
Report

66th Executive Committee Meeting

6 May 2025

As accepted at the 67th 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, United States and South Africa as Co-Chairs and the GEO Secretariat Director opened the 66th meeting of the ExCom and welcomed members.

1.2 Adoption of Agenda

- The agenda was adopted by the Executive Committee.

1.3 Draft Report of the 65th Session and 25 March 2025 ExCom Supplementary Meeting

- The following documents were approved:
 - ExCom-66.2: Draft Report of the 65th Executive Committee Meeting (for decision);
 - ExCom-66.3: Draft Report of the 25 March 2025 ExCom Supplementary Meeting (for decision).

1.4 Review of Action Items from Previous Meetings

- The following document was approved: ExCom-66.4: Review of Action Items from Previous Meetings (for decision). Lead Co-Chair noted that all action items were completed or are ongoing.

2 SESSION 2: STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND GEO-20 PLENARY

2.1 Discussion on SIP presentation at Plenary. Briefing on GEO-20 Plenary agenda and overview of documents

- The Director summarised the status of the Strategy Implementation Plan (SIP) following the receipt of the United States' proposed edits;

- The EU Co-Chair noted the outcome of the Co-Chairs meeting to propose revising the nature of the SIP document as for information rather than for decision;
- The United States Co-Chair acknowledged the efforts invested in the development of the SIP document and highlighted the edits proposed by the United States to ensure the language remains aligned with national priorities;
- Italy, Australia, Japan, China, and the United States expressed support for the recommendation to present the SIP document for information and to submit the Work Programme for decision during the Plenary;
- GEO Secretariat provided an overview of the GEO-20 Plenary agenda.

Action 66.1: GEO Secretariat to revise the Plenary agenda to include the agreed amendment in Sessions 3 and 4.

Decision: The Executive Committee agreed to propose to the Plenary that the SIP be for information and open for continued comments rather than for decision. The Post-2025 GEO Work Programme remains for decision.

3 SESSION 3: SECRETARIAT 2025 FINANCE & RESOURCE MOBILIZATION UPDATE

3.1 Secretariat Finance Update

- GEO Secretariat presented the ExCom-66.6 Interim Report on Income and Expenditure as of 15 April 2025 (for information) and provided a brief update on income and expenditure in the year to date;
- ExCom noted with appreciation South Africa's increased contribution to the Trust Fund for 2025.

3.2 GEO Budget Management relating to extrabudgetary projects

- Franz Immler (EC) presented the ExCom-66.7 EU Position Paper on GEO Budget Management (for discussion);
- The Executive Committee noted various budget management models within GEO and recommended a review of the approaches;
- Australia, Germany, South Africa, and China welcomed the EU position paper and stressed the need to review diverse budget management models to ensure transparency and effectiveness;
- China reiterated the importance of integrating all revenue and extrabudgetary funding into a unified, transparent framework;
- The United States called for flexibility in funding models to meet donor needs, emphasized ExCom's role in oversight, and highlighted the need for regular financial reporting;
- GEO Secretariat proposed post-Plenary collaboration with the Budget Working Group to explore the enabling environment for budget models as part of revisiting the broader operating model (as required by the Post 2025 Strategy);
- The Executive Committee affirmed the need for multiple fit-for-purpose models and called for improved communication with the community on the various fundraising approaches being applied.

Action 66.2 GEO Secretariat and Budget Working Group to work together to review the issues raised in the EU position paper and the ExCom discussion, in the context of the Post-2025 Strategy's directive to ensure the GEO Secretariat's Operating Model is fit for purpose and report back on progress at the next Executive Committee meeting.

3.3 Update on resource mobilization activities and engagement with GEO Members since ExCom 65

3.3.1 *GEO Secretariat*

- GEO Secretariat presented an update on the Secretariat's resource mobilization activities and engagement with GEO Members since ExCom 65 (for information);
- Fundraising efforts involving ministerial engagement have already resulted in increased financial support to the GEO Trust Fund, notably from South Africa, and are expected to continue yielding positive outcomes based on the indications received;
- The responses to this outreach confirmed the value of GEO's mission and revealed a need for greater political visibility, stronger inter-ministerial coordination, and the critical role of active GEO Principals in enabling effective high-level engagement;
- The United States acknowledged the need to increase engagement and in-country coordination by GEO Principals.

3.3.2 *ExCom Members*

- Armenia announced its intention to make cash contributions to GEO, subject to further approvals;
- The European Commission noted that the pre-published Horizon Europe work programme outlines increased contributions to the GEO Trust Fund and GEOGLAM;
- China highlighted domestic resource mobilisation efforts towards the GEO Work Programme;
- Germany and Korea indicated they are working towards increased contributions to the GEO Trust Fund, timing to be confirmed;
- Nigeria noted ongoing efforts to mobilise resources and highlighted the need to engage with the private sector to this effect;
- Japan noted continued support to the GEO Trust Fund and confirmed the imminent issuance of its contribution for 2025.

3.4 Consultation on Draft Protocol for Engagement with GEO Members

- GEO Secretariat presented the document ExCom-66.8: Draft Protocol for Engagement with GEO Members (for discussion), outlining a proposed workflow, timeline, consultation questions, and next steps;
- Germany, South Africa, and Australia welcomed the protocol and emphasized using Regional GEOs and diplomatic channels for fundraising, while supporting strong engagement with GEO Principals;

- Germany recommended extending the initial response time beyond 5–7 days and clarifying the definition of an “inactive” GEO Principal;
- The EC commended the protocol and requested one month to review and provide feedback. It also supported efforts to understand member financial constraints, create an online catalogue of branding assets, and share effective engagement practices;
- The United States noted that the protocol would benefit from a standard operating procedure depending on the action, need and urgency of the outreach in question. They also noted the value of Regional GEOs in providing additional contact points, and recommended providing context upfront to manage expectations around response times;
- France praised existing member engagement in relation to the Rio Conventions, and encouraged inclusion of policy outreach in the protocol;
- GEO Secretariat acknowledged the feedback, highlighted existing branding resources available on the GEO website (including the brand book), and noted that tailored content can be developed upon request.

Action 66.3: GEO Secretariat to circulate the current version of the Draft Protocol with the ExCom for additional written comments, then circulate a revised version ahead of the next ExCom meeting.

4 SESSION 4: PLANNING FOR GEO 2026 SYMPOSIUM AND PLENARY

4.1 Venue Options for GEO 2026 Symposium and Plenary

- GEO Secretariat presented the document: ExCom-66.9: Venue Options for GEO 2026 Symposium & Plenary for discussion, including objectives and considerations for venue selection, as well as a comparison of possible options (Nairobi, Geneva, other host countries);
- GEO Secretariat highlighted the opportunity to host the next annual event back-to-back with the Global Data Festival in Nairobi in May 2026, which ExCom members (Australia, China, EU, Germany, Japan, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, United States) and observers the Committee on Earth Observations (CEOS) and World Meteorological Organization (WMO) supported;
- Australia considered it important to assess the financial cost for each option moving forward, and to strategically align future GEO events with end-user global events, such as Conference of the Parties (COPs). Australia noted the technical strength of CEOS and suggested more general consideration of how to bring together the technical aspects of CEOS and GEO at event forums;
- Germany and EC emphasised the importance of holding two days of Symposium, in addition to Plenary;
- The United States mentioned the importance of differentiating the objectives of the GEO Symposium and the Data Festival;
- The WMO is planning an event in Africa and would like to explore the possibility of hosting back-to-back events.

5 SESSION 5: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 GEO Secretariat 2025 Operational Plan

- GEO Secretariat presented the ExCom-66.10: GEO Secretariat 2025 Operational Plan (for information), an action-planning activity with a goal of expanding the plan beyond the Secretariat in the future;
- ExCom members widely supported the reporting format and appreciated the visibility of the plan;
- GEO Secretariat acknowledged the United States and China's observation that certain activities need additional funding and external support, such as technical expertise, in order to be activated.

5.2 Approval of Secretariat Director Performance Evaluation process and 360° Assessment process

- The Development of Evaluation Procedures Task Force (DEPT) presented the Secretariat Director Performance Evaluation process and the Secretariat Director 360° Assessment process (for decision);
- The ExCom approved the documents with one amendment - to note that the decision on the respondent group be made by the Lead Co Chair 'in consultation with the Secretariat Director';
- The following documents were approved - subject to the amendment referenced above:
 - ExCom-66.11 Secretariat Director Performance Evaluation process (for decision);
 - ExCom-66.12 Secretariat Director 360° Assessment process (for decision).

5.3 Approval of ToR of the new Rules of Procedure Task Force

- Lawrence Friedl (United States) and Lulekwa Makapela (South Africa) presented the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the new Rules of Procedure Task Force (RoP TF) and the request for Plenary's special permission for endorsement of the new TOR and establishment of the RoP TF (for decision);
- The ExCom agreed for the TF to discuss post meeting edits to the ToR document to be submitted to the Plenary;
- The following documents are pending approval following the discussions of the TF:
 - ExCom-66.13a Terms of Reference of the new Rules of Procedure Task Force (for decision);
 - ExCom-66.13b Request for Plenary's special permission for endorsement of the new Terms of Reference and establishment of the Rules of Procedure Task Force (for decision).

Action 66.4: Task Force will edit the ToRs to reach a consensus to later seek approval from the ExCom Co-Chairs, as well as the Special Permission.

5.4 Approval of new Associates

- GEO Secretariat presented the proposed new associates (for decision);
- The following proposed associates were approved:
 - AxelSpace Corporation;
 - European Space Imaging (EUSI);
 - Wyvern.

5.5 Approval of term extension of ExCom Observers to 31 December 2025

- GEO Secretariat presented on the proposed term extension of ExCom observers until the end of 2025 (for decision);
- The following document was approved:
 - ExCom-66.15: Term Extension of ExCom Observers (for decision).

5.6 Review of Action Items

- GEO Secretariat reviewed the action items from the ExCom 66 meeting.

5.7 Any Other Business

5.8 Closing Remarks

- The Lead Co-Chair provided closing remarks, along with the other Co-Chairs Joanna Drake (EC), Mmboneni Muofhe (South Africa), Stephen Volz (US), and additionally Yana Gevorgyan, GEO Secretariat Director.

Draft Report

66th Executive Committee Meeting

6 May 2025

FULL REPORT

Chair: Mr Xiaohan Liao

1 SESSION 1: GENERAL BUSINESS

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

The Lead Co-Chair, Mr Xiaohan Liao welcomed everyone to the 66th Executive Committee Meeting, expressed gratitude to the Italian hosts, and the GEO Secretariat for the planning and preparations for the GEO Global Forum 2025.

Mr Xiang Gao (China) expressed gratitude to all parties involved in the planning of the GEO Global Forum and emphasized the importance of the GEO Global Forum, the development of the Post-2025 Strategy Implementation Plan (SIP) and the transformation of the GEO Work Programme (GWP). Reaffirmed China's continued role in strengthening cooperation within the Asia-Oceania GEO (AOGEO) caucus and advocacy for GEO's strategic objectives into the third decade of GEO.

Ms Joanna Drake (European Commission¹) acknowledged the efforts undertaken by the Italian hosts, European Commission and GEO Secretariat in the lead up to the GEO Global Forum in her introductory remarks. Ms Drake noted the topics of discussion at the 66th Meeting and encouraged the Executive Committee to make efforts to reach consensus.

Mr Stephen Volz (United States) thanked the Italian hosts and the GEO Secretariat for the effective planning and execution of the GEO Global Forum and reiterated the United States' active participation in the meeting.

Mr Mmboneni Muofhe (South Africa) acknowledged the efforts of the Local Organizing Committee, Italy, and GEO Secretariat. Highlighted the community's collaborative spirit and commitment to addressing shared challenges. He recalled the Youth Declaration from Cape Town, stressed the urgency of action, reaffirmed South Africa's dedication to GEO's goals, and underscored the need for increased resource mobilization efforts.

Ms Yana Gevorgyan (GEO Secretariat Director) noted Rome as a fitting venue to celebrate the 20-year milestone of GEO in her opening remarks. She reflected on GEO's 20-year journey and the non-linear nature of innovation and emphasized adaptability, resilience and the need for robust tools and services. Ms Gevorgyan then thanked China for its leadership as the Lead Co-Chair over the past year.

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

Outcomes:

- China as Lead Co-Chair, European Commission, United States and South Africa as Co-Chairs and the GEO Secretariat Director opened the 66th meeting of the ExCom and welcomed members.

1.2 Adoption of Agenda

The Lead Co-Chair provided an overview of the Agenda, and was adopted as distributed.

Outcomes:

- The agenda was adopted by the Executive Committee.

1.3 Draft Report of the 65th Session and 25 March 2025 ExCom Supplementary Meeting

The Lead Co-Chair noted the two reports were for decision.

The following documents were approved as distributed:

- ExCom-66.2: Draft Report of the 65th Executive Committee Meeting (for decision);
- ExCom-66.3: Draft Report of the 25 March 2025 ExCom Supplementary Meeting (for decision).

Outcomes:

- The following documents were approved as distributed:
 - ExCom-66.2: Draft Report of the 65th Executive Committee Meeting (for decision);
 - ExCom-66.3: Draft Report of the 25 March 2025 ExCom Supplementary Meeting (for decision).

1.4 Review of Action Items from Previous Meetings

The Lead Co-Chair provided an overview of document ExCom-66.4: Review of Action Items from Previous Meetings (for decision) and noted all action items were completed or are ongoing.

The document was approved as distributed.

Outcomes:

- The following document was approved: ExCom-66.4: Review of Action Items from Previous Meetings (for decision). Lead Co-Chair noted that all action items were completed or are ongoing.

2 SESSION 2: STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (SIP) AND GEO-20 PLENARY

2.1 Discussion on SIP presentation at Plenary. Briefing on GEO-20 Plenary agenda and overview of documents

The Lead Co-Chair introduced the nature of the discussion related to the presentation of the SIP at Plenary.

GEO Secretariat Director provided the background, noted the recently proposed edits from the United States, and noted the Co-Chair meeting the previous day.

The United States recognized the substantial effort behind the development of the SIP. Clarified that proposed edits aim to ensure future and continued participation of the United States amid governmental transition. Stressed that changes concern wording, not substance, and should not alter the document's intent. Supported the SIP being presented to the Plenary for information, with the GWP up for decision as an evergreen technical document.

The European Commission reported on Co-Chairs' discussion the previous day and expressed concern that some of the proposed modifications were not broadly acceptable. The Commission reiterated the Post-2025 Strategy and the SIP's value as a live reference document in the context of its evolving nature aligned with GEO's mission (e.g., linked to Sustainable Development Goals, Multilateral Environmental Agreements, equity). Supported presenting the SIP for information making it a living document which allows for Members to provide input on a continuous basis while presenting the GWP for adoption.

Australia supported the proposal, noting that implementation of the SIP is inherently dynamic. Agreed with GWP being up for decision.

Italy, Japan and China endorsed the approach of presenting the SIP for information and GWP for decision to the Plenary.

The Commission enquired about the procedural nature of the change to be reflected for Plenary's decision.

GEO Secretariat clarified that the presiding chair would note the recommendation of the Executive Committee to treat the SIP as an information item during Plenary agenda adoption and that in the absence of objections, the SIP would be considered for information.

South Africa supported the proposed procedural approach.

GEO Secretariat then provided an overview and brief walkthrough of the Plenary agenda, key sessions, documents and elements.

Outcomes:

- The Director summarised the status of the SIP following the receipt of the United States' proposed edits. The EU Co-Chair noted the outcome of the Co-Chairs meeting to propose revising the nature of the SIP for information rather than for decision;

- The United States Co-Chair acknowledged the efforts invested in the development of the SIP document and highlighted the edits proposed by the United States to ensure the language remains aligned with national priorities;
- Italy, Australia, Japan, China, and the United States expressed support for the Executive Committee's recommendation to present the SIP document for information and to submit the Work Programme for decision during the Plenary;
- GEO Secretariat provided an overview of the GEO-20 Plenary agenda.

Action 66.1: GEO Secretariat to revise the Plenary agenda to include the agreed amendment in Sessions 3 and 4.

Decision: The Executive Committee agreed to propose to the Plenary that the SIP be for information and open for continued comments rather than for decision. The Post-2025 GEO Work Programme remains for decision.

3 SESSION 3: SECRETARIAT 2025 FINANCE & RESOURCE MOBILIZATION UPDATE

3.1 Secretariat Finance Update

Mr Steven Parkinson (GEO Secretariat) presented the interim financial statement and budget and noted the increased contributions from South Africa.

The Commission requested further updates on budgetary scenarios related to funding from the United States.

GEO Secretariat noted there were no specific updates in relation to the scenarios.

China emphasized the importance of addressing current financial challenges, noted the challenges of funding approvals for voluntary versus mandatory contributions, and reiterated ongoing efforts to secure increased future support for the Trust Fund.

The United States acknowledged and appreciated sound financial practices and recognized South Africa's increased contributions.

Outcomes:

- GEO Secretariat presented the ExCom-66.6 Interim Report on Income and Expenditure as of 15 April 2025 (for information) and provided a brief update on income and expenditure in the year to date;
- ExCom noted with appreciation South Africa's increased contribution to the Trust Fund for 2025.

3.2 GEO Budget Management relating to extrabudgetary projects

Mr Franz Immler (European Commission) presented an overview of the document ExCom-66.7 EU Position Paper on GEO Budget Management (for discussion). Noted that according to the RoP, all donor contributions are part of the GEO Trust Fund and subject to Plenary approval. Cited examples of GEO Global Agricultural Monitoring (GEOGLAM), GEO-Land Degradation Neutrality (GEO-LDN), iClimate Action project, the Global Forest Observation Initiative (GFOI) Global Ecosystems Atlas and GEO Trees, as existing models

of budget management and highlighted the need for clarification on financial models and potential RoP adjustments.

Australia welcomed the EU paper and expressed support for ongoing efforts to define GEO Secretariat's role regarding extrabudgetary resources and the RoP.

Germany supported the EU paper, emphasizing the need for transparency in mobilizing resources for GWP activities and identifying appropriate funding models.

South Africa supported the EU paper, underlining the importance of standardizing procedures for resource utilization.

China stressed that budget management is a core function of the Executive Committee. Supported the EU position and called for an integrated approach that includes Trust Fund contributions, activity-specific funding, and in-kind support. Agreed on the need for a clear, codified process involving the GEO Secretariat, Executive Committee, and the GEO community, to be reflected in the RoP.

France supported the EU's paper and called for continued work to clarify the roles and responsibilities between the Executive Committee and the GEO Secretariat.

The United States backed the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) recommendations to broaden the funding base and supported updating budget reporting, including specifying conditions and provisions. Endorsed RoP amendments, while cautioning against a one-size-fits-all model. The United States also requested the Executive Committee to replace the use of the word 'transparency' with 'timely reporting' given the obfuscating nature and negative connotations associated with the usage of 'transparency'. Encouraged flexibility and innovation, with oversight focused on timely reporting rather than direct management.

The GEO Secretariat emphasized the need, as documented in the Post 2025 Strategy, to evolve GEO's operating model to ensure it is fit for purpose and aligned with the organization's strategic vision of enabling transformative programmes and sustainable services. It was proposed that issues relating to the Rules of Procedure, resource mobilization, and reporting relating to extra budgetary projects be addressed holistically within this broader scope, rather than in isolation.

The Secretariat requested the Executive Committee to endorse this approach and suggested collaboration with the Budget Working Group or an alternative task force to evaluate suitable operating models with the objective to define an enabling environment that fosters innovation and supports transformative programmes.

Additionally, the Secretariat clarified the origins and development of the Atlas and Global Health Resilience Service initiatives, which were selected in 2022 as part of a co-designed, experimental approach endorsed by both the Programme Board and the Executive Committee. Updates on their progress, including project design and funding requests, have been regularly presented at Executive Committee meetings. The Secretariat acknowledged opportunities to communicate better with the wider GEO community regarding the initiatives' focus and intent. It was further noted that the upcoming GEO Work Programme includes a section on "Accelerators," inspired by the success of these

incubator initiatives. Therefore, it is critical to ensure the operating model is structured to support similar efforts in the future.

The European Commission welcomed efforts to diversify funding sources but emphasized the need for a clearer understanding of GEO's overall funding model. Highlighted the importance of examining the various models through a broader lens to avoid potential misunderstandings. Stressed the necessity of an adaptable operating model that can be applied across all GEO activities and called for continued collaborative efforts.

The GEO Secretariat recommended the matter be referred to the Budget Working Group. Stressed the need for further discussion and consideration and proposed using the Budget Working Group to advance the dialogue and addressing of the issues raised in the context of building a fit for purpose operating model.

Outcomes:

- Franz Immler (EC) presented the ExCom-66.7 EU Position Paper on GEO Budget Management (for discussion);
- The Executive Committee noted various budget management models within GEO and recommended a review of the approaches;
- Australia, Germany, South Africa, and China welcomed the EU position paper and stressed the need to review diverse budget models to ensure transparency, effectiveness, and equitable resource mobilization;
- China reiterated the importance of integrating all revenue and extrabudgetary funding into a unified, transparent framework;
- The United States called for flexibility in funding models to meet donor needs, emphasized ExCom's role in oversight, and highlighted the need for regular financial reporting;
- GEO Secretariat proposed post-Plenary collaboration with the Budget Working Group to explore the enabling environment for budget models as part of revisiting the broader operating model (as required by the Post 2025 Strategy);
- The Executive Committee affirmed the need for multiple fit-for-purpose models and called for improved communication with the community on the various fundraising approaches being applied.

Action 66.2 GEO Secretariat and Budget Working Group to work together to review the issues raised in the EU position paper and the ExCom discussion, in the context of the Post-2025 Strategy's directive to ensure the GEO Secretariat's Operating Model is fit for purpose and report back on progress at the next Executive Committee meeting.

3.3 Update on resource mobilization activities and engagement with GEO Members since ExCom 65

3.3.1 GEO Secretariat

Ms Sara Venturini (GEO Secretariat) presented an update on resource mobilization activities and engagement efforts with GEO Members since ExCom 65 and provided an overview of the statistics. She noted that involving ministerial engagement resulted in increased financial support to the GEO Trust Fund, notably from South Africa, and are expected to continue yielding positive outcomes based on the indications received. She

noted that the responses to the ministerial outreach confirmed the value of GEO's mission and revealed a need for greater political visibility, stronger inter-ministerial coordination, and the critical role of active GEO Principals in enabling effective high-level engagement.

The United States acknowledged the Secretariat's continued efforts to diversify the funding base. Noted that outreach activities may not always be well received, for example, when the GEO Principal receives unexpected calls from other ministries regarding an official response to an official letter.

Outcomes:

- GEO Secretariat presented an update on the Secretariat's resource mobilization activities and engagement with GEO Members since ExCom 65 (for information);
- Fundraising efforts involving ministerial engagement have already resulted in increased financial support to the GEO Trust Fund, notably from South Africa, and are expected to continue yielding positive outcomes based on the indications received;
- The responses to this outreach confirmed the value of GEO's mission and revealed a need for greater political visibility, stronger inter-ministerial coordination, and the critical role of active GEO Principals in enabling effective high-level engagement;
- The United States acknowledged the need to increase engagement and internal coordination by GEO Principals.

3.3.2 ExCom Members

Armenia informed the Executive Committee that a revision of the national operating model for GEO activities is underway, with in-cash contributions to the GEO Trust Fund under consideration.

The European Commission requested further information on the countries that have responded to the recent ministerial outreach. Recommended the GEO Secretariat review the pre-published Horizon Europe programme, which includes provisions for increased contributions to the Trust Fund for Secretariat Operations, GEOGLAM, and contribution through the iClimate Action grant, supporting GEO's strategy and work. Emphasized the need to resource GWP Activities.

China echoed the Commission's emphasis on resourcing GWP activities and highlighted that successful external fundraising is dependent on GEO's technical capabilities. Urged Members to prioritise GWP funding and reported that China has allocated 132 million RMB in domestic funding for GWP implementation within China.

Germany confirmed ongoing resource mobilization efforts, with an expectation of increased contributions to the Trust Fund. Noted that past contributions will be matched, and additional funding is anticipated following the formation of the new government.

Australia noted that GEO Principals on the Executive Committee are well-placed to advocate for financial support to GEO and expressed intent to fulfil its full financial commitment to the Trust Fund.

Republic of Korea noted that KASA is currently working towards doubling its contributions to the GEO Trust Fund, with the request submitted to the Ministry of Finance and noted that a decision is expected in December.

Nigeria reported on outreach efforts to the Ministry of Innovation, Science and Technology to support financial contributions and highlighted the potential role of the private sector in supporting GEO activities.

Japan reaffirmed its planned contributions to the Trust Fund and noted its alignment with the 2025 GEO budget.

United States noted increased engagement from newly active Members should be acknowledged at Plenary.

Outcomes:

- Armenia announced its intention to make cash contributions to GEO, subject to further approvals;
- The European Commission noted that the pre-published Horizon Europe work programme outlines increased contributions to the GEO Trust Fund and GEOGLAM;
- China highlighted domestic resource mobilisation efforts towards the GEO Work Programme;
- Germany and Korea indicated they are working towards increased contributions to the GEO Trust Fund in the near future;
- Nigeria noted ongoing efforts to mobilise resources and highlighted the need to engage with private sector to this effect;
- Japan noted continued support to GEO Trust Fund and confirmed the imminent issuance of its contribution for 2025.

3.4 Consultation on Draft Protocol for Engagement with GEO Members

Ms Sara Venturini (GEO Secretariat) presented the document ExCom-66.8: Draft Protocol for Engagement with GEO Members (for discussion), outlining a proposed workflow, timeline, next steps and requested input from the Executive Committee. Emphasized the need for a more structured and consistent approach and noted the document will be shared to facilitate detailed feedback.

Germany noted that a 5–7-day timeframe for initial responses is too short and requested clarification of the term "inactive GEO Principal" while cautioning against direct outreach to ministers, recommending all other channels be exhausted first, as engagement typically routes through the GEO Principal.

South Africa welcomed the structured approach outlined in the protocol and appreciated the integration of Regional GEOs and Permanent Missions. Emphasized that a one-size-fits-all model is not feasible and expressed confidence in the Secretariat's efforts.

Australia expressed support for the draft protocol and stressed the importance of communication through GEO Principals and lead agencies. Noted that engagement for political endorsement is best led by National GEOs and recommended that all contact avenues be exhausted before escalating to Permanent Missions. Agreed that clear

procedures, tailored to national contexts and fiscal cycles, are essential, with realistic timeframes.

The European Commission endorsed the formalization of the protocol and proposed a one-month window for written responses to allow sufficient time for reflection. Suggested further exploration of structural barriers to financial contributions from resource-constrained countries. Highlighted the need for collective action, stronger branding, timely stocktakes, and improved narrative consistency.

The United States recommended the development of a Standard Operating Procedure for the protocols, aligned with urgency and context. Supported involvement of Regional GEOs as valuable contact points and advocated for clear context at the outset to assist with appropriate response timing.

France praised existing member engagement in relation to the Rio Conventions and encouraged inclusion of policy outreach in the protocol.

The GEO Secretariat acknowledged the document's complexity and need for broad consultation, and confirmed the Secretariat will provide additional time for feedback. Noted that the process is iterative and will involve trial and error to refine. The Secretariat then highlighted the availability of resource mobilisation communication tools, including a brand book, videos, and narrative materials, to support consistent outreach.

The Commission clarified its previous comment to note that their proposal is for an online catalogue of materials for accessibility and encouraged sharing of best practices, including impact reporting and alignment with institutional goals.

Outcomes:

- GEO Secretariat presented the Draft Protocol for Engagement with GEO Members, outlining a proposed workflow, timeline, consultation questions, and next steps;
- Germany, South Africa, and Australia welcomed the protocol and emphasized using Regional GEOs and diplomatic channels for fundraising, while supporting strong engagement with GEO Principals;
- Germany recommended extending the initial response time beyond 5-7 days and clarifying the definition of an "inactive" GEO Principal;
- The EC commended the protocol and requested one month to review and provide feedback. It also supported efforts to understand member financial constraints, create an online catalogue of branding assets, and share effective engagement practices;
- The United States proposed including a tailored statement of purpose for each engagement, noted Regional GEOs as secondary contacts, and recommended providing context upfront to manage expectations around response times;
- France praised existing member engagement in relation to the Rio Conventions, and encouraged inclusion of policy outreach in the protocol;
- GEO Secretariat acknowledged the feedback, highlighted existing branding resources available on the GEO website (including the brand book), and noted that tailored content can be developed upon request.

Action 66.3: GEO Secretariat to circulate the current version of the draft protocol with the ExCom for additional written comments, then circulate a revised version ahead of the next ExCom meeting.

4 SESSION 4: PLANNING FOR GEO 2026 SYMPOSIUM AND PLENARY

4.1 Venue Options for GEO 2026 Symposium and Plenary

Ms Wenbo Chu (GEO Secretariat) presented the document ExCom-66.9: Venue Options for GEO 2026 Symposium & Plenary (for discussion), including objectives and considerations for venue selection, as well as a comparison of possible options. Highlighted the opportunity to host the next annual event back-to-back with the Global Data Festival in Nairobi in May 2026. She highlighted the opportunity to align the event with the Global Data Festival in Nairobi in May 2026. GEO plans to hold the Symposium and Plenary on 4–7 May 2026 in Nairobi, ahead of the Festival. Four venue options are under discussion: (1) Full Symposium + Plenary in Nairobi; (2) Light Symposium + Plenary in Nairobi; (3) Third-country host; (4) WMO Building in Geneva.

Nigeria expressed intent to support Kenya's preparations to host the next Symposium and Plenary.

Germany emphasized the need to clearly communicate the nature and objectives of the event and highlighted the importance of allocating sufficient time to discuss the progress of the GEO Work Programme.

Australia expressed support for Option 1 (Full Symposium + Plenary in Nairobi) and Option 2 (Light Symposium + Plenary in Nairobi), noting the value in promoting active use of Earth observations. Recommended further assessment of financial viability and event structure, proposing a Symposium combined with a Plenary and highlighted the strategic benefit of co-locating with other events and noted Australia's focus on end-user engagement, similar to COPs.

The United States noted the importance of maintaining clear distinctions between different event objectives when combining activities such as Plenary and Symposium. Supported a focus on end-user engagement.

The European Commission welcomed the concept of a combined event and expressed concern over Option 2, warning that it could dilute the community's collaborative potential. Stressed the need for dedicated time to engage as a full GEO community.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) informed the group of its plans to organize a conference in Africa, noting the potential for back-to-back scheduling with GEO Symposium and Plenary.

Senegal supported both Options 1 and 2 and stated that Option 1 would strengthen GEO's presence in Africa and create engagement opportunities within the region and the francophone community.

China expressed support for the co-location approach and emphasized the symbolic importance of holding the first GEO Plenary of the third decade in Africa and encouraged confirmation with Kenya regarding its willingness to host.

Outcomes:

- GEO Secretariat presented the document: ExCom-66.9: Venue Options for GEO 2026 Symposium & Plenary for discussion, including objectives and considerations for venue selection, as well as a comparison of possible options (Nairobi, Geneva, other host countries);
- GEO Secretariat highlighted the opportunity to host the next annual event back-to-back with the Global Data Festival in Nairobi in May 2026, which ExCom members (Australia, China, EU, Germany, Japan, Nigeria, Senegal, SA, US) and observers (CEOS and WMO) largely support;
- Australia considered it important to assess the financial cost for each option moving forward, and to strategically align future GEO events with end users global events, such as COPs. Australia noted the technical strength of CEOS and suggested more general consideration of how to bring together the technical aspects of CEOS and GEO at event forums;
- Germany and EC emphasised the importance of holding two days of symposium, in addition to Plenary;
- United States mentioned the importance of differentiating the objectives of the GEO Symposium and the Data Festival to benefit from utilising the end user focus;
- The WMO is planning an event in Africa and would like to explore the possibility of hosting back-to-back events.

5 SESSION 5: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 GEO Secretariat 2025 Operational Plan

GEO Secretariat presented the document ExCom-66.10: GEO Secretariat 2025 Operational Plan (for information) and outlined the priorities and key activities through December 2025, along with the new reporting format.

Australia expressed support for the proposed reporting format, particularly the prioritization framework, noting all priorities and activities are subject to risk.

The Commission commended the plan's approach, describing it as well elaborated and reasonably structured.

The United States encouraged the group to consider resourcing the GWP from Members and Participating Organizations (POs).

Senegal expressed support for Goal 2 despite current budget limitations, particularly activity 2.5.3 on reinvigorating joint regional GEO coordination. Noted that certain actions will necessitate additional funding and technical capacity, without which implementation may be delayed or uninitiated.

China endorsed the recommendations of the Operational Plan and encouraged Members to contribute both in-kind and in-cash resources to support priority actions, while emphasizing the importance of coordinated evaluation of priorities with the Secretariat based on available budget and feedback.

Outcomes:

- GEO Secretariat presented the ExCom-66.10: GEO Secretariat 2025 Operational Plan (for information), an action-planning activity with a goal of expanding the plan beyond the Secretariat in the future;
- ExCom members widely supported the reporting format and appreciated the visibility of the plan;
- GEO Secretariat acknowledged the United States and China's observation that certain activities need additional funding and external support, such as technical expertise, in order to be activated.

5.2 Approval of Secretariat Director Performance Evaluation process and 360° Assessment process

Mr Yuqi Bai (DEPT Team Chair) presented a brief overview of the process undertaken by the DEPT team and presented the documents ExCom-66.11 Secretariat Director Performance Evaluation process (for decision) and ExCom-66.12 Secretariat Director 360° Assessment process (for decision).

The United States expressed appreciation for DEPT Team's work in enhancing clarity and precision. Confirmed approval and concurrence with both documents. Proposed adding the phrase "in consultation with the Director" in section 3.3 of ExCom-66.12, regarding the finalization of the 360-degree review participant list prior to initiation.

GEO Secretariat Director noted that section 3.3 of the 360-degree process should be structured as an interaction between the supervisor (line manager) and supervisee (Secretariat Director).

The Commission supported the proposal from the United States and GEO Secretariat Director and approved both documents.

Mr Bai clarified that the Executive Committee serves as the First Reporting Officer (FRO) for the Director, in alignment with WMO's current management approach.

Australia commended the work in establishing a clear process and agreed that the proposed modification to paragraph 3.3— "in consultation with the Director"—is a natural and acceptable extension.

Mr Bai reaffirmed that the list of selected participants for the 360-degree review lies with the Lead Co-Chair and overseen by the Executive Committee.

Outcomes:

- The DEPT team presented the Secretariat Director Performance Evaluation process and the Secretariat Director 360° Assessment process (for decision);
- The ExCom approved the documents with one amendment - to note that the decision on the respondent group be made by the Lead Co Chair 'in consultation with the Secretariat Director';
- The following documents were approved - subject to the amendment referenced above:
 - ExCom-66.11 Secretariat Director Performance Evaluation process (for decision);
 - ExCom-66.12 Secretariat Director 360° Assessment process (for decision).

5.3 Approval of ToR of the new Rules of Procedure Task Force

The Rules of Procedure (RoP) Task Force (TF) Co-Chairs provided an overview of the two documents for decision.

China acknowledged the work carried out by the Task Force but opposed expanding the TF's role to examine Governance. Noted that the new TF should be responsible only for activities clearly identified in the RoP Amendment Process (as defined in ExCom Decision 65.12 Rev), should not automatically inherit previous mandates and that Terms of Reference (ToRs) must reflect consensus. Supported geographic balance and structured composition, with Task Force Co-Chairs representing each of the four GEO Co-Chairs' regions.

The European Commission supported China's position on the mandate of the Task Force. Noted that governance activities must be tasked by the Executive Committee with defined outcomes. Emphasized the need for a manageable Task Force in terms of size and rotation among Co-Chairs, who shall be selected by TF members.

The RoP Task Force Co-Chair clarified that the mandate of the current Task Force aligns with document ExCom-66.13a, as discussed during the 65th ExCom Meeting in March 2025 and suggested that Task Force leadership could be determined by members of the Task Force.

United States noted the two documents are not ready for decision of the Executive Committee and cautioned against assigning an elevated status to ExCom Co-Chairs over other members of the Executive Committee. Emphasized that ExCom's forming Task Forces is permitted under the current RoP and proposed forming a small team to find consensus within 24 hours ahead of Plenary.

Australia highlighted that the ToRs are provisional and can be amended over the next 12 months. Stressed the need to contextualize changes within the broader governance framework and supported the United States' proposal for consensus-building ahead of Plenary.

Paraguay aligned with Australia's position, supported continued work, and agreed with the United States' proposal to resolve concerns in advance of Plenary.

The RoP Task Force Co-Chair suggested geographic representation could be formally added to TF composition and clarified the suggested mandate focuses primarily on changes to the Rules of Procedure.

The Co-Chair then highlighted that governance issues extend beyond the RoP. Proposed Plenary that either authorize the Executive Committee to form a RoP Task Force until 2026 or revise ToRs immediately. Clarified that ToRs are submitted to Plenary for information, not decision.

The GEO Secretariat reiterated the TF's prior efforts. Noted ToRs were presented at the 65th Meeting of the Executive Committee but postponed to focus on the assigned work and mandate. Urged addressing concerns as soon as possible to allow process continuity.

Nigeria called for addressing outstanding concerns as soon as possible to enable consensus ahead of Plenary.

Outcomes:

- Lawrence Friedl (United States) and Lulekwa Makapela (South Africa) presented the Terms of Reference of the new Rules of Procedure Task Force and the request for Plenary's special permission for endorsement of the new ToR and establishment of the RoP TF (for decision);
- The ExCom agreed for the TF to discuss edits to the ToR document to be submitted to the Plenary;
- The following documents are pending approval following the discussions of the reduced TF:
 - ExCom-66.13a Terms of Reference of the new Rules of Procedure Task Force (for decision);
 - ExCom-66.13b Request for Plenary's special permission for endorsement of the new Terms of Reference and establishment of the Rules of Procedure Task Force (for decision).

Action 66.4: Task Force will edit the ToRs to reach a consensus to later seek approval from the ExCom Co-Chairs, as well as the Special Permission.

5.4 Approval of new Associates

The GEO Secretariat presented the slate of the proposed Associates to join GEO.

The following were approved as Associates:

- AxelSpace Corporation;
- European Space Imaging (EUSI);
- Wyvern.

Outcomes:

- GEO Secretariat presented the proposed new associates (for decision);
- The following proposed associates were approved:
 - AxelSpace Corporation;
 - European Space Imaging (EUSI);
 - Wyvern.

5.5 Approval of term extension of ExCom Observers to 31 December 2025

The GEO Secretariat presented on the proposed term extension of ExCom observers until the end of 2025 (for decision).

The following document was approved:

- ExCom-66.15: Term Extension of ExCom Observers (for decision).

Outcomes:

- GEO Secretariat presented on the proposed term extension of ExCom observers until the end of 2025 (for decision);
- The following document was approved:
 - ExCom-66.15: Term Extension of ExCom Observers (for decision).

5.6 Review of Action Items

Outcomes:

- GEO Secretariat reviewed the action items from the ExCom 66 meeting.

5.7 Any Other Business

5.8 Closing Remarks

The Lead Co-Chair expressed appreciation for the collaborative efforts throughout the meeting.

China commended the successful conclusion of the agenda and extended sincere appreciation to all participants. Emphasized the importance of continued efforts to bridge the technical divide, integrate Earth observations (EO) with Artificial Intelligence (AI), and achieve the goals of Earth Intelligence for All (EI4All) through strong collaboration.

The European Commission thanked members of the Executive Committee for their active participation. Highlighted the 20th anniversary of GEO as a moment to strengthen collective impact by demonstrating the real-world benefits of EO and EI. Stressed the importance of accessible tools, actionable insights, and renewed trust in the intersection of policy, science, and technology.

South Africa expressed gratitude for the collaborative spirit and contributions from Members. Noted that the tone and spirit of collaboration set during the session should carry forward into the Plenary discussions.

United States thanked all participants and acknowledged the GEO community for its spirit of collaboration.

GEO Secretariat Director appreciated the dynamic nature of the Executive Committee's discussions and extended thanks for the pragmatic, constructive, and solution-focused approach taken by all participants.

Outcomes:

- The Lead Co-Chair provided closing remarks, along with the other Co-Chairs Joanna Drake (EC), Mmboneni Muofhe (South Africa), Stephen Volz (US), and additionally Yana Gevorgyan, GEO Secretariat Director.