

**Revised GEO Rules of Procedure
Version with tracked changes**

This document is submitted to Plenary for information.

GEO Rules of Procedure

Revised Version

May 2025 (following the GEO-20 Plenary)

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Rules of Procedure

1 DEFINITIONS

- 1.1** *GEO*: The intergovernmental Group on Earth Observations, established by the Resolution of the Third Earth Observation Summit in February of 2005, consisting of a Plenary, an Executive Committee, a Programme Board, and a Secretariat.
- 1.2** *GEOSS*: The Global Earth Observation System of Systems.
- 1.3** *Strategic Plan*: the *GEO Strategic Plan 2016-2025: Implementing GEOSS*, endorsed by the GEO Mexico City Summit in November 2015.
- 1.4** *Plenary*: The GEO Plenary, the highest decision-making body of GEO, composed of Principals or their Alternates, representing GEO Members and Participating Organizations, with Members holding the decision-making authority.
- 1.5** *Principal*: The primary designated representative, at the senior-official level, of a GEO Member or Participating Organization.
- 1.6** *Principal Alternate*: The alternate designated representative, at the senior-official level, of a GEO Member or Participating Organization.
- 1.7** *Executive Committee*: The GEO Executive Committee, composed of representatives from GEO Members Governments.
- 1.8** *Secretariat*: The GEO Secretariat.
- 1.9** *Director*: The Director of the GEO Secretariat.
- 1.10** *Programme Board*: The GEO Programme Board, composed of representatives of GEO Members and Participating Organizations.
- 1.11** *GEO Work Programme*: The primary instrument to plan and implement GEO activities.
- 1.12** *Task Force/Advisory Group*: An ad hoc group of the Plenary or of the Executive Committee convened to address a specific topic for limited-time duration.

2 GEO MEMBERS, OBSERVERS, PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS, AND ASSOCIATES

2.1 *Members*

Membership in GEO is open to all Member States of the United Nations and to the European Union.

2.2 *Observers*

Member States of the United Nations may participate in GEO activities as Observers.

2.3 Participating Organizations

GEO welcomes as Participating Organizations all organizations with a global or regional (multi-country) mandate and scope of operations that have an active interest in, or are a user of, Earth observations, information and services – that is the full spectrum and/or value chain from data collection to use. These may include: intergovernmental, organizations, development banks, foundations, nongovernmental organizations, and not-for-profit associations of commercial entities.

2.4 GEO Associates

GEO welcomes as GEO Associates commercial firms and national associations of commercial firms, as well as non-governmental, not-for-profit and civil society organizations with a national or sub-national mandate or scope of operations related to Earth observations.

Annex A provides guidance for recognition as GEO Participating Organization and Associates.

3 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

3.1 Governance

- **Plenary:** The highest decision-making body of GEO is composed of Principals at the senior official level, or their designated Alternates, representing GEO Members and Participating Organizations, with Members holding the decision-making authority;
- **Executive Committee:** Provides the strategic leadership for GEO when the Plenary is not in session;
- **Programme Board:** supports the development and implementation of GEO activities by overseeing the establishment of the multi-year GEO Work Programmes;
- **Secretariat:** facilitates and supports GEO activities and it is accountable to Plenary and to Executive Committee;

Detailed descriptions are found in chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7.

3.2 Implementation Mechanisms

GEO will implement its activities through four Implementation Mechanisms:

- **GEO Community Activities,** which allow GEO Community to cooperate flexibly in a bottom-up fashion and with a low initiation cost;
- **GEO Initiatives,** which allow Members, Participating Organizations and Associates to coordinate their actions and contributions towards a common objective within an agreed, yet flexible framework;
- **GEO Flagships,** which allow Members, Participating Organizations and Associates with a policy-relevant mandate to spin-up a dedicated operational service serving common needs and/or well-defined user groups; and.
- **GEO Foundational Tasks,** which allow GEO to implement selected, often enabling, tasks to achieve GEO Strategic Objectives, thus providing important support functions to Flagships, Initiatives, and Community Activities.

These four mechanisms provide a framework, which is both flexible and open, enabling the broad and diverse GEO community to work together. Each of the mechanisms serves a different purpose in attaining GEO's Strategic Objectives, allowing activities of different scale and kind to be implemented. Full descriptions are contained in the Strategic Plan and in the Strategic Plan Reference Document.

3.3 *The GEO Work Programme*

A multi-annual GEO Work Programme, accepted by Plenary, will constitute the primary coordination and planning instrument to assist GEO with the selection and prioritization of its activities. The Work Programme defines the GEO Foundational Tasks as well as describes the plans of GEO Flagships and GEO Initiatives, according to their applicable planning documents, and of GEO Community Activities according to the information provided by the proposing entities.

Details on Work Programme definition and implementation are contained in the Strategic Plan and in the Strategic Plan Reference Document.

3.4 *Ethical Standards and Intellectual Property*

GEO is committed to upholding the highest standards of ethics, integrity, accountability and transparency across and throughout the community.

Members, Participating Organizations, Associates and the Secretariat Staff involved in GEO activities shall promote a working environment that values respect, fairness, courtesy, honesty, integrity and impartiality. In discharging their functions, all Secretariat Staff and secondees shall respect the requirements of the WMO (host organization) Staff Regulations, the WMO Code of Conduct, the WMO Fraud Prevention Policy and the UN Staff Rules. All GEO Members and Participating Organizations involved in GEO activities shall respect the obligations of the Secretariat in this regard, as well as abide by their respective national or organizational standards.

Members, Participating Organizations, Associates, and Secretariat involved in GEO activities shall adhere to GEO Data Sharing and Data Management Principles, which are fundamental tenets of GEO.

Data, software, products, and other goods created prior to a collaboration within a GEO Work Programme Activity by GEO Members, Participating Organizations and Associates may be subject to copyright or intellectual property right restrictions. GEO Members, Participating Organizations or Associates may choose to use such data, software, products, and other goods in such a collaboration and to share it with others involved in the collaboration. Such use does not affect that party's prior intellectual property rights, and those it authorizes to use the data, software, products, or other goods within a GEO Work Programme Activity must do so for the purpose of the collaboration and in accordance with instructions of the owner. Such data, software, and other goods may not be disclosed or retransferred to any other entity without the prior written permission of the furnishing party.

Data, software, products, and other goods developed solely or jointly by GEO Members, Participating Organizations and Associates during and within the scope of a collaboration within a GEO Work Programme Activity should not be made subject to copyright or intellectual property right restrictions, but should be made available to the public under an open license, at no cost and with no restrictions on copying, publishing, distributing, citing, or adapting. Such data, software, products, and other goods may therefore be used by any entity for any lawful purpose, including for commercial purposes. Organizations that are unable to comply with the expectation, due to legal or other constraints, should document these restrictions in advance of their involvement in the GEO Work Programme activity (or as soon as possible in the case of existing contributors).

If after public release, such data, software, products, and other goods are developed further by entities outside the scope of a collaboration within a GEO Work Programme Activity, and such developments qualify for copyright or intellectual property right protections, those entities may choose to seek such protections on the portions they created.

4 PLENARY

- 4.1 Decisions:** Plenary decisions will be made by consensus of GEO Members present.
- 4.2 Delegation of powers:** The GEO Plenary may explicitly and formally delegate decision-making powers to other bodies of the GEO organizational structure and/or other subsidiary bodies as appropriate, in the interest of efficiency and expediency in the implementation of GEO activities.
- 4.3 GEO Co-Chairs:** Four GEO Members will co-chair meetings of the Plenary and the Executive Committee. The composition of, and method of selection for, the Co-Chairs is provided in Rule 5.6 Between Executive Committee meetings, the Co-Chairs will act on behalf of the Executive Committee and Plenary to provide guidance to the Secretariat, and will report to the Executive Committee and Plenary on actions taken.
- 4.4 Meetings:** The GEO Plenary will meet at least annually to (at a minimum) adopt the 3-year Work Programmes, their annual updates, and associated budget for the following year, and to review programmatic progress, budgets and financial situation, through reports from the Executive Committee, Programme Board and Secretariat.
- 4.5 Principal and Principal Alternate Designation:** All GEO Members and Participating Organizations should designate, at the senior-official level, one GEO Principal and not more than two GEO Principal Alternates to represent that Member or Participating Organization in the Plenary, and to receive and submit all official communication to, and from, the Secretariat. A designated GEO Co-Chair will also serve as the GEO Principal on behalf of his or her respective GEO Member. GEO Principals are encouraged to attend each GEO Plenary, and do not serve in their individual institution's capacity but rather as representatives of their entire government or Participating Organization. GEO Principal and Principal Alternate designations, including complete and current contact information are the responsibility of the GEO Principal, and are to be provided to the Secretariat annually.
- 4.6 Official Delegations:** The GEO Secretariat will issue a call for official delegation lists no later than eight calendar weeks prior to any Plenary meeting. The GEO Principal should submit an official delegation list to the GEO Secretariat no later than four calendar weeks prior to any Plenary meeting. Submission may also be forwarded by means of a Note Verbale to the Secretariat by the Government's Permanent Mission in Geneva. All official delegates should register with the GEO Secretariat no later than two calendar weeks before any Plenary meeting. A roster of registered official delegates will be made available to delegates arriving for the Plenary meeting. On-site registrants will not be included on this list, but included in the final official record of the meeting.
- 4.7 Participation by GEO Associates:** The Executive Committee may invite select GEO Associates to attend a Plenary meeting where this will support the objectives of GEO.
- 4.8 Documents:** All documents for final decision by Plenary will be released by the Secretariat to GEO Principals for review no later than six calendar weeks in advance of the Plenary meeting where the documents will be formally considered. Documents originating outside the Secretariat should be provided to the Secretariat at least seven calendar weeks prior to the Plenary meeting.
- No documents may be considered unless circulated by the Secretariat to all GEO Principals.
- 4.9 Reports:** The Secretariat will produce a draft summary of Plenary proceedings including decisions, actions, and timelines for completing actions, and disseminate it to GEO Principals no later than four calendar weeks following each Plenary meeting. Based on comments and corrections

received, the Secretariat will prepare a draft report for distribution to the entire GEO community no later than eight calendar weeks following each Plenary meeting.

5. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

5.1 *Function:* Ensure the efficient conduct of GEO business and provide strategic leadership between meetings of the Plenary.

5.2 *Duties: Acting by consensus, the Executive Committee will:*

- a. Maintain the policy framework set by the GEO Plenary, within which the organization, including the Secretariat, will execute the strategy and advance the objectives set forth by the Plenary;
- b. Facilitate the decisions of the Plenary by identifying and framing issues for appropriate Plenary action. The Executive Committee will conduct initial considerations and discussions of the issues, and subsequently develop papers and/or recommendations for discussion by Plenary. The basis for discussions at the Executive Committee, and subsequently by the Plenary, will be the reports of the GEO Programme Board, the Secretariat, and other Task Force or Advisory Groups of GEO that may be established by Plenary, as well as discussion topics introduced at the initiative of Members;
- c. Oversee the effectiveness of GEO's governance and recommend revisions to the Rules of Procedure, as appropriate;
- d. Supervise the work of the Director and ensure that it is consistent with the direction received from Plenary;
- e. Examine the annual budget in preparation for its presentation to Plenary;
- f. Report in writing, at least annually, to GEO Plenary;
- g. Authorize signing of Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) between organizations;
- h. Act upon requests for recognition of Participating Organization and Observers, as well examine and decide on applications of Associates, and inform Plenary of their action;
- i. Establish advisory groups to address specific topics as needed, and
- j. Undertake such other tasks as may be delegated to the Executive Committee by the Plenary.

5.3 *Membership:* The Executive Committee members are a representative sub-set from the membership of the GEO Caucuses. The Executive Committee comprises 18 GEO Members based on geographic distribution: Africa (4), Americas (4), Asia and Oceania (4), CIS (2), and Europe (4). The Executive Committee members serve as representatives of their respective Caucuses and not in their individual or country capacities.

5.4 *Observers:* Three (3) Participating Organizations, who are also members of the Programme Board, will be invited to participate as observers in the discussions of the Executive Committee.

5.5 *Co-Chairs:* Four Executive Committee Members will serve collectively as Co-Chairs of the Plenary and the Executive Committee, with two Co-Chairs representing developed countries and two Co-Chairs representing developing countries. One Co-Chair will serve as lead to guide the discussion for each meeting. The lead Co-Chair will rotate among the Co-Chairs as agreed by the Co-Chairs.

5.6 *Selection:* Executive Committee Members, including those Members serving as Co-Chairs, will be nominated through regional caucuses. Based on the conclusions of the regional caucuses and

further consultations as necessary, the Director will present a slate of nominees, including those nominated to serve as Co-Chairs, to the Plenary for its approval. Upon approval, Executive Committee members will serve a term of up to two years. The process will be guided by the following principles: (1) preserving sufficient continuity in the Executive Committee's membership; (2) ensuring sufficient opportunity for participation of GEO Members in the Executive Committee by rotation; (3) preserving the balance of developed and developing countries at the level of the Co-Chairs and (4) ensuring Executive Committee leadership to maintain adequacy of resources in the GEO Trust Fund. If a Member chooses not to complete his or her term of service, then the regional caucus may select another Member to represent it in the Executive Committee to complete the remaining term of service.

- 5.7** *Decisions:* Executive Committee decisions will be made by consensus of the GEO Members of the Executive Committee present.
- 5.8** *Meetings:* The GEO Executive Committee will meet at least annually and may hold additional meetings as agreed by the Executive Committee. *Documents:* The GEO Secretariat will prepare all documents for the Executive Committee's consideration and will release them to all GEO Members and Participating Organizations for information at least two calendar weeks prior to any Executive Committee meeting. The GEO Co-Chairs will approve draft Executive Committee agendas.
- 5.9** *Reports:* The Secretariat will release a preliminary report of Executive Committee proceedings to the Members of the Executive Committee within two calendar weeks and to the full GEO community no later than six calendar weeks following the Executive Committee meeting.

6 GEO PROGRAMME BOARD

- 6.1** *Function:* The GEO Programme Board supports the ongoing development and implementation of the GEO Strategic Plan 2016 – 2025: Implementing GEOSS through multi-year GEO Work Programmes.

Specifically, the GEO Programme Board:

- Works to ensure the overall coherence and alignment of the GEO Work Programmes with GEO's Strategic Objectives and Core Functions;
- Works to align the scope and substance of tasks, GEO Initiatives and Flagships in the GEO Work Programme with the resources committed by Members and Participating Organizations;
- Supports and enables cross-cutting coordination and knowledge exchange, especially best practices; and
- Promotes GEO Work Programmes and engagement of stakeholders in their implementation.

- 6.2** *Duties:* The GEO Programme Board will:

- a. Review the scope and substance of GEO Work Programme activities (that is, GEO Initiatives, Flagships, Regional GEOs, and Foundational Tasks) proposed for the multi-year GEO Work Programme;
 - b. Review the progress of all GEO Work Programme activities;
 - c. Recommend GEO Work Programmes for Plenary acceptance; including assessing whether resources committed are commensurate to the activities scoped for inclusion in the Work Programme;
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d. Evaluate, technically and financially, proposals submitted to potential dedicated GEO financing mechanisms or pooled funds to support the GWP, and make funding recommendations to the Executive Committee;

~~e.~~ Examine proposed Implementation Plans for GEO Initiatives and Flagships and take decisions to accept new ones;

~~e.f.~~ Collaborate with and assist GEO Work Programme activities and candidate activities to maximize the quality and sustainability of the GEO Work Programme;

~~f.g.~~ Collaborate with the Secretariat to convene symposia or other events in support of the development and implementation of the GEO Work Programme;

~~g.h.~~ Provide high-level recommendations to the Executive Committee;

~~h.i.~~ Nominate Participating Organization observers to the Executive Committee; and

~~i.j.~~ Undertake such other tasks as may be delegated to the Programme Board by the Executive Committee or the Plenary.

6.3 *Membership*

6.3.1 Membership on the GEO Programme Board is open only to GEO Members and Participating Organizations.

6.3.2 The GEO Programme Board will be composed of no fewer than 16 and no more than 32 members. At least 40% of Programme Board members must be from GEO Members and at least 40% of Programme Board members must be from Participating Organizations.

6.3.3 Programme Board member terms are for a period of three calendar years, beginning January 1, unless the member resigns or their membership is terminated early (see article 6.3.5). Programme Board members whose term has ended may reapply for another term.

6.3.4 To assure continuity of processes and retention of knowledge, Programme Board member terms will be set so that approximately one-third of member terms end each year.

6.3.5 If neither the principal nor the alternate representatives of a Programme Board member have participated, either in-person or by teleconference, in two consecutive Programme Board meetings, and if the principal and alternate representatives of that Programme Board member have not been active in Programme Board subgroups or review teams, the term of that Programme Board member may be terminated early by the Executive Committee on advice from Programme Board Co-chairs.

6.4 *Appointment of Programme Board Members*

6.4.1 Appointment of Programme Board members is by decision of Plenary.

6.4.2 A Call for Nominations to the Programme Board will be issued by the Secretariat at least four months prior to the end of the calendar year. At least three weeks will be provided from the Call for Nominations to the deadline for submission of nominations.

6.4.3 Nominations must identify one principal representative and may identify up to two alternate representatives to the Programme Board. Nominations of representatives must be approved by the GEO Principal of the nominating GEO Member or Participating Organization. Both principal and alternate representatives may attend Programme Board meetings and participate in Programme Board subgroups and review teams.

6.4.4 The Secretariat will review the nominations received and propose to the Executive Committee a slate of candidates for Programme Board seats that are or will be vacated. The Executive

Committee will review all nominations and recommend a slate of Programme Board members for appointment by the Plenary.

6.4.5 Principal and alternate representatives may be changed during the Programme Board member term at the request of the GEO Principal of the Programme Board member.

6.4.6 Programme Board member representatives are expected to take a broad, comprehensive perspective of GEO, working constructively toward common objectives.

6.4.7 Each Programme Board member will be responsible for their own costs connected with participation in Programme Board activities. Subject to the availability of funds and the approval of the Executive Committee, participation in Programme Board activities may be supported from the GEO Trust Fund for members from developing countries.

6.5 *Programme Board Co-chairs*

6.5.1 Programme Board members will elect three co-chairs from among the principal representatives. At least one Programme Board co-chair will be from a GEO Member and at least one Programme Board co-chair will be from a Participating Organization.

6.5.2 The term of each Programme Board co-chair will end at the conclusion of the term of the Programme Board member of which they are the principal representative. If that Programme Board member term is renewed, the principal representative may be re-elected to a second term as co-chair.

6.5.3 The Programme Board co-chair election process will follow the procedure described in Annex F.

6.5.4 Programme Board co-chairs, with the support and collaboration of the GEO Secretariat, are jointly responsible for:

- a. Setting Programme Board meeting agendas;
- b. Reviewing Programme Board documents prior to distribution to Programme Board members;
- c. Chairing meetings of the Programme Board;
- d. Identifying strategic and tactical issues relevant to successful implementation of the GEO Work Programme and formulate them for discussion within the Programme Board and/or the Executive Committee;
- e. Representing the Programme Board at Executive Committee and Plenary meetings; and
- f. Preparing reports from the Programme Board to the Executive Committee and the Plenary.

6.6 *Programme Board Meetings*

6.6.1 Programme Board will convene an in-person meeting at least two times per year. Means for Programme Board representatives to participate by teleconference will be provided for each meeting. Additional meetings, including meetings solely by teleconference, may be convened at the discretion of the Programme Board co-chairs.

6.6.2 Quorum for Programme Board meetings will be 50% of Programme Board members.

6.6.3 Decisions by the Programme Board will be by consensus, taking account of decisions taken previously by the Programme Board and in other GEO governance structures. In the spirit of GEO being open, inclusive and transparent, consensus is reached when there is no strong objection from a Programme Board member to the proposed decision before the

Programme Board. In cases where consensus cannot be achieved, the Programme Board co-chairs may decide to bring the matter to the Executive Committee for resolution.

- 6.6.4 If more than one representative of a Programme Board member attends a Programme Board meeting, the attending representatives will coordinate their positions.
- 6.6.5 Documents for decision at a Programme Board meeting will be sent to the Programme Board co-chairs at least three weeks prior to the meeting for their review and comment. Once approved by the Programme Board co-chairs, documents for decision will be distributed to all Programme Board members at least two weeks prior to the meeting. Documents that are for information or discussion will be distributed at least one week prior to the meeting. Documents having significant implications and which have not been previously reviewed by the Programme Board will be distributed to all Programme Board members at least four weeks in advance, the determination of significance to be decided by the Programme Board co-chairs.
- 6.6.6 The Secretariat will distribute to all Programme Board members, within two weeks of each meeting, a report which will include a list of all meeting participants and the key outcomes and actions from the meeting.
- 6.7** *Participating Organization Observers to Executive Committee: The Programme Board members from Participating Organizations will nominate three of their members to serve as Participating Organization Observers to the Executive Committee. The term of each Observer will be one year, which may be renewed. The nomination process will follow that described in Annex F.*
- 6.8** *Programme Board Subgroups*
- 6.8.1 The Programme Board may create, modify and disband subgroups to further its work on any matter related to its duties.
- 6.8.2 Any principal or alternate Programme Board member representative may participate in any subgroup. Programme Board subgroups may also include participants who are not Programme Board member representatives, at the discretion of the Programme Board. At least one co-chair of every subgroup must be a Programme Board representative.
- 6.8.3 Each subgroup will have a terms of reference which is approved by the Programme Board when the subgroup is established. The terms of reference will include, among other things:
- a. The purpose for which the subgroup was created;
 - b. The scope and mandate of the subgroup;
 - c. The expected outputs or deliverables of the subgroup; and
 - d. Whether participation in the subgroup is open to those who are not Programme Board member representatives.
- 6.8.4 The status and terms of reference of all subgroups will be reviewed at the first meeting of the Programme Board in each calendar year.
- 6.9** *Support: The Secretariat will provide administrative and analytical support to the Programme Board. The activities of the Programme Board will be closely coordinated with the Secretariat and other GEO entities to maintain consistency with the approved GEO Strategic Plan, and to maximize the effectiveness of GEO and the implementation of GEOSS.*

7 GEO SECRETARIAT

- 7.1 Function:** The Secretariat, led by the Director, will facilitate and support all GEO activities. The Secretariat will primarily consist of co-located, well-qualified staff.
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7.2 Secretariat Director: GEO Secretariat Director Terms of Reference and Recruiting Procedures are defined in Annex B

7.3 Duties: The Secretariat will:

- a. Prepare and submit, for Plenary approval, the necessary documentation for the efficient and effective functioning of GEO, including programmatic, budgetary and financial reports;
- b. Initiate the development of the GEO Work Programmes and support the Programme Board with Work Programme finalization;
- c. Support the implementation of the GEO Work Programme, including playing a central role in supporting and implementing the Foundational Tasks and performing sound execution of budget expenditure;
- d. Pursue activities to identify and secure funds for GEO activities and Secretariat operations in accordance with the direction of GEO;
- e. Identify staffing and other resources necessary to support the GEO Work Programmes, develop indicators for Secretariat performance, and report to the Executive Committee and Plenary on Secretariat performance against indicators;
- f. Facilitate overall cooperation and liaise with GEO Members and Participating Organizations, and other programmes and bodies as appropriate to support the work of GEO, with particular emphasis on existing systems and Earth observation coordination mechanisms;
- g. Oversee the implementation of the GEO engagement and communication strategy as outlined in the Strategic Plan; specific criteria for engaging the private sector in the GEOSS implementation are defined in Annex C;
- h. Inform Plenary and the Executive Committee of current and planned specific engagement activities in line with the agreed GEO Engagement and Communication Strategy.
- i. Initiate and support the GEO Monitoring and Evaluation activities, including performing annual Monitoring, as outlined in the Strategic Plan Reference Document;
- j. Compile an annual Progress Report on all activities, drawing on available reports of the GEO Flagships, GEO Initiatives, GEO Foundational Tasks and, to the best of its knowledge, of GEO Community Activities, here included execution of annual budget expenditures;
- k. Organize, prepare, and support meetings and other work of the GEO Plenary, Executive Committee, and Programme Board and Task Forces/Advisory groups, as appropriate;
- l. Organize GEOSS user and other GEO Community fora as required in coordination with the Programme Board as appropriate;
- m. Conduct the day-to-day administrative activities of the Secretariat; and
- n. Carry out additional duties as required by the GEO Plenary or Executive Committee.

8 REGIONAL GROUPS ON EARTH OBSERVATIONS

8.1 Definition: A Regional Group on Earth Observations (Regional GEO) is a coordinated set of GEO activities working on a set of priorities agreed by the Caucus, and overseen by the Caucus.

8.2 Function: Regional Groups on Earth Observations (Regional GEOs) engage regional stakeholders in GEO activities and coordinate implementation of GEO activities within the region. Regional GEOs may also:

- Engage national agencies, regional intergovernmental organizations and other users and potential users of Earth observations, including those having responsibility for the implementation of global and regional policy priorities;
- Identify regional needs for Earth observation applications and conveying these to global GEO activities;
- Facilitate regional Earth observation activities collaboration with global activities in the GEO Work Programme;
- Promote communications among regional GEO Members and other participants, as well as with other Regional GEOs; and
- Identify funding opportunities to support regional GEO activities and projects.

8.3 Participation: Participation in Regional GEOs is open to all countries and multinational organizations interested in advancing the collection, management and use of Earth observations within the region, including countries and organizations that are not currently GEO Members, Observers, Participating Organizations or GEO Associates.

8.4 Oversight: Activities of each Regional GEO are overseen by the respective Caucus. Matters involving the scope of Regional GEO functions and other issues affecting more than one Regional GEO will be referred to Executive Committee for decision.

9 GEO TASK FORCES

9.1 Purpose and Function: The GEO Plenary and the Executive Committee may establish Task Forces to address aspects of GEO Strategic Plan implementation and provide a mechanism for GEO Members and Participating Organizations to engage fully in the work of GEO.

9.2 Duration and Terms of Reference: The Plenary and the Executive Committee may establish and develop terms of reference for Task Forces, ensuring consistency with the Organizational Structure and Implementation arrangements defined in Chapter 3 and defining duration and expected outputs. Once established, their Terms of Reference are appended to these Rules of Procedure.

9.3 Funding: Unless otherwise agreed, any costs arising from Task Forces activities will be borne by the Member or Participating Organization that incurs them, and will be subject to the availability of funds, personnel, and other resources.

9.4 Support and Coordination: The Secretariat will provide administrative support to Task as stipulated in their Terms of Reference.

10 GEO RESOURCES, TRUST FUND AND FINANCES

~~10.1 GEO resources: Contributions may be in kind or cash, and may be designated for GEO implementation activities, in accordance with the Implementation Mechanisms where resources committed are commensurate with the type of action; or for the GEO Trust Fund, administered by the GEO Secretariat and supporting, as decided by Plenary, the GEO Foundational Tasks, specifically earmarked GEO Flagships, and the operations of the GEO Secretariat.~~

~~10.2 Trust Fund Establishment: The ad hoc Group on Earth Observations at its sixth session (Brussels, Belgium 14-15 February 2005) decided to enter into a Standing Arrangement between GEO and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), which arranges for the GEO Secretariat to be located at the WMO Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. In order to provide for a mechanism~~

for GEO to support the GEO Secretariat and other GEO activities as approved by the GEO Plenary, GEO also agreed to undertake steps to create a GEO-WMO Trust Fund to support the work of GEO. (See GEO-WMO Trust Fund Terms of Reference, Annex D).

~~10.3 Finances:~~ The Work Programme and associated annual budget produced by the Secretariat will detail all operating expenses for the coming year, and will contain provisions for monitoring and execution of the budget throughout the year. Indicative budgets shall also be provided for a further two years. The Secretariat will report at each Executive Committee and Plenary meeting on the progress of budget execution, including income and expenditures. In case of sensible variations on the income, priorities for the expenditure of GEO funds will be devoted to cover approved Secretariat staff salaries and benefits. The Executive Committee will provide guidance on the priorities on the Foundational Tasks so that the Secretariat can revise the plans for the year and produce a revised version of the budget.

~~10.4 Solvency and Audit: The Secretariat~~ 10.1 Introduction and Use of the GEO Trust Fund

- (1) The primary purpose of the GEO Trust Fund will be to support the costs of the GEO Secretariat as well as selected GEO activities.
- (2) The Trust Fund consists of multiple ‘sub-funds’, specifically: i) a Secretariat Operations Fund; and ii) separate ‘Activity Funds’ for other activities which have funding that is partially or entirely channelled through the Trust Fund.
- (3) The Trust Fund may be used for the following purposes:

- a) GEO Secretariat Operations Fund

The Secretariat Operations Fund within the Trust Fund supports the direct and indirect costs of the GEO Secretariat, and programmatic activities funded through the Secretariat’s annual operating budget.

Direct costs are those directly attributable to the GEO Secretariat, such as but not limited to salaries of GEO Secretariat staff, travel expenses, consultancies, sub-contracts, trainings, and cost of equipment used by GEO Secretariat staff. The direct costs of the GEO Secretariat shall be covered by GEO. Indirect costs are those incurred by WMO for the provision of administrative services to GEO. As a principle, WMO shall not charge GEO for the total indirect costs, but rather for the incremental costs only. The incremental costs of administrative services provided by WMO to GEO shall be identified in a Service Level Arrangement between GEO and WMO.

- b) Individual Activity Funds

Individual Activity Funds are intended where: i) the activity’s funding is partially or entirely channelled through the Trust Fund; and ii) the activity has its own established and mature governance body.

These Activity Funds are termed ‘Extrabudgetary Funds’ since they are separate from the GEO Secretariat Operating Fund and from related annual Secretariat operating budgets overseen by the ExCom. These may be GWP activities or other financing mechanisms that require an individual Activity Fund. The budget development, approval and oversight for each Activity Fund will be undertaken by the governance body of the activity to which the Activity Fund relates. The GEO Budget Working Group shall be informed on those budget items and report to the Executive Committee as appropriate.

10.2 Contributions to the GEO Trust Fund

- (1) The GEO Trust Fund will be established from voluntary contributions from GEO Members, Participating Organizations, Associates, and other entities in the form of grants, donations and other contributions.

- (2) GEO Members, Participating Organizations, and Associates will endeavour to provide assured multi-year funding for the Secretariat Operations Fund to maintain approved staff levels and continuity of Secretariat operations, subject to their respective budget systems and cycles.
- (3) Financial contributions to the Trust Fund may be unearmarked or earmarked for a specific purpose. In-kind contributions (for example, secondments) may be also made, with certain restrictions for commercial sector donors (see Annex C). Financial and in-kind contributions to the Secretariat Operations Fund shall be in line with the Secretariat's duties and tasks as outlined in section 7 and its annual Operating Plans approved by the Executive Committee.
- (4) Contributions shall be normally made in Swiss Francs or any other convertible currency. The United Nations rate of exchange prevailing on the date of the transaction or report will apply for the conversion into Swiss Francs of contributions or income received and payments made or charges incurred in any other currency.
- (5) All contributions to Secretariat operations (financial and in-kind) must be reported individually (not aggregated) in GEO financial reports. A register of these contributions and any associated agreements will be maintained by the Secretariat, with the status of each being reported on an annual basis to the GEO Budget Working Group.

10.3 Administration of the Trust Fund

- (1) Financial arrangements for administration of the Trust Fund are specified in: (1) the GEO-WMO Standing Arrangement; (2) the WMO Financial Rules and Regulations; (3) delegations of responsibility from the Secretary-General to the GEO Secretariat Director.
- (2) The Secretariat Director will be responsible for deciding on the acceptance of incoming contributions. Due diligence on non-Member donors in accordance with WMO procedures will be undertaken by the GEO Secretariat before contribution acceptance. The Budget Working Group will be informed of all new contributions and needs to be consulted before a decision by the Secretariat is taken for contributions from the private sector larger than 50,000 Swiss Francs. In such cases the Budget Working Group should provide its feedback to the Secretariat in an expeditious manner and may also seek strategic input from the Executive Committee.
- (3) Where required, the Secretariat will prepare and sign contribution agreements with donors, in accordance with WMO Financial Rules and Regulations. The Secretariat Director is the signatory of these agreements on behalf of GEO/WMO.
- (4) The accounting of the expenditures of the Trust Fund shall be in accordance with the WMO Financial Regulations and Rules, as well as any related policy documents. The interest accrued from any investment of the principal of the Trust Fund will constitute an income to the Fund.
- (5) The Trust Fund shall maintain solvency at all times. No expenditure may be authorized in the absence of available funds. Notwithstanding the principle of a single external auditor of WMO, GEO may engage independent financial reviews of the GEO budget against expenditures.

~~10.5 Revenue Continuity: GEO Members and Participating Organizations will endeavour to provide assured multi-year revenue for the Secretariat to maintain approved staff levels and continuity of Secretariat operations, subject to the budget systems and cycles of GEO Members and Participating Organizations. Additional contributions may be earmarked for specific purposes and special projects.~~

- (6) ~~10.6 Surplus Funds: Surplus funds remaining in the GEO The~~ Trust Fund shall be maintained on a continuous basis and amounts standing to the credit of the Fund at the end of the calendar year will be transferred to the Working Capital Fund (WCF) (capped at 1M CHF) and then

~~made available for the following~~any annual period shall remain in the Fund for use in the subsequent year unless otherwise restricted by the relevant donor.

- (7) External audit will be conducted as provided for in the WMO Financial Regulations.
- (8) The GEO Secretariat Director shall submit a financial report annually in Swiss Francs to the GEO Executive Committee and to the GEO Plenary on the overall use of the Trust Fund.
- (9) In the event the GEO Trust Fund is dissolved, any ~~remaining funds~~cash balance of the Fund will be returned to the contributors, based on the ratio of their contribution to the Fund in the immediately preceding year.
- (10) Under no circumstances will the Fund be made liable to pay and/or reimburse any taxes on emoluments or honorarium, or any customs and import duties, value added taxes or similar charges. If applicable, these will be payable by the beneficiaries of the support provided.
- (11) ~~dispersed~~Administration of the Secretariat Operations Fund:
 - (i) The utilization of the Secretariat Operations Fund shall be based upon a general Secretariat budget prepared by the GEO Secretariat, in consultation with the Budget Working Group, for each calendar year and approved by the Plenary in the preceding year. The Executive Committee may approve interim budgets until Plenary can meet.
 - (ii) The Secretariat will operate under the ~~terms of the GEO Trust Fund~~approved budget for the calendar year. Spending decisions shall be made by the GEO Secretariat Director. In the event that some portion of the pledged contributions is not received by the Secretariat within the calendar year, the Secretariat will adjust the budget, leverage existing Trust Fund resources if available, and seek approval from the ExCom, to maintain a balanced budget, and will report this adjustment in the final annual report of income and expenditures.
- (12) Administration of Activity Funds:
 - (i) The Secretariat may create individual Activity Funds related to individual activities (such as GWP activities) in consultation with the Budget Working Group.
 - (ii) As indicated in 10.1.3, the budget development, approval and oversight for each Activity Fund will be undertaken by the governance body of the activity to which the Activity Fund relates.
 - (iii) As a prerequisite for an Activity Fund's creation, a written Terms of Reference- (ToR) will be established between the activity's governance body and the GEO Secretariat, confirming the modalities of the Activity Fund and committing the governance body to oversight and adherence to relevant WMO Rules & Regulations, and to relevant financial conditions of the GEO Rules of Procedure. Approval by the Executive Committee will be required for the ToR and any subsequent major amendments. The Secretariat will maintain an online repository of Activity Fund TORs available to the Budget Working Group and the Executive Committee.

~~Terms of Reference and Rules for the Trust Fund are detailed in Annex D-~~

- (iv) The Secretariat will provide financial, administrative (and, where relevant, HR-related) support to each activity's project lead(s), to ensure that contribution agreements, financial transactions and expenditure-related actions (e.g. procurements, consultancies, recruitments, travel missions) are undertaken in alignment with relevant WMO Rules & Regulations. An administration fee for the support to the activity shall be charged by the GEO Secretariat to the Activity Fund. This fee, which is in addition to the WMO administrative fee charged on

all GEO expenditure, will be a percentage of total expenditure by the Activity Fund in each financial year. The percentage will be agreed in the Terms of Reference based on the level of support required from the Secretariat to support the activity. It will be renegotiated as required between both parties as the activity's operations evolve year to year.

11 EFFECTIVE DATE AND AMENDMENT

11.1 *Effective Date:* These Rules of Procedure will take effect immediately upon adoption.

11.2 *Amendment:* These Rules of Procedure may be amended by the Plenary at any meeting. Proposals to amend these rules of procedure can be submitted by eligible entities at any time throughout the year to the Secretariat. Proposals will be considered on a periodic basis. The process to submit, consider, and review RoP amendments will follow the procedure described in Annex G.

11.2.1 Eligibility

11.2.1.1 Members, POs and GEO Governing Bodies are eligible to propose amendments to the Rules of Procedure.

11.2.1.2 Proposals from eligible entities may be submitted by the Principal, Alternate, Focal Point, or Co-Chair of the respective entity.

11.2.2 Categories

11.2.2.1 Major amendments, or “major changes,” include material changes that introduce or represent substantive modifications or implications for governance, processes, or operations.

11.2.2.2 Minor amendments, or “minor changes,” include editorial or immaterial changes that improve accuracy but do not introduce or represent substantive modifications or implications for governance, processes, or operations.

11.2.3 Task Force

11.2.3.1 A RoP Task Force will manage the process in Annex G.

11.2.3.2 The RoP Task Force Terms of Reference are defined in Annex [TBD]¹.

11.2.4 Authorities

11.2.4.1 The Executive Committee has the authority to approve minor amendments, which will be submitted to the Plenary for information.

11.2.4.2 Annex [TBD] defines the authorities of the Rules of Procedure Task Force.

¹ This RoP Task Force reports to the ExCom, which will develop the terms of reference for the task force. When those terms of reference are completed and endorsed by the ExCom, the RoP will be updated to indicate the specific annex following the process defined in the RoP, to be approved by the Plenary.

Annex A.1

GEO Members and Observers

Guidance for Recognition of GEO Members and Observers

The Group on Earth Observations (GEO) is an intergovernmental partnership that improves the availability, access and use of Earth observations for a sustainable planet. GEO promotes open, coordinated and sustained data sharing and infrastructure for better research, policy-making, decisions and action across many disciplines. GEO Members have the decision-making authority within GEO and can convene and host GEO Plenaries and Ministerial Summits.

Membership in the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) is open to all Member States of the United Nations and to the European Commission. GEO also welcomes, as Observers, Member States of the United Nations to participate in GEO's activities without participating in the governance of GEO.

Opportunities and benefits of joining GEO include: participating in partnerships with governments and non-governmental entities; providing and accessing Earth observation data, information and knowledge in an open environment; increasing the diversity and numbers of users of Earth observations; building capacity throughout the world; increasing visibility and high-level support for sustained Earth observations and leveraging funding for activities nationally, regionally and

To join GEO as a Member, Member States of the United Nations are invited to send a letter from a Minister or Cabinet level Official to the GEO Secretariat informing their intention to join GEO and endorsement of *GEO Strategic Plan 2016-2025: Implementing GEOSS*,

To be recognized as an Observer, Member States of the United Nations must send a letter to the GEO Secretariat, requesting formal recognition as an Observer, and a completed application, acknowledging that you are familiar with *GEO Strategic Plan 2016-2025: Implementing GEOSS* available at

The GEO Executive Committee will act upon requests for recognition of Observer status received by the Secretariat, and will annually inform Plenary of their actions.

For inquiries and to submit a letter of intent, interested governments should contact secretariat@geosec.org.

Annex A. 2

GEO Participating Organizations

Guidance for Recognition of GEO Participating Organizations

The Group on Earth Observations (GEO) is an intergovernmental partnership that improves the availability, access and use of Earth observations for a sustainable planet. GEO promotes open, coordinated and sustained data sharing and infrastructure for better research, policy-making, decisions and action across many disciplines. GEO Participating Organizations are critical partners in fulfilling GEO's mission to enable the use Earth observation-based knowledge in responding to global challenges at global and regional scales.

GEO welcomes, as Participating Organizations, all organizations with a global or regional (multi-country) mandate and scope of operations that have an active interest in, or are a user of Earth observations, information and services – that is the full spectrum and/or value chain from data collection to use. These may include intergovernmental, international, and regional organizations, development

banks, foundations, non-governmental organizations, and not-for-profit associations of commercial entities.

Opportunities and benefits of joining GEO include: participating in partnerships with governments and non-governmental entities; providing and accessing Earth observation data, information and knowledge in an open environment; increasing the diversity and numbers of users of Earth observations; building capacity throughout the world; increasing visibility and high-level support for sustained Earth observations and leveraging funding for activities nationally, regionally and globally.

Participating Organizations may attend all GEO technical events, workshops, symposia and Plenaries, are eligible to serve on the GEO Programme Board, and may join any Working Groups or Task Forces that coordinate and conduct GEO's work. Participating Organizations can propose and lead GEO Work Programme activities. The annual GEO Report on Progress will include updates on the contributions of Participating Organizations collected by Secretariat through GEO's standard monitoring and reporting processes to be presented to GEO Plenary.

To be recognized as a Participating Organization of GEO, entities must send an application to the GEO Secretariat using online application. Candidates must identify their proposed contributions to GEO, including, but not limited to, involvement in the GEO Work Programme, and/or the function performed by their organization that would benefit the broader community of Earth observation users and advance the vision of GEO. Examples include capacity building, data sharing, development of products and services; advocacy, communication and outreach; and application and use of Earth observation-based decision-support tools for the benefit of society. Applicants must endorse the *GEO Strategic*

Plan 2016-2025: Implementing GEOSS available at <http://www.earthobservations.org/index.html>.

The GEO Executive Committee will review and make decisions regarding granting of PO status to new applications and discontinuing PO status to those with no record of recent involvement (within three years) in GEO activities or those who are unresponsive to requests to provide current and correct contact data and will inform Plenary of their actions.

For inquiries and to submit an application for GEO Participating Organization status, interested parties should contact secretariat@geosec.org.

Annex A. 3

GEO Associates

Guidance for Recognition of GEO Associates

The Group on Earth Observations (GEO) is an intergovernmental partnership that improves the availability, access and use of Earth observations for a sustainable planet. GEO promotes open, coordinated and sustained data sharing and infrastructure for better research, policy-making, decisions and action across many disciplines. GEO Associates are important partners in enabling the application and use of GEO's global solutions at regional and local scales.

GEO welcomes, as GEO Associates, commercial firms and national associations of commercial firms, as well as non-governmental, not-for-profit and civil society organizations with a national or sub-national mandate or scope of operations related to Earth Observations. GEO Associates must be registered in the territory of a GEO Member. GEO Associates do not participate in the governance of GEO.

Opportunities and benefits of joining the GEO community include: participating in partnerships with governments and non-governmental entities; providing and accessing Earth observation data, information and knowledge in an open environment; increasing the diversity and numbers of users of Earth observations; building capacity throughout the world; increasing visibility and high-level support for sustained Earth observations and leveraging funding for activities nationally, regionally and globally.

GEO Associates may attend GEO's technical meetings, workshops and symposia and may be invited to attend GEO Plenaries. Associates can participate in the GEO Work Programme activities. GEO Associates are also eligible to participate in exhibitions and side-events held concurrently with GEO Plenaries. The annual GEO Report on Progress will include updates on the contributions of GEO Associates collected by Secretariat through GEO's standard monitoring and reporting processes to be presented to GEO Plenary.

To be recognized as a GEO Associate, candidates must send an application to the GEO Secretariat using online application. Eligible candidates must demonstrate two or more years of substantive involvement with GEO and identify their proposed contributions to GEO, which must be self-funded and sustained. Contributions may include involvement in the GEO Work Programme, and/or a function performed by their organization that would benefit the broader community of Earth observation users and advance the vision of GEO. Examples include capacity building, data sharing, development of products and services; advocacy, communication and outreach; and application and use of Earth observation-based decisionsupport tools for the benefit of society. Applicants must endorse the *GEO Strategic Plan 2016-2025: Implementing GEOSS* available at <http://www.earthobservations.org/index.html>. Applicants must agree to designate, and maintain a Correspondence Contact.

The GEO Executive Committee will review and make decision regarding the applications and will annually inform Plenary of their actions. The Executive Committee will decide on applications each year and only review applications that are supported by the Principal of the GEO Member in which the applicant is registered.

For inquiries and to submit an application for GEO Associate status, interested parties should contact secretariat@geosec.org.

Annex B

GEO Secretariat Director Terms of Reference and Recruiting Procedures

AUTHORITY

~~1.~~ GEO Rules of Procedure 5.2 establish the authority of the Plenary to delegate authority to the Executive Committee, including that pertaining to the supervision of the GEO Director:

~~(1) :~~

5.2 *Duties:* Acting by consensus, the Executive Committee will:

- d. Supervise the work of the Director and ensure that it is consistent with the direction received by the Plenary;
- j. Undertake other such tasks as may be delegated to the Executive Committee by the Plenary.

~~2.~~ The Group on Earth Observations at its first session (Geneva, Switzerland 3-4 May 2005) created the Executive Committee and authorized the Executive Committee to recruit and select the Director. GEO also agreed that the WMO Secretary-General will appoint the Director as a WMO staff member.

~~(2)~~

~~3.~~ The Third Plenary Meeting of the Group on Earth Observations (Bonn, Germany 28-29 November 2006) noted that the GEO Secretariat was to remain being filled by its Director and staff. GEO affirmed delegation of authority to the Executive Committee to ensure continuity of Secretariat operations and functioning.

~~(3)~~

~~4.~~(4) The Standing Arrangement between WMO and GEO states that the GEO Secretariat Director is selected by, and under the management authority of GEO while under the administrative authority of the Secretary General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). It does not detail the process of recruitment, selection, renewal, or term of the Director. It does provide language affirming the applicability of WMO Staff and Financial Regulations.

PROCEDURES

- ~~a)~~ The Director may serve a maximum of three ~~three year~~ terms²; of three years³ duration each.
- ~~•~~ ~~Allowing sufficient time, the Executive Committee shall establish a selection panel (the Panel) to oversee the selection of the Director. The Panel shall be open to all Members of the Executive Committee;~~
- ~~b)~~ ~~The Panel~~During the first term, the co-chairs may recommend to the Executive Committee to re-appoint the incumbent Director for a second term without further competition. The Executive Committee ~~should~~may approve such a recommendation ~~throughby~~ unanimous consent; no less than nine months before the end of ~~the~~ Director's first term~~;~~.

² ~~Current WMO procedures limit positions below DG to a 2-year term; an exception to this limit has been established with respect to the GEO Secretariat Director position.~~

³ ~~Current WMO procedures limit positions below DG to a 2-year term; an exception to this limit has been established with respect to the GEO Secretariat Director position.~~

- c) ~~If the Panel recommends opening the~~To appoint a new director, the Executive Committee shall establish a selection panel (the Panel) to oversee the selection process ~~to competition, then~~ ~~the~~ahead of the end of the term of the incumbent director. The Panel shall be open to at least one member of each of the caucuses of the Executive Committee. One WMO staff may participate in the panel as an observer.
- d) ~~The~~ Panel will oversee the ~~announcement of the position, the~~ review of the candidates, ~~and~~ the interview process ~~and~~. The draft vacancy notice, including the ~~ultimate~~job description, the selection criteria, and ~~recommendation~~required experience, which shall include scientific and managerial experience, are subject to approval by the Executive Committee.
- e) A Director who wishes to serve a third (three year) term shall take part in the open ~~competition~~and competitive process.
- f) The panel shall prepare a ranked list and propose the highest ranked candidate to the Executive Committee, which decides by unanimous consent. The Executive Committee may request to interview the recommended candidate(s) and to receive information on the three highest ranked candidates.
- g) The final decision ~~of~~by the Executive Committee on the selection of the Director ~~will~~should be made ~~no~~six month, and shall not be made less than ~~six~~three months before the end of a Director's term and passed to the WMO Secretary General for formal appointment.
- In the event that the post of Director becomes vacant before the term expires, the Executive Committee will appoint an ~~Acting Director~~acting director, whose term of office shall not extend beyond the tenure of the incumbent Director.

a)h)

Annex C

Rules of Engagement with the Commercial Sector

1 PREAMBLE

- 1.1 Since the establishment of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO), GEO Members and Participating Organizations have recognized the potential value that commercial sector organizations⁴ can bring to help accomplish GEO's Vision of a future wherein decisions and actions for the benefit of humankind are informed by coordinated, comprehensive and sustained Earth observations;
- 1.2 GEO also understands that commercial sector products and services based on Earth observations already provide important public and private benefits and contribute greatly to scientific and technological innovation and to economic development;
- 1.3 Commercial sector organizations have participated in GEO in various capacities for a number of years, based on the recognition that common interests and mutual benefit from such collaboration exists;
- 1.4 Therefore, in order to create further opportunities for mutual benefit from engagement in GEO by the commercial sector and to clearly define a basis for engagement that recognizes the respective and different roles, responsibilities and functions of GEO and commercial sector organizations, GEO sets out the following Principles and Modes of Engagement to guide commercial sector involvement in GEO.

2 PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 The public good foundation of GEO and GEOSS must be preserved. GEO is first and foremost a global partnership of national governments and exists primarily to facilitate cooperation and collaboration among them. For this reason, membership in GEO is reserved for Member States of the United Nations and the European Commission;
- 2.2 Commercial sector engagement with GEO should respect the GEOSS Data Sharing and Data Management Principles—which are fundamental tenets of GEO—to the extent possible given commercial sector organizations' duties to their shareholders and stakeholders;
- 2.3 GEO's commitment to uphold the highest standards of ethics, integrity, accountability and transparency across and throughout the community (as further detailed in section 3.4 of the Rules of Procedure) shall also apply to relations between the constituents of GEO (GEO Members, Participating Organizations, Associates and the Secretariat) and commercial sector organizations;
- 2.4 The ability of GEO Members, Participating Organizations, Associates, Secretariat, other GEO partners, and commercial sector organizations engaged with GEO to act independently must not be compromised;
- 2.5 Information on the nature and scope of GEO relations with commercial sector organizations should be transparent and publicly available;

⁴ "Commercial sector" in this Annex refers to organizations that operate for profit.

- 2.6 Relations between GEO and commercial sector organizations must be impartial and provide equal access to all commercial sector organizations. GEO engagement with the commercial sector should not provide, nor imply, exclusivity or endorsement or preference to a particular commercial sector organization, product or service;
- 2.7 Services developed by commercial sector organizations as a contribution to the GEO Work Programme should be made freely available, on a best-efforts basis, to GEO Members;
- 2.8 The Secretariat must inform the GEO Executive Committee prior to entering into a Memorandum of Understanding or other formal agreement with a commercial sector organization;
- 2.9 All commercial sector contributions to Secretariat operations (financial and in-kind) must be reported individually (not aggregated) in GEO financial reports. A register of these contributions and any associated agreements will be maintained by the Secretariat, with the status of each being reported on an annual basis to the GEO Plenary;
- 2.10 Commercial sector organizations must conform to the GEO Branding Guidelines, as may be amended from time to time, in their use of the GEO logo or other GEO-related branding elements.

3 MODES OF ENGAGEMENT

- 3.1 Commercial sector organizations may participate in, and contribute financial or in-kind resources (including data and information products and services) to, GEO Work Programme activities, including GEO Flagships, GEO Initiatives, Community Activities and Foundational Tasks;
 - 3.2 Commercial sector organizations may use data and information available through the GEOSS Common Infrastructure (GCI) for the development of commercial products and services, subject only to those conditions that may have been placed on such use by the original data providers;
 - 3.3 Commercial firms and national associations of commercial firms may apply for status as GEO Associates.
 - 3.4 Multinational not-for-profit associations of commercial organizations may apply for status as GEO Participating Organizations;
 - 3.5 GEO Members may invite commercial sector organizations to participate in GEO Plenary meetings as part of their national delegations;
 - 3.6 Commercial sector organizations may contribute to the operations of the GEO Secretariat either through financial contributions to the GEO Trust Fund or through in-kind contributions directly to the Secretariat, except for contributions of human resources;
 - 3.7 The Secretariat is encouraged to organize regular international commercial sector fora or exhibitions in collaboration with the commercial sector, for example in conjunction with the GEO Plenary and the GEO Work Programme Symposium, and to facilitate dialogue among commercial sector entities and the broader GEO community;
 - 3.8 GEO Members, Participating Organizations and Associates are encouraged to develop and organize commercial sector engagement fora and exhibitions at regional and national levels.
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Annex D

GEO-WMO Trust Fund

Terms

The content of ~~Reference Annex D~~ has been revised and **Rules**

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSES OF THE FUND

- ~~1. The Fifty-Sixth Session of the WMO Executive Council in its Resolution 9 (EC-LVI) authorized the WMO Secretary General to confirm to the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) strong support for the Global Earth Observing System of Systems (GEOSS) concept; to work closely merged with his counterparts in the other Earth-observing United Nations agencies and programmes to ensure an effectively coordinated United Nations system role in the implementation of GEOSS; and to indicate WMO readiness to host the GEO Secretariat;~~
- ~~2. The ad hoc Group on Earth Observations at its sixth session (Brussels, Belgium 14-15 February 2005) finalized the GEOSS Section 10-Year Implementation plan. At the sixth session, GEO agreed to enter into a Standing Arrangement between GEO and WMO and to arrange for a GEO Secretariat to be located at WMO. In order to provide for a mechanism for GEO to fund the GEO Secretariat and GEO activities, GEO also agreed to undertake steps to create a GEO-WMO Trust Fund to support the work of GEO/GEOSS. The Third Earth Observation Summit (Brussels, Belgium 16 February 2005) established the intergovernmental Group on Earth Observations (GEO) and endorsed the GEOSS Ten Year Implementation Plan, and instructed GEO to take those steps necessary to implement GEOSS in accordance with its implementation plan;~~
- ~~3. The primary purpose of the GEO-WMO Trust Fund will be to support the direct and indirect costs of GEO/GEOSS and its Secretariat as well as related GEO activities. The full cost of the GEO Secretariat contains direct and indirect costs. Direct costs are those directly attributable to the GEO Secretariat, such as salaries of GEO Secretariat staff, travel expenses by GEO Secretariat staff, cost of equipment used by GEO Secretariat staff. The direct costs of the GEO Secretariat shall be covered by GEO. Indirect costs are those incurred by WMO for the provision of administrative services to GEO. As a principle, WMO shall not charge GEO for the total indirect costs, but rather for the incremental costs only. The incremental costs of administrative services provided by WMO to GEO shall be identified in a Service Level Arrangement to be concluded between GEO and WMO;~~
- ~~4. The GEO-WMO Trust Fund will also be used to accomplish GEO/GEOSS objectives and goals through the preparation of necessary studies, reports and relevant materials, the use of consultants to assist the GEO Secretariat, and other activities relevant to the GEO/GEOSS as approved by the GEO Plenary;~~
- ~~5. The Trust Fund will be established from voluntary cash contributions from GEO Members, Participating Organizations and other Entities involved in Earth observations, grants, donations, funds deposited for specific purposes, hereafter referred to as deposits, and other contributions. Contributions shall be normally made in Swiss Francs or any other convertible currency;~~

ADMINISTRATION OF THE FUND

- ~~1. Financial arrangements for administration of the Fund are specified in: (1) the GEO-WMO Standing Arrangement; (2) the WMO Financial Rules and Regulations; (3) delegations of responsibility from the Secretary General to the GEO Director;~~
- ~~2. The accounting of the expenditures of the Fund shall be as provided for in paragraph 1 above, including any other directly identifiable charges related to the administration of the Fund. No additional programme support cost charges will be incurred. The interest accrued from any investment of the principal of the Fund will constitute an income to the Fund;~~
- ~~3. The Fund shall be maintained on a continuous basis and amounts standing to the credit of the Fund at the end of any annual period shall remain in the Fund for use in the subsequent period;~~
- ~~4. Financial reports on the Fund will be made in Swiss Francs. Contributions from Members, Participating Organizations, Associates and others will be reported in separate categories. The United Nations rate of exchange prevailing on the date of the transaction or report will apply for the conversion into Swiss Francs of contributions or income received and payments made or charges incurred in any other currency. The GEO Director shall submit a financial report, annually, to Trust Fund contributors, to the GEO Executive Committee, and report to Plenary on the overall use of the Fund;~~
- ~~5. External audit will be conducted as provided for in the WMO Financial Regulations;~~
- ~~6. At the closure of the Fund, any cash balance of the Fund will be returned to the contributors, based on the ratio of their contribution to the total fund in the immediately preceding year.~~

~~PROCEDURES FOR THE UTILIZATION OF THE FUND~~

- ~~1. The utilization of the Fund shall be based upon a general budget prepared by the GEO Secretariat for each calendar year and approved by the Plenary in the preceding year and will reflect contributions pledged at, or before, that Plenary meeting. These contributions will be referred to as "pledged contributions."~~
- ~~2. Subsequent contributions pledged and received during the calendar year will be referred to as "additional contributions" and will be reported in the quarterly financial update;~~
- ~~3. In the event that all pledged contributions are received, additional contributions, unless otherwise specified by the donor, or authorized to be expended by the Executive Committee will be carried forward to the budget for the following calendar year;~~
- ~~4. In the event that some portion of the pledged contributions is not received by the Secretariat within the calendar year, the Secretariat will use additional contributions to maintain a balanced budget, and will report this adjustment in the final annual report of resources and expenditures;~~
- ~~5. If the donor requires its additional contribution be used to finance specific additional activities within the current calendar year, the Secretariat will produce a revised budget including these activities, to be reviewed by the Executive Committee and approved by the Plenary. For all specific activities, the Secretariat will provide to the donor a detailed statement of expenditure incurred in undertaking the activity;~~
- ~~6. The Secretariat will operate under the approved budget for the calendar year;~~

7. ~~Day to day spending decisions shall be by the GEO Secretariat Director;~~
8. ~~The GEO Director will not enter into any financial commitments unless he/she has received the funds required.~~

LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

- ~~1. (1) Under no circumstances will the Fund be made liable to pay and/or reimburse any taxes on emoluments or honorarium, or any customs and import duties, value added taxes or similar charges. If applicable, these will be payable by the beneficiaries of the support provided.~~

Annex E

Budget Working Group Terms of Reference and Rules

PURPOSE

1. The Budget Working Group will provide relevant and timely advice to the Executive Committee regarding the budget and resourcing of the GEO Secretariat.

OBJECTIVES

1. To provide general direction on budget formulation, taking into account standards followed by similar international initiatives;
2. To provide overall guidance on the management of the GEO Trust Fund;
3. To assess the resourcing strategy and associated budget for alignment with GEO strategic objectives, and identify potential risks, including consideration of cash contributions to the Trust Fund from non-Members to ensure their consistency with the nature of GEO as an intergovernmental organization;
4. To review formulation of the operating budget, including preliminary (indicative) budgets for each of the next two years;
5. Provide timely advice on the presentation of the operating budget for adoption at Plenary.

MEMBERSHIP

1. Working Group members serve at the will of their organizations and, therefore, their tenure on the Working Group will be determined by their GEO Principal;
2. Organizations, through the GEO Principal, are invited – on a rolling basis – to nominate a single representative to the Working Group;
3. Membership to the Working Group is open to Participating Organizations that contribute to the GEO Trust Fund with either Cash Contributions or In-kind contributions, as long as these contributions are listed within the GEO Secretariat Budget.

APPROACH AND FUNCTIONS

1. Review and provide advice to the Executive Committee, on the progress of budget execution, including income and expenditure, on an annual basis. This may include, as appropriate and at the request of the Executive Committee, negotiations of budget projections and requests, and suggestions on appropriate ways and means to realize projections;
2. In collaboration with the Secretariat, annually review the resourcing strategy and preliminary budget for presentation at Plenary;

3. In collaboration with the Secretariat, as necessary, determine a strategy for optimizing the allocation of the Secretariat resources on the basis of prioritization of Foundational Tasks and, as applicable, other established Work Programme requirements;
4. Provide feedback and advice to the Secretariat and the Executive Committee, regarding the efforts to identify, mobilize and secure resources from existing and new sources in order to meet the short-term and long-term financial commitments and strategic resourcing plan of the GEO Secretariat.

Annex F

Programme Board Voting Procedure

The following voting procedure will apply to elections of:

- Programme Board co-chairs; and
 - Participating Organization nominees to Executive Committee.
- A. The Secretariat will inform Programme Board member representatives of the number and type of vacancies for which elections are required. In most instances, these vacancies will be anticipated due to completion of some member terms.
 - B. Vacancies will be filled prior to the next Programme Board meeting using electronic voting, unless an objection is raised by a Programme Board member. If an objection is raised, vacancies will be filled at the next in-person Programme Board meeting as the first order of business.
 - C. The Secretariat will invite nominations from Programme Board members for vacant positions. Nominations must be by individual Programme Board principal representatives on their own behalf. The period of time allowed for nominations will be no less than one week, in the case of anticipated vacancies, and no less than two weeks in the case of unanticipated vacancies. Nominations will be submitted via email to the Programme Board distribution list. The nomination email should include a short (less than 200 words) statement describing why they wish to serve and what they bring (e.g. experience, qualifications, perspectives) to the position.
 - D. Following the close of the nomination period, the Secretariat will confirm the eligibility of the nominees and announce the candidates for the vacant positions. If only one valid nomination has been received by the end of the nomination period, the Secretariat will announce that the candidate has been elected by acclamation.
 - E. If more than one valid nomination has been received, the Secretariat will circulate the list of candidates and their statements to all Programme Board members eligible to vote. Each Programme Board member will then be asked to submit one vote for each position for which an election is being held to the Secretariat only (as a secret ballot) via email. Where there are multiple representatives for a Programme Board member, the representatives must coordinate among themselves which representative will submit the votes on behalf of that member.
 - F. If the election is being held at an in-person meeting, each candidate will be provided the opportunity to give their candidate statement verbally at the meeting, following which there will be opportunity for other Programme Board members to ask questions. Voting at in-person meetings will occur by secret ballot administered by the Secretariat.
 - G. Before voting begins, the Secretariat will announce the number of eligible voters and the list of candidates. For Programme Board co-chair positions, all Programme Board members will be eligible to cast one vote per vacant position. For positions as Participating Organization Observers on Executive Committee, each Participating Organization Programme Board member will be eligible to cast one vote per vacant position. A nominating member may vote for themselves.
 - H. In the event there is more than one co-chair vacancy, voting will be conducted for each vacancy in sequential rounds.

- I. If the number of votes is tied for a particular vacant position, a tie-breaker round of voting will be undertaken. If the tie remains after three rounds of tie-breaker voting, a member of the GEO Secretariat will flip a coin to determine the result of the vote.

Annex G

Rules of Procedure Amendment Process

ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROCESS

The following statements apply to the respective steps defined in Figure 1.

Step 1: Proposed RoP Changes to GEO Secretariat

The GEO Secretariat, in coordination with the RoP Task Force,⁵ provides information no less than once a year on the process and schedule to submit proposed changes to the RoP by eligible entities.

Step 2: File/Database of Individual Inputs

The GEO Secretariat maintains a digital method for the submission, storage, and tracking of proposed changes to the RoP. The Task Force has access to this system. Submissions must include the rationale for the proposed changes as part of the information provided.

Step 3: Compliance Check & Task Force Package

The GEO Secretariat performs a compliance check on the submissions received. The compliance check involves an assessment of the eligibility of the submitter, the relation of the submission to the RoP, and the inclusion of a rationale. If a submission contains multiple independent changes, the GEO Secretariat may split the submission into separate ones in the digital system and indicate accordingly. The GEO Secretariat compiles the submissions into a package for the Task Force, indicating any submissions that the GEO Secretariat separated or deemed non-compliant. The GEO Secretariat will consult with the RoP Task Force Co-Chairs during this stage, as needed.

Step 4: Task Force Review of Submissions

4.1 The Task Force reviews the package of submissions on a periodic basis and no less than once per year. The Task Force initially reviews any submissions deemed non-compliant to confirm that assessment or to reclassify it as compliant. The Task Force will notify the submitter for a submission it determined as non-compliant.

4.2 The Task Force assesses the substantive nature of each compliant submission. Classification options include a major change or minor change. The GEO Secretariat will record the classifications accordingly in the digital system for RoP change submissions.

4.3 Minor Changes. Changes the Task Force classifies as minor are expedited to Step 5 for preparation and consideration at the soonest ExCom meeting as possible.

4.4 Major Changes. The Task Force conducts a thorough evaluation of major change submissions for integration into the RoP. The Task Force assesses the potential risks and impacts of a proposed change on

⁵ For this Annex, Task Force refers to the RoP Task Force unless otherwise specified.

other sections of the RoP. The Task Force may make slight refinements to proposed changes for clarity or editorial integrity or slight edits to the RoP needed to incorporate proposed changes. The Task Force can combine related changes and identify any complementary changes needed in other parts of the RoP. The Task Force will collaborate with the respective submitters in refining any proposed text or combining with similar submissions and in ensuring the submitter's concurrence. A submitter may withdraw a proposed

change. As needed, the Task Force, with assistance from the GEO Secretariat, may invite comments from outside the Task Force on changes under consideration.

The Task Force will consider the following criteria in its evaluations:

- Independence - Extent to which a proposed change is unique or is related to other changes;
- Merit - Extent to which a proposed change is well-founded and has value and worth;
- Reasonableness - Extent to which a proposed change is cogent and sensible; • Suitability - Extent to which a proposed change is germane, apt, and pertinent.

Step 5: Preparation for ExCom Consideration

5.1 Major Changes. The Task Force, with assistance of the GEO Secretariat, prepares a package of the evaluation of major changes, including a record of any combinations or revisions. The package includes the Task Force recommendations. The Task Force will work with the Secretariat to schedule ExCom consideration at the most appropriate opportunity to support the ensuing GEO Plenary.

5.2 Minor Changes. The Task Force, with assistance of the GEO Secretariat, prepares a package of the minor change submissions for the ExCom, including Task Force comments, a record of any revisions, and the Task Force recommendations. The Task Force will work with the Secretariat to schedule ExCom consideration at most expedient opportunity.

Step 6: ExCom Consideration

The Executive Committee considers the packages for major and/or minor changes and decides whether to advance major changes to GEO Plenary and whether to approve minor changes. Decision options include 'Submit to Plenary' for major changes, 'Modification' for major or minor changes, and 'Approve' or 'Decline' for minor changes. The decisions can apply to some or all changes considered. The GEO Secretariat will record the decisions accordingly in the digital system for RoP change submissions.

For major changes that the Executive Committee decides to submit to GEO Plenary, the Executive Committee will identify its recommendations for GEO Plenary. The Task Force will notify the submitters of changes that the Executive Committee decides to submit to GEO Plenary.

6A Modification. The Executive Committee may refer proposed changes back to the Task Force for additional work, such as for further evaluation, revision, or rationale. Referrals can go to Step 4 or to Step 5 depending on the nature of the Executive Committee comments. When proposed changes are referred back to the Task Force, the Task Force will consult with the proposal submitter about the Executive Committee's concerns and will evaluate options with the submitter.

The Executive Committee can reclassify a proposed minor change as a major change and refer it back to the Task Force for additional work in Step 4 and/or Step 5.

6B Minor Change–Approve. The GEO Secretariat and RoP Task Force will incorporate approved changes in the RoP and post an updated RoP. The GEO Secretariat will notify the community of the

updated RoP. The Task Force will notify the submitters of minor change proposals that the Executive Committee approved the change.

6C Minor Change–Decline. The Task Force will notify the submitters of minor change proposals that the Executive Committee declined the change.

Step 7: Preparation for GEO Plenary

The Task Force, with assistance of the GEO Secretariat, prepares a package of proposed RoP changes for the Executive Committee to submit to GEO Plenary. As part of the package, the Task Force will combine the RoP revisions from individual proposed changes into a consolidated RoP document with edits, deletions, and additions identified; the Task Force may make slight revisions for clarity or editorial integrity and will coordinate with the submitters accordingly. The package includes the Executive Committee recommendations as well as notifications of any minor changes the Executive Committee adjudicated since the prior GEO Plenary.

Step 8: GEO Plenary Decisions

The GEO Plenary decides whether to approve the proposed major changes. Decision options include ‘Approve’ or ‘Decline.’ The GEO Secretariat will record the decisions accordingly in the digital system for RoP change submissions.

8A Approve. The GEO Secretariat and the RoP Task Force will incorporate approved changes in the RoP and post an updated RoP. The Task Force will notify the submitters of major change proposals that the GEO Plenary approved the change.

8B Decline. The Task Force will notify the submitters of major change proposals that the GEO Plenary declined the change.

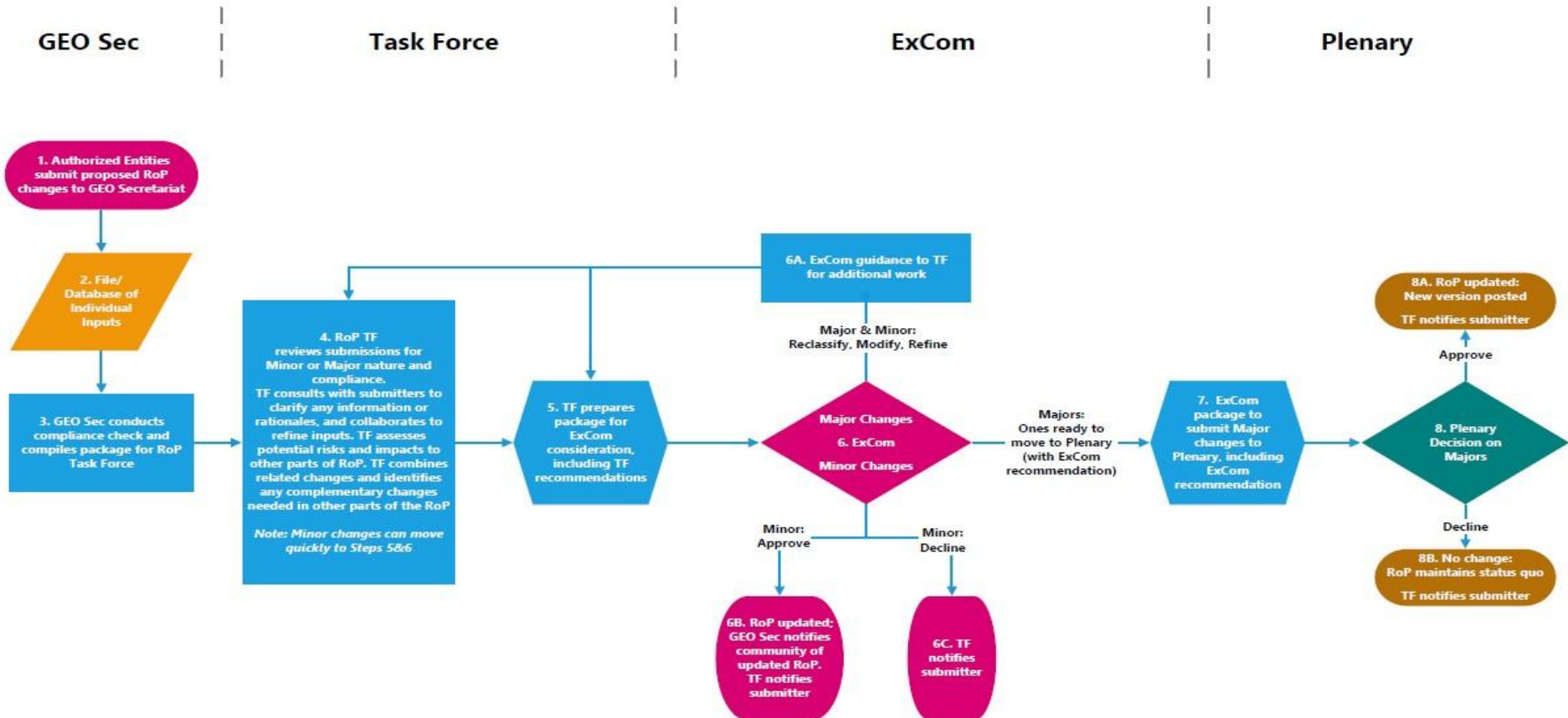


Figure 1. Process for Amendments to GEO Rules of Procedure