

Draft Report of GEO-21 Plenary

Thursday, 28 May 2026

1 SESSION 1: OPENING SESSION

1.1 Welcome and opening remarks from the European Union¹, GEO Lead Co-Chair

Joanna Drake, Deputy Director-General, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, European Commission, welcomed participants to the GEO-21 Plenary and reflected on progress since the adoption of the GEO Post-2025 Work Programme and discussion of the Strategy Implementation Plan at GEO-20. She highlighted new European Union (EU) investments supporting Earth Intelligence solutions through Horizon Europe, Copernicus, and international partnerships. Drake also reviewed progress made during the EU's tenure as GEO Lead Co-Chair, including governance reforms, strengthened Executive Committee engagement, and implementation of the GEO Work Programme. She reaffirmed the EU's commitment to advancing Earth Intelligence for All.

1.2 Opening remarks from China, GEO Co-Chair

Jiachang Chen, Vice Minister, Ministry of Science and Technology, China, delivered opening remarks by video message. He highlighted the growing role of Earth Intelligence in addressing global challenges and reviewed China's contributions to implementation of the GEO Post-2025 Strategy, regional coordination through the Asia-Oceania GEO (AOGEO), and the provision of Earth observation data and services for disaster response and agricultural monitoring. Chen noted China's continued commitment to international cooperation, capacity development, open scientific collaboration, and the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and Earth observation technologies.

1.3 Opening remarks from South Africa, GEO Co-Chair

Humbulani Mudau, Chief Executive Officer, South African National Space Agency, South Africa, thanked the EU, fellow GEO Co-Chairs, Executive Committee, and GEO Secretariat for their leadership and support. He welcomed progress on GEO governance, infrastructure development, and the development of the GEO In-situ Data Strategy, and emphasized the importance of innovation, partnerships, capacity development, and inclusive participation in addressing climate change, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity loss, and sustainable development challenges.

¹ European Union (EU) as represented by the European Commission

1.4 Opening remarks from the United States, GEO Co-Chair

Taylor Jordan, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Environmental Observation and Prediction, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), United States, thanked the EU and the GEO Secretariat for organizing the GEO-21 Plenary. He highlighted the value of Earth observations in supporting disaster preparedness, resource management, economic growth, and public safety, and emphasized the importance of practical cooperation, measurable outcomes, innovation, and private sector engagement. Jordan also noted the GEO Impact Assessment Toolkit as an important tool for demonstrating the socio-economic benefits of Earth observation investments.

1.5 Opening remarks from the GEO Secretariat

Yana Gevorgyan, GEO Secretariat Director, welcomed participants to the GEO-21 Plenary and reflected on progress of the GEO Post-2025 Strategy and Work Programme. She emphasized the importance of maintaining GEO's agility and adaptability while accelerating delivery of impactful Earth Intelligence solutions, highlighted opportunities on innovative funding and access to very high-resolution data, and encouraged Members and partners to strengthen collaboration, inclusivity, and investment across GEO activities.

1.6 Approval of Plenary Agenda

The GEO-21 Plenary agenda was presented by the Lead Co-Chair. The Maldives requested clarification regarding previously submitted proposed revisions to the GEO Rules of Procedure. The Lead Co-Chair noted that this matter would be addressed under agenda item 4.3.

The Plenary agenda ([GEO-21-1.6\(Rev3\) Plenary Draft Agenda](#)) was approved as circulated.

1.7 Approval of Draft Report of GEO-20 Plenary

The Draft Report of the GEO-20 Plenary ([GEO-21-1.7 Draft Report of GEO-20 Plenary](#)) was approved as circulated.

1.8 Presentation of new Members, Participating Organizations and Associates

Steven Parkinson, Chief of Staff, GEO Secretariat, presented new Members, Participating Organizations, and Associates that joined GEO since the GEO-20 Plenary in May 2025.

The Plenary welcomed Togo as a new GEO Member, bringing the total number of GEO Members to 117 (116 countries and the European Union as represented by the European Commission).

The Plenary also welcomed five new Participating Organizations: Pacific GIS and Remote Sensing Council (PGISRC), Svalbard Integrated Arctic Earth Observing System (SIOS), Aerosol, Clouds and Trace Gases Research Infrastructure (ACTRIS), World Overview of

Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT), and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). These bring the total number of Participating Organizations to 163.

The Plenary further welcomed three new Associates: High Tide Intelligence, Open Oceans Global, and Geospatial Information Technologies (KILO), bringing the total number of GEO Associates to 27.

(Document: [GEO-21-Info-1.8\(Rev1\) New Members, Participating Organizations and Associates](#))

1.9 Intervention by Togo as new GEO Member

Yoma Baka, Director General, National Civil Protection Agency, Ministry of Security and Civil Protection, Togo, and Manuel Ntumba, Executive Vice President, Tod'Aérs Global Network, highlighted the significance of Togo's joining GEO and underscored the country's commitment to strengthening disaster risk reduction, climate resilience, early warning systems, and evidence-based decision-making through Earth Intelligence and geospatial technologies. They outlined ongoing cooperation with international partners, including the World Bank Group, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), United Nations agencies, and regional organizations. Togo reaffirmed their readiness to actively contribute to GEO activities and regional engagement through AfriGEO.

2 SESSION 2: TRANSFORMATIONAL IMPACT IN ACTION: PROGRAMME RESULTS DRIVING EARTH INTELLIGENCE INVESTMENT

2.1 Panel Session

Madeeha Bajwa, Chief Work Programme Coordinator, GEO Secretariat, moderated a panel discussion showcasing examples of GEO Work Programme activities delivering operational Earth Intelligence and transformational societal impact.

Antje Hecheltjen, Co-Chair, GEO Land Degradation Neutrality (GEO-LDN), highlighted GEO-LDN's work with countries, scientific institutions, and technical partners to transform Earth observations data into practical decision-support tools for sustainable land management. She presented a case study from Ghana, where satellite data and local knowledge were used to identify coastal erosion risks and support coastal protection, land-use planning, and community resilience efforts. The initiative contributed to the protection of approximately 80 kilometres of coastline and has since expanded to other locations facing similar challenges.

Angelica Gutierrez, Programme Director, GEO Global Water Sustainability (GEOGLOWS), highlighted the use of hydrological forecasting services to support decision-making during extreme weather events. She described how GEOGLOWS forecasts informed reservoir management decisions in Honduras during Hurricanes Eta and Iota, helping authorities manage flood risks and reduce impacts, resulting in an estimated \$1.6 billion in avoided damage and 40 per cent lower losses than the comparable

Hurricane Mitch event in 1998. She also highlighted the use of GEOGLOWS forecasts during Ecuador's 2024 drought, where hydrological information supported energy management decisions during a period of nationwide electricity shortages. She emphasized the importance of trusted forecasts in supporting operational decision-making and crisis management.

Michele Melchiorri, Co-Chair, GEO Human Planet Initiative (HPI), highlighted the role of Earth observation-derived population and settlement data in supporting disaster management, urban planning, and sustainable development. He noted the inclusion of Earth observation products in the 2025 edition of the United Nations World Urbanization Prospects and highlighted collaboration with the World Bank that enabled the identification and characterization of approximately 15,000 previously unmapped towns in Sub-Saharan Africa. He emphasized the growing shift for HPI from demonstrating technological capabilities to responding directly to user needs and policy requirements.

Lisa-Maria Rebelo, Managing Director, Digital Earth Africa (DE Africa), highlighted the institutionalization of DE Africa services within government planning and decision-making processes. She described how DE Africa's Coastlines Monitoring Service has been integrated into Egypt's coastal and water management systems and is supporting climate adaptation planning in Senegal, supporting operational monitoring of more than 2,000 kilometres of coastline. She noted growing adoption of DE Africa services by governments, private sector entities, and civil society organizations across the continent (including government users from 35 African countries and over 100 private sector entities accessing the platform in the past six months alone), demonstrating the transition of Earth observation data from a technical resource to operational public infrastructure.

Wenjiang Huang, Lead, GEO Pest and Disease Risks and Surveillance (GEO-PDRS), highlighted the use of Earth observation, meteorological information, and AI to support early warning and forecasting of agricultural pests and diseases. He noted that GEO-PDRS services have been deployed in approximately 20 countries across Africa and Asia through collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and other partners. He noted reductions in pesticide use of more than 20 per cent, alongside a 15 per cent increase in biodiversity, and improvements in crop yields through targeted interventions informed by Earth Intelligence.

The panel discussion subsequently focused on the factors enabling successful implementation and scaling of Earth Intelligence services. Speakers emphasized the importance of demonstrating impact, building trust through long-term partnerships, ensuring country ownership, and strengthening collaboration across institutions and sectors. The value of operational infrastructure, interoperable data systems, capacity development, South-South cooperation, and user-centered approaches in moving initiatives from pilot projects to sustainable operational services was highlighted.

During a discussion on investment and sustainability, Gutierrez highlighted the return on investment generated through avoided disaster losses and noted recent support from major partners, including Google.org. Rebelo outlined DE Africa's approach to measuring impact through adoption, institutionalization, and scalability, citing engagement across all 54 African countries through its continental cloud platform. Hecheltjen emphasized

the importance of continuity, co-development, and long-term engagement with countries. Melchiorri highlighted the value of partnerships in integrating diverse datasets and supporting international policy frameworks. Huang emphasized the importance of addressing end-user needs, strengthening partnerships, and expanding access through localized tools and services.

In their concluding remarks, panelists issued a series of calls to action. Huang called for increased investment, international cooperation, and responsible use of AI to strengthen pest and disease monitoring. Rebelo encouraged partnerships that combine Earth observation, AI, and public sector implementation to expand access to Earth Intelligence. Melchiorri called for stronger support to position the GEO HPI as GEO's flagship on settlements and population. Gutierrez called for the establishment of a sustainable funding mechanism for global hydrological forecasting services as essential public infrastructure rather than support dependent on project cycles. Hecheltjen called for increased support from Parties and partners to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) to sustain GEO-LDN activities and regional support mechanisms. Bajwa concluded by encouraging support for impact assessment and valuation efforts, including the GEO Value Toolkit, to better demonstrate the benefits of Earth Intelligence investments in the GEO Work Programme going forward.

2.2 Interventions from the Floor

Senegal highlighted its national implementation of GEO-LDN tools for land-use planning and restoration activities, collaboration with DE Africa on coastal monitoring, and growing interest in GEOGLOWS forecasting services. They emphasized the importance of sustained investment, African ownership, and partnerships.

Colombia welcomed the contributions of GEOGLOWS to water management and risk reduction and reaffirmed support for the GEO HPI and its applications for diverse communities.

China thanked Members, Participating Organizations, and experts contributing to the GEO Work Programme and highlighted national support for GEO-PDRS and the GEO HPI. They also presented examples of Earth observation projects supporting karst monitoring, mining impact assessment, and South-South cooperation.

Togo welcomed opportunities for collaboration through GEO and expressed its readiness to participate in pilot projects and case studies, highlighting its integrated national approach involving multiple ministries.

Ghana highlighted GEO's role in supporting national priorities related to AI, agriculture, and population planning. They welcomed stronger engagement with GEOGLOWS, GEO-PDRS, the GEO HPI, DE Africa, and GEO-LDN, including through academic partnerships and capacity-development programmes.

France emphasized the importance of the GEO Work Programme in supporting the maturation of initiatives and highlighted GEO-LDN as a strong model for collaboration

with multilateral environmental agreement processes. They also noted the contributions of other GEO initiatives, including GEO-TREES and GEO-Wetlands.

Japan highlighted the importance of the GEO Water Strategy and the Earth Observation for the Sustainable Development Goals (EO4SDG) initiative and emphasized the need for cross-cutting frameworks that integrate Earth observation, AI, and machine learning to support sustainable development and decision-making.

Greece highlighted national use of GEO HPI products in combination with statistical and Copernicus datasets to support decision-making in several cities and welcomed the flexibility of the GEO Work Programme's evergreen approach.

Paraguay emphasized GEO's value as a platform for collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and practical action, and expressed strong support for GEOGLOWS and growing collaboration between GEO and WMO on hydrological services.

Nigeria highlighted the contributions of DE Africa and GEOGLOWS to operational decision-making and welcomed ongoing collaboration on water intelligence initiatives, including activities supporting institutional coordination and information flows.

The **United States** welcomed progress achieved by GEO flagship initiatives, congratulated GEOGLOWS on attaining flagship status, and expressed support for the GEO Innovation Fund as a mechanism for accelerating innovation and impact across the GEO Work Programme.

3 SESSION 3: FROM PARTICIPATION TO PARTNERSHIP: ADVANCING MEMBER ENGAGEMENT ACROSS REGIONS

3.1 Panel Session

Sara Venturini, Chief of Member Services, GEO Secretariat, moderated a panel discussion on the role of GEO Members and Regional GEOs in advancing Earth Intelligence through investment, coordination, and partnerships.

Dirk Engelbart, Director, Division Meteorology and German Meteorological Service (DWD), Federal Ministry of Transport, Germany, highlighted the importance of high-level mandates, user engagement, international partnerships, and long-term sustainability in translating scientific knowledge into operational impact. He emphasized the value of GEO initiatives such as GEO-LDN and GEO Global Agricultural Monitoring (GEOGLAM) initiative in responding to mandates from international conventions and supporting evidence-based decision-making. He also underscored the continued importance of the Copernicus programme and its contribution to GEO activities through open data and operational services.

Melanie Hutchinson, International Geospatial Lead, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), United Kingdom, outlined how strategic investments in GEO initiatives contribute to national priorities related to biodiversity, food security, resilience,

and economic growth. She highlighted the United Kingdom's support for GEOGLAM, GEO BON, the Global Ecosystems Atlas, and Digital Earth Pacific, emphasizing the value of international collaboration, biodiversity monitoring, ecosystem intelligence, and Earth observation-based decision-making in addressing global environmental challenges.

Xiaohan Liao, Director-General, Key Laboratory of Low-Altitude Geographic Information and Air Routes, Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC), and Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research (IGSNRR), Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), China, emphasized the role of governments, research institutions, and enterprises in advancing Earth Intelligence for All. He highlighted China's support for GEO Work Programme activities through its International Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation Programme, including support for agricultural monitoring and the GEO HPI. He noted that previous funding had supported 30 GEO-related international projects and announced that China is preparing a new round of GEO-focused project funding dedicated to GEO. He also highlighted plans to provide computing capacity and cloud resources to strengthen GEO implementation activities and expand access to advanced Earth observation technologies, particularly for developing countries.

Matthew Adepoju, Director-General, National Space Research and Development Agency (NASRDA), Nigeria, highlighted preparations for the 10th AfriGEO Symposium and welcomed Togo as a new GEO Member. He outlined Nigeria's growing use of Earth observation for climate action, agriculture, environmental monitoring, and implementation of the European Union Deforestation Regulation. He also highlighted investments in national satellite infrastructure and emphasized the role of Earth observation in supporting Nigeria's economic development objectives, food security, and regional cooperation across Africa.

Melany Ramirez, Director of Geospatial Analysis and Climate Change, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN), Guatemala, highlighted the role of AmeriGEO in strengthening regional collaboration, knowledge exchange, and partnership-building across the Americas. She emphasized shared regional challenges related to climate variability, water security, forest loss, and biodiversity conservation, and called for stronger collaboration, interoperability, and data integration. She also presented Guatemala's forthcoming Environmental Information System (SIA) as a platform for improving coordination and information-sharing nationally and across the region.

Thibault Valentin, Policy Officer, Space Cooperation, Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), European Commission, highlighted the EU's support for GEO objectives through international cooperation programmes that strengthen partner countries' capacity to access, integrate, and apply Earth observation data. He presented examples including the Africa-EU Space Partnership Programme, early warning initiatives, Copernicus cooperation activities in Africa, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America, and regional investments in disaster risk reduction, land management, and environmental monitoring. He emphasized the importance of regional approaches in achieving sustainable impact, knowledge transfer, and long-term capacity development.

The discussion highlighted the importance of sustained investment, regional cooperation, data interoperability, institutional coordination, and long-term partnerships in advancing

GEO's mission. Panelists emphasized that Earth Intelligence creates impact when supported by strong governance, user-driven services, open knowledge, and operational implementation mechanisms capable of addressing national and regional priorities.

During a subsequent round of interventions, Engelbart announced Germany's continued support for GEO-LDN through October 2028, including an additional EUR 2 million contribution from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. He highlighted GEO-LDN's role in supporting countries affected by land degradation through capacity development, Earth observation-based monitoring, and evidence-based land-use planning, and called for broader support from GEO Members to ensure the initiative's sustainability beyond 2028.

Hutchinson confirmed new United Kingdom support for GEO BON and the Global Ecosystems Atlas over the next three years, alongside continued support for GEOGLAM and Digital Earth Pacific. She emphasized the role of these initiatives in advancing biodiversity monitoring, ecosystem intelligence, resilience, and international collaboration.

Liao announced that, with support from the Ministry of Science and Technology of China, a full-time staff member (P-3 level) would be seconded to the GEO Secretariat at the end of 2026. He noted that the position would strengthen engagement with Members, support implementation of GEO priorities, and enhance coordination and partnerships across the GEO community. Yana Gevorgyan, GEO Secretariat Director, welcomed the announcement and emphasized that the secondment would contribute to strengthening engagement with GEO Participating Organizations and Associates, reflecting the Secretariat's role in supporting the full GEO community.

Ramirez invited Members and partners to actively contribute to AmeriGEO Week 2026 and announced that registration would open in the coming months.

Adepoju reaffirmed Nigeria's commitment to GEO and AfriGEO and invited Members and partners to participate in the 10th AfriGEO Symposium, to be held in Abuja, Nigeria, in October 2026. A promotional video for the Symposium was shown.

3.2 Interventions from the Floor

Japan announced that the 18th AOGEO Symposium would be held in Tsukuba, Japan, from 15–17 December 2026 and reaffirmed its commitment to promoting Earth observation collaboration across the Asia-Oceania region.

South Africa emphasized that GEO's long-term success depends on regional engagement, effective partnerships, resource mobilization, and national and regional coordination mechanisms that strengthen sustainability, data integration, and Earth Intelligence.

Mongolia highlighted preparations for the 17th Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the UNCCD, to be held in Ulaanbaatar in August 2026 under the theme "Restoring Land, Restoring Hope." They invited GEO Members and partners to contribute Earth

observation expertise, AI applications, drought monitoring, and early warning capabilities to support implementation of the conference outcomes.

France highlighted support for regional GEO activities, including the Community Geospatial 2025 initiative in the Pacific and capacity-development activities in Central Africa through the One Forest Vision initiative. They emphasized the role of open science, digital transformation, and partnerships in forest and wetland conservation.

Türkiye highlighted preparations for the forthcoming United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP31 to be held in Antalya in November 2026, and invited the GEO community to contribute Earth observation expertise to climate action and resilience efforts. They also invited Members and partners to participate in the 77th International Astronautical Congress, to be held in Antalya in October 2026.

Colombia encouraged GEO Members, Participating Organizations, and Regional GEOs to engage in AmeriGEO Week 2026, highlighting Central America's shared environmental challenges and the importance of regional cooperation to advance resilience and sustainable development.

China highlighted the Fengyun Meteorological Satellite Programme and the Mazu Early Warning System, which supports the United Nations Early Warnings for All initiative. They reaffirmed commitment to leveraging GEO to strengthen scientific cooperation, disaster resilience, and sustainable development.

Ghana welcomed the new commitments announced during the session and emphasized the importance of national ownership and sustainable financing mechanisms. They highlighted ongoing discussions with partners to support long-term capacity development and GEO-LDN-related activities.

Nigeria highlighted partnerships with Chinese and European partners supporting precision agriculture, water resource management, disaster management, and climate-smart agricultural services through Earth observation applications.

The International Astronautical Federation (IAF) emphasized action-oriented partnerships and reaffirmed its commitment to advancing climate-related space applications through its global events. They announced the postponement of the Global Space Conference on Climate Change (GLOC 2026) and invited the GEO community to participate in the 77th International Astronautical Congress in Antalya, Türkiye.

In closing remarks, Venturini thanked the speakers and participants for their contributions and emphasized the importance of sustained cooperation, regional coordination, and investment in implementation.

4 SESSION 4: GEO PLENARY BUSINESS

The session was chaired by Franz Immler, Head of the Environmental Observation Sector, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD), European Commission. The

session focused on an update by the GEO Programme Board on the GEO Work Programme (including the GEO Innovation Fund), a discussion on the GEO Infrastructure Implementation Plan, approval of the GEO In-situ Data Strategy, approval of the revised GEO Rules of Procedure, approval of the 2026 Secretariat Budget, and approval of the Executive Committee membership for 2026.

4.1 Presentation by the GEO Programme Board: update on the GEO Work Programme

Evangelos Gerasopoulos, Vice-President of the National Observatory of Athens (NOA) and Director of the Institute for Environmental Research and Sustainable Development (IERSD/NOA), Greece, provided an update on the continued development of the Post-2025 GEO Work Programme (Phase 2) with activities submitting detailed workplans. He highlighted progress in operationalizing the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and introduced the differentiated reporting by activity category, designed to support continuous learning, adaptation, and reporting across GEO Work Programme activities.

Amos Kabo-Bah, Associate Professor and Dean International Relations Office, University of Energy and Natural Resources, Ghana, presented the proposed GEO Innovation Fund roadmap ([GEO-21-Info-4.1: Roadmap for the Establishment of the GEO Innovation Fund](#)) approved by the Executive Committee at its 68th Meeting in March 2026. The Fund is intended to serve as a catalytic financing mechanism to support GEO Work Programme activities, strengthen implementation, and mobilize additional resources for priority initiatives. He emphasized that sustained financing remains essential for achieving the objectives of the Post-2025 Strategy and invited the Plenary to support adoption of the related amendments to the GEO Rules of Procedure that will allow the operationalization of the Fund and to support the launch of the Fund through voluntary contributions, partnerships, and secondments to enable an initial pilot call and associated implementation capacity.

Interventions from the Floor

The **United States** welcomed progress on Phase 2 implementation of the GEO Work Programme and the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, noting that systematic reporting would strengthen GEO's ability to communicate its value and impact to Members and stakeholders.

China expressed appreciation for the work of the Programme Board and noted that the GEO Work Programme had become the primary implementation mechanism for achieving the objectives of GEO's third decadal strategy. They welcomed the proposed Innovation Fund roadmap and encouraged Members and Participating Organizations to provide dedicated support to GEO Work Programme activities. They also shared national examples demonstrating how Earth Intelligence supports integrated natural resource management and public services.

South Africa welcomed the Innovation Fund development and emphasized the importance of sustainable financing mechanisms to support GEO priorities.

The Plenary took note of the update on the GEO Work Programme and the proposed roadmap for the GEO Innovation Fund ([GEO-21-Info-4.1: Roadmap for the Establishment of the GEO Innovation Fund](#)).

4.2 Presentation by the Data and Knowledge Working Group

4.2.1 Approval of the GEO In-Situ Data Strategy

Helen Graves, Scientific Officer, European Plate Observing System, European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC), presented the GEO In-situ Data Strategy ([GEO-21-4.2.2\(Rev1\) GEO In-situ Data Strategy](#)). She emphasized the critical role of in-situ and ground-based observations in supporting Earth Intelligence and highlighted the challenges posed by fragmented data systems, inconsistent standards, heterogeneous formats, and data gaps. The strategy seeks to improve coordination across providers, strengthen interoperability, identify critical data gaps, and enhance the discoverability and usability of in-situ observations across GEO.

Following the presentation the Lead Co Chair (Franz Immler) noted that Plenary members had received an updated version of the GEO In-situ Data Strategy on 26 May, following concerns recently raised by one GEO Executive Committee (ExCom) member after the strategy had been endorsed at the ExCom's 67th meeting in October 2025. While acknowledging that the late revision process was not ideal, Immler stressed the importance of securing Plenary approval to enable implementation of the strategy and strengthen commitments to improving in situ observing networks and data accessibility. Immler highlighted that limited access to in situ data remains a significant barrier to developing integrated Earth Intelligence, which depends on combining space-based and ground-based observations. Speaking as EU representative, Immler emphasized that, although references to climate change were removed to accommodate consensus, this did not diminish the scientific evidence for climate change or its impacts, and supported the compromise to enable adoption of the strategy.

Interventions from the Floor

China welcomed the strategy and expressed support for its implementation.

Italy thanked the Data and Knowledge Working Group for its efforts in developing the strategy and welcomed the collaborative process that led to its preparation.

Ecuador expressed support for both Earth Intelligence for All and the GEO In-situ Data Strategy.

South Africa supported adoption of the strategy and emphasized the importance of continued investment in regional observation networks and capacity development.

Colombia emphasized the importance of maintaining a balanced and inclusive approach across the GEO community and expressed support for the strategy.

The Integrated Carbon Observing System (ICOS) highlighted the essential role of long-term, high-precision in-situ greenhouse gas observations in supporting climate projections, calibration, and validation of satellite-derived products, noting that satellite observations cannot function effectively without robust ground-based measurements.

The International Training Centre (University of Twente Faculty of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation) noted the integration of its Digital Learning Platform with the GEO Knowledge Hub and reaffirmed its commitment to supporting GEO's data and knowledge ecosystem.

The Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC) supported approval of the document.

Following the interventions, the GEO In-situ Data Strategy ([GEO-21-4.2.2\(Rev1\) GEO In-situ Data Strategy](#)) was approved.

4.2.2 Demonstration by the GEO Infrastructure Development Task Team: GEO Infrastructure Implementation Plan

Bente Lilja Bye, Chief Executive Officer, BLB, and Paola de Salvo, GEO Infrastructure Coordinator, GEO Secretariat, presented the GEO Infrastructure Implementation Plan ([GEO-21-4.2.1 GEO Infrastructure Implementation Plan](#)) and demonstrated new elements and functionality of the GEO Knowledge Hub. They highlighted efforts to consolidate access to GEO data, knowledge resources, tools, training materials, and community-generated content through a more integrated and user-oriented infrastructure.

The presenters emphasized the importance of preserving curated Earth observation resources, improving discoverability and reuse of knowledge products, and connecting users to existing GEO capabilities through interoperable platforms. Examples included knowledge packages developed by GEO partners, integration with external data platforms, training resources, Jupyter notebooks, and the GEO Indigenous Alliance Knowledge Hub.

Interventions from the Floor

France thanked those involved in developing the Infrastructure Implementation Plan, and emphasized the importance of continuity, long-term sustainability, and preservation of knowledge assets.

Japan expressed appreciation to the GEO Infrastructure Development Task Team and proposed that the strategy be reviewed regularly to reflect rapid developments in AI and digital technologies.

Ghana highlighted opportunities to use the GEO Infrastructure to support youth engagement and capacity development initiatives.

Nigeria welcomed efforts to improve accessibility and noted the potential benefits for disaster risk reduction, food security, resilience, and other national priorities.

GÉANT emphasized the importance of research and education networks as enabling infrastructure for scientific collaboration and highlighted the evolving role of digital infrastructure in supporting distributed scientific ecosystems.

The Plenary took note of the GEO Infrastructure Implementation Plan ([GEO-21-4.2.1 GEO Infrastructure Implementation Plan](#)).

4.3 Presentation by the Rules of Procedure Task Force: Approval of the Revised GEO Rules of Procedure

Yuqi Bai, Professor in Earth and Space Informatics at Tsinghua University and Co-Chair of the Rules of Procedure (RoP) Task Force, presented progress on the review of the GEO Rules of Procedure ([GEO-21-4.3 Revised GEO Rules of Procedure](#)).

He noted completion of the Task Force's first phase of work in 2025: approval of its terms of reference and the RoP revision methodology. The second phase, conducted during the fourth quarter of 2025 and first quarter of 2026, included GEO's first open call for amendment proposals, resulting in approximately 185 submissions from Members, Participating Organizations and governance bodies, which were reviewed and consolidated into recommendations. At its 68th meeting in March 2026, the ExCom decided to defer a comprehensive revision of the RoP and instead focus on a limited set of urgent and critical amendments for approval at the GEO-21 Plenary. A fully revised RoP, based on a review of all remaining amendment proposals, would be presented for approval to the GEO-22 Plenary in 2027.

Franz Immler, Task Force Co-Chair, presented the key amendment proposals. Proposed finance revisions clarify the relationship between the GEO Trust Fund, the Secretariat Operations Budget, and activity-specific funds, establish clearer reporting mechanisms, and create a governance framework that can accommodate financial mechanisms or pooled funds such as the Innovation Fund. Amendments relating to the Secretariat Director strengthen and clarify the Director recruitment process by defining selection procedures, required experience, the role of the selection panel, and the ExCom's responsibility for appointing the final candidate.

Interventions from the Floor

The United States welcomed the work of the Task Force and supported adoption of the proposed revisions while encouraging continued work on more complex governance issues over the coming year.

China emphasized that revisions to the Rules of Procedure should be based on broad consensus and thanked the Task Force for its efforts. They encouraged all Members to remain engaged in the review process as work continues.

The Maldives thanked the GEO Secretariat and the Task Force for their transparent and inclusive approach. They highlighted proposals submitted on behalf of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), including suggestions relating to representation within GEO governance structures. They emphasized the importance of ensuring that the perspectives

and priorities of SIDS remain visible and effectively represented within GEO decision-making processes.

Immler noted that only a small subset of the proposed amendments was being presented for approval and confirmed that all remaining proposals would continue to be considered by the Task Force, with the aim of finalising its work and submitting additional amendments for approval at the next Plenary.

The Revised GEO Rules of Procedure ([GEO-21-4.3 Revised GEO Rules of Procedure](#)) was approved.

4.4 Presentation by the GEO Budget Working Group: Approval of the 2026 Secretariat Budget

Jean Dusart, Policy Officer, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD), European Commission, presented the proposed 2026 Interim GEO Secretariat Budget ([GEO-21-4.4\(Rev1\) 2026 Interim GEO Secretariat Budget](#)). He noted that the budget supports the operation of the GEO Secretariat and is developed through consultation with the GEO Budget Working Group and the Executive Committee. He reported that only 14 Members were contributing directly to the GEO Trust Fund in 2026, a figure unchanged from the previous year, and highlighted the challenging funding environment. He welcomed the continued support of Participating Organizations and Associates and emphasized the need for ongoing fundraising efforts and prudent resource management.

The GEO Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2024 ([GEO-21-Info-4.4 GEO Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2024](#)) were also provided, for information in the Plenary documentation.

Interventions from the Floor

France approved the budget and noted that the significant value of in-kind contributions provided by Members was not fully reflected in the financial presentation.

Japan reaffirmed its commitment to GEO and announced a contribution of CHF 514,300 to the GEO Secretariat, in addition to ongoing secondments and approximately CHF 1.5 million in in-kind support for GEO-related activities. They also highlighted support for disaster risk reduction projects in Nigeria and Ghana.

China approved the budget, confirmed that it would maintain its current financial contribution, and indicated that it would explore opportunities to increase future support to the GEO Trust Fund. They encouraged other Members to contribute additional resources to ensure stable Secretariat operations.

Sweden announced that it would continue providing support to GEO in 2026.

South Africa emphasized the importance of broadening and diversifying GEO's funding base, recognizing in-kind and extra-budgetary contributions, and ensuring continued

support for infrastructure, capacity development, women, youth, and developing countries. They reaffirmed its support for both GEO and AfriGEO activities.

The 2026 Interim GEO Secretariat Budget ([GEO-21-4.4\(Rev1\) 2026 Interim GEO Secretariat Budget](#)) was approved.

4.5 Presentation of Executive Committee Members 2026: Approval of New Members

Steven Parkinson, GEO Secretariat, presented the proposed Executive Committee membership for 2026 ([GEO-21-4.5\(Rev1\) Executive Committee Members 2026](#)). He recalled that the GEO-20 Plenary had approved amendments expanding representation from the Africa and Americas regional caucuses on the ExCom, and noted that these changes would take effect in 2026.

Interventions from the Floor

Costa Rica expressed appreciation for the opportunity to participate in GEO governance and highlighted GEO's value as a platform for international collaboration, sustainable development, and Earth Intelligence. They emphasized the importance of strengthening connections between GEO initiatives and national priorities and encouraged continued Member engagement and financial support.

China welcomed the proposed composition and emphasized the importance of ensuring that developing countries continue to have a strong voice within GEO governance.

The Executive Committee membership for 2026 ([GEO-21-4.5\(Rev1\) Executive Committee Members 2026](#)) was approved.

5 SESSION 5: CLOSING SESSION

5.1 Review of Plenary Decisions

Steven Parkinson, GEO Secretariat, reviewed the Plenary decisions.

5.2 Handover of GEO Lead Co-Chair

Franz Immler reflected on the EU's tenure as GEO Lead Co-Chair, highlighting progress made in advancing GEO priorities, strengthening governance processes, and supporting implementation of the GEO Post-2025 Strategy and GEO Work Programme. He thanked the European Commission team, the GEO Co-Chairs, the Executive Committee, and the GEO Secretariat for their collaboration and support throughout the year. He also noted the importance of continuing work on the revision of the Rules of Procedure, sustainable financing, GEO Infrastructure, and the proposed GEO Innovation Fund. On behalf of the EU, he then formally handed over the GEO Lead Co-Chair role to the United States.

Taylor Jordan accepted the role of GEO Lead Co-Chair on behalf of the United States. He thanked the GEO Secretariat for its successful organization of the GEO-21 Plenary and

expressed appreciation to the EU for its leadership over the past year. He welcomed Togo as GEO's newest Member, together with the new Participating Organizations and Associates that had joined since GEO-20. Reaffirming the United States' commitment to GEO, he emphasized the importance of delivering practical and measurable outcomes through Earth observation and Earth Intelligence. Jordan highlighted the role of innovation, including stronger engagement with the private sector, in enhancing resilience, public safety, and evidence-based decision-making. He concluded by expressing his commitment to working closely with the GEO Co-Chairs, Members, Participating Organizations, Associates, and the GEO Secretariat over the coming year to advance GEO's mission and strategic objectives.

The GEO-21 Plenary was adjourned.