Draft Report of GEO-19 Plenary

This Document is submitted to Plenary for decision.

Wednesday, 8 November 2023

1 OPENING SESSION

1.1 Welcome Address

This session, which took place on Wednesday, 8 November, was moderated by Ayanda Allie, South African journalist and news anchor. Lead GEO Co-Chair Mmboneni Muofhe, Deputy Director General, Department of Science and Innovation, South Africa, welcomed participants to GEO-19. He underscored the theme "The Earth Talks" highlighting biodiversity loss and extreme events everywhere are the Earth's way of communicating. He stressed that the outcome of not listening will be devastating and emphasized the role of citizen science to ensure the participation of all citizens.

Buti Manamela, Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, South Africa, drew attention to how GEO has changed since the meeting in Canberra, Australia, in 2019, having "truly grown in international representation and accessibility." He highlighted the strengthened voices of small island states, the expanded role of the private sector and small and medium enterprises, and the participation of young people, adding that GEO was created precisely to foster access and collaboration.

GEO Co-Chair Jing Zhao, Director General, National Remote Sensing Center, China, expressed her country's willingness to collaborate with all partners in the GEO community. She described African experiences through a China-Africa center through which high-resolution imagery are shared with 23 African countries. She further elaborated on the open sharing of multi-spectral data towards the world's first remote sensing atlas, which covers 147 cities in 105 countries and provides data sets of forest cover and Antarctic ice cover through joint global ecosystem observation and research cooperation.

GEO Co-Chair Joanna Drake, Deputy Director-General, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, European Commission, noted that current disturbing events can cause the world to drift apart and expressed her gratitude "to be among friends" since the GEO community is a forum for peaceful collaboration. Describing the GEO community's values of free and open access to all people as an important ingredient towards achieving sustainable development, she highlighted the EU's Copernicus system as an integral tool in the GEO toolkit.

GEO Co-Chair Richard Spinrad, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Administrator, United States, said GEO-19 provides the opportunity to take the lofty objectives captured in the GEO Post-2025 Strategy and bring them into action. He described the BioSCape collaboration between the United States and South Africa's University of Cape Town as an example of empowering local communities to literally save lives and for governments and entities to meet national and international treaties' obligations.

Yana Gevorgyan, Director, GEO Secretariat, highlighted how far GEO has come since the original vision was adopted in 2005, especially regarding data sharing and putting people on the map so resources are made available to them. She reminded that this seminal GEO Week will see the adoption of the Post-2025 Strategy for GEO that builds on 18 years of work will go beyond delivering data to delivering "Earth intelligence" to everyone, including through close relations with local communities and intergenerational approaches. Looking forward, she drew attention to the planned Implementation Plan for the Post-2025 Strategy and asked GEO principals to commit politically and financially to turn the GEO vision into an actionable and implementable reality.

1.2 Approval of the Agenda

The agenda, found in Document GEO-19-1.2(Rev3), was approved without comment.

1.3 Approval of the Draft GEO-18 Report

The Draft Report of GEO-18 (Document GEO-19-3), was approved without comment.

1.4 Welcoming new GEO Members and Participating Organizations

Lead GEO Co-Chair Muofhe welcomed Trinidad and Tobago as a new member of GEO, noting this brings the total number of GEO members to 115 (114 Countries and the European Commission). Trinidad and Tobago expressed their appreciation for GEO's work and the country's commitment to its Post-2025 Strategy. They called for greater access to high-resolution satellite imagery, highlighted the importance of including marine areas in the new Global Ecosystems Atlas, and stressed the need to address land-based marine pollution.

The Plenary also welcomed eight new Participating Organizations, bringing the total to 153. These include: Health Solutions Research Inc.; Eratosthenes Centre of Excellence; New World Hope Organisation; UbuntuNet Alliance for Research and Networking; Jokkolabs Banjul; Research Centre of Big Data for Sustainable Development Goals; Asia Pacific Space Cooperation Organisation; and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (Document GEO-19-Info-1.4).

2 POST-2025 STRATEGY

2.1 Post-2025 Strategy

In a session on Wednesday on the GEO Post-2025 Strategy, Alejandro Román, Paraguay Space Agency, and Samantha Burgess, European Centre for Medium-range Weather

Forecasts (ECMWF), Post-2025 Working Group Co-Chairs, opened with reflections on the year-long process that formulated the Strategy.

Burgess noted the Strategy seeks to inspire and guide the work of the GEO community beyond 2025, while reaffirming its commitment to full and open access to Earth observations (EO) data, knowledge and products, and the co-development of services that empower environmental decisions, enable economic opportunities, and promote good governance. Burgess highlighted two new commitments introduced in the Post-2025 Strategy: to pursue global equity in EO, making resources and opportunities available to communities with varying needs and capacities; and to provide not only EO but also "Earth intelligence."

Román shared how this new strategy intends to build on GEO's strengths, expertise, and global network to address the complex issues facing our planet through a unified approach. Reflecting on these attributes and deliberations with the GEO community, Burgess discussed how the Post-2025 Strategy provides a vision for GEO in which "trusted Earth intelligence is universally accessible and empowers society to achieve a sustainable future," and how the Strategy identifies GEO's mission to "co-produce user-driven Earth intelligence solutions by leveraging its unique position."

These presentations were followed by panel interventions.

Sofiia Drozd, National Technical University, Ukraine, emphasized the importance of engaging young people given their fresh view on global problems and acceptance of scientific progress. She stressed the need for skills development and online translation tools to ensure wide access.

Maree Wilson, Space Division, Geoscience Australia, said the fact that the Post-2025 Strategy was developed jointly by the community was "most inspiring." She welcomed the strategy's openness, referred to work with territories in her region on data access, and reassured the Plenary of Australia's commitment to the Strategy and to data sharing.

Titus Letaapo, Sarara Foundation, Kenya, noted that while Indigenous Peoples are caretakers of up to 80% of the world's biodiversity, their value is often overlooked. Regarding GEO's Post-2025 Strategy, he stressed: the role of the GEO Indigenous Alliance; the need to address the potential misuse of data and the importance of free, prior, and informed consent procedures; and the recognition of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Emmanuel Pajot, European Association of Remote Sensing Companies, said the concept of Earth intelligence allows for a change of focus and introduces co-designed instrument tools that all users can benefit from. He highlighted the strength of each member of the GEO community and emphasized the private sector, which contributed to new methodologies and opening access to opportunities for all actors.

Andiswa Mlisa, Pacific Community, welcomed the Strategy's potential for global transformation, emphasizing the critical role of integrating new technologies and innovations to overcome the challenges facing the Pacific community. She further highlighted the Strategy's recognition of new funding mechanisms and opportunities, which are needed to implement change.

In responses from the floor, there was an overwhelming support from delegates for the Strategy, with it being lauded for its intelligent, equitable approach and its ability to address a wide range of challenges: China, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, the United Kingdom, the United States, the Center for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the World Geospatial Industry Council (WGIC).

There was an emphasis on the Strategy's impact including for job creation. Finland, France and the United States welcomed the Strategy's inclusiveness and openness, especially with respect to Indigenous people and their knowledge. The World Geospatial Industry Council (WGIC) appreciated the Strategy's engagement with the EO commercial sector.

Germany emphasized continuity of successful initiatives and open data from public institutions. The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) urged development and sharing of new technologies, particularly with vulnerable countries, as crucial in addressing global challenges like climate change. The Strategy's role in empowering remote areas disproportionately affected by climate change was also noted by South Africa.

The UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) highlighted the GEO Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) flagship initiative and stressed the importance of the GEO Indigenous Alliance.

2.2 Session Outcomes and Recommendations

- Plenary expressed its gratitude to the Post-2025 Working Group for the development of the draft GEO Post-2025 Strategy and to the GEO community for its engagement and contributions;
- Plenary adopted the GEO Post-2025 Strategy and recommended its endorsement by the Ministerial Summit.

3 MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

3.1 Ministerial Declaration and Ministerial Summit Agenda

The Co-Chairs of the Ministerial Working Group presented the Ministerial Declaration and Ministerial Summit agenda to the GEO community (Document GEO-19-Info-3.1.a(Rev1)). Yasuko Kasai, Committee on Space Research, thanked the working team, which included Cambodia, South Africa, Senegal, China, Japan, the European Commission, France, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada.

Lawrence Friedl, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, United States, provided highlights from the Declaration, including an emphasis on the inter-connected nature of the challenges, endorsement of the GEO Post-2025 Strategy, underscoring its inclusivity, and reflection on which commitments and actions to take.

4 IGNITING ACTION – THE GEO GLOBAL ECOSYSTEMS ATLAS

4.1 The GEO Global Ecosystems Atlas

This session, moderated by Marco Lambertini, World Wide Fund for Nature Special Envoy, introduced the Global Ecosystems Atlas (Document GEO-19-Info-4.1), one of two major programmatic efforts that GEO has been leading since GEO-18 and that, in GEO's words, presents a "proof of concept for the Post-2025 Strategy."

Lambertini provided an overview of the Atlas's purpose, real-world applications, and user perspectives, noting that measurement of progress is vital to any commitment. He explained that the Atlas will be an open, user-friendly, online resource bringing together high-quality ecosystems data in a single place and will help in monitoring and reporting under multilateral environmental agreements, notably to achieve the targets of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Panelists variously described the Atlas as: "one system speaking one language"; a "heart rate monitor of the life-support system;" a "harmonizing tool which effectively measures our conservation progress"; and a "key tool to monitor, measure, and manage our biodiversity commitments".

Ahmed Raidh, Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Technology, Maldives, drew attention to the Atlas's usefulness and the need to measure efforts undertaken by the Maldives, establish baselines, identify key biodiversity areas requiring special attention, and adapt actions as needed.

Andrew Skowno, South African National Biodiversity Institute, stressed the importance of ecosystem-level thinking. He underscored that iteration and collaboration are key, allowing for blending bottom-up and top-down approaches.

Miriam Grigg, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, United Kingdom, elaborated on the need for greater integration of ecosystem data internationally and the Atlas's potential to better monitor and direct United Kingdom Aid funding. She announced the United Kingdom's provision of USD 180,000 towards the Atlas.

Jixi Gao, Satellite Application Center for Ecology and Environment, Ministry of Ecology and Environment, China, emphasized biodiversity monitoring as a basis for long-term understanding and the Atlas's role in monitoring human activities and their impact.

Joanna Drake, European Commission, called for collaboration and making use of existing initiatives, including those under the European Commission's Horizon Europe and Joint Research Center.

In interventions from the floor, delegations further welcomed the initiative and noted the GEO community's involvement since the Atlas's inception phase. Some pointed at other ongoing initiatives, expertise, and scope that could be considered in the development of the Atlas.

South Africa, France, Germany, Italy, and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) emphasized the Atlas's role in advancing Earth intelligence and addressing global environmental goals. They suggested expanding its scope to include diverse ecosystems such as terrestrial, aquatic, tropical forests, wetlands, mangroves, and coral

reefs, while also aligning it with existing GEO flagship initiatives. Observations were made regarding the desire for more transparency in decision-making processes, along with suggestions for a wider-ranging focus that encompasses aspects such as agro-ecosystems and sustainable land management.

Canada and the United States, along with the Netherlands, Ghana, Japan, China and Senegal recognized the importance of integrating the Atlas with ongoing projects and collaborations. Canada and the US highlighted their existing involvement in GEO-related initiatives and the necessity of maintaining these collaborative efforts. Other countries offered specific suggestions and expertise: the Netherlands on considering existing initiatives, Ghana on the importance of co-design for sustainable planning, Japan seeking clarity on targets, and China and Senegal offering data and expertise for synergy with their national systems. Space Enabled and ESRI offered their support for the initiative, with the former. Space Enabled voiced support for the initiative and suggested involving universities. ESRI expressed support for GEO's vision and commitment to mapping and sharing ecosystems, pledging to continue to engage in the rapid development of the Global Ecosystems Atlas.

In closing, Lambertini urged increased political commitment and financial support to ensure timely continuation of the Atlas development.

4.2 Session Outcomes and Recommendations

- Plenary welcomes the Global Ecosystems Atlas as a key tool to implement the commitments under the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), which will build on existing initiatives and involve key players for biodiversity monitoring;
- Urgent support is required by GEO Members and partners to continue co-design and develop a proof of concept by CBD COP16 (21 Oct-1 Nov 2025);
- Plenary commended the United Kingdom for its financial pledge towards the development of the Atlas (USD 180,000). The EC will provide resources through the Horizon Europe programme;
- Expertise is available within GEO Members and partners;
- Others are encouraged to make financial and in-kind contributions.

5 DRIVING COLLABORATION FOR EARLY WARNINGS FOR ALL: THE GEO GLOBAL HEAT RESILIENCE SERVICE

5.1 The GEO Global Heat Resilience Service

Johan Stander, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), presented the Early Warnings for All Initiative (EW4All), spearheaded by WMO and United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and underscored the importance of data-driven early warning systems to ensure that every person on Earth are protected from extreme weather events, including heatwaves. Stander noted that WMO are teaming up with GEO to deliver the Global Heat Resilience Service under EW4All.

Detailing the impacts of extreme heat, Juli Trtanj, Global Heat Health Information Network, stated that half a million people die every year from heat. Trtanj further discussed how heat not only leads to death, but also exacerbates issues related to air

quality, food security, civil unrest, and physical and mental health. Trtanj then showcased the Global Heat Resilience Service (Document GEO.18.Info-5.1), a tool to provide urban areas with data on health risks from exposure to heat.

Eddie Andrews, Deputy Mayor of Cape Town, South Africa, provided examples of the economic, environmental, and social impacts of heat in Cape Town, noting the most vulnerable populations disproportionately experience the impacts. He highlighted the city's work creating public green spaces and providing education and awareness-raising programmes.

Jessica Kavonic, C40 Cities, highlighted her organization's work in addressing extreme heat, which includes C40's Cool Cities Network as well as assisting cities with the development and implementation of plans to address heat. Kavonic further noted multiple constraints, including the difficulty of quantifying the impact of heat and the rapid rate of urbanization.

Lennox Gladden, provided global and national perspectives by representing UNFCCC Technology Executive Committee (TEC) and the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management, Belize. He stressed the strong appetite for the international community to address the heat issue by referring to relevant decisions of the climate negotiations, such as the Sharm el-Shaikh Implementation Plan. Gladden further emphasized the importance of innovation and technology in the efforts to implement EW4All and achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement, for which TEC and GEO are collaborating.

During the Plenary intervention, numerous participants such as United Kingdom, United States, Greece, European Commission and China expressed their interests in and support for the development of Global Heat Resilience Service. Notably three Members in the first group of countries to implement EW4All provided their insights while expressing their interests:

Cambodia urged the national statistical data to be combined with EO to create crucial disaster risk knowledge for EWS and the Heat Resilience Service.

Ecuador talked about how the global heat resilience service should be a part of a nationwide multi-hazard early warning system while incorporating the work of AmeriGEO and GEO Working Groups.

Uganda pointed at how heatwaves are underlying causes of the country's priorities such as drought-induced crop failures, malaria, and other health concerns.

5.2 Session Outcomes and Recommendations

- Plenary supported continued development of the Global Heat Resilience Service as a contribution to the vision and mission of the Post-2025 Strategy;
- The service should draw on expertise, data and tools available through existing GEO Work Programme activities, whilst fostering collaboration with those in the GEO community and beyond already working on initiatives at the nexus between climate, health and urbanization;

- The service will build on and develop partnerships with organizations like the WMO to ensure contribution to global policy initiatives such as the EW4All Initiative;
- GEO to work with city and local governments, their communities and key partner organizations to ensure user perspectives inform the design of the service and reflect local needs to protect the most vulnerable from heat-health risks.

Thursday, 9 November 2023

6 GEO ACHIEVEMENTS

6.1 Showcase of GEO Achievements

The second day of the GEO-19 plenary opened with a session showcasing GEO achievements and selected stories from the 2023 Highlight Report. Moderated by Carrie Stokes, United States Agency for International Development, the session kicked-off with a video presentation highlighting global efforts and impact of GEO programmes since July 2021.

Ian Jarvis, GEO Global Agricultural Monitoring (GEOGLAM), discussed the historical impact of GEOGLAM's work in crop monitoring and forecasting, while underscoring the importance of independent, timely and consensus-based information and the role it plays as a trusted and authoritative source of data.

Lillian Diarra, GEO Blue Planet, shared her initiative's three core action areas: stakeholder engagement, co-designing fit-for-purpose tools, and capacity development to ensure long-term use of data. Diarra cited the Sargassum Information Hub, which provides early warnings for sargassum blooms, and the Integrated Marine Debris Observing System, which strengthens coordination and collaboration to reduce marine debris.

Wenjiang Huang, Global Vegetation Pest and Disease Dynamic Remote Sensing Monitoring and Forecasting (GEO-PDRS), explained the GEO-PDRS as a multi-source tool for use at the global, regional, and local levels. He said it combines EO, habitat monitoring, hotspot analysis, risk prediction, and time-series forecasting for 19 major vegetation pests and diseases, in a way that enables improved accuracy of monitoring and forecasting and leads to reduced chemical pesticides use, enhancing food security and biodiversity.

Angélica Gutiérrez, GEO Global Water Sustainability (GEOGloWS), United States, elaborated on GEOGloWS, a free and open service, global hydrological forecasting tool. She explained that it represented a paradigm change, given its more collaborative and cost-effective approach and ability to enhance local efforts on disaster risk reduction, providing 15-day forecasts on rivers often short of data. She mentioned various instances where GEOGloWS has resulted in reducing human casualties and impacts, allowing early evacuation before extreme weather events, better reservoir management, and water-quality forecasts.

Amos Kabo-Bah, GEO Land Degradation Neutrality initiative (GEO-LDN), highlighted GEO-LDN's role in supporting over 40 countries and 59 teams working with geospatial

data to advance land degradation neutrality. He emphasized the importance of translation, stressed gender as a crucial element to take into account, and pointed to the usefulness of online forums and monthly seminars.

Aya Takatsuki, Data Integration and Analysis System (DIAS), described the role of DIAS to improve disaster preparedness and response as a flood early warning system in reaction to Typhoon Noru. As enablers, she highlighted: the flexibility of DIAS partners to co-develop a data integration and analysis system; having a national coordination scheme; and years of training of practitioners and decision-makers facing typhoons and floods.

Stokes challenged the panelists with three questions: "What lessons did you learn along the way?" "What would the users of your work say?" "How has GEO facilitated your work?"

The showcased achievements underscored key factors that drive success within the GEO framework: user-centric design, interdisciplinary collaboration/integration, sustainable capacity-building, continued financial support, among others.

In interventions from the floor, South Africa challenged panelists to expand on the administrative lessons learnt, while Senegal pointed out the cross-programme connections between GEO initiatives. Ecuador and Mexico provided examples of applied geospatial data, while India noted concerns about declining coastal water quality.

6.2 Session Outcomes and Recommendations

- Plenary congratulated the GEO Work Programme activities for their achievements in delivering impactful solutions to countries in need;
- The showcased achievements underscored key factors that drive success within the GEO framework: user centric design, interdisciplinary collaboration/integration, sustainable capacity-building, continued financial support, among others;
- Plenary encouraged the community to leverage these best practices as a source of inspiration to the design of transformative solutions for the Post-2025 GEO Work Programme;
- The GEO Secretariat presented the launch of the new GEO website.

7 BRIDGING THE GAP: GEO'S COORDINATED APPROACH TO NATIONAL AND GLOBAL ENGAGEMENTS

7.1 GEO's Coordinated Approach to National and Global Engagements

Moderated by Yuqi Bai, Tsinghua University, China, this session on Thursday convened panelists to discuss national EO efforts and initiatives aimed at strengthening national coordination, including the challenges and opportunities faced by national GEOs, who will play a crucial role in implementing the GEO Post-2025 Strategy.

Ernest Acheampong, GEO Secretariat, discussed common qualities among successful national GEOs, including clear mandates, well-defined objectives and goals, and annual strategies or plans. Advocating for more national GEOs, Acheampong introduced National Coordination Mechanisms (NCMs) as a non-binding framework to promote institutional synergies, guide the planning and execution of coordinated EO responses to identified

issues and amplify national GEOs role as a vital link between global, regional, and national engagements.

Speaking about her country, Trinidad and Tobago, Rahanna Juman, Institute of Marine Affairs, noted they were the newest member of GEO, joining in September 2023. Representing a national GEO office in its infancy, Juman underscored the importance of data to address contextually sensitive environmental issues, while highlighting her organization's attributes which position it to be well-suited to lead the national GEO office.

Marilyn Calvo Méndez, National Meteorological Institute, Costa Rica, presented on AmeriGEO Week 2023, a regional GEO event, which resulted in an ideal platform to raise awareness and exchange experiences on EO, eventually facilitating national GEO coordination in Costa Rica. She stressed inter-institutional collaboration as fundamental and the unifying role of a common topic of interest.

Evangelos Gerasopoulos, National Observatory of Athens / Greek GEO Office, Greece, shared the Greek experience in the creation of a coordination mechanism at the national level. He highlighted work around specific priorities, such as urban resilience, climate change impacts on cultural heritage and adaptation, and the importance of local leadership in bringing partners from different sectors together.

Shannon Kaya, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Canada, presented on building the Canadian national GEO secretariat. She said it had been a small investment in resources but large in benefits and urged members not to be intimidated by the term "secretariat" as it could be as small and simple as a one-person secretariat.

Interventions from Members included: the need to reduce duplication between multiple departments and national structures by integrating data collection and information; the importance of pooling resources and information through coordination mechanisms such as national GEO offices; and calls to governments to invest in establishing properly functioning and well-resourced national GEO offices that multiple agencies and departments can benefit from.

7.2 Session Outcomes and Recommendations

- Plenary supported bridging the gap between national, regional and global engagement through a strong National Coordination Mechanism (NCM) which is fundamental to GEO's Post-2025 Strategy;
- National GEOs are primary sources of EO data, local needs, and innovative solutions, while improving coordination and outreach;
- Plenary encouraged National GEOs to cooperate and leverage resources, with Secretariat support, to enhance their capabilities for mutual benefits and sustainability;
- Plenary supported the Secretariat's efforts to strengthen emerging countries' capacities to create and maintain robust NCMs.

Launch of the New GEO Website

Nicoleta Panta, GEO Secretariat, introduced the new public-facing GEO website, explaining its aim to: to increase brand-awareness and credibility; provide clearer

information and the ability to generate leads; allow for better engagement with target audiences; and improve user-experience and accessibility.

Providing a walk-through of the website, Hendrik Baeyens, GEO Secretariat, described the website's focus on: promoting community building; an improved multi-service device support; a consistent look and feel; easier navigation; and a powerful search function.

8 THE WAY AHEAD: PLENARY BUSINESS AND DECISIONS

8.1 Plenary Business and Decisions

Moderated by Lead GEO Co-Chair, Mmboneni Muofhe, Deputy Director General, Department of Science and Innovation, South Africa, the final session was convened to discuss GEO Plenary business, as required by the GEO Rules of Procedure.

8.2 Foundational Tasks of the GEO Work Programme 2023-2025

Anthony Milne, Co-Chair, GEO Programme Board, presented the Foundational Tasks of the GEO Work Programme 2023-2025 (Document 19-8.2) on Thursday. Among the noted changes from the former Foundational Tasks, Milne highlighted the shift from 24 to 16 foundational task activities, as a result of integrating activities. These fall under three foundational tasks: GEO Work Programme Coordination; GEO Engagement Priorities Coordination and Integration; and Data and Knowledge Management.

Following the presentation of the GEO Work Programme for 2023-2025, delegates provided interventions, with Japan offering support specifically to the foundational task of Data and Knowledge Management. The Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) expressed concerns that the Work Programme did not go far enough in acknowledging the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. China, Italy, European Commission, and others expressed gratitude for the Foundational Tasks. Delegates then approved the Foundational Tasks of the GEO Work Programme 2023-2025.

8.3 Programme Board Members for 2024

Wenbo Chu, GEO Secretariat, presented the 2024 Board Members (Document GEO-19-8.3), noting the maximum total of 32 seats for Members and Participating Organizations. Saying that 14 seats became vacant for 2024, she announced that the Secretariat had received 16 nominations for 2024, of which three were new nominations, namely El Salvador, India, and Paraguay. GEO-19 approved the 2024 slate of Programme Board Members.

8.4 Executive Committee Members for 2024

Erika Alex, GEO Secretariat, presented the members put forward by the regional caucuses to serve as the Executive Committee for 2024 (Document GEO-19-8.4 (Rev1)). These members include: South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal, China, Republic of Korea, Japan, Australia, Russian Federation, Armenia, United States, Peru, Paraguay, European Commission, France, Italy and Germany.

8.5 2022 Financial Statements and Audit Report

In a recorded video, Brian Cover, Chief, WMO Finance Section, presented the 2022 Financial Statements, 2022 Audit Report (Document GEO-19-Info-8.5), and notes looking forward to 2023 and beyond. Cover highlighted the impacts of reduced COVID-19 restrictions on revenues and expenditures in 2022, noting GEO is in a good financial position.

8.6 2024 GEO Secretariat Trust Fund Budget and Pledges

Chen Miao, GEO Budget Working Group Representative, presented the 2024 GEO Secretariat Trust Fund Budget and Pledges (Document GEO-19-8.6(Rev1)), noting that the total amount of CHF 5.031 million (cash and in-kind, excluding extrabudgetary contributions and expenditures) operational budget will support GEO work and activities in 2024. She presented the 2023 income and expenditure figures, confirming that by the end of 2023, expected expenditures are projected to amount to CHF 4.779 million. The budget was approved by Plenary as submitted.

China, United States, and Australia pledged to continue their contributions to the Trust Fund, with Australia pointing to opportunities to fund specific activities. South Africa also pledged to continue its contributions and financial support to AfriGEO in Nairobi as well as its ongoing annual contribution of ZAR 2 million to the GEO Trust Fund.

Sweden pledged CHF 110,000 to continue supporting the Trust Fund, but cautioned against duplicating efforts, mentioning links between GEO incubators on health and other initiatives such as the Copernicus Health HUB.

Japan announced its intention to contribute to the Trust Fund for 2024 as soon as possible.

8.7 Review of Plenary Outcomes

Madeeha Bajwa, GEO Secretariat, presented outcomes of the GEO-19 sessions, including brief overviews of session topics as well as general feedback received during interventions.

8.8 Handover of Lead Co-Chair from South Africa to China

Extolling the importance of teamwork, GEO Lead Co-Chair Muofhe expressed thanks to the Executive Committee, the GEO Secretariat and everyone for their support. Muofhe then handed over chairmanship to China "with full confidence that the race will continue."

8.9 Closing Remarks

Guangjun Zhang, Vice Minister, Ministry of Science and Technology, China, said that China is acutely aware of the importance of technology for social and economic development and that "no one should be left behind," underscoring China's commitment to work together to build capacities driven by need, with a particular focus on developing countries. The Minister announced that the 2024 Symposium will be held in China between 23 and 27 September 2024.

Joanna Drake highlighted the substantive, rich, and engaging nature of GEO-19. She underscored the need to listen to stakeholders and be prepared to co-design implementation plans that don't underestimate the resources needed.

Saying that GEO-19 had been "remarkable" in its progress, success, and impact, Richard Spinrad, pointed to what he said were extraordinary examples of localized benefits from GEO's global work, including in disaster risk reduction, policy advice for adaptation, and other impactful programmes, policies, and practices.

In thanking her team, the co-chairs, and the Executive Committee, Yana Gevorgyan, reflected on how much GEO Week has changed and grown since beginning as a two-day event in Mexico in 2015. Looking forward, Gevorgyan invited delegates to "continue the conversation" in April of 2025 during the next Ministerial Summit and welcomed expressions of interest for hosting the event.