Report
68th Executive Committee Meeting
17-18 March 2026

Chair: European Union as represented by the European Commission

1 SESSION 1: GENERAL BUSINESS

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

The Lead Co-Chair, Ms Joanna Drake (European Union) welcomed participants to this first in-person Executive Committee (ExCom) meeting of 2026. Emphasized that GEO is well prepared for this period, with a clear strategy - now simply referred to as the GEO Strategy - alongside a renewed GEO Work Programme (GWP) focused on delivering Earth Intelligence for All and tangible impact across sectors. Noted that the remaining governance work, especially on the Rules of Procedure, was essential to ensure that GEO's institutional architecture remains fit for purpose in the new period. Beyond formal rules, stressed the importance of fostering a culture of openness, respect, and inclusive participation, where all voices are heard.

Mr Gao Xiang (China), speaking on behalf of the China Co-Chair, thanked the European Union and the GEO Secretariat for the meeting preparations. Recalled China's continued commitment to GEO's third decade, highlighted China's support to GEO implementation, and referred to upcoming activities including the Earth Intelligence for All Forum in Beijing and continued regional engagement through AOGEO. Noted China has strengthened regional cooperation in Asia-Oceania through workshops and training programmes benefiting over 2,000 young scientists, as well as disaster data support across the region. Collaboration with Africa has also expanded, including partnerships and technology transfer efforts. Emphasized the importance of this meeting in guiding GEO's work, including governance improvements and implementation of the GWP.

Mr Humbulani Aaron Mudau (on behalf of the South Africa Co-Chair) reaffirmed South Africa's strong commitment to the GEO Strategy, noting encouraging implementation progress. Welcomed discussions on GEO infrastructure, the Innovation Fund, and the updated Rules of Procedure as key to strengthening GEO's transparency, inclusivity, and effectiveness. Highlighted South Africa's contributions, including the national GEO Knowledge Hub and the South African National Space Agency's work to translate data into user-driven solutions. Stressed the need for sustainable funding and operational capacity

to support GEO infrastructure, recognizing its critical role in enabling access to and use of Earth observation data.

Ms Irene Parker (United States) thanked the European Union and GEO Secretariat for organizing the meeting and underlined the timeliness of agenda items related to GEO's budget, operations, and collective efforts to advance the use of Earth observations. Emphasized the importance of governance discussions in strengthening partnerships and supporting shared objectives. As GEO shifts toward delivering timely and actionable Earth intelligence, she welcomed its focus on innovation, improved operational efficiency, and stronger partnerships, including with the private sector.

Ms Yana Gevorgyan (GEO Secretariat Director) welcomed participants and thanked departing members. Emphasized that GEO's strategy provides a strong direction toward a future driven by Earth Intelligence, grounded in science and partnerships. As implementation progresses, urged members to ensure alignment with strategic goals. Highlighted the importance of balancing robust procedures with delivering on GEO's promises to the global community. Noted progress within the Secretariat, particularly the arrival of two new team members to complete the Member Services team.

At the invitation of the Lead Co-Chair, introductions of first-time meeting participants were also conducted: Mr Charles Mwangi, Directorate Director, Kenya Space Agency (Kenya); Mr Ian Naumkin, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva (Russian Federation); Mr Sid Boukabara, Senior Program Scientist for Strategy, NASA (Committee on Earth Observations Satellites - CEOS); Mr Paolo Laj, Chief of the Atmospheric Environment Research Section (World Meteorological Organization - WMO); Mr Yu Sumikawa, Director for Environmental Science and Technology, Research and Development Bureau, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (Japan).

1.2 Adoption of Agenda

On behalf of the Lead Co-Chair, Mr Franz Immler (European Union) introduced the agenda (ExCom-68.1(Rev2)) for adoption.

Decision: The following document was approved: ExCom-68.1(Rev2): Draft Agenda (for decision).

1.3 Draft Report of the 67th Session

The Lead Co-Chair introduced the draft report (ExCom-68.2) for decision.

Decision: The following document was approved: ExCom-68.2: Draft Report of the 67th Executive Committee Meeting (for decision).

1.4 Review of Action Items from the Previous Meeting

The Lead Co-Chair introduced the document ExCom-68.3 for decision.

Decision: The following document was approved: ExCom-68.3: Review of Action Items from the Previous Meeting (for decision).

Action 68.1: The Secretariat will ensure open action items are reported until completed.

1.5 Secretariat Operations Report

The GEO Secretariat Director presented the Secretariat Operations Report (ExCom-68.4), covering the period from September 2025 to February 2026.

The report was structured around the five goals of the Post-2025 Strategy plus a section on Enabling Environment. Highlights included:

- **Goal 1** (Programmes): GEO advanced implementation of its Post-2025 GWP, launching Phase II to refine results frameworks and indicators, supported by 3 webinars directly reaching 24 activities. The M&E framework is under development aiming for launch in May 2026. Key initiatives progressed: the Global Ecosystems Atlas expanded collaboration with 5+ partners and engagement at 2 international conferences; the Global Heat Resilience Service established governance and launched 2 AI-enabled prototypes; and iClimateAction advanced across 7 work packages, engaging ~80 experts. Capacity development and communication efforts included launching the GEO Community Space and Open House Webinar Series (70+ participants in first session), alongside 31 blogs, 75 LinkedIn posts (2,057 engagements), and 41 X posts (27,645 views) advocating GWP activities. Resource mobilization linked multiple activities to major funding sources and advanced the Innovation Fund roadmap. GEO Infrastructure work included endorsement of its Implementation Plan and support to national hubs in South Africa and Ghana.

- **Goal 2** (**Equity**): Adoption of GEO tools was facilitated through webinars with initiatives such as Digital Earth Africa and the Data & Knowledge Working Group. The 2026 Member Engagement Strategy is being implemented, focusing on replenishing the GEO Secretariat Fund and strengthening diplomatic outreach. Membership expanded with Togo joining as the 117th Member (33rd in Africa), while engagement continued with several prospective countries. Regional coordination was strengthened through support to AfriGEO, EuroGEO and AOGEO events, each convening around 300 participants. Progress was made on revising the Rules of Procedure (RoP) through support to the RoP Task Force. Communications outreach also grew, with a resumed GEO newsletter service reaching 8,000+ recipients and over 150 social media posts generating ~170,000 impressions.

- **Goal 3** (Innovation): A Very High Resolution (VHR) satellite survey is being prepared to assess community needs, with results expected before the GEO-21 Plenary. Progress on the AI4EO Enabler included webinars on EO foundation models (over 100 participants each), development of a white paper on AI applications across GWP Focus Areas, alongside governance structure establishment, leadership selection, and workstream definition. Collaboration with the Data & Knowledge Working Group has been facilitated, to define principles for integrating AI and LLMs in GEO Infrastructure. An AI integration demonstration for the GEO Knowledge Hub is planned for the 69th ExCom meeting, featuring an open-source user interface.

- **Goal 4** (Youth): The Secretariat supported the GEO Youth Community of **Practice** in advancing its outreach and collaboration across the GWP. It also supported the onboarding of a 5-member Youth Leadership Team, and is planning youth-led events for the 2026 GEO Symposium, alongside a new mentorship programme for young professionals and students. Outreach activities include the launch of the GEO Youth Blog Series (February 2026), and 4 GEO Knowledge Hub webinars connecting youth and universities with geospatial knowledge and expert communities.

- **Goal 5** (Communications & Advocacy): GEO participated in major fora including UNFCCC COP30 (Brazil, November 2025), showcasing 7 GEO initiatives and contributing to the Earth Information Day and relevant policy negotiations. Outreach supported initiatives such as the UNFCCC NAP Expo (Zambia, August 2025) and a CEOS call for case studies for the 2026 EO Handbook on Adaptation and Resilience. Early warning efforts informed the 2030 CREWS Strategy, with EW4All training delivered in Kenya and Italy, and contributions to global reporting. Urban resilience engagement included participation in global initiatives (e.g. Innovate4Cities Advisory Committee, IPCC Special Report on Cities, UNEP Beat the Heat in Cities), while biodiversity efforts involved 7 CBD regional dialogues and preparations for CBD COP17 through engagement with the government of Armenia. Resource mobilization advanced through engagement with key donor Members (United States, United Kingdom, China) and an industry roundtable event in Haiyang, China. Communications outputs included 80+ graphics, 20 outreach products, and updated branding resources (223 assets) to strengthen GEO messaging and support Member engagement.

- **Enabling Environment**: The Secretariat supported the ExCom Intersessional meeting (25 September 2025), 67th ExCom meeting (28–29 September 2025), and

33rd Programme Board (10-11 February 2026). Operational planning included preparation of the 2026 Interim Budget (endorsed by ExCom-67), updates to the 2025 Operating Plan and the Risk Registry, and development of the 2026 Operating Plan and 2026–27 Concept of Operations. Secretariat capacity was strengthened through recruitment (P3 Regional GEO Liaison Officer, P2 Member Services Associate). Preparations advanced for the 2026 GEO Symposium and GEO-21 Plenary.

China welcomed the well-organized report and commended the Secretariat's work. Emphasized strengthening Asia-Oceania participation and announced an AOGEO Caucus meeting in Beijing, starting on 26 March. China praised efforts to engage new Members, noting that GEO membership should align with UN membership criteria. Encouraged greater inclusion of AI experts in GEO activities and offered support.

Senegal welcomed the Secretariat's engagement in Africa and encouraged continued prioritization of capacity building in the Global South. The European Union commended the breadth of work undertaken, welcomed progress on the GWP and regional engagement, and encouraged continued investment in communications, branding assets and public visibility. Japan thanked the Secretariat for its support to the 17th AOGEO Symposium and ongoing regional collaboration.

Paraguay and Armenia expressed appreciation for the report, with Armenia highlighting links to the Global Ecosystems Atlas and preparations for engagement in the context of CBD COP17. Members broadly viewed the report as evidence that, despite constraints, the Secretariat had maintained a high level of operational responsiveness across multiple fronts.

2 SESSION 2: GEO 2026 SYMPOSIUM AND GEO-21 PLENARY

2.1 GEO 2026 Symposium and GEO-21 Plenary update

The GEO Secretariat presented ExCom-68.5: GEO 2026 Symposium and GEO-21 Plenary (for discussion).

The updated programme for the Symposium will feature two town hall sessions and three tracks of community-led events, alongside showcases and poster sessions. Proposals for community events, showcases and posters (submissions closed on 28 February) are under evaluation by the Symposium Programme Committee. The two town hall sessions will focus on (1) new operating models of GWP, including co-design, partnerships, sustainability, and M&E, and (2) scaling advanced technologies such as AI and digital twins. Strategic guidance on arrangements is provided by the Symposium Programme Committee.

The updated draft agenda for the GEO-21 Plenary will combine formal business and interactive sessions. Two programmatic sessions will focus on (1) showcasing impact from GWP activities and (2) advancing Member engagement and cross-regional collaboration. Both are designed as interactive panels. The business session will cover key decisions and updates, including the 2026 GEO Secretariat Budget, revised Rules of Procedure, GWP update by the Programme Board, GEO Infrastructure demonstration, and highlights of 2025 activities. The day will conclude with Lead Co-Chair handover (European Union to the United States), and closing remarks.

ExCom members welcomed the Symposium and Plenary planning and progress made. The United States highlighted the maturity of preparations and relevance of themes, encouraged the showcasing of public-private partnerships, and offered speaker recommendations. The European Union appreciated the integrated approach and requested more details on the Lead Co-Chair handover. Japan supported the agendas presented and updated its exploration of possible in-kind contributions, such as hosting an evening reception. Senegal welcomed the programme alignment with African priorities and called for adequate African representation in the speaker lineup.

China emphasized the events should ensure inclusive opportunities for all Members, particularly developing countries and the broader user community, and noted strong national engagement, with high-level representatives expected to attend. Commended resource mobilization efforts and updated it will contribute elements such as design and photography services and gift bags. Germany supported the Plenary agenda and cautioned it may be ambitious for one day, while highlighting a possible announcement regarding continued support for GEO-LDN. Armenia expressed full support and readiness to contribute to both events.

Given limited budgets, the Secretariat stressed the need for additional sponsorship to support participation from low-income countries.

Action 68.2: The Secretariat will follow up on various suggestions by Members regarding the event programme to ensure broad and balanced participation, and offers to provide in-kind and financial support.

Action 68.3: The Secretariat will provide updates to ExCom on the programme of Community Events.

3 SESSION 3: FINANCE AND RESOURCING

3.1 Finance & Risk Register Update

The GEO Secretariat presented ExCom-68.6: Interim Report on 2025 Income and Expenditure (for information) and ExCom-68.7: GEO Secretariat Risk Register (for information).

The Secretariat presented a financial update on the 2025 financial year. Actual contributions received totaled CHF 3.15M, rising to CHF 4.15M when including delayed 2024 contributions. In response to funding shortfalls, significant cost reductions were implemented, including 80% cuts to travel, elimination of training, IT and other savings, and non-renewal of several staff positions, resulting in total expenditure of just under CHF 3.9M.

On risk management, the updated Risk Register shows reduced operational risks due to adjusted planning aligned with reduced capacity. However, key structural risks remain high, including reliance on a small number of donors and currency fluctuations. A new risk was identified: potential diversion of funds from core operations to the GEO Innovation Fund. The Secretariat emphasized the need for continued ExCom engagement and guidance on risk assessment and mitigation.

ExCom members broadly commended the Secretariat's financial management and transparency in a difficult year marked by reduced income and staffing constraints. The United States appreciated prudent fiscal stewardship and supported the risk assessment, emphasizing the need to diversify funding sources. Germany and the European Union echoed appreciation for cost containment, and sought clarification on future United States contributions to the GEO Trust Fund. The United States updated that the 2025 NASA contribution is being processed, and consultations are underway regarding 2026 NOAA and NASA contributions.

Senegal and Nigeria raised concerns that current financial reporting does not capture significant in-kind contributions, citing examples such as Senegal's support to the AfriGEO Symposium. Called for mechanisms to better recognize and account for such contributions. China supported this view, proposing expanded reporting formats to reflect diverse contributions. The Secretariat clarified that current financial reports reflect audited cash transactions under WMO rules but acknowledged the value of recognizing wider contributions.

Action 68.4: The Executive Committee tasked the Budget Working Group and the Secretariat to explore ways to capture other contributions (e.g. indirect funding, in-kind support) beyond the GEO Trust Fund contributions.

3.2 Resource Mobilization Update

The GEO Secretariat presented an update on resource mobilization efforts, emphasizing that fundraising remains a joint responsibility between the Secretariat and ExCom. Guided by the ExCom-approved 2026 Member Engagement Strategy and Plan, the Secretariat developed a prioritized pipeline of potential donors for outreach and is preparing targeted funding proposals, primarily to strengthen contributions to the GEO Secretariat Operations Fund.

Engagement with China has been a key example of expanding partnerships, including a December 2025 industry roundtable which led to the upcoming "Earth Intelligence for All" Forum in Beijing, aimed at mobilizing private sector support and advancing innovation. Additional opportunities are being pursued with Members, including potential multi-year agreements with the United States and United Kingdom.

ExCom members were invited by the Lead Co-Chair to update on their own fundraising activities in support of GEO Secretariat operations. No updates were forthcoming.

The European Union emphasized the need to balance funding between the GEO Secretariat operations and direct support to GWP activities, highlighting the importance of the discussion on the proposed GEO Innovation Fund. China welcomed the Secretariat's fundraising efforts and reaffirmed its continued support for resource mobilization.

3.3 Updated Concept of Operations (ConOps)

The GEO Secretariat presented ExCom-68.8: 2026-2027 Concept of Operations (for decision), alongside additional context on staffing changes during 2025 and an updated snapshot of current staffing. Explained that 2025 was a challenging year due to budget uncertainty, with funding constraints leading to several staff reductions. P3 Coordination Officer, P4 Capacity Development Officer and P4 Strategic Communications Officer posts were abolished. Following the incumbent's resignation, the P5 Chief of Communications and Partnerships position was not filled, and the planned recruitment of a P1 GEO Infrastructure Associate did not proceed. These decisions have reduced Secretariat capacity.

At the same time, some targeted strengthening has occurred: a Regional GEO Liaison Officer and a Member Services Associate both joined on 2 March 2026, supported in part through earmarked funding.

The principal new proposal in the ConOps was the recruitment of a P3 Communications Officer. This replaces the earlier plan to rely on several communications consultancies in 2026. The Secretariat explained that using the same funding envelope for an in-house post would be more effective, restoring internal communications capacity, strengthening continuity, and improving collaboration across the Secretariat and with members and participating organizations. The Secretariat also signaled that it intends to return in November 2026 with a revised ConOps, when resource mobilization results and projected income for 2027 should be clearer, allowing a more informed and updated staffing plan. Internal assessment is also underway on the future structure of the GWP team.

ExCom members broadly welcomed the update. The United States, EU, China, Italy, and Japan supported the overall approach, especially the creation of the communications post and the use of secondments and flexible support. South Africa raised questions about staffing priorities, sustainability of funded roles, diversity, and recruitment policy; these

were answered in Session 6, a later closed session of ExCom 68, and in that Session the ConOps was approved.

Decision: The following document was approved (in Session 6 of the meeting): ExCom-68.8: 2026-2027 Concept of Operations (for decision).

4 SESSION 4: GEO RULES OF PROCEDURE PART I

This session was divided into two segments, 4.1 and 4.2.

After an introduction from Rules of Procedure Task Force Co-Chair Mr Franz Immler, the ExCom discussed the ongoing revision of the RoP. The discussion took place in the context of the amendment process adopted in 2025, under which the RoP Task Force had been established to coordinate revisions. Following a call for inputs, the Task Force received a substantial number of proposals - approximately 140 suggested changes from a range of contributors - reflecting both the breadth of interest in updating the RoP and the complexity of reconciling diverse perspectives.

Several ExCom members noted that revision of the RoP was both expected and necessary, particularly in light of the adoption of the Post 2025 GEO Strategy and the need to address evolving governance priorities such as budget management and recruitment.

Despite broad recognition of the importance of updating the RoP, a concern emerged regarding the readiness of some members to adopt a comprehensive revision at this stage. The United States, supported by several other ExCom members, underscored the need for more time to review the revised document, conduct internal consultations, and align positions within their respective caucuses. As a result, the United States, Armenia, Costa Rica, Colombia, Japan, and the Russian Federation could not support the adoption of a fully revised RoP during the meeting and emphasized the need for additional time and consultation.

Following further discussion, a broad convergence emerged around prioritizing time-sensitive and consensus-ready elements, rather than attempting to finalize a comprehensive revision in one step. Several ExCom members suggested that the meeting should be used to identify those provisions that are essential for the functioning of GEO's governance structures or that require timely decisions, and to focus efforts on advancing those items.

A related point of clarification concerned the framing of the revision itself. Several participants emphasized that the exercise should be understood as an amendment to the existing RoP, rather than the adoption of an entirely new document. This distinction was considered important by some members, as it would facilitate a more incremental approach and make it easier for ExCom members to review and agree on specific changes to be proposed to the GEO-21 Plenary.

It was agreed that the Task Force shall prepare a revised version of the existing RoP with clearly identified and limited "track changes" reflecting changes in three areas:

- GEO Resources, Trust Fund and Finances;
- GEO Secretariat Director Terms of Reference;
- Programme Board Procedures (paragraph related to GEO Innovation Fund).

This document will then be submitted to ExCom members for further review, including internal and caucus-level consultations. The Secretariat shall schedule a virtual Intersessional ExCom meeting for consideration of the revised submission.

Decision: ExCom-68.9: RoP Change Recommendation report of the RoP Task Force was not approved.

Action 68.5: The Rules of Procedure Task Force to prepare and resubmit to the Executive Committee by 27 March a document based on the original Rules of Procedure document (May 2025 version), with tracked changes, in relation to a subset of urgent matters including:

- Article 6: GEO Resources, Trust Fund and Finances;
- Appendix A: GEO Secretariat Director Terms of Reference;
- Appendix B: Programme Board procedures (paragraph related to GEO Innovation Fund).

Action 68.6: The Executive Committee tasked the Secretariat to set up a virtual intersessional ExCom meeting for consideration of the new submission scheduled for 13 April.

5 SESSION 5: REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS

5.1 Review of Action Items

The GEO Secretariat reviewed the action items from Day 1 (Sessions 1-4). These were confirmed by those present as captured in this report.

6 SESSION 6: STAFF PULSE SURVEY (CLOSED SESSION)

6.1 Staff Pulse Survey

In a session closed to Secretariat staff other than the Secretariat Director and the Chief of Staff, the GEO Secretariat presented ExCom-68.10: Staff Pulse Survey (for information).

A subsequent discussion reviewed the main findings of the survey and the implications for staff wellbeing, organisation culture and management follow-up. Members agreed that a joint communication from ExCom and the Secretariat Director to Secretariat staff (as

indicated in the Director's annual performance objectives) would be an appropriate next step following consideration of the survey results.

Action 68.7: The Executive Committee and the Secretariat Director will issue a joint communication to GEO Secretariat staff in follow-up to the 2025 Staff Pulse Survey.

7 SESSION 7: GEO RULES OF PROCEDURE PART II

This session was divided into two segments, 7.1 and 7.2.

Budget and Finance Provisions

The Executive Committee resumed its discussion of the RoP from day 1, beginning with a focus on budget and finance provisions. The GEO Secretariat presented, on behalf of the Budget Working Group, proposed RoP revisions designed to improve clarity, transparency, and accountability. A key clarification is the recognition that GEO's finances operate through multiple funds rather than a single fund. These include the Secretariat Operations Fund, which covers core administrative costs, and separate activity funds for initiatives such as GEOGLAM, the Global Ecosystems Atlas, and GEO-LDN. The proposed RoP revisions formalise this structure and introduce clearer financial arrangements. The creation of activity funds would be subject to ExCom approval. Each activity fund would operate under agreed terms of reference (ToR), ensuring compliance with WMO rules.

The revisions also clarify institutional roles. The Secretariat Director retains authority to accept contributions, consistent with WMO requirements, while the Budget Working Group is to be consulted on private-sector contributions above CHF 50,000, without decision-making authority. Operational responsibilities, including legal agreements, remain with the Secretariat.

Administrative fees for Secretariat support to activity funds were also discussed. While a typical rate of around 8 percent has been applied, the proposal allows for flexibility depending on the level of support required. Members questioned whether a minimum should be set and whether fees could contribute more broadly to GEO activities. The Secretariat clarified that these fees are intended primarily to recover administrative and operational costs.

Secretariat Director Terms of Reference and Recruitment Process

Mr Franz Immler (European Union) subsequently presented the proposed RoP revisions to the Secretariat Director terms of reference (ToR) and recruitment process, which aimed to clarify procedures, strengthen governance and align the RoP with existing practices. The revisions included integration of the Director's performance evaluation and 360-degree review processes, which had previously existed as separate documents.

A key proposed change was to simplify the extension of a Director's term by having ExCom decide directly, based on a recommendation from the Co-Chairs, rather than establishing a separate assessment panel. This aligns with past practice and streamlines the process.

Regarding recruitment, the revised text clarified the role of the selection panel, which would oversee the vacancy announcement, define selection criteria, review candidates, and conduct interviews, before recommending a candidate to ExCom. The final decision would remain with ExCom. However, several members questioned whether the panel should recommend only one candidate or a ranked list. Australia and Japan supported a ranked list to improve efficiency and avoid delays if a preferred candidate declines, while others emphasized the value of a single clear recommendation.

The proposed timeline for appointing a Director was debated, with some members, including Australia and Japan, favoring six months (as the current RoP stipulates) over the proposed three to ensure adequate time for transition and relocation.

A proposed RoP revision of the Director's term to two years raised concerns among several ExCom members, including Germany, Greece, and Senegal, who noted that this may be too short for a Director to become fully effective. Alternatives such as three-year terms (the current term length) or hybrid models (e.g. 3+2 years) were suggested to ensure continuity and stability.

Members also discussed the composition and role of the selection panel. While the proposed revisions set a maximum of eight members, some ExCom members suggested a smaller panel with representation from each caucus to ensure geographic balance. There was also support for involving WMO through an HR representative as an observer.

Finally, differing views emerged on the proposed balance of responsibilities between the selection panel and ExCom. Some members advocated for stronger ExCom involvement throughout the process, including approving the vacancy notice and selection criteria, and potentially conducting interviews. Others emphasized that the panel should retain a central technical role, with ExCom providing oversight and final approval.

Overall, while there was general support for updating the Director ToR and recruitment process, several elements - particularly term length, panel composition, and procedural responsibilities – there was consensus that these require further discussion before final agreement.

Incorporation of Session 9.1

At the suggestion of the Lead Co-Chair, given the linkage with the RoP revision discussion, agenda item 9.1, Secretariat Director Recruitment Process, was moved into Session 7. Franz Immler (European Union) presented document ExCom-68.14: Secretariat Director Recruitment Process. Following discussion, ExCom agreed that the document should be treated as for discussion rather than for decision.

The discussion began by noting that, according to the current RoP, ExCom must complete the recruitment process by the end of 2026. This requires careful sequencing of approvals and preparatory steps, including the establishment of a selection panel and agreement on key recruitment documents such as the vacancy notice and selection criteria. A proposed timeline was presented and discussed.

The composition and establishment of the selection panel was discussed. While the panel was formally open to all ExCom members, there was broad support for a smaller, balanced group to ensure efficiency. To ensure fairness and geographic representation, it was agreed that caucuses should nominate candidates for the panel. Each caucus shall submit 1-2 nominees by 3 April 2026 with the final composition to be agreed at the 13 April ExCom intersessional meeting. Gender balance and expertise were also highlighted as important considerations in panel selection. It was agreed that both current ExCom members and incoming members (currently observers) could be considered for panel participation to ensure continuity and inclusiveness.

The respective roles of the panel, ExCom, and the Secretariat were also clarified. While the panel would carry out the technical work of screening candidates and conducting interviews, it would rely on WMO processes and Secretariat support, particularly for administrative tasks and compliance with WMO HR procedures. At the same time, some members emphasized that the panel should operate with a degree of independence, consistent with past practice.

Additional suggestions were made to strengthen transparency and accountability. These included providing ExCom with more detailed documentation alongside the panel's recommendations, such as evaluation grids based on clear selection criteria. Concerns were also noted regarding candidate confidentiality and data protection.

In conclusion, the ExCom broadly agreed on a structured, multi-stage recruitment process led by a representative selection panel and culminating in a final decision by ExCom. While there was general consensus on the overall approach, operational details - particularly regarding panel composition, documentation, and support arrangements - will be agreed at the upcoming intersessional meeting.

Agreed related actions and decisions are detailed under Session 9.1.

8 SESSION 8: GEO WORK PROGRAMME

8.1 Report of the 33rd Programme Board

Programme Board (PB) Co-Chair Justyna Nicinska presented ExCom-68.11: Report of the 33rd Programme Board meeting (for information). The 33rd PB meeting in February 2026 discussed topics critical for implementing the Post-2025 GWP. A key outcome was progress on a comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework to assess

outputs, outcomes, and impacts across activities. It started with the GWP Phase II process, launched in November 2025, developing measurable indicators across the GWP. The M&E framework will remain flexible and agile, and apply differentiated requirements across activity types.

The GEO Innovation Fund was advanced as a voluntary pilot mechanism (see session 8.2), aimed at accelerating activities along the R2O pipeline, with transparent selection by the PB under ExCom oversight. In parallel, the Post-2025 Incubator Roadmap drew lessons from initiatives such as the Global Ecosystem Atlas and Global Heat Resilience Service, emphasizing early user engagement, co-design, governance, and resource mobilization.

New coordination tools include the GEO Community Space (pilot launched, full rollout planned for May 2026 at the GEO Symposium) to enhance collaboration and knowledge exchange. Additional approaches included a "R2O spotlight" session at the PB meeting featuring GEOGLAM, GEO-LDN, and GEO-TREES, to be followed by a dedicated workshop to strengthen activity support and regional connections.

Engagement with Regional GEOs was reinforced, with regular Regional GEO participation in PB meetings to better align global and regional activities. Preparations for the 2026 GEO Symposium (see session 2.1) are well advanced: a multi-stakeholder Programme Committee is reviewing 47 community event proposals, 29 showcases, 39 posters, and 7 news items.

ExCom members generally welcomed the PB's report and supported the direction of Phase II implementation, particularly the development of a systematic M&E framework and stronger links between the GWP and Regional GEOs.

Germany requested clarification on the proposed activity cycles (e.g. 3+2 years, 2+1 years), questioning how these timelines differ across pilots, initiatives, and flagships. The United States supported the M&E framework and emphasized stronger collaboration between GWP activities and Regional GEOs to improve synergies, avoid duplication, and strengthen user engagement. Kenya asked whether the M&E framework could be shared with countries for possible national adoption, whether user uptake by countries and end users would be reflected in the framework, and whether the Global Heat Resilience Service prototypes risk vendor lock-in. Senegal praised the incubator experience and asked how lessons from successful incubators, especially on co-design and user engagement, would be scaled across the wider work programme. China welcomed progress on the incubators, encouraged greater attention to developing-country needs and capacity barriers, and suggested including indicators on practical uptake and application of outcomes. The European Union stressed that ExCom should provide stronger strategic guidance to the Programme Board, especially on the Innovation Fund, infrastructure, and accelerators, while cautioning against an overly burdensome M&E framework. Nigeria and Paraguay emphasized the importance of continued capacity building, especially for developing and emerging countries.

In response, PB Co-Chairs Justyna Nicinska, Evangelos Gerasopoulos and Amos Kabo-Bah clarified that activity timelines are indicative development windows rather than fixed evaluation points, confirmed the framework is intended to be shareable once refined, and stressed that it will remain adaptable and manageable across diverse activity types.

8.2 GEO Innovation Fund

PB Co-Chair Amos Kabo-Bah presented ExCom-68.12: Roadmap for the Establishment of the GEO Innovation Fund (for decision). The fund is designed as a targeted, catalytic financing mechanism to address a key gap in the GEO Strategy: supporting the transition from research and pilot phases to sustained operational services.

Unlike traditional funding, the Innovation Fund would focus on time-bound, high-impact support, including user co-design, prototyping, piloting, integration into operations, and handover to institutions. It explicitly excludes basic research funding, long-term operations, and general grant-making, ensuring a narrow and strategic scope.

The fund would rely on voluntary contributions, aiming to attract new funding rather than divert existing GEO Secretariat Operations Fund resources. It would launch only once at least one initial donor ("champion") is secured. Implementation would be phased, emphasizing a pilot approach. Governance would be integrated into existing GEO structures: the Programme Board would provide technical and programmatic leadership, ExCom would provide strategic oversight and approvals, and the Secretariat would handle administration and reporting. Proposals would be selected through a transparent, competitive process.

Key risks identified include potential diversion of funding from the Secretariat Operations Fund, conflicts of interest, and administrative complexity, with associated mitigation measures such as clear scope, independent review, and monitoring.

Feedback from ExCom members (United States, Senegal, South Africa, Australia, Nigeria, European Union, Japan, China, Germany, Italy, Kenya) showed broad and consistent support for establishing the fund as a pilot mechanism, with many recognizing its importance in addressing the research-to-operations (R2O) gap, strengthening delivery of the GWP, improving impact, and diversifying funding sources, including engagement with the private sector.

ExCom members also raised several cautions and recommendations. A key concern was ensuring the fund does not divert resources from GEO Secretariat core operations, requiring close monitoring. Many emphasized the need for clear governance, including transparent roles between the PB, ExCom, and Secretariat, and limiting donor influence on project selection.

Operational capacity was another concern, with calls to ensure the Secretariat has sufficient resources to manage the fund without overburdening existing functions.

Members also stressed the importance of clear criteria, success metrics, and evaluation frameworks, as well as learning from existing incubators. Additional points included ensuring eligibility to existing initiatives and flagships, improving resource mobilization approaches, and ensuring sustainability and long-term viability.

Overall Members supported moving forward, using the pilot phase to test, refine, and evaluate the mechanism before scaling.

Decision: The following document was approved: ExCom68-12: Roadmap for the Establishment of the GEO Innovation Fund (for decision), noting the establishment is on a pilot basis and its dependency on the approved revision of the RoP (Section 10 – Annex D).

8.3 Feasibility, Sustainability and Resources Plan for the GEO Infrastructure Operations

Ms Bente Bye, representing the GEO Infrastructure Development Task Team (GIDTT), presented the ExCom-68.13: Feasibility, Sustainability and Resources Plan for the GEO Infrastructure Operations (for discussion), in response to ExCom Action 67.14[1].

Highlighted the fragmentation of Earth observation data and presented the GEO Infrastructure as a modular system connecting providers and users to improve access and usability, centered on the GEO Knowledge Hub (GKH) with marketplace features. Emphasized its foundation in open data and coordination principles, and its flexibility to adapt to emerging technologies like AI while strengthening GEO's role in supporting informed decision-making.

Members broadly supported the vision of a modular, user-oriented GEO Infrastructure. The GKH was highlighted as a key component enabling knowledge sharing and improved access for users, including researchers, practitioners, and decision-makers.

Several ExCom members, including France, Kenya, China, and South Africa, emphasized the infrastructure's importance for supporting national capacities, enabling data-driven decision-making, and advancing GEO's "Earth Intelligence for All" strategy. The potential for countries to adopt similar models at national level was also noted. At the same time, members raised several concerns. The European Commission, Germany, and Japan called for greater clarity on the intended user base, user needs, and how these are reflected in the design. They stressed the importance of stronger user engagement and outreach to ensure the infrastructure delivers tangible value. Questions were also raised about the

[1] ExCom Action 67.14: GIDTT, supported by the GEO Secretariat, will develop the feasibility and sustainability aspects of the Implementation Plan and ensure the integration of documented user needs. A detailed breakdown of the costs related to the Plan will also be prepared to inform ExCom deliberations on its financial sustainability.

integration of legacy components such as GEODAB with newer elements, and how emerging technologies like AI will be incorporated.

The proposed annual cost of approximately CHF 572,000 prompted discussion on funding mechanisms, with support for a mix of earmarked member contributions, voluntary funding, and in-kind support. Several ExCom members cautioned that reliance solely on voluntary contributions would be insufficient for a core GEO capability. Overall, ExCom members expressed strong support for continued development of the GEO Infrastructure, while underscoring the need for clearer user definition, technical articulation, and a stable, long-term funding model.

9 SESSION 9: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 Secretariat Director Recruitment Process (term commencing 1 July 2027)

This agenda item was discussed during Session 7. The following decisions and outcomes were agreed:

Decision: The following document was reclassified from "for decision" to "for discussion": ExCom-68.14: Secretariat Director Recruitment Process.

Action 68.8: The Lead Co-Chair and GEO Secretariat will revise and resubmit to ExCom document ExCom-68.14 before 30 March 2026, ahead of the ExCom intersessional meeting on 13 April 2026, with a view to finalise the approval of the Secretariat Director Recruitment Process while ensuring consistency with the ongoing Rules of Procedure revision.

Action 68.9: The Secretariat will issue a reminder for nominations to ExCom, inviting Regional Caucuses to nominate 1–2 panel members from among ExCom members (including Observer governments). Nominations should be submitted to the Secretariat by 3 April, in advance of the intersessional meeting on 13 April.

9.2 Approval of new POs and Associates

The GEO Secretariat presented ExCom-68.15: Proposed New POs and Associates (for decision).

Decision: The following document was approved: ExCom-68.15: Proposed New POs and Associates (for decision).

The following entities were approved as Participating Organizations:

- ACTRIS;
- WOCAT.

The following entities were approved as Associates:

- High Tide Intelligence;
- Open Oceans Global.

9.3 Review of Action Items

The GEO Secretariat reviewed the action items from Day 2 (Sessions 7-9), including the updates agreed to the timelines associated with the Rules of Procedure and Secretariat Director Recruitment Process items. These were confirmed by those present as captured in this report.

9.4 Any Other Business

10th AfriGEO Symposium

Mr Godstime James (Nigeria) updated on preparations for the 10th AfriGEO Symposium, which Nigeria will host in Abuja from 5–8 October 2026. Reported that key organizational steps have already been taken, including the establishment of national coordination structures, engagement with the AfriGEO Secretariat, and consultations with stakeholders across government, research institutions, and the private sector. Planning is ongoing to position the Symposium as a major continental platform for Earth observation collaboration, innovation, and policy dialogue.

Nigeria reaffirmed its strong commitment to delivering a high-impact event that will strengthen the GEO community across Africa. The symposium will take place during Nigeria's National Space Week (4–10 October 2026), an annual event promoting space science, Earth observation applications, youth engagement, and industry participation. Integrating the symposium with Space Week is expected to enhance visibility and participation. Nigeria concluded by inviting members to attend and mark their calendars.

9.5 Closing Remarks

The Lead Co-Chair thanked ExCom members for two full days of substantive discussion, noting both the substantial advancements made, and that the April 13 ExCom intersessional meeting will act as a key next step in preparation towards the GEO-21 Plenary.

Closing remarks from other Co-Chairs and the Secretariat Director underscored the constructive spirit of the meeting and the importance of carrying this momentum forward into the Plenary and related governance processes.