approved, pending TF resolution based on feedback from ExCom after a

streamlined flowchart of the process is distributed. The TF should align the text in the document and the resolved flowchart.

10 SESSION 10: EXCOM DEPT TF

10.1 Update on the ExCOM DEPT TF

Mr Yuqi Bai, on behalf of the DEPT Task Force, presented updates and discussed the document *ExCom65-14_Draft Reports from the ExCom DEPT TF*.

The Secretariat Director expressed concerns regarding the proposed 360° assessment noting it deviates from the World Meteorological Organization's (WMO) standard HR practices, as WMO does not use 360° assessments for directors or staff. She emphasized the need for the process to be aligned with best practices for 360° assessments and to remain a tool for personal development rather than performance evaluation. She suggested focusing on the proposed performance evaluation process instead, as the 360° process seemed inconsistent with established norms.

The European Commission noted that the document is ready for decision, emphasizing that the 360° process is about personal development and not performance evaluation.

The Director urged further discussion to refine the process, stressing the importance of aligning it with standard practices.

The DEPT TF clarified that the 360° questionnaire was provided by WMO HR in 2023, and after consulting UN Systems Staff College (UNSSC), it was determined that the 360° development process still needs refinement. The TF was tasked with developing this process, alongside the performance evaluation process.

Japan supported the need for fairness in the performance evaluation process, emphasizing the involvement of the Executive Committee in the process.

The GEO Secretariat noted that the 360° assessment is just one of many personal development tools and suggested removing it from the evaluation process to avoid further delays.

The European Commission enquired if the performance evaluation process could move forward to the Plenary for decision.

The Secretariat Director raised questions about the approval process, especially regarding the performance evaluation, suggesting it automatically be tied to the WMO personnel system.

The DEPT confirmed that any necessary changes to the Rules of Procedure would need to be presented to the Plenary, but approval wasn't required at this stage. The process may require changes based on the Executive Committee's guidance.

The United States agreed with the DEPT's proposal, noting that the performance review process should come to ExCom for decision in May, after which any necessary adjustments to the Rules of Procedure could be evaluated.

South Africa highlighted that the Executive Committee is responsible for the director's appointment and performance evaluation, so these should not require Plenary approval.

Outcomes:

- Yuqi Bai, China, presented an update from the ExCom DEPT TF and outlined the Draft Report from the ExCom DEPT TF;
- Recommendation from EU and GEO Secretariat to focus on the Performance Evaluation process and remove the 360° Assessment process from TF's outputs. Recommendation from US that ExCom should have ability to provide their feedback to the Co-Chairs;
- ExCom discussed whether the Performance Evaluation process requires Plenary approval and becomes an annex to the RoP or should be a separate document approved by ExCom only.

Action 65.10: DEPT Team to finalize the Performance Evaluation process and the 360° Assessment process and submit to ExCom for approval.

11 SESSION 11: ANY OTHER BUSINESS**11.1 Approval of new POs and Associates**

Ms Sara Venturini (GEO Secretariat) presented the slate of new Participating Organizations (PO) and Associates with interest to join GEO.

The Executive Committee approved the requests of organizations to join GEO as new POs and Associates.

Outcomes:

- GEO Secretariat Chief of Member Services, Sara Venturini listed the proposed new POs and Associates, for decision.

Decision:

- The following organizations were approved as a Participating Organization:
 - Red De Laboratorios De Observación De La Tierra Para La Reducción Del Riesgo De Desastres (RedLabOT).
- The following organizations were approved as an Associate:
 - Skywatch Space Applications Inc.;
 - Voyager Search.

11.2 Proposed ExCom dates for 2025

Mr Steven Parkinson (GEO Secretariat) presented the proposed dates for the next virtual Executive Committee meeting.

China noted there are no clashes with the presented dates. Noted, as part of the Rules of Procedure Task Force, many members sacrificed weekends and holidays. Suggested the compilation of a list of holidays to guide the scheduling of meetings and related planning.

Germany noted its unavailability for 26 and 27 November due to the ESA Ministerial conference.

The European Commission requested an additional meeting between May 2025 and November 2025.

Outcomes:

- Steven Parkinson proposed ExCom dates for 2025 for feedback from ExCom;
- Recommendation from China to compile holidays and special dates to guide scheduling of meetings.

Action 65.11: GEO Secretariat to send Doodle to assess availability of the ExCom for the proposed dates.

11.3 Review of Action Items

Amber Kremer provided an overview of the outcomes, decisions, and action items, allowing for any final comments or modifications on the content.

Outcomes:

- Amber Kremer provided an overview of the outcomes, decisions, and action items, allowing for any final comments or modifications on the content.

11.4 Any Other Business

11.5 Closing Remarks

China thanked everyone for their participation, highlighting the meeting achieved its intended goals, built consensus on the SIP and other documents, and laid a strong foundation for the Plenary in Rome. China reaffirmed its commitment to GEO and the integration of EO and EI technologies, especially in developing countries.

The European Commission acknowledged the participation of the United States colleagues, noting the ongoing challenges for GEO, particularly regarding the GEO Trust Fund. Welcomed the Secretariat's efforts to find additional funding sources and emphasized the importance of securing funding for both the Trust Fund and Work Programme activities. Highlighted the upcoming GEO Global Forum in Rome, and hoped to gather support for GEO and the development of Earth Intelligence.

South Africa reflected on the success of the two-day meeting, thanking everyone for their time and patience, especially those who joined virtually. Praised the GEO Secretariat team for the preparation and summarized discussions, stressing the importance of the Executive Committee meetings to navigate challenges. Noted South Africa's commitment to GEO's future work and reaffirmed commitment to address key issues, with hopes for positive outcomes in May.

The United States expressed appreciation for the work done, thanking the Lead Co-Chair and the Secretariat for managing the Executive Committee and looking forward to the meeting in Rome.

GEO Secretariat Director acknowledged the intensity of the meeting, especially for those who joined at odd hours, and thanked everyone for their active participation. She emphasized the importance of the timeline, with Rome serving as a key milestone and

encouraged all members to continue working on their channels and connections, as the work to make Earth Intelligence for All will intensify from June.

Outcomes:

- Closing remarks were provided by Lead Co-Chair, Co-Chairs and GEO Secretariat Director.

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