

Summary Report
1st Meeting of the GEO BON Steering Committee
Geneva, 22 – 23 June 2009

1.1 Start-up

Anne Larigauderie (DIVERSITAS), Co-Lead of GEO Task BI-07-01 on Developing a global Biodiversity Observation Network (GEO BON), opened the meeting and made an introductory presentation on GEO BON and GEOSS. In her presentation, she noted three key components of GEO BON: 1) its focus on observations for the detection of biodiversity change, 2) the need to ensure “operational” observations of biodiversity characterized by long-term commitments to the continuity of the observations, and 3) its provision of a set of innovative and relevant global biodiversity observation products. Anne also described the goals for this first GEO BON Steering Committee meeting. These were to refine the implementation approach to GEO BON, discuss a strategy for obtaining funding for GEO BON, and agree on GEO BON’s role in the GEO-VI Plenary meeting in November 2009.

The participants then introduced themselves via a tour de table. Prior to the meeting, Anne, Rob Jongman (EBONE), and Woody Turner (NASA) had proposed that Bob Scholes (CSIR) serve as chair of the GEO BON Steering Committee. This proposal was met with wide acceptance before and during the meeting. Bob assumed the chair for the Steering Committee. He thanked the participants and stated that the Government of South Africa has offered to provide him with additional support to carry out this role.

1.2 Updates

Nick King (GBIF) signed a letter agreement with the GEO Secretariat concerning the development of a GEO BON “early product” on protected areas with financial support from the Government of Switzerland. During presentations on the status of the GEO BON early products, Nick demonstrated an impressive web version of a widget tool that will form the foundation for this early product.

During a GEO Secretariat update, Michael Williams (GEO Secretariat) informed the Steering Committee that Sebastien Miazza would leave the Secretariat at the end of the month and that Douglas Muchoney had recently returned to the Secretariat as a seconded expert on biodiversity. In addition, a new GEO BON website is now available for review at <http://www.earthobservations.org/geobon.shtml>. The meeting heard progress reports on EBONE and on five GEO BON early products (the lens approach, ecosystems, gap analysis, population & drivers, and protected areas).

Three important criteria for early products were noted: reflect integration, provide visibility to GEO BON, and deliver quickly. Edward Vanden Berghe (Rutgers University) mentioned that Boris Worm of the Census of Marine Life (CoML), which is going through a synthesis phase, might be able to deliver a hotspot marine map for GEO-VI.

ACTION 1 – The early products teams should provide updates in time for inclusion in a GEO BON progress report to the GEO-VI Plenary meeting in Washington DC in November; there is a hope that one or more of these products will be ready in time.



1.3 Topical Working groups

The meeting reviewed progress on establishing the GEO BON Topical Working Groups. The Working Groups exist to translate the GEO BON concept document into concrete activities through Working Group implementation plans. In most cases, if not all, these groups will cease to exist after completing these plans. Each Group will develop a draft implementation plan of fewer than 10 pages by early 2010, with penultimate versions completed by May 2010. Based on these individual plans, the Steering Committee will produce an overall implementation plan.

The Working Groups are all currently developing their membership rosters. The meeting discussed how to identify funding for Working Group operations, the importance of coordination with other Tasks and sub-tasks in the GEO Work Plan, and the need for some balanced representation of regions and disciplines while not letting the membership get overly large. It was agreed that, while changes can be made later on as the situation evolves, the eight Working Groups should remain 1) genetics, 2) terrestrial species monitoring, 3) terrestrial ecosystems monitoring, 4) freshwater ecosystems monitoring, 5) marine ecosystems monitoring, 6) ecosystem services, 7) in-situ/remote-sensing integration, and 8) data integration & interoperability.

ACTION 2 – Each Working Group lead is to finalize its membership list (who’s doing what in which group) and refine the scope of its work by mid-July. The “Getting Started” document (sent by Sebastien Miazza on 1 May 2009) will serve as a basis for refining the scope of work. Doug Muchoney (GEO Secretariat) will compile these lists and scopes of work and send them to the Steering Committee Chairman.

ACTION 3 – Gary Geller (JPL) will distribute a revised template for Topical Working Group Implementation Plans by 5 July, with an eye toward increasing the overlap (where possible) between these plans and the GEO Task plans. Working Group leads may comment on this template and Gary will recirculate a final version by the end of July.

ACTION 4 – The Secretariat was tasked with collecting and distributing information from the Working Groups on an ongoing basis and with creating and maintaining a list of Working Group members for use by the Steering Committee and the GEO BON community.

ACTION 5 – The Secretariat will assist the Freshwater Ecosystems Monitoring Group in getting organized.

ACTION 6 – The Steering Committee will seek to organize a meeting of all Working Groups, preferably in late 2009 or early 2010.

ACTION 7 – The GEO BON Task co-leads will revise the GEO BON Task Sheet.

ACTION 8 – Doug Muchoney (GEO Secretariat) will identify potential overlaps between GEO BON and other GEO Tasks.

1.4 Regional BONs

Gary Geller (JPL) made a presentation on the various emerging and potential regional BONs: EBONE, Asia-Pacific BON, J BON (Japan), South-East Asia BON, Southern Africa/SAEON). The meeting agreed on the value and importance of encouraging the development of these regional networks. Bob Scholes (CSIR) listed three criteria for regional BONs. These are: 1) they are engaged in repeated, operational observations (generating time series); 2) their observations are shared and placed in the public domain; and 3) there is a harmonization of observational approaches and methods across the region.

It was agreed that the GEO BON Steering Committee would not attempt to control the use of the word “BON”, nor engage yet in a process of formal endorsement of these various spontaneous initiatives.



1.5 Funding

The meeting agreed on the need to identify sources of funds to support: 1) the functioning of the Working Groups, 2) the development of regional BONs, 3) the development of early products, 4) work on outreach and communication, and 5) annual GEO BON Steering Committee meetings (currently self-funded).

ACTION 9 – Bob Scholes (CSIR), Woody Turner (NASA) and Gary Geller (JPL) will elaborate a bottom-up budget for GEO BON activities.

ACTION 10 – The GEO Secretariat will explore the possibility of supporting a number of teleconferences and communications products (such as brochures).

ACTION 11 – DIVERSITAS, EBONE and other Committee members will explore options for supporting a number of teleconferences.

ACTION 12 – Bob Scholes (CSIR) will draft text for a GEO BON flyer.

ACTION 13 – Woody Turner (NASA) will explore funding options for the All-Working Group meeting.

1.6 Data-sharing principles

Rob Koopman of the GEO Secretariat made a presentation on the GEO data-sharing principles and the recent formation of the GEO Data Sharing Task Force. The meeting discussed the barriers to data sharing and the need to avoid “reinventing the wheel”.

ACTION 14 – GBIF and Secretariat to discuss how to ensure that biodiversity concerns and experiences are addressed by GEO Data Sharing Task Force.

1.7 GEO & GEOSS

GEO Secretariat staff described how GEO BON could engage with the rest of the GEO community through the GEO Committees (Capacity Building, Science & Technology, Architecture & Data, and User Interface), the other Communities of Practice, and the other Tasks in the GEO 2009-2011 Work Plan.

ACTION 15 – GEO Secretariat (Doug Muchoney) will produce a matrix of the current Tasks and sub-Tasks related to the development of GEO BON.

ACTION 16 – Bob Scholes (CSIR) will seek, as appropriate, to engage the other GEO Biodiversity tasks and relevant GEO Ecosystems tasks in future GEO BON meetings. The GEO Secretariat will help to identify ahead of time areas of possible synergies with GEO BON. The Secretariat will communicate to the Steering Committee members ahead of the GEO Plenary the GEO Member governments and Participating Organizations that have expressed to the Secretariat their interest in contributing to the GEO BON Task.

1.8 The GEO VI Plenary meeting

The meeting discussed how GEO BON could most effectively promote itself at the GEO-VI Plenary meeting. It was agreed that GEO BON should request the opportunity of making an oral statement at the Plenary. Other options are organizing an off-site side event at a prestigious location (e.g. the National Museum of Natural History), presenting a short document and issuing a press release (possible topics include the GBIF widget and its use in supporting an understanding of African protected areas and a Census of Marine Life synthesis product). Bob Scholes noted that he was planning to attend the GEO-VI Plenary.

ACTION 17 – The Secretariat, on behalf of the Steering Committee, will request a slot for making an oral statement at GEO-VI.



ACTION 18– The Secretariat will explore options for organizing a GEO BON side event. A short (less than 5 pages) document should be prepared for distribution at GEO-VI.

1.9 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

The participants discussed the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held in Nagoya, Japan in October 2010. It was noted that GEO BON has already been recognized in a number of CBD documents and decisions and that the CBD Secretariat has a member on the GEO BON Steering Committee. The meeting agreed that GEO BON could play a useful role in supporting the development of a 2010 baseline and in measuring future trends in biodiversity, perhaps through the creation of a gap analysis document laying out the appropriate biodiversity observations and comparing those with what is available today (2010). Sections in the Topical Working Group Implementation Plans on observation needs will help with the development of this document.

ACTION 19 – The Steering Committee (Bob Scholes) will consult with the CBD Secretariat with the aim of ensuring that an appropriate role for GEO BON is discussed first at SBSTTA-14 in May 2010, and then at COP-10 in November, with a possible outcome being a COP resolution calling for a commitment to a global biodiversity observation system and to GEO BON. We should seek the support of the Japanese Government for such a resolution.

1.10 Communication strategy

The meeting agreed on the need to strengthen all aspects of GEO BON communications, including the web site, written materials, outreach to the biodiversity and GEO communities (for example by distributing documents and including GEO BON in statements at various conferences), and, when appropriate, press outreach.

ACTION 20 – The Steering Committee will review the draft web site and send comments to mwilliams@geosec.org. The web site should include a place where interested people and/or organizations can register if they want to belong to the GEO BON Community of Practice.

ACTION 21 – The Secretariat will establish a password-protected section of the web site to enable Committee members to share documents and presentation slides, an expanded meetings page, an expanded page on links to other GEO activities, and a link to enable new organizations to join GEO BON.

1.11 Action points from final meeting of the Interim Steering Committee (22-23 January 2009)

The meeting concluded by reviewing all action points from the previous meeting of the Interim Steering Committee. These included:

- Commitment of interim Steering Committee members to continuing to serve on the Steering Committee was confirmed.
- New organizations were invited to join the Committee to ensure better balance.
- GEO BON Task sheet needs to be updated by 8 July (Action: Anne Larigauderie).
- The Secretariat channeled resources provided by the Government of Switzerland to the development of the new GEO BON web site.
- The Working Groups were established and leads identified and confirmed as follows: Genetics (Tet Yahara, Dan Faith); Terrestrial Species Monitoring Programmes (Henrique Pereira); Terrestrial Ecosystem Monitoring (Rob Jongman); Freshwater Ecosystem Monitoring (Ian Harrison); Marine Ecosystem Monitoring (Jan de Leeuw, Carlo Heip); Ecosystem Services Monitoring (Hal Mooney); In-Situ/Remote-sensing Integration (Simon Ferrier); and Data Integration and Inter-operability: Informatics and portals (Hannu Saarenmaa, Éamonn Ó Tuama)
- Requested updates on the early products were delivered.



- The next Steering Committee meeting should take place early May 2010. It might take place back to back with the collective meeting of all Working Groups.

1.12 Close of the meeting

The participants thanked Sebastian Miazza for his past support to GEO BON and to the Committee and gave him a round of applause. The chair proposed that the Committee meet on an annual basis, with the next meeting to take place during the first few months of 2010.

ACTION 22 – Sebastien Miazza is to assemble the ppt versions of the slides presented and make them available on the GEO BON web site.



ANNEX I

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